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To: Members of Altadena Heritage

From: Your Board

Dear Members:

You have likely heard a lot of conversation about the impact of SB9 and SB1123 on the trajectory of Altadena’s recovery. We want to explain some basics, and then tell you what we think.

### **What are SB9 and SB1123?**

SB9 and SB1123 are state housing mandates aimed at increasing the supply of housing. They were born of a desire to create “middle housing” and break the economic and social lock that single-family (or “R1”) zoning historically had on building abundant housing in California.

SB9 allows a property owner to add a second primary dwelling unit to their lot (and up to four units total), or split their lot into two separate parcels. There is an owner-occupancy requirement for the lot split, but not otherwise.

SB1123 is an urban infill law that allows for up to ten units on a single-family lot that meets two basic conditions: (1) it is vacant; and (2) 75 percent of the perimeter of the site adjoins parcels that are developed with “urban uses”—which we understand could be just residential development.<sup>1</sup>

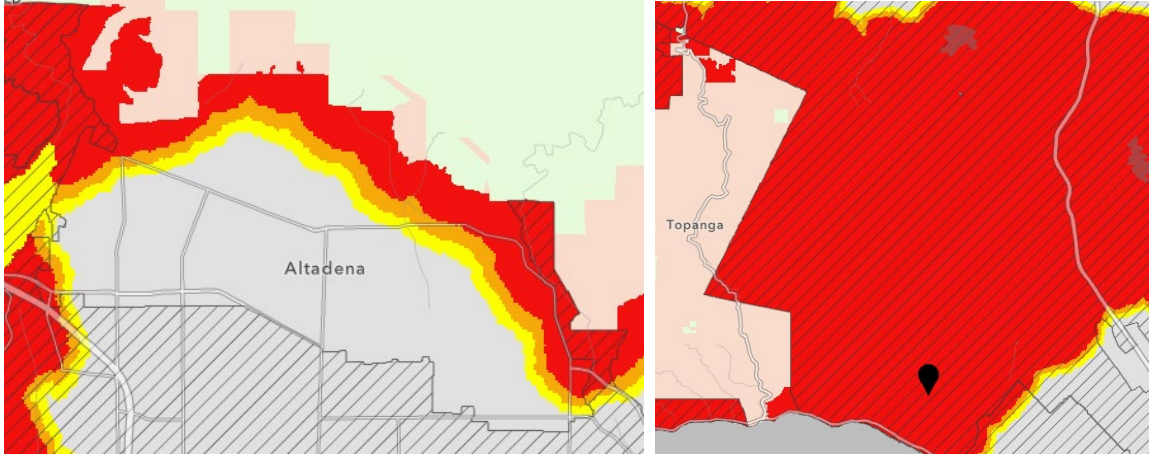
### **How are SB9 and SB1123 in play in post-Fire Altadena?**

The [Fire Hazard Severity Zone Maps](#) that are developed by CalFire’s Department of Forestry and Fire Protection are critical here. These maps designate three degrees of fire hazard severity: (1) very high (red); (2) high (orange); and (3) moderate (yellow).

The Governor issued an executive order that allows local jurisdictions to suspend SB9 in the very high fire hazard severity zones only—*which both L.A. County and the City of Los Angeles did*. (“Abundant housing” advocates have sued over this.) As for SB1123, the law itself prohibits projects in very high *and* high fire hazard severity zones. Now, here are the respective maps for Altadena and the Palisades:

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<sup>1</sup> This gets complicated. The root of SB1123 is the Starter Home Revitalization Act of 2021. SB1123 was an amendment to that Act, and SB1123 is where the vacancy requirement comes from. AB130 and SB684 were other amendments, and that’s where we see “urban uses” referenced and defined, along with the California Public Resources Code section 21072.



As you can see, the bulk of Altadena is in *no zone whatsoever*, and is therefore eligible, in large part, for SB9 and SB1123 projects.

**Shouldn't CalFire just redraw these Fire Hazard Severity Zone Maps?**

Our understanding is that this would be very hard. We should assume they are fixed for the purposes of advocacy on these housing issues.

**Doesn't SB1123 have a five-year vacancy requirement before a property is eligible?**

SB1123 has a five-year vacancy requirement for *tenant*-occupied properties, but no such vacancy requirement for *owner*-occupied properties.<sup>2</sup> Presumably, the very instant there is no home on a lot that was owner-occupied, it could be eligible for an SB1123 application.

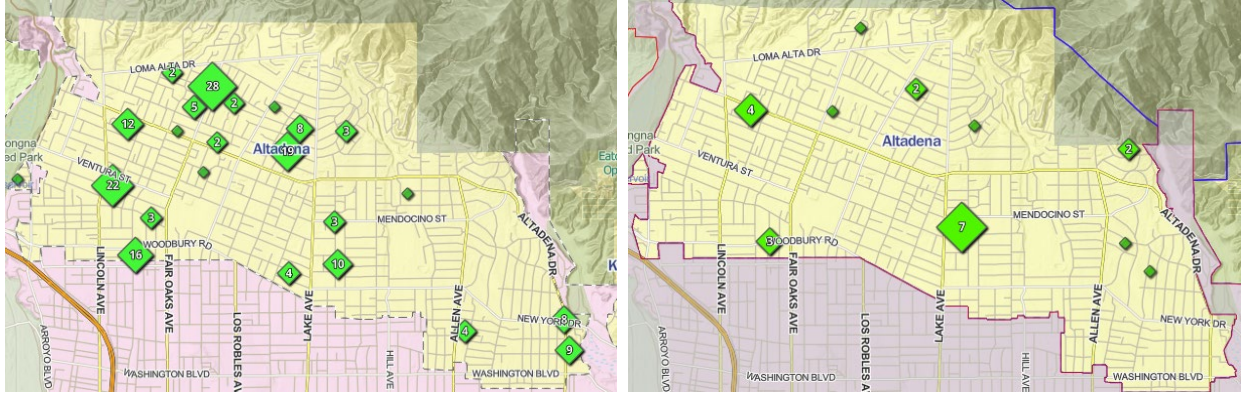
**Are there enough applications for SB9 and SB1123 projects that this is actually concerning?**

There are enough that it is worth a discussion, for sure.

The "[Permit Finder](#)" maps below from EpicLA confirm that, as Altadena rebuilds, there is significant momentum behind SB9 and SB1123 projects. An SB9 search yields over 200 permit applications (left), and an SB1123 search over 20 permit applications (right).

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<sup>2</sup> See Government Code 66499.41(a)(2)(A)(ii)(III).



Also, we have found at least one online “white paper” from the land use practice group of a major law firm, directed at their institutional clients, expressly saying “There is currently no natural disaster exception” for SB1123. Take that for what it is.

**What’s the concern here—and what’s the argument on the other side?**

The concern is that SB9 and SB1123 projects will proliferate in ways that: (1) undermine Altadena’s traditional character and its appeal to residents who want to come home; (2) compromise its safety in the next emergency; and (3) overwhelm its wounded infrastructure. There is also a concern that a lot of these projects are being undertaken by real estate investors who bought burned lots—not by residents.

The argument on the other side is that we need more housing, including for lower-income members of our community who need a path home, and that single-family zoning is exclusionary and largely responsible for the housing crisis we find ourselves in. Also, some property owners may need the revenue that additional dwelling units can generate in order to rebuild and stay in Altadena. Lastly, the abundant housing advocates will say that it’s really just the architecture the opposition doesn’t like, not the added density per se.

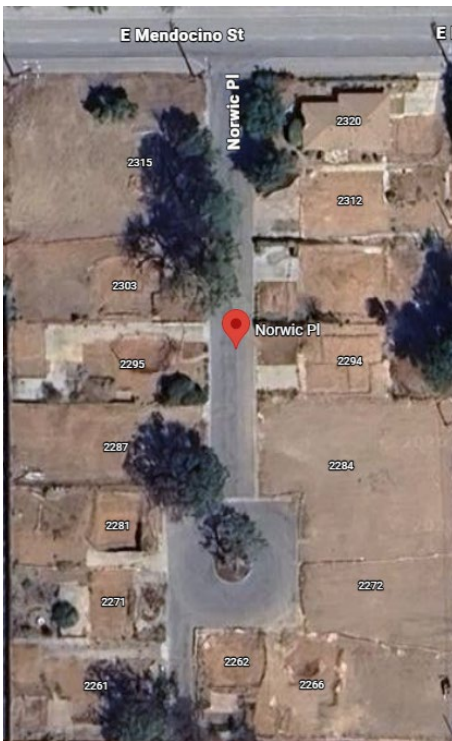
**What are some examples of controversial projects?**

Two SB9 projects in particular have gotten a lot of attention: 2284 Norwic Place and 411 Punahou Street.

Norwic Place is a private cul-de-sac that was previously a cohesive enclave of Norman style cottages:



Every home on Norwic Place burned in the Eaton Fire, and then an investor bought the largest lot, at 2284. This is what the County has approved on that lot:



This project has two primary units at the front of the property, two detached ADUs at the rear of the property, and a third ADU attached to one of the primary units. (And no off-street parking for the ADUs.)

Punahou is a restful Altadena street, and 411 was previously the site of a modest single-family home. But now, the purchaser of a vacant lot has developed plans and gotten them approved for “a five unit residential development,” per the [listing on Zillow](#). It would look like this:



The neighbors are distraught and have started a [petition in opposition](#) to this project.

### **What's the County doing about this?**

Let's break this down into SB9 and SB1123.

#### **SB9**

First, we have learned that the County has approached the Governor's office about extending the executive order allowing local jurisdictions to suspend SB9 *beyond* the very high fire hazard severity zones. They have been told this is not a possibility. (Again, even the suspension of SB9 in those zones is in litigation.)

On May 7, 2026, Supervisor Kathryn Barger wrote to Amy Bodek, the Director of the Department of Regional Planning, and asked for clarification on the approval of SB9 projects that "have outsized impacts and . . . the potential to greatly impact the character of the community." (She referenced the Norwic and Punahou projects, specifically.)

Director Bodek submitted a robust response on May 18, 2026. Her conclusion, in essence, was that the County's hands are tied—to the potential detriment of our local community: "[T]he broad mandate imposed by SB9 and other housing laws often results in projects occurring in places where infrastructure or site requirements do not meaningfully support such projects." Director Bodek also inventoried the SB9 applications in the Eaton Fire perimeter: 52 applications as of May 12, 2026.

A survey of the application data that Director Bodek assembled suggests that a sizeable number: (1) intend to max out their allowances under SB9 and the County's ADU ordinance; and (2) are not from residents aiming to rebuild, but rather real estate investors who purchased lots after

the Fire. For example, according to a table created by Director Bodek, the owner of 2284 Norwic is “Seale Investment, LLC,” and the owner of 411 Punahou is “ABD Altadena LLC.”

### *SB1123*

In Director Bodek’s response to Supervisor Barger, she noted that SB1123 “pose[s] similar challenges to managing housing development in existing, mature communities and through aggressive State-mandated procedures.”

We understand that the Department of Regional Planning has requested guidance from the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) on the applicability of SB1123 in Altadena. For this reason, *at least for now*, the County has paused SB1123 applications.

### **What, then, can be done?**

Many people might support SB9 and SB1123 in the abstract, on the grounds of promoting abundant housing and respecting a property owner’s right to do with her property what she pleases. This is not unreasonable. The truth is SB9 was in play before the Eaton Fire, and 2284 Norwic Place could have gone through then. (SB1123 is a little different. It did not become applicable to single-family zones until *after* the Eaton Fire, in July of 2025.)

But Altadena’s recovery is not abstract. Our community has suffered unimaginable losses, no doubt unforeseen to the drafters of abundant housing legislation, and it finds itself in a fragile state desperate to restore what was home. There are very strong arguments that SB9 and SB1123 should bend to this, and not be a source of even greater disruption. Here are some examples of changes that would be impactful at the state level:

#### *SB9*

- Enact a disaster exception that pauses oversized SB9 projects in disaster zones for a reasonable and fixed period of time.
- Add an owner-occupant requirement for *all* SB9 projects, even where the owner does not split the lot. This would disincentivize investor-backed projects.
- Add a density cap in disaster zones that would keep the number and scale of SB9 projects in check.

#### *SB1123*

- Enact a disaster exception that pauses SB1123 projects in disaster zones for a reasonable and fixed period of time.
- Modify the statute so that there is a five-year vacancy requirement for *both* owner-occupied and tenant-occupied lots.
- Exclude SB1123 projects from properties and districts that have historic designations at the County or state level. (SB9 already has this exclusion.)

### **What does Altadena Heritage think?**

We are not opposed to density done sensibly. And we are not opposed to SB9 or SB1123 by themselves. We even treasure the occasional out-of-place home in Altadena, for that way it enlivens our strolls!<sup>3</sup> We also very much like bungalow courts, and have even participated in an informational hearing before the Regional Planning Commission about how they might fit into Altadena. We like the way in which the West San Gabriel Valley Area Plan, generally speaking, upzoned some of our busy corridors. Lastly, we understand that “developers” have always had a hand in making Altadena—and we’re frustrated by the [rote demonization of them](#).

**That said, we think the arguments against SB1123 projects on single-family lots are particularly strong.** It just cannot be the case that SB1123—again, an urban infill law—was ever intended to apply to “vacant” lots that are vacant only because the home on them burned. Moreover, the lack of a five-year vacancy requirement on *both* tenant-occupied and owner-occupied lots alike is indefensible post-Fire.

**We acknowledge that SB9 is tougher.** It was the law before the Fire. But even there, we think modest guardrails are imperative now, particularly given the number and scale of SB9 projects. It is one thing to gently add density and, at the same time, give property owners an economic tool to aid in their recovery and return to Altadena. But projects like 2284 Norwic and 411 Punahou are investment opportunities undertaken without any regard for Altadena’s beloved sense of place, and at great risk to the community’s safety and infrastructure capacity. Those kinds of projects, if left unchecked, really do threaten irreparable harm to the meaning and appeal of our neighborhoods.

We support any of the bulleted items above, and we will be contacting our representatives in Sacramento to let them know. You can do the same:

- State Senator Sasha Perez; (916) 651-4025 or (626) 304-1086; senator.perez@senate.ca.gov
- Assemblymember John Harabedian; (916) 319-2041 or (626) 351-1917; assemblymember.harabedian@assembly.ca.gov.

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<sup>3</sup> We have fond memories, for example, of 628 Wapello Street: 7 bedrooms, 9 bathrooms, 9,555 square feet, with an American flag, metal sculptures of birds of prey, and a fiberglass deer out front. See Altadena Library District 2017 Community Conversations Project Report, which identified the number one community priority of Altadena to be: “Keep Altadena Funky.”