

SENATE THIRD READING
SB 625 (Wahab and Richardson)
As Amended July 17, 2025
Majority vote

SUMMARY

Extends key elements of the Governor's executive orders issued in response to the Los Angeles fires by establishing a statutory, ministerial approval process for rebuilding residential structures destroyed in declared disasters, including provisions that waive local discretionary review, streamline permitting timelines, and allow reconstruction up to 110% of the prior structure's size.

Major Provisions

- 1) Deems void and unenforceable any covenant, condition, or restriction (CC&R) contained in any deed, contract, security instrument, or other instrument affecting the transfer of, or any interest in, real property, and any provision of the common interest development (CID) governing documents, that effectively prohibit a substantially similar reconstruction of a residential structure that was damaged or destroyed in a disaster.
- 2) Defines "disaster" as any of the following:
 - a) A state of disaster or emergency declared by the federal government;
 - b) A state of emergency proclaimed by the Governor pursuant to Government Code Section (GOV) 8625; and
 - c) A local emergency proclaimed by a local governing body or official pursuant GOV 8630.
- 3) Defines "substantially similar reconstruction of a residential structure" as a proposal that rebuilds a residential structure on a separate interest located in a CID that complies with all of the following:
 - a) The local building code;
 - b) The interior livable square footage of the rebuilt residential structure will not exceed 110% of the square footage that existed when the structure was damaged or destroyed;
 - c) The exterior footprint of the rebuilt residential structure will meet either of the following:
 - i) The rebuilt residential structure will be constructed in the same location and to the same exterior dimensions as the structure that was damaged or destroyed; or
 - ii) The setbacks for the rebuilt residential structure will be at least four feet from the side and rear lot lines.
 - d) The height of the rebuilt residential structure will not exceed 110% of the height that existed when the residential structure was damaged or destroyed, or 100% of the height allowed by the governing documents of the association in effect at the time the proposal was submitted, whichever is greater; and

- e) Any objective design standard in effect at the time the original residential structure was destroyed or damaged in a disaster, provided that the standard does not unreasonably increase the cost to construct, effectively prohibit the construction of, or extinguish the ability to otherwise rebuild, a substantially similar residential structure.
- 4) Requires any CC&R contained in any deed, contract, security instrument, or other instrument affecting the transfer of, or any interest in, real property, and any provision of the CID governing documents, that subjects substantially similar reconstruction of a residential structure that was destroyed or damaged in a disaster, to be processed and approved in the following manner:
- a) Establishes the following timeline and standards for a review body to determine if an application is complete:
 - i) Requires a review body to notify an applicant whether their application is complete or incomplete within 30 calendar days;
 - ii) Requires a review body that determines that an application is incomplete to provide the applicant with a list of incomplete items and a description of how the application can be made complete;
 - iii) Authorizes an applicant to resubmit an application that a review body deemed incomplete, subject to the same timeline noted above, and prohibits a review body from requiring the applicant to include an item that was not identified as necessary at the time the original application was submitted; and
 - iv) Specifies that if a review body does not make a timely determination, an application shall be deemed complete.
 - b) Establishes the following timeline and standards for a review body to review a complete application:
 - i) Requires the review body to conduct its review of a complete application within 30 business days;
 - ii) Requires the review body that determines that a complete application is not compliant with the body's lawfully adopted standards to return in writing a full set of comments to the applicant with a comprehensive request for revisions;
 - iii) Requires the review body to approve a complete application if it determines that the application is compliant with the body's lawfully adopted standards;
 - iv) Requires a review body that determines that a complete application is not compliant with its lawfully adopted standards to provide the applicant with a list of items that are noncompliant, and a description of how the application can be remedied by the applicant;
 - v) Authorizes an applicant to resubmit an application that a review body deemed noncompliant and subjects the review to the same timeline noted above;

- vi) Requires the review body to provide an applicant with a process to appeal a decision in writing to the body; and
 - vii) Requires the review body to issue a decision on an appeal within 60 business days.
 - c) Provides that once a review body approves an application, the body shall not subject the applicant to any appeals or additional hearings; and
 - d) Provides that a court shall award reasonable attorney's fees to an applicant who prevails in an action to enforce this section.
- 5) Establishes a streamlined ministerial review process for housing developments that rebuild housing on property that was destroyed or damaged in a declared disaster. Specifically:
- a) Requires local agencies to approve a housing development application within 90 days of receipt, as specified, and prohibits local agencies from subjecting the proposal to a conditional use permit or discretionary review if the application demonstrates that the project complies with the following objective standards:
 - i) The housing development is located on a parcel on which a residential structure was destroyed or damaged in a disaster;
 - ii) The housing development, excluding any density bonus concessions, incentives, or waivers, is consistent with objective zoning, standards, objective subdivision standards, and objective design review standards in effect at the time the application is submitted;
 - iii) The housing development proponent owned the site of the proposed development on the date of the disaster;
 - iv) The development proponent complies with labor standards established for SB 35 developments;
 - v) The development is not on an existing parcel of land or site that is governed under Mobilehome Residency Law, Recreational Vehicle Park Occupancy Law, the Mobilehome Parks Act or the Special Occupancy Parks Act; and
 - vi) The development is not located within a historic district or property, as specified.
- 6) Prohibits local agencies in an area impacted by a disaster from enforcing an ordinance that precludes the placement and use of a manufactured home, mobilehome, or recreational vehicle on a private lot for use during the reconstruction or repair of any home any damaged or destroyed in a disaster for a period of three years following the disaster declaration.
- 7) Provides that this bill offers an optional streamlined, ministerial approval process, but does not affect the availability, applicability, or use of any other exemptions from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

COMMENTS

Eaton and Palisades Fires: On January 7, 2025, two devastating wildfires, the Palisades Fire and Eaton Fire, both ignited in Los Angeles County. The Palisades Fire began in the Santa Monica Mountains, rapidly spreading across over 23,000 acres and destroying over 6,800 structures, primarily in the Pacific Palisades community of the City of Los Angeles.¹ The Eaton Fire ignited in Eaton Canyon near Altadena, burning more than 14,000 acres, destroying over 9,400 structures.² Both fires were fully contained by January 31, 2025.

Executive Orders on Rebuilding: In response to the Palisades and Eaton fires, Governor Newsom issued four executive orders in January and February 2025 intended to help the Los Angeles region rebuild permanent housing quickly. Many of the actions in the executive orders are directly related to expediting the housing approvals process, and removing permitting barriers at the state and local levels.

This bill would codify and extend key elements of the Governor's executive orders by establishing a statutory, ministerial approval process for rebuilding homes destroyed in declared disasters, including provisions that waive local discretionary review, streamline permitting timelines, and allow reconstruction up to 110% of the prior structure's size, ensuring that these measures apply automatically in future disasters where housing is destroyed, without requiring new executive declaration and emergency measures each time.

This bill would further nullify any covenant, restriction, or other governing-document provision, including HOA rules, that prohibits or impedes substantially similar reconstruction of residential structures after a disaster, and would require courts to award reasonable attorney's fees to proponents who prevail in enforcing these rights. It sets strict review timelines for HOAs when reviewing requests to rebuild substantially similar residential structures, and provides that applications to rebuild shall be deemed complete if those timelines are missed. This bill also prohibits local ordinances from restricting homeowners' use of mobilehomes or Recreational vehicle (RVs) as temporary living quarters for up to three years following a disaster.

According to the Author

"California has a housing shortage of 2.5 million homes, and the Palisades and Eaton fires have added nearly 13,000 homes to that total. It is critical that we ensure a speedy recovery for Los Angeles, and any future disaster sites, in order to curb the ongoing displacement from an already painful housing crisis. SB 625 allows families to cut red tape—while maintaining appropriate adherence to safety standards—to expedite rebuilding these homes and communities. While Governor Newsome acted swiftly to support rebuilding efforts in Los Angeles, the increasing frequency of climate disasters makes it necessary to codify these actions for all future disasters."

Arguments in Support

The San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce writes in support: "the Chamber is laser-focused on supporting solutions to our region's housing crisis. Disasters throughout California, whether wildfires, earthquakes, flooding, or other events, create major challenges with rebuilding needed housing for our region and state's workforce. Emergencies and associated rebuilding only worsen the housing crisis facing California. SB 625 will help ensure that homes can be rebuilt

¹ <https://www.latimes.com/california/live/la-fire-updates-floods-mud-rain-closures-laguna-eaton-palisades>

² IBID.

quickly and ministerially following disasters, especially homes that are part of homeowners' associations or have been subject to certain covenants. By creating streamlined ministerial approval process and establishing timelines for homeowners' associations to review development proposals, this bill ensures that unnecessary red tape and oversight are not delaying Californians' ability to get back into their homes and recover from disaster."

Arguments in Opposition

None on file for current bill version.

FISCAL COMMENTS

Local costs to cities and counties to meet the new streamlined permitting and other requirements in this bill are not reimbursable by the state because local agencies have general authority to charge and adjust planning and permitting fees to cover their administrative expenses associated with new planning mandates.

VOTES

SENATE FLOOR: 39-0-1

YES: Allen, Alvarado-Gil, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Choi, Cortese, Dahle, Durazo, Gonzalez, Grayson, Grove, Hurtado, Jones, Laird, Limón, McGuire, McNeerney, Menjivar, Niello, Ochoa Bogh, Padilla, Pérez, Richardson, Rubio, Seyarto, Smallwood-Cuevas, Stern, Strickland, Umberg, Valladares, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener

ABS, ABST OR NV: Reyes

ASM HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: 12-0-0

YES: Haney, Patterson, Ávila Farías, Ward, Garcia, Kalra, Lee, Quirk-Silva, Ta, Tangipa, Wicks, Wilson

ASM JUDICIARY: 12-0-0

YES: Kalra, Dixon, Bauer-Kahan, Bryan, Connolly, Harabedian, Macedo, Pacheco, Papan, Sanchez, Stefani, Zbur

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 15-0-0

YES: Wicks, Arambula, Calderon, Caloza, Dixon, Elhawary, Fong, Mark González, Hart, Pacheco, Pellerin, Jeff Gonzalez, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

UPDATED

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CONSULTANT: Dori Ganetsos / H. & C.D. / (916) 319-2085

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