Fire-Safe Permitting on Crane Boulevard

Board of the Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety (LADBS) on appeal BF 260043



VANC – Valley Alliance of Neighborhood Councils · November 12, 2026

Mark Kenyon

Resident of Mt. Washington · Northeast LA Community Plan Area · Arroyo Seco Neighborhood Council

- **Community land use and environmental leader since 1980s**
- **Open space and tree advocate**
  Helped amend the City's protected tree and shrub ordinance
- **Executive Director at North East Trees from 2011 to 2023**
- **President of the Crane Boulevard Safety Coalition**

Topics for discussion

- **State Fire Safe Regulations**
- **Crane Blvd. LADBS Appeal**
- **Other Community Actions**



State law requires fire-safe review

Since July 1, 2021, new construction in Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones (VHFHSZs) must meet the State Minimum Fire Safe Regulations:

- **Road width:** two 10-foot travel lanes
- **Road grade:** 16% max, 20% with mitigation
- **Turning radius:** 50-foot minimum
- **Setbacks:** 30 feet from lines and road
- **CAL FIRE notice:** before the permit issues
- **Exceptions:** allowed only if the alternative is equally safe

The City already committed to this

- 2025 General Plan Safety Element
- 2024 Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, filed with FEMA

Public Resources Code § 4290 · 14 CCR § 1270 et seq.

Why these rules now reach Los Angeles

2018 Camp Fire, Paradise

85 people killed

7+ died in cars stuck on the road out

A similar fire on Crane Boulevard is the risk these rules exist to prevent.

1991

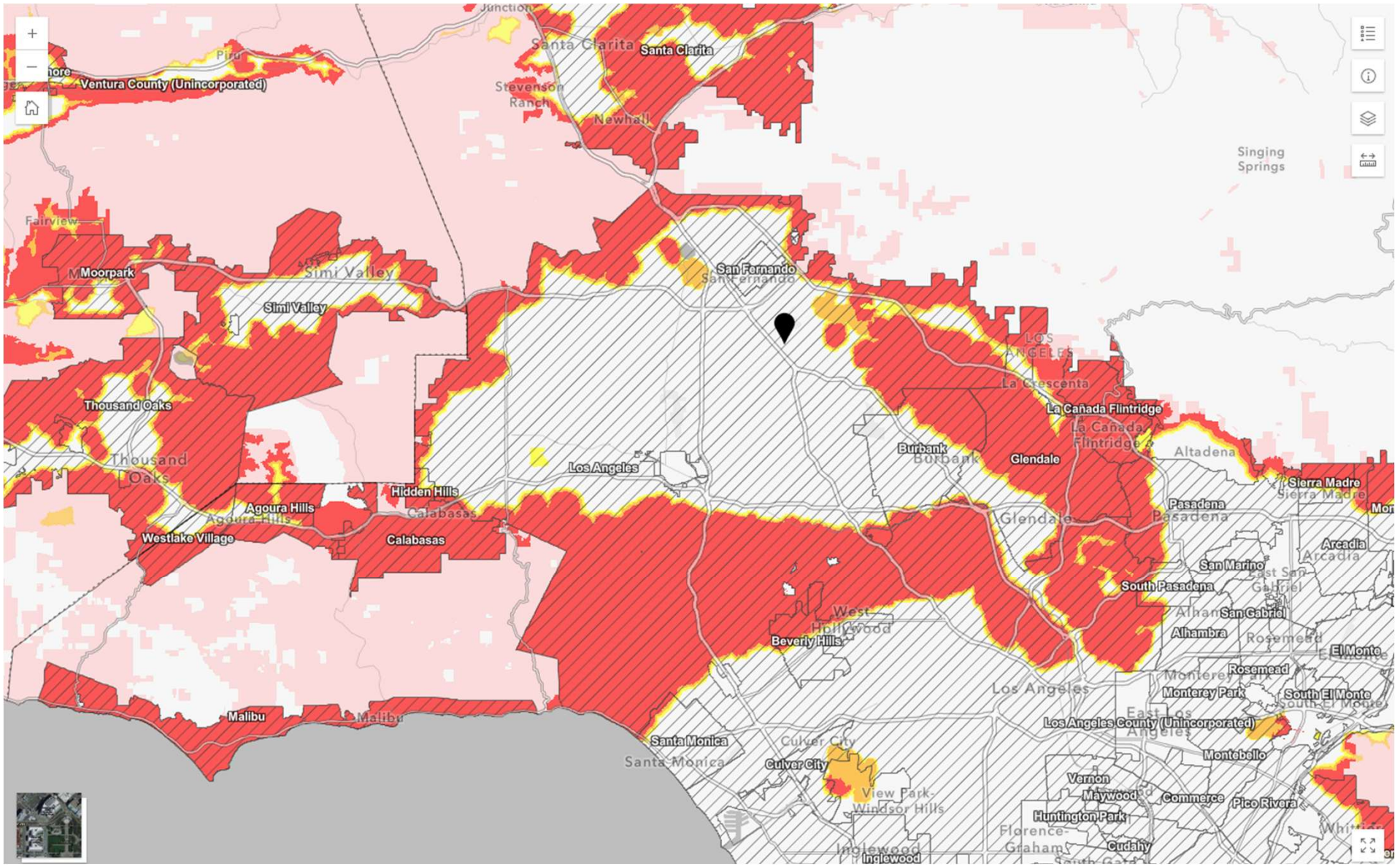
First Fire Safe Regulations: roads, grade, width, turning radius, signs, water, fuel modification, and setbacks. Rural state lands only.

2018

Senate Bill 901 directs the state to extend them to Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones inside cities.

July 1, 2021

The regulations apply to new construction in the City of Los Angeles by operation of state law.


Ventura County (Unincorporated)
Santa Clarita
Stevenson Ranch
Newhall
Singing Springs
Fairview
Moorpark
Simi Valley
San Fernando
Thousand Oaks
La Crescenta
La Cañada Flintridge
Burbank
Glendale
Los Angeles
Hidden Hills
Agoura Hills
Calabasas
Westlake Village
Altadena
Sierra Madre
Pasadena
Arcadia
San Marino
South Pasadena
San Gabriel
Alhambra
El Monte
Rosemead
Monterey Park
South El Monte
Los Angeles County (Unincorporated)
Montebello
Beverly Hills
West Hollywood
Malibu
Santa Monica
Culver City
Vernon
Maywood
Commerce
Pico Rivera
Huntington Park
Florence-Graham
Inglewood
Cudahy

How fire-safe review is supposed to work

1. Notify CAL FIRE

of every permit application for new construction in a VHFHSZ

§ 1270.04(a)

2. CAL FIRE may review

and recommend fire protection conditions

§ 1270.04(b)

3. Make them conditions

of the permit, so the standards are enforceable

§ 1270.04(c)

If a project can't meet a standard

The City may grant a written, case-by-case exception, with CAL FIRE notice, only if alternatives give the "Same Practical Effect": fire engine access, safe evacuation, signs, water, and fuel modification. Without a valid exception, the permit can't issue.

2021–2023: the City knew, and waited

May 27, 2021

LADBS report to a Council committee cites the regulations, but asks for no program to apply them

July 1, 2021

The regulations take effect in the City's Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones

May 15, 2023

Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy warns Planning and LADBS that permits don't comply. No reply

October 2023

Ordinance 187994 adopts the rule in one sentence. No CAL FIRE notice or exception process

More than two years from the deadline to a one-sentence adoption, with no process to carry it out.

2024–2026: promises, not a program

2024

Hazard plan filed with FEMA promises to "ensure compliance"

Jan. 7, 2025

Palisades and Eaton fires: at least 31 killed

October 2025

Safety Element Policy 1.1.6 promises compliance again

Jan. 1, 2026

WUI Code in effect. LADBS checklist skips road standards

Feb. 2026

Council orders a WUI ordinance. Not yet returned

Also May 2025: Council orders an ordinance for the new fire hazard maps. Not yet returned.

The City promised FEMA it would comply

2024 Local Hazard Mitigation Plan

Filed with FEMA and the Governor's Office of Emergency Services. Table 32-10 lists, as a wildfire mitigation measure:

"Ensure compliance with the state minimum fire-safe regulations."

Federal money depends on it
An approved plan is required for FEMA mitigation grants and disaster recovery funds.

No program behind the promise
No CAL FIRE notice, no exception process, and permits issued without review.

Then came January 2025
The Palisades and Eaton fires struck months after the plan was filed.

What is still missing in 2026

No CAL FIRE notice process
No form, no checklist, no unit assigned to send notices

No exception process
No official, application, public notice, records, or criteria

A checklist for buildings, not roads
Skips road width, grade, and turning radius entirely

Setbacks assumed waived
No documented finding that alternatives are equally safe

The "existing road" argument

The City has treated new homes on existing streets as exempt. The state Attorney General (2019), the Board of Forestry (2020), and the regulations' 2022 Statement of Reasons all say the rules still apply.

464–466 Crane skipped that review

A new three-story residence in Mount Washington

7

permits issued

building, grading, and shoring

0

CAL FIRE notices

and no documented compliance review

13 ft

turning radius

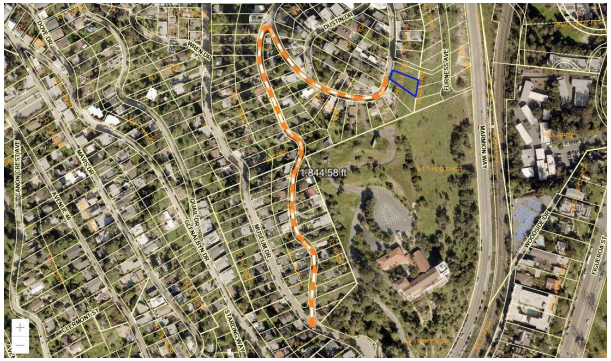
on Crane just downhill; 50 ft required

>20%

road grades

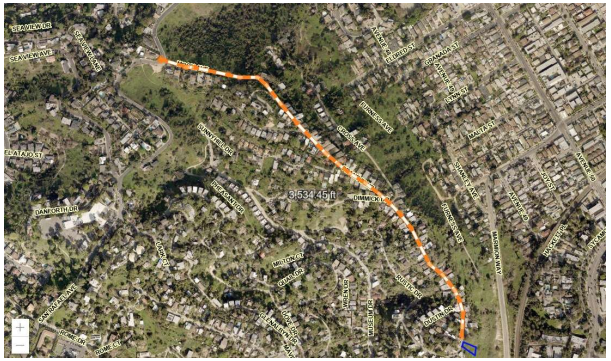
on evacuation routes; 16% is the limit

Every way out is a long, steep, narrow road



1,845 ft

Downhill on Crane to Museum Drive



3,534 ft

Uphill on Crane to Moon Drive

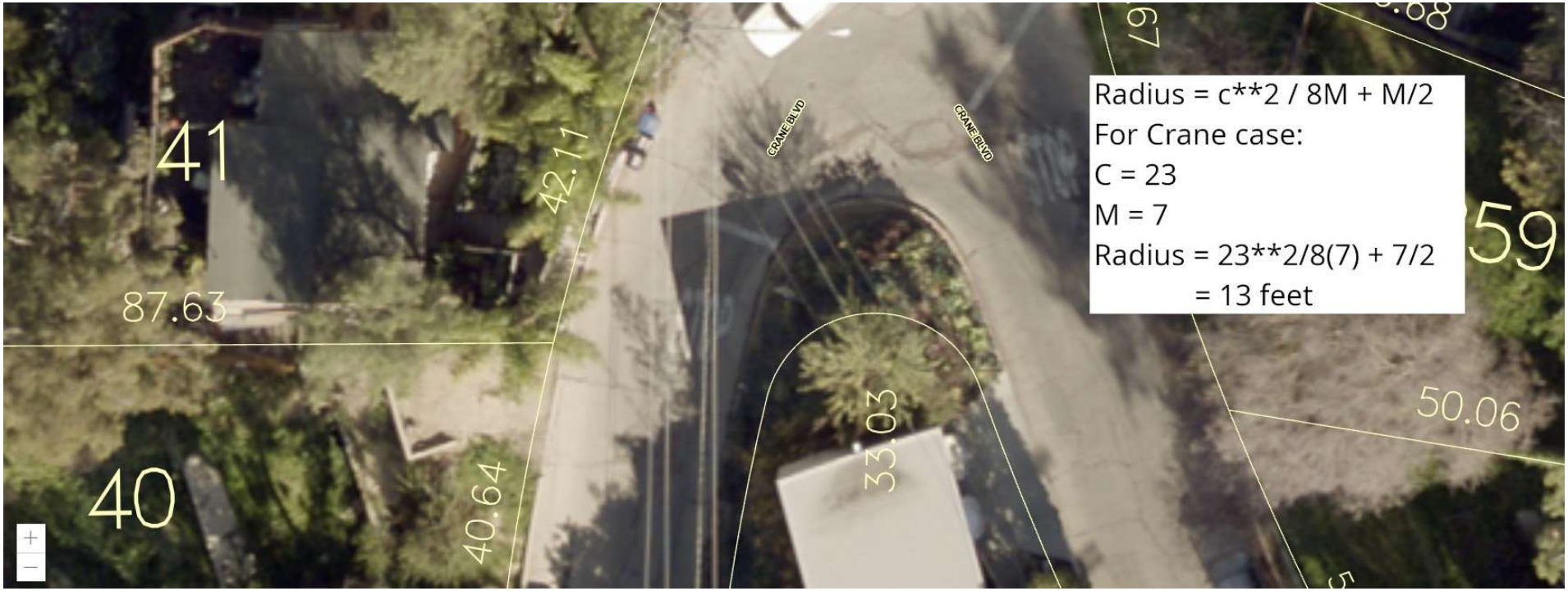


4,301 ft

Crane and Rustic Drive to Museum Drive

Route distances measured in the City's ZIMAS mapping tool, from the appeal.

A 13-foot curve where 50 feet is required



Turning radius at 400 Crane, on the main route downhill. Chord and middle-ordinate method using ZIMAS dimensions. State minimum: 50 feet (§ 1273.04).

17.5 to 20 feet wide, with parking allowed

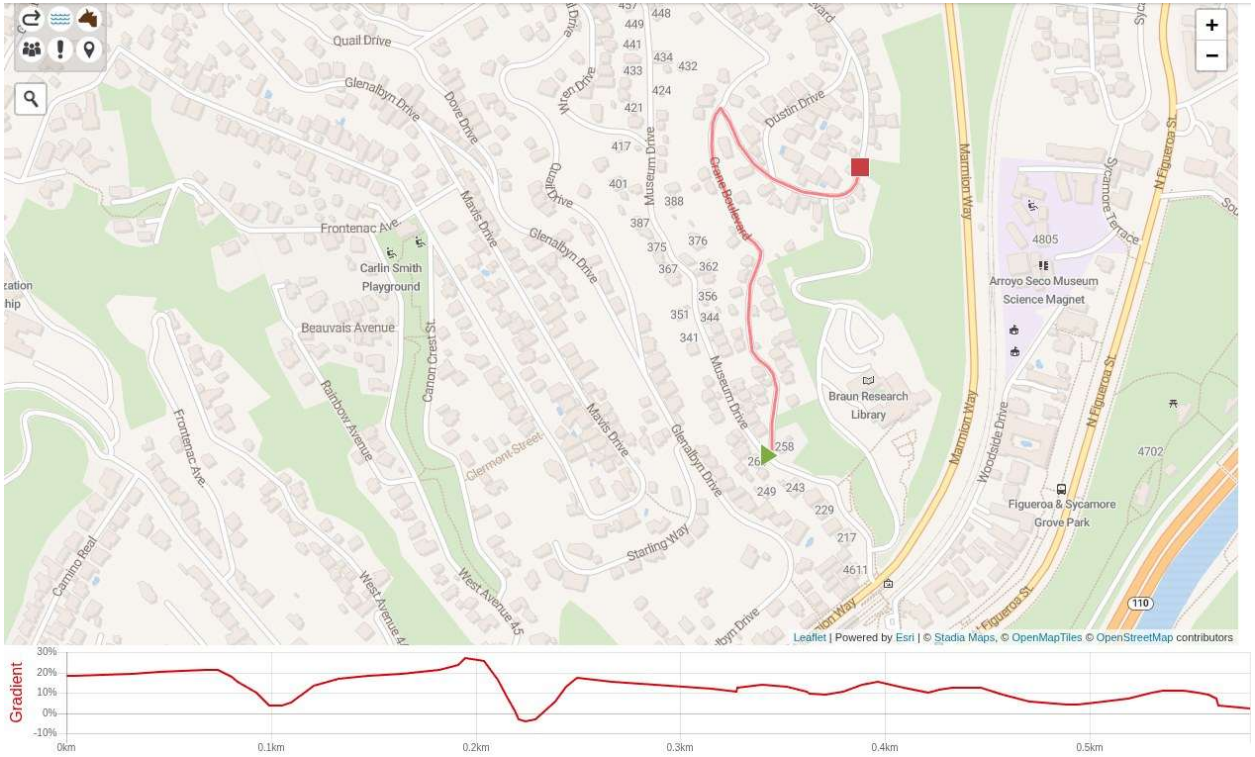


19.9 ft

curb to curb in front of the site

Two 10-foot lanes are required (§ 1273.01). With cars parked, one lane is left.

Grades above the state limit



>20%

on Crane between the site and Museum Drive

The limit is 16%, or 20% with approval and mitigation (§ 1273.03).

Elevation profile: Mapometer.com

This is a pattern, not one project

75 similar approvals citywide

12 in Mount Washington and Glassell Park

January 2025

The Palisades and Eaton fires killed at least 31 people and destroyed about 16,000 structures. Narrow, steep streets that gridlock are the danger.

Approvals issued without fire-safe review, according to research.

Other Community Actions

City Council Granted Appeals and Ordered a Study of Fire-Regulation Compliance

4230 North Saltillo Street
2166 and 2172 North Stanley Hills Drive

East Area Planning Commission

Continued hearing at 4849 – 4853 North Mount Royal Drive

City Council delegated issue to LADBS

1236 North Cliff Drive

Planning, LADBS, CEQA and who is in charge

Planning says – LADBS is in charge
LADBS says – Who us?!
CEQA is skipped

Other Community Actions

East Los Angeles Area Planning Commission Appeal

481 Quail Dr., Mt Washington

Hillside Federation v City of Los Angeles

Lawsuit specifically targeting lack of enforcement of Fires Safe Reg.

Crane Blvd. Coalition v City of Los Angeles

Lawsuit targeting City Patterns and Practices on Fair Hearings, Due Process, MWGP Specific Plan

Crane Blvd. Coalition v City of Los Angeles

- **Due Process and Fair Hearings**
- **Pre-PLUM secret meetings – decisions are disclosed and shared. Secret reports. Secret scripts**
- **Secret communications by Google Chat and Texts - deleted**
- **>98% of the time when a local CM's desire is known the Council adopts that decision. >85% with no deliberation**

Land-use appeal fees are going up ten-fold

Council File 09-0969-S4: fee increase for residents who appeal City land-use decisions

No public participation
Routed through a council file titled as an annual inflation adjustment

No time for neighborhood councils
Only three impact statements, all opposed, all filed in the final days

Over ten times the fee
$2,860 per appeal with surcharges; over $5,000 to reach City Council

Prices out communities, blocks the courts
Residents must appeal before they can sue

Negligible impact on the City budget
Saves the City about $254,000 a year

One more vote to come

The City Council backed the increase on November 10. It comes back one more time.

Write to the City Council and attend the hearing to get this decision changed.

Join Our Bucket Brigade

Five Minutes Is All It Takes

1. **Learn more by watching and sharing our short video.**
   www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Tc4Ms3Fv4E
2. **Sign our petition.**
   actionnetwork.org/petitions/protect-la-hillside-communities-revoke-illegal-permits-enforce-state-fire-code
3. **Send an easy-click letter to the City Council and the Board of Building and Safety Commissioners to help demand action.**
   actionnetwork.org/letters/protect-la-hillside-communities-revoke-illegal-permits-enforce-state-fire-safe-code
4. **Read our appeal to LADBS.**
   craneblvdcoalition.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/cbsc-ladbs_board_appeal.pdf
5. **Share this with a reporter you know.**
6. **Support our lawsuit and LADBS appeal with a $5 or $10 donation.**
   www.zeffy.com/en-US/donation-form/help-crane-blvd-safety-coalition-cbsc-hold-the-city-accountable-and-protect-los-angeles-communities

For more information: www.craneblvdcoalition.com