

Defensible Space—what you need to know and do..NOW

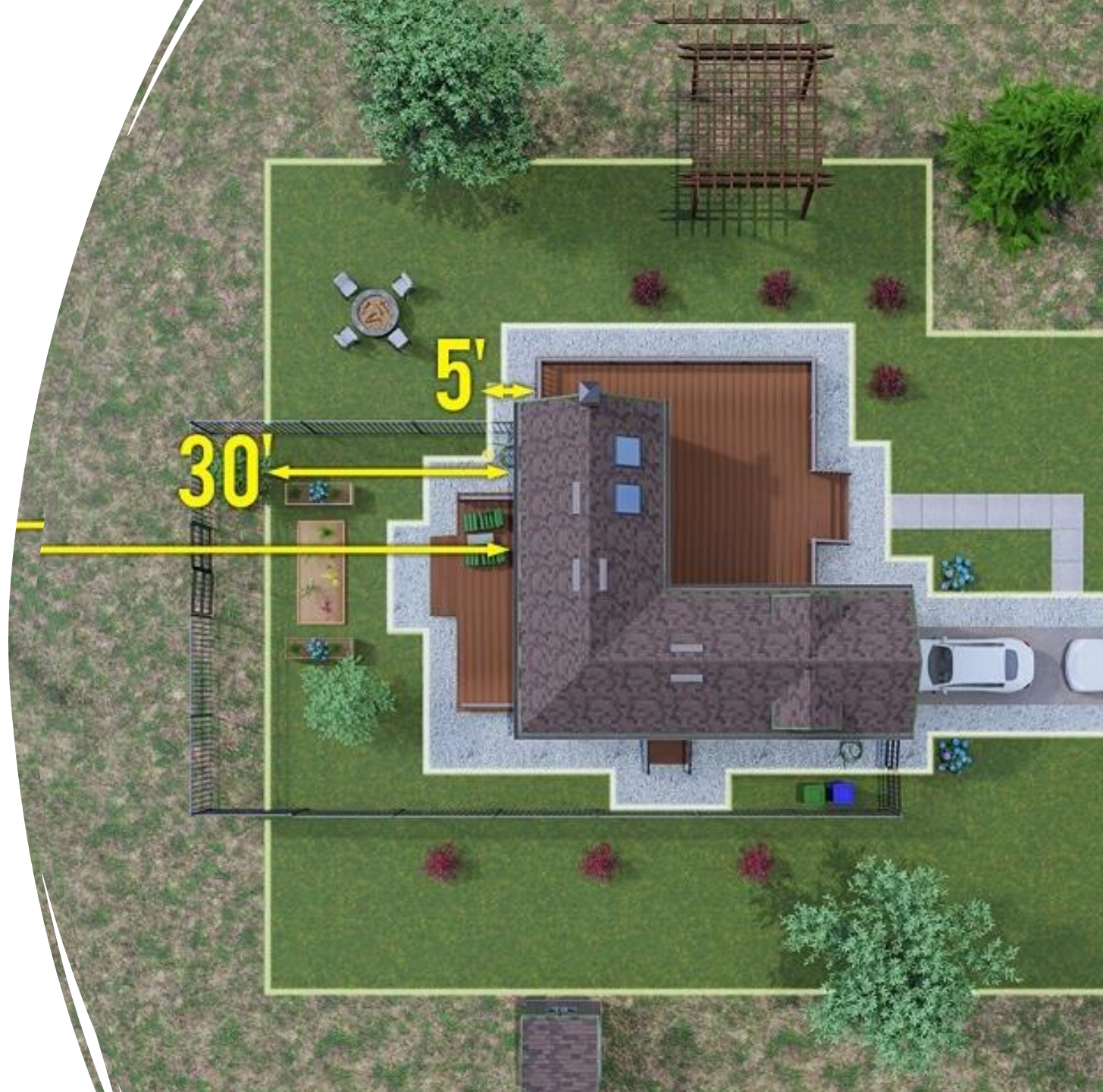
AB3074/SB504

Legislation

- For decades CA Law required homeowners to maintain 100 feet of defensible space (200 ft/Los Angeles) around structures requiring clearing of dead debris and thinning of vegetation.
- AB3074 passed in 2020 to add more clearance requirements in high fire areas introducing zones with the most intense 30 feet from home/structures.
- Zones conceived with the **original** goal of ember resistance.
- Working Group of Insurance, Cal-Fire and Bureau of Forestry convened to **formulate** rules to then be provided to State Fire Marshall. (Hosted April 7th All Day Workshop)
- We now have mandates rather than guidelines carrying legal ramifications.

Defensible Space Zones

- AB3074 (Amended Nov 2020) set out concept of zones for fire safety.
- Zone 0—area five feet (maybe extended to ten feet) around perimeter.
- Zone 1—area reaching to 30 feet around perimeter.

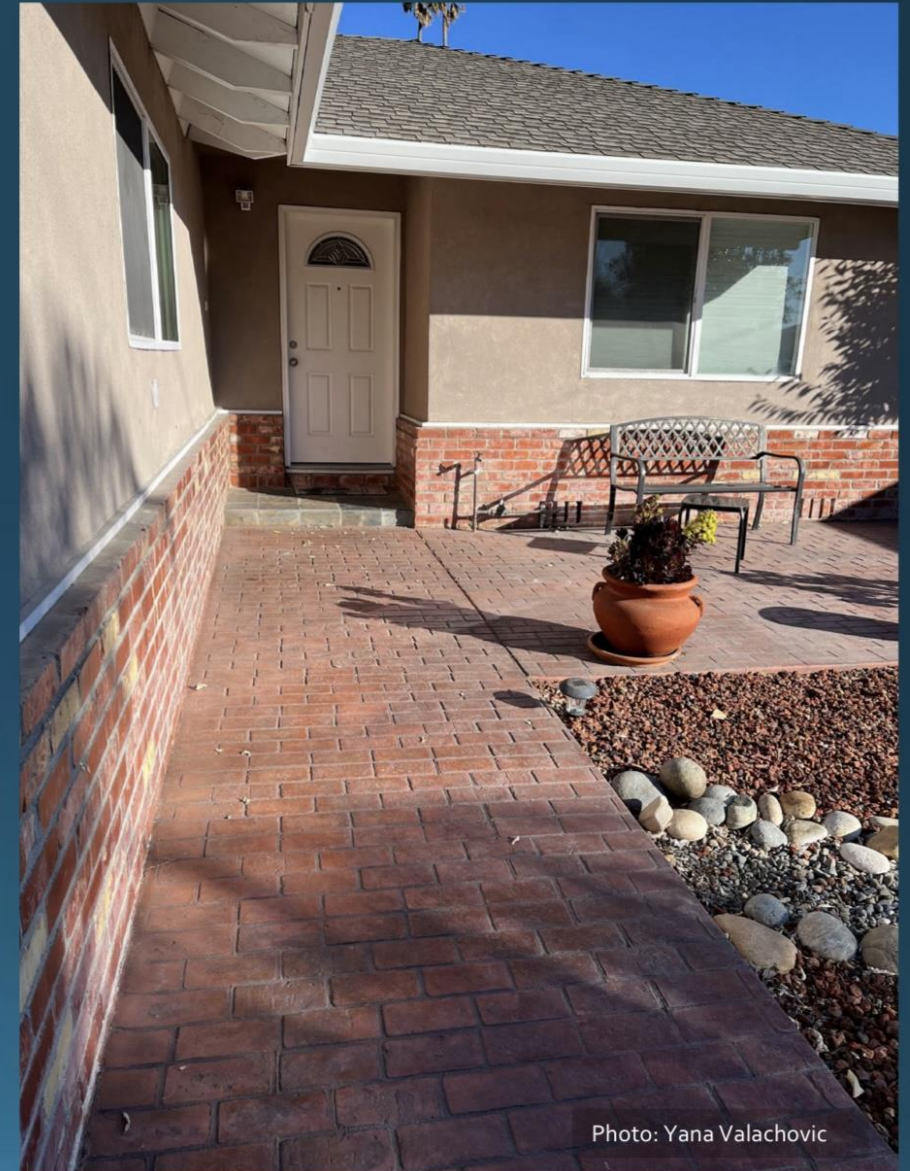


Zone Zero (April 7th workshop) becoming more radical as we near implementation....

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Zone o Draft

- **Trees:** Allows the bole of mature trees that meet Zone 1 standards-- branches above the roof lines, away from the chimney, no ladder fuels (live or dead branches within 5 feet of the sides of the structure)
- **Pots:** noncombustible, < 5 gallons, plants limited to 18 inches in height.
- **Gates/fences:** Mandates that the 5 feet that connect to the house be of a noncombustible material. Upgrade the fence, upon replacement, in Zone o.
- **Outbuildings within Zone o:** Recommend moving all small buildings, but if impossible, the exterior should meet 7A requirements
- **Ground coverings:** Gravel, rocks, pavers, stone, cement, bare mineral soil
- Look at minor changes to Zone 1 to help **harmonize between Zone 1 and 2**



Zone 1

- Extends from 5-30 feet around perimeter.
- Proposal that plants be of limited height 2 feet and in clusters spaced 18 feet apart.
- Any trees allowed must have a minimum of ten feet of space between canopy.
- Near certain elimination of privacy hedges.



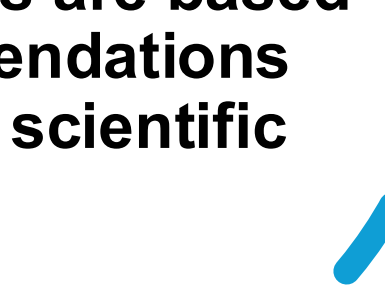
Problem: The Real Fuel for the Fires are the Structures NOT the Plants

- Vegetation around homes had no impact on Palisades fire yet we are going to be forced to remove substantially all the greenery (privacy, security, aesthetics) around our homes.
- Need Plants to Slow Fire. Plants slow down flying embers—source of urban fire spread.
- HOMES Burn—NOT PLANTS



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The Science Agrees:

- **“Once the fire was in Palisades, the structures were the fuel” (Keeley)**
 - **Although the term ‘clearance’ is often used interchangeably with defensible space, this term is incorrect when misinterpreted to mean clearing all vegetation, and our results underline this difference. (Keeley/Syphard)**
 - **Most spacing guidelines and laws are based on “expert” opinions or recommendations from older publications that lack scientific expertise or rationale. (Syphard/Brennan/Keeley)**
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Grave Concerns with Implementation and Consequences to Brentwood

- Great Loss of Urban Canopy: Brentwood will lose 40% of green cover (trees, shrubs)—slopes destabilized.
- Extreme loss of nature and habitat.
- Vegetation Can Mitigate Fire: Plants/Trees can sequester flying embers. Denuding landscape counter-productive.
- Not Informed by Science: Group writing definitive legislation not informed by the seminal fire science. Clear from April 7th workshop.
- Closely Spaced Homes Greatest Threat: We know from Jon Keeley PhD
- Very Harsh Penalties for Non-Compliance: Rules very punitive to homeowners. allow the government to come in to your private property to forcibly remove plants and trees. “State Fire Marshall may prescribe procedure for removal of vegetation and make expense a lien on property.
- Huge loss of privacy—hotter homes, expensive clearance and retrofitting. Homes less desirable and enjoyable.
- AB3074 amended Nov 2020 to bring rules online for existing structures ONE YEAR (not three) from implementation of rules for new structures.

More Consequences

- No opportunity to tailor rules for structure type, materials, vegetation as originally set out in AB3074.
- Once rules are in effect for zones, they may only be made MORE extreme on a local level, not more lenient. (Berkeley)
- New Schiff grants for fire modification are income restricted.
- Environmentally reckless.
- DRACONIAN and NOT MAKING US SAFER

Legislation Being Formulated—Comment Now

- April 7th Day Long Workshop
- Presentations
- Limited Q &A
- Clear that rules are becoming more stringent (as allowed by law) rather than less
- Desire for “one size fits all” for ease of enforcement.
- Insurance Company at the table drafting rules
- NO environmental impact report (EIR) done on impact of legislation.

Next Steps





OUR FUTURE??

APRIL 7, 2025 Working Group Presentation—Suggested Implementation

Send Comments/Get Updates:

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