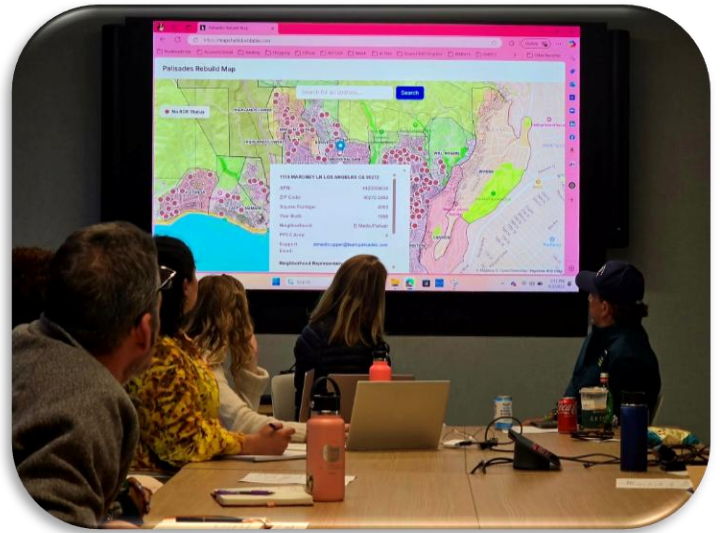


AFTER THE FIRE

RECOVER. REBUILD. REIMAGINE.™

Los Angeles Megafire Recovery January–April 2025



Brief: Q1

Submitted: April 21, 2025



Contents

Letter to the Los Angeles Community..... 3

Purpose of After the Fire USA Deployments to Los Angeles 4

Delegations: Fire Survivors Supporting Fire Survivors..... 5

Meeting the Needs of Los Angeles 7

 By the numbers: 8

 Supporting the Department of Angels 8

 Webinars (selected) 8

Who We've Met (Selected)..... 9

Observations..... 11

In Gratitude 13

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**EMPOWERING
COMMUNITIES TO
NAVIGATE THE ERA OF
MEGAFIRES**



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EIN/TAX ID: 82-3266893

Letter to the Los Angeles Community

Since January 2025, After the Fire USA has been working with you—residents, organizers, leaders, neighbors—to recover and rebuild after the devastating megafires. Most of our team are fire survivors too, and we show up not to lead, but to walk beside you. You're not alone, and you don't have to figure it all out by yourselves.

Our delegations—made up of people who've lived through wildfires in places like Paradise, Santa Rosa, and Maui—come to listen, support, coach, and share what's worked elsewhere. We bring lessons, but we also learn from you. This isn't about charity. It's about community.

We've been especially proud to support the creation of **Block Captain networks** in both Palisades and Eaton, standing up systems that help residents coordinate, communicate, and care for one another. These efforts are already making a real difference.

After the Fire USA has been able to work alongside the extraordinary people in Los Angeles who are recovering and rebuilding from the Palisades and Eaton Fires. We have supported community organizations, provided coaching, offered policy and planning support, and amplified the strength of local leadership across neighborhoods and networks. We have brought dozens of

fire survivors and subject matter experts to the Eaton and Pacific Palisades fire communities every single month as well as provide hundreds of hours of staff time.

We align strongly with Los Angeles' commitment for sustained, equitable recovery approaches that evolve over time.

We hope this brief reflects not only the impact of your work in the community, but also the shared values and vision that guide our work.

With deep respect and partnership,

Jennifer Gray Thompson
 Founder & CEO, After the Fire USA



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Purpose of After the Fire USA Deployments to Los Angeles

Between January and April 2025, After the Fire USA CEO Jennifer Gray Thompson led three delegations to Los Angeles to discuss post-disaster recovery strategies and provide support to communities affected by the Palisades and Eaton Fires. These visits occurred in the crucial early months of recovery, offering experienced guidance while allowing local communities space to assess immediate needs and priorities.

We will continue to bring delegations to Los Angeles monthly. We are mindful to split our time and efforts between the fire communities and bridge relationships whenever possible. Indeed, these communities are sisters that will rise together.

The goal of these deployments is to learn from survivors, share insights from previous megafires, and support residents, local leaders, and organizations as they navigate the complexities of rebuilding. By uniting experts and fire survivors from past disasters, After the Fire USA aims to foster cross-community leadership, build meaningful relationships, and offer models that help residents not just recover—but reimagine their future. Delegations are the single most important activity of our work. We build relationships and envelope newly megafire-affected communities into our terrible club full of the absolute best humans.

Disaster recovery is a multi-year process. The communities of Los Angeles face steep rebuilding challenges, and After the Fire USA is committed to walking beside them with long-term support and best practices earned through lived experience.

We are optimistic for the Megafire Communities, Eaton and Palisades, to not only recover, but also to innovate in ways we have not seen in previous megafires. We expect these communities will showcase what is possible, what is insurable, what is beautiful, and what is equitable after disaster. Los Angeles is a land of doers, makers, creators, characters, leaders.

We caution strongly to only compete against the disaster and not each other. Cooperation, collaboration, and communication are the foundational actions of every recovery. A final C? *Curiosity.* Imagine what is possible and aim for the absolute best outcome: neighborhoods and lives rebuilt; relationships thriving; resiliency built in and hard-won.

Our job is to teach you about megafire disasters as we walk alongside you for the long-term before we will ask you to come with us to the next fire. Unfortunately, there is always another one. We know firsthand you are never the same after a megafire. We also know from experience you can – and often are -- be better, stronger, safer, and closer than before the fire.

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Delegations: Fire Survivors Supporting Fire Survivors

| Name | Title & Affiliation | Lived Fire Experience |
|------------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| Jennifer Gray Thompson | CEO, After the Fire USA | North Bay Fires 2017–2020 |
| Reva Feldman | Emergency Manager Consultant: City Manager (ret), Malibu | Woolsey Fire 2018 |
| Natalie Minuzzo | Executive Assistant & Coordinator, ATF USA | |
| Jenn Kaoush | Co-Founder, Superior Rising; Town Trustee; Army Veteran | Marshall Fire 2021 |
| Brad Sherwood | Asst. GM, Sonoma Water; Founder, Larkfield Rising | Tubbs Fire 2017 |
| Valerie Brown | Vice Chair, California VOAD; SBP Fellow | Witch Creek Fire 2007 |
| Josiah Nishita | Managing Director, County of Maui | Maui Fires 2023 |
| Chris Smith | Director, Disaster Housing, IEM | National Response |
| Tim Carpenter | Director, Recovery & Resilience, Fannie Mae | |
| Sidra Goldwater | Advisor, Disaster Recovery, Fannie Mae | |
| Casey Taylor | Superintendent & Founder, Achieve Charter Schools | Camp Fire 2018 |
| Maddie Pennie | Sr. Manager of Development, Good360 | |
| Melissa Baurer | Health Director, Santiam Hospital | Santiam Canyon Fire 2020 |
| Dr. Adrienne Heinz | Scientist, VA/Stanford | Tubbs, Kincade, Walbridge Fires |
| Mike Holdner | Engineer, Keysight Technologies | Tubbs Fire 2017 |
| Nicole Huguenin | Co-Director, Maui Rapid Response | Maui Fire 2023 |
| Paul Lowenthal | Fire Marshal, City of Santa Rosa | Tubbs Fire 2017 |
| Jeff Okrepkie | Council Member; Founder, Coffey Strong | Tubbs Fire 2017 |
| Reina Pomeroy | Sr. Director of Community, Good Inside | Marshall Fire 2021 |
| Margaret Van Vliet | Principal, Trillium Advisors | Housing Recovery |
| Katie Arrington | Resiliency Manager, Boulder County | Marshall Fire 2021 |
| Lorez Bailey | Consultant, Lorez Bailey Consulting | North Bay Fires 2017–2020 |
| Steve Rahmn | COO, Firebrand Electric | Tubbs Fire 2017 |



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Scope of Support Provided

“The people. It is always about and by the people.” — Josiah Nishita, Maui Fires

Since January 7, 2025, After the Fire USA has collaborated closely with leaders and residents across the Palisades and Eaton Fire zones. Our approach has focused on trust-based coaching, cross-sector convenings, and alignment of local efforts with lessons learned from over 15 past megafire recoveries.

We supported the launch and coaching of two comprehensive block captain networks—one for each fire—alongside the Department of Angels and neighborhood leaders. These block captains are embedded in the fabric of their communities and have become vital nodes of communication, coordination, and survivor advocacy. They help share accurate information, surface neighborhood-level needs, verify local conditions, and support civic transparency. We have brought experienced block captains from the 2017 Tubbs Fire (Sonoma County) to every delegation to provide lived experience.

We have also worked in **direct consultation** with local clergy, nonprofit hubs, mental health practitioners, school district leaders, and emergent organizers—offering one-on-one guidance, templates from past fires, policy briefings, and strategic introductions. We’ve supported **coordination** across groups and helped reduce duplicative efforts, **always centering the lived experience of fire survivors in every decision.**

In addition to community support, we’ve regularly briefed philanthropic leaders and funders to ensure alignment between evolving needs on the ground and funding strategies designed for equity and impact.

Since January 7, 2025, After the Fire USA has worked side-by-side with fire survivors, organizers, and civic leaders across Los Angeles. As the Palisades and Eaton Fire zones entered their earliest days of recovery, we stepped in quietly, with humility and experience—not to lead, but to walk beside.

“The LTRG, block captains, and the city planning meetings are bright spots. Fund and support them.” — Casey Taylor, Camp Fire



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Meeting the Needs of Los Angeles

In response to the scope and complexity of recovery across these urban megafire zones, we have expanded our capacity in Los Angeles. The generous support of our donors made it possible for us to assign a **Strategic Advisor**, a **Recovery Coordinator**, and a **Community Outreach Coordinator** to focus on Los Angeles. Each of these roles supports alignment, communication, and culturally informed collaboration in service of the residents leading their own recovery.

Critically important, robust philanthropic support has gone toward **underwriting our volunteer delegation program** and sustaining the infrastructure needed to deploy it effectively. Delegation members—many of them fire survivors themselves—offered expertise across housing, insurance, trauma, equity, governance, emergency response, and philanthropy. Each visit was backed by our full-time team and the partnerships that make high-impact recovery coaching possible.

We have supported and helped shape **two comprehensive block captain networks**, one for each fire. These efforts were led by residents and the **Department of Angels** and have grown into critical organizing systems that reflect survivor voice and local accountability.

“Meeting with survivors and sharing examples of what has worked was the most rewarding part.” — Steve Rahmn, Tubbs Fire

Our work has always centered around one goal: ensure that the people doing the most important work—neighbors helping neighbors—feel seen, supported, and sustained.



VALUES

LISTEN first: “What do you need and how can we help?”

Serve the community in FRONT of you

Lean into LEARNING, ADAPTING, INNOVATING

Act with integrity ALWAYS

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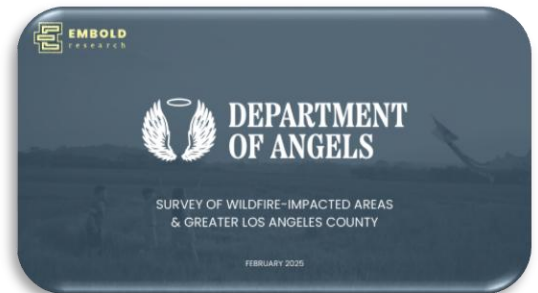
By the numbers:

- Held over 700 meetings with public officials, community groups, funders, and residents
- Coached and advised two major block captain efforts (Palisades and Eaton Fires)
- Hosted 25+ public and private webinars
- Offered 1:1 support to clergy and grassroots leaders
- Regularly briefed philanthropic funders
- Drafted and reviewed policy memos
- Participated in technical working groups and disaster finance advisory sessions
- Helped interpret and translate acronyms and processes for public use



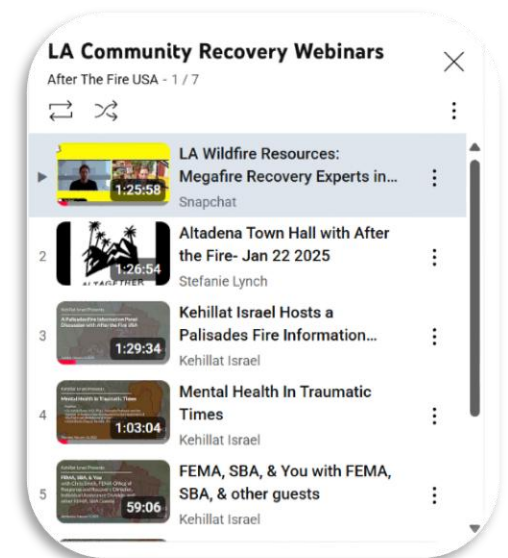
Supporting the Department of Angels

- Provided strategic coaching to support Department of Angels' vision
- Advised on block captain system design
- Participated in Finance, Insurance, and Communications working groups
- Supported relationship-building between orgs and civic institutions



Webinars (selected)

- LA Wildfire Resources: Megafire Recovery Experts (Snapchat, 1:25:58)
- Altadena Town Hall (Stefanie Lynch, 1:26:54)
- Palisades Fire Panel (Kehillat Israel, 1:29:34)
- Mental Health in Traumatic Times (Kehillat Israel, 1:03:04)
- FEMA, SBA, & You (Multi-agency, 59:06)
- Navigating Financial Decisions (Kehillat Israel, 1:01:35)
- The Road Ahead: Survivor Stories (Essie Justice Group, 1:16:50)



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Who We've Met (Selected)

Below is a selected list of community groups and leaders we have met with directly and/or in larger groups. By no means is this list comprehensive but instead meant to offer insight into our process.

We are very intentional about how and when we enter a community after a megafire. It is with a deep sense of compassion combined with curiosity that allows us to delve deeply into the fabric of leadership, both official and emergent, and learn the language of the people. Every community is different even as certain aspects of all megafires are the same. We are committed to serving the community in front of us – something we learned during the fires firsthand. Strong, kind, flexible, ethical leadership is at the core of who we are and determines who we bring to your community, and who we align with moving forward.

Every recovery is predicated upon the pre-existing conditions in that community. We listen and then we develop our approach to meet the people where they are as opposed to what we want them to be. This is an important distinction and a differentiator born of our own lived experiences as disaster survivors. We know this terrible thing has just been done TO the people; our work is to do things FOR the people. Emotional intelligence is as important as technical knowledge.

| | |
|---|---|
| - Department of Angels | - Ethos Giving |
| - My Tribe Rise | - Annenberg Foundation |
| - Malibu Boys & Girls Club | - Wonderful Foundation |
| - Palisades Wildfire Community Center | - Philanthropic Briefing (large group) |
| - Altadena Rising | - LAUSD Recovery Team |
| - PostFire | - NASA JPL |
| - Altagether | - UCLA Luskin School |
| - Neighborhood Housing Services of LA | - FEMA + CalOES |
| - Kehillat Israel | - Fannie Mae |
| - Clergy Community Coalition | - City of Los Angeles leadership |
| - Essie Justice Group | - Office of Mayor Karen Bass |
| - Foothill Unity Center | - Office of Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin |
| - Block Captains: Palisades and Eaton Fires | - Office of Senator Ben Allen |
| - Black Community Leaders Support | - Office of Senator Adam Schiff |
| - California Community Foundation | - Eaton Fire Collaborative |
| - Ballmer Group | - SnapChat, Inc. |
| - Parsons Foundation | - Assemblyman John Harabedian |

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“The Essie Justice Group space was sacred. They are closer than others to doing this equitably.” — Valerie Brown, Partial Loss, Witch Creek Fire, 2007

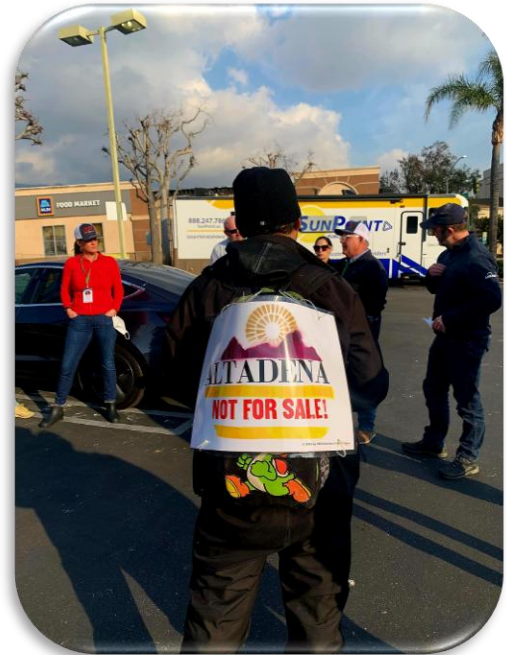


Observations

The pathway to a faster, more equitable, and more resilient rebuild in Los Angeles is this central tenet: Listen to the Community. While communities vary wildly across megafires, this one basic truth does not change: Recovery is a Team Sport. Period. And the team? **Community.**

It takes everyone to recover. Those who lost everything to those who lost nothing but have determined to lean all the way into rebuilding the home, neighborhood, town they deeply love. Everyone has a role to play in reimagining life after great disasters.

We know from many conversations with funders real, relevant and timely impact is the top priority. We know philanthropy understands the long tail of recovery will require funding over the next several years. The focus on long-term recovery funding is not common in the space of disaster. Most of the funds arrive in the first 6-8 weeks, followed by minor sustained support over time, but most often the remainder of the disaster is a trickle of support. We believe Los Angeles will do better.



A key challenge is creating communication loops that effectively convey needs in real time to funders who can then respond. This loop must make it clear who is funding which effort so the people walking through the fire every day, rebuilding their lives, are deeply aware of the impact and most importantly, that they are being heard. We cannot overstress the high value of this closed loop relationship for the short, mid, and long-term recovery.

Fire survivors are the best R&D possible after disaster. Their insight enables funders to act with precision, policymakers to lead with integrity, and communities to heal and organize effectively. In Los Angeles, we have seen this model come alive.

Fire survivors across Los Angeles have embraced these principles with a determination we've rarely witnessed—and we are profoundly optimistic. They are not just responding; they are building, innovating, and modeling recovery in ways that will ripple far beyond their own neighborhoods.

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The biggest barrier and threat to success? Failure to recognize the power of community. Competing against each other instead of only against the disaster.

We have strongly encouraged full representation, equity-centered design, and communication across every platform and community channel. We know the foundation of organization and communication will make the rest of the process of recovery much more successful.

Los Angeles is the land of doers, producers, and creators—and it shows in the pace and imagination of their recovery leadership.

Our Recommended Guiding Principles:

1. Center Survivor Leadership:

- Include survivors in governance, advisory structures, and strategic planning.
- Fund organizations already doing the work and trusted by the community.
- Build co-designed systems with transparent feedback loops
- Take advice from outsiders; do not center them in recovery. You know your community.

2. Refine and Elevate the Block Captain Model:

- Block Captains must be people navigating recovery directly
- Ensure neighborhood-wide representation, across all demographics
- Encourage two-way communication: accurate, verified, and timely

3. Invest in Systems Built to Last:

- Fund programs for at least three years; one-year cycles are not enough
- Pair funding with technical assistance and trauma-informed coaching
- Reduce competition by insisting on collaboration among grantees

4. Support Innovation—Even When It Fails:

- Allow space for local organizations to test innovative ideas
- Reward learning. Create room for “I don’t know” to become “I want to learn.”
- Normalize curiosity and growth in a city that prizes confidence
- These leaders know their communities. They are now learning disaster—and we are here for them for the long-term

No one recovers alone. No one should lead alone. Together, the people of Los Angeles are creating a recovery ecosystem that is more than the sum of its parts. We are proud to support this work.

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In Gratitude

We are always very clear that when we walk into a megafire, we are not only dealing with the disaster, but also ensuring we are taking the time and resources to learn the community in front of us. Since our inception, one of our primary rules is “Serve the Community in front of you”. In other words, respect the people who live, work, love the community and strive to always find ways to support their leadership and desired outcomes.

There is no perfect formula for recovery, but we do have many case studies, best practices, and adaptable models for the community to incorporate into their locally led and designed recovery.

We acknowledge that the space of disaster moves very slowly and quickly – it needs to shift and pivot, and that communities need navigational help to respond and activate after a massive disaster.

It will be at least 2-3 years before recovery hits a stride. We encourage communities to use these months to go slow so they can move faster with greater intention, a shared vision, and strategic rebuild to meet the needs of the entire community. We caution the critics who are anxious to tear down every action and who are interested only in failures of leadership; accountability is key, we agree, but so is accuracy and allowance for a learning curve post-disaster is just as important.

We want to express our gratitude to the members of our delegations to Los Angeles for their compassion, contributions, volunteerism, and continued contributions to our work.



Finally, we would like to thank the remarkable people of Los Angeles for allowing us into your community at this most vulnerable and delicate time after the fire. We understand the trust given and feel humbled by the experience. We look forward to building relationships, listening, learning, and walking beside you as you find your way home.

Together, we can recover, rebuild, and reimagine.

Jennifer, Rena, Natalie, Jenn + Valerie



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