HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS

MOTION

~~SPECIAL 16~~

The devastation caused by last week's fires will unfortunately linger long after the flames have been extinguished. Through lost jobs, shuttered businesses, and widespread economic hardship, families across Los Angeles will face increased housing insecurity. Sadly, a consistent pattern emerges in the aftermath of these disasters: alongside the loss of life and homes, rental prices often skyrocket, and evictions follow. In Lahaina, Hawaii the median rent surged 44% in the year after the 2023 Hawaii wildfires.[1] In the three surrounding counties of Paradise, California rental prices jumped 20.1% in the 2 years after the 2018 Camp fire.[2]

That same predatory pattern has already begun to emerge in our communities, as rental prices in Los Angeles have jumped on Zillow between 15 and 64% just in the last week.[3] Unfortunately, these increases are not exclusively tied to areas next to the affected communities, but citywide. California Penal Code 396(e) outlaws rental increases of greater than 10%, but sunsets 30 days after the declaration of the State of Emergency, allowing an opportunity for unscrupulous landlords to simply wait and then initiate unaffordable rental increases.

As rents rise, tenants already grappling with an affordable housing crisis—where more than half of Los Angeles renters spend over 30% of their income on housing—are facing even greater strain. Tenants who have generously taken in some of the 100,000 evacuees[4] across the county can be evicted for over-occupancy, or see their rents raised. Landlords eager to take advantage of limited available units will file more evictions. A 2019 MIT Study found that eviction rates nearly double after severe natural disasters.[5]

The economic outlook for tenants is similarly grim, with employment generally diminishing immediately in the wake of this kind of fire, then in additional waves 1 and 2 years out.[6] Meanwhile, wildfires lead to a significant decrease in the regional GDP growth rate.[7] In light of these challenges, the City must act swiftly to address the crisis at hand, ensuring that thousands of families do not face eviction or financial ruin during this vulnerable time.

I **WE THEREFORE MOVE** that the Council determine, as provided in Section 54954.2(b)(2) of the Government Code, and pursuant to Rule 23 of the Rules of the City Council, that there is a need to take immediate action on this matter and that the need for the action came to the attention of the City Council subsequent to the posting of the agenda for today's Council meeting;

I **WE FURTHER MOVE** that the City Council request the City Attorney, in coordination with the Los Angeles Housing Department (LAHD), to prepare and present an ordinance, with an urgency clause, that prohibits the following types of evictions, through January 31, 2026:

- For tenants who attest to having experienced economic or medical hardship related to the January 2025 fires:
    - Evictions for non-payment of rent
    - No-fault evictions other than a government order to vacate

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[1] https://www.propublica.org/article/maui-wildifre-evictions-fema

[2] https://uphelp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/camp_fire_housing_study_-_final_9-1-20.pdf&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1736875883584263&usg=AOvVaw1l_eBhbZpVzDlhNVcuqECc

[3] https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/10/business/california-fires-rent-price-gouging.html

[4] https://www.reuters.com/world/us/san-fernando-valley-under-threat-los-angeles-fire-rages-2025-01-12/

[5] https://lcau.mit.edu/research/disasters-and-displacement-evictions-immediate-aftermath-natural-disaster

[6] https://arxiv.org/pdf/2308.02739

[7] https://www.sciencedirect.com/journal/journal-of-environmental-economics-and-management

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- Evictions related to unauthorized occupants, pets or nuisance related to those additional occupants
- Evictions based on failure to obtain renters' insurance

- For tenants who have accommodated in their rental units additional displaced or economically impacted occupants that attest to having experienced economic or medical hardship related to the January 2025 fires:
  - No-fault evictions other than a government order to vacate
  - Evictions based on failure to obtain renters' insurance
  - Evictions related to unauthorized occupants, pets or nuisance related to those additional occupants

I WE **FURTHER MOVE** that the City Council request the City Attorney to draft an emergency ordinance implementing a rent increase pause for all rental residential units through January 31, 2026;

I WE **FURTHER MOVE** that the City Council request the City Attorney, in conjunction with the Los Angeles Housing Department (LAHD), to prepare and present an ordinance, with an urgency clause, that suspends Los Angeles Municipal Code Section (LAMC) 151.06G, which allows rent increases for additional occupants, through January 31, 2026.

I WE **FURTHER MOVE** that the City Council request the City Attorney, with support from the Los Angeles Housing Department and Chief Legislative Analyst and in coordination with the Mayor's Office, to produce monthly reports on the City's response to complaints of price gouging in the rental housing market for the duration of the local emergency order declared in response to the January 2025 fires and for six months after, and that such monthly reports include but are not limited to:

- A count of the complaints received by the City;
- The average response times between receipt of a complaint and the investigations and any enforcement by the City;
- A categorization and count of the City's responses to complaints, including enforcement actions;
- A geographic breakdown of the complaints and of City enforcement actions; and
- Any recommendations for improving enforcement and increasing deterrence of illegal rent gouging;

PRESENTED BY: _____
EUNISSES HERNANDEZ
Councilmember, 1st District

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HUGO SOTO-MARTÍNEZ
Councilmember, 13th District

SECONDED BY: _____