

**From:** [Marilyn Avila](#)  
**To:** [WebMail - CCD](#)  
**Subject:** CC Mtg. 2/10/26 - Public Hearing on STRs - item #9.A.  
**Date:** Monday, February 9, 2026 12:20:44 PM

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Mayor, Mayor Pro Tem, and Council Members,

On March 28, 2023 my wife and I came to you with a petition signed by 60 Starlite Estates residents to ask you to ban Short Term Rentals in Whittier. Since then you have created an STR Ordinance with very lax regulations to make it easy for Whittier residents to own up to three STRs each, and you are currently discussing reducing or eliminating the buffer distance in the non-fire hazard zone. Part of your process was to cancel the STR ban in the Moderate Fire Hazard Severity Zone, because a small number of STR owners simply asked you to do so. It took you about one minute to vote to remove the protection from this Cal-Fire designated fire zone. On January 13, 2026, you rescinded the ban on the Moderate zone but voted to uphold the ban on the Very High and High Fire Hazard Severity Zones. Now the STR owners are asking you to essentially rescind the ban by permitting "Hosted STRs" in our two remaining fire zones. According to several cities in L.A. County and Orange County, this is how they define the term "Hosted STR": **Hosted rental activity is defined as rental whereby the registrant remains on-site and resides in a qualified dwelling or unit throughout the guests' stay.** It does not provide for a period of time that the host can leave the house. If the owner-host leaves while the STR is being rented, it turns the STR into an "Unhosted STR". This is a loophole that breaks the ban on STRs in our Very High and High Fire Hazard Severity Zones and would enable new "Hosted STRs" to spread in our hillside residential neighborhoods. It also opens up access to future changes in the Very High and High Fire Hazard Severity Zones.

How will you know when the "Host" leaves for an unknown period of time, which leaves the STR "Unhosted"? With no owner on-site STR guests are free to do whatever they want. A "Host" could rent out their STR and then leave 5 minutes later for an unknowable period of time. How will you regulate and enforce this very possible situation? How will you monitor continuously transient strangers who are of unknown integrity to STR "Hosts"? There is no way for "Hosts" to know if their STR guests are alcohol or drug users. Transient STR guests are completely unaware of the fire danger to our hillside neighborhoods. One careless transient STR guest could start a fire that destroys our homes with the embers of one cigarette butt. Accidents happen and fire is an accident we do not want in our hillside neighborhoods. Starlite Estates is a cul-de-sac neighborhood. If a fire occurs, the only escape route would be blocked by fire trucks and vehicles while residents are trying to flee the fire.

Your discussion of fire with the L.A. County Fire Department states: "The Fire Department does not treat an STR any differently than an owner-occupied residence. The Fire Department would only review the residence if there was a change of use, such as a residential care facility." The Fire Department statement about STRs is not a good argument for permitting "Hosted STRs". The problem is not the residence. The problem is the continuously transient STR guests who rent the residence. The Fire Department does not witness the danger STR guests expose our homes to on a year-round basis. How would they know which STRs are most likely to start a fire when they have never seen what occurs in the STRs during the drunken, drug-impaired parties. STR guests throw cigarette butts into neighbors' yards and light fireworks and sky rockets in the STR backyard which is next to Hellman Park, and not just on the 4th of July. These parties might still occur if the "Hosted STR" owner leaves for an unknown period of time. People are unpredictable and cannot be regulated in certain situations by ordinances that are written on a piece of paper, with no real ability to enforce them.

Allowing permits for "Hosted STRs" would be the City Council voting to rescind the STR ban in our two

remaining Fire Hazard Severity Zones. This essentially undermines all of our efforts over the past three years and chips away at the trust we placed in the City Council. Why would the City Council disregard three years of public comments and CCD comments from the many hillside residents and go on to rescind your votes to protect our two fire zones? Why would you place the request of a small number of STR owners, to permit "Hosted" STRs in our fire hazard zones, above the many requests by hillside residents to protect our homes by upholding the ban?

There are approximately 4,000 hillside residential homes in Whittier within the Very High and High Fire Hazard Severity Zones. Approximately 8,000 hillside residents live in those homes. The total value of all those homes is \$4.5 billion dollars. This is the basis of our request for you to uphold your vote to protect all these hillside neighborhoods that are within the Very High and High Fire Hazard Severity Zones.

The following fire lists show that fires in Whittier have been increasing since 1966. According to the Whittier Daily News and several websites, Whittier has had 8 fires since 1949:

1949 - Puente Hills fire - Whittier Hills near oil derricks & tanks in Savage Canyon  
 1955 - Turnbull Canyon - major fire in Whittier Hills  
 1966 - Friendly Hills fire - significant fire threatened homes in Friendly Hills  
 1989 - July - Turnbull Canyon - burned 1,229 acres - 13 homes destroyed  
 2007 - Turnbull Canyon - 50 acre brushfire - 50 homes evacuated  
 9/16/2010 - Colima incident, 10 acre brushfire  
 2012 - Whittier Hills fire - burned over 100 acres  
 8/6/2019 - Turnbull Canyon burned - 1 acre

According to: Fire History within the Habitat Authority Management Zone from 1967-present:

Unocal - Whittier, 9/28/70 - 323 acres burned  
 Chevron/Unocal - Whittier, 9/16/79 - 886 acres  
 Las Palomas - Whittier, 1999 - 1 acre  
 Hellman Park - Whittier, 5/11/2002 - 3 acres  
 Turnbull Canyon, Orlears, Whittier, 7/5/2003 - 8 acres  
 Hellman Park - Whittier, 8/2003 - 2 acres  
 Colima, Unocal - Whittier, 12/2003 - 1/8 acre  
 Colima, Unocal - Whittier, 9/2010 - 10.2 acres  
 Hellman Park, top near Helipad - Whittier, 6/2013 - 30'x100'  
 Arroyo Pescadero just before Colima - Whittier, 4/16/2015 - 3 acres  
 Arroyo San Miguel City Unocal - Whittier, 10/20/2016 - 1/4 acre  
 Peppergass Trail, Hellman Park - Whittier, 4/22/24 - 1/10 acre  
 Worsham Canyon - Whittier, 1/7/24 - 1/10 acre

As you can see, wildfire danger is increasing. The Cal-Fire map released on March 24, 2025 was very alarming to all of Whittier's hillside residents. We witnessed your unanimous vote on July 8, 2025 to ban STRs in all three fire zones. Your vote on January 13, 2026 to reduce the STR ban to the Very High and High Fire Hazard Severity Zones by removing the Moderate Fire Hazard Severity Zone was at great cost to the residents that had the protection removed from their hillside homes. The fact that it was done at the request of a small number of STR owners is incomprehensible. An individual's ability and desire to make money should not supersede the well being of the community. **We ask you not to permit "Hosted STRs" which would rescind the ban. Uphold your vote to protect our two remaining Fire Hazard Severity Zones by signing the ban on all STRs, with no exceptions, into the STR Ordinance Amendment.**

Thank you. Leonard Avila