

**From:** [Marilyn Avila](#)  
**To:** [WebMail - CCD](#)  
**Subject:** CC Mtg. 2/10/26 -Public Hearing on STRs - item #9.A.  
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Mayor, Mayor Pro Tem, and Council Members,

I am requesting that you uphold the Short Term Rental ban in the Very High and High Fire Hazard Severity Zones that you voted for in two separate meetings - July 8, 2025 and January 13, 2026. There should be no exceptions to the ban which would allow permits to be issued in the two fire hazard zones for “Hosted” STRs, based on recommendations from a small number of STR owners. There are many more residents in the hillside neighborhoods who do not want “Hosted” STRs spreading in our Fire Hazard Severity Zones.

It seems obvious that various STR out-of-town tourists are more of a fire danger in the fire-prone hills than long term residents are. Even if there are rules to follow, there is no guarantee that STR guests will adhere to them. Our experience over the last 4 years is that much of the time, they don't. It would only take one violation to burn down our hills and homes and then it would be too late. STR guests are only permitted to smoke outside and many of these homes are extremely close to the brush-covered hills. Even if “hosted”, how would that be monitored to assure the home owner is on site during the rental period? Would they be watching the guests every minute? These guests are various out-of-town tourists who are mostly unaware or uncaring of the fire danger here. Due to the recent winter rain, the windy hills will have much more fuel for just one burning ember to hit the dry vegetation and explode into flames. The wind that occurs almost constantly in the hills would make the situation much worse. Long term residents know this and are much more vigilant.

Please remember the Fire Hazard Map Virtual Workshop that you attended on June 18, 2025, and the importance it conveyed of doing everything possible to protect the Whittier hills from catastrophic fire that would not only devastate the hillside residents and our homes, but all of Whittier in so many ways. Afterwards, at the following City Council meeting on July 8, 2025, the Council voted unanimously 5-0 to ban STRs in all three fire zones. The genuine concern and heartfelt comments expressed by all the council members resulted in this unanimous vote.

Cathy Warner stated that she & Joe had the meeting with L.A. County fire and went over those maps, and that in her opinion, STRs should be exempted from the red, orange and yellow, and was even nervous about anything north of Whittier Blvd because of the information received from L.A. Co. Fire when they had the meeting.

Fernando Dutra mentioned the lack of knowledge relative to individuals using the STRs, the added parking and impacts, and how they potentially could add to the danger zones, and was really concerned about adding STRs to anything that is red, orange or yellow.

Mary Ann Pacheco agreed with her colleagues and stated that all these areas have been identified as hazardous, that the wind doesn't recognize the delineations, and one ember can go really far, that it makes sense to curtail any activity that might lead to a possible fire that could go into the white areas, and was very comfortable with including all three fire zones and a little concerned if all three weren't included, since all three have been defined as being hazardous, period.

Octavio Martinez, our representative for District 2, stated that it seems to him that it's a reasonable, practical approach to protect our community and residents, to ban STRs in the fire hazard areas -red, orange

and yellow. He said that "complaints are coming from up in the hills, where it's a fire hazard and it's difficult to get to, to fight fires, even a small one, let alone the winds, and that it is not even a thing open to discussion - it must be done". His last statement was, "I am convinced that the red, orange, and yellow must be banned, period", to which Mayor Joe completely agreed with, that the red, orange and yellow have no STRs.

My hope was that you would retain the strong convictions that led you all to vote to ban STRs in all three Fire Hazard Severity Zones on July 8, 2025. However, at the January 13, 2026 first reading at the Public Hearing, one of the fire zones - moderate - was quickly voted on to be removed from the ban, at the request of a small number of STR owners. A recent discussion by staff with the Fire Department resulted in finding that it "does not treat an STR any differently than an owner-occupied residence". I question whether that Fire Department official actually had experience in living near and observing STR guests on a regular basis compared to long-term residents. I doubt that the Fire Department have witnessed firsthand, STR guests smoking outside houses bordering the windy hills, flicking their cigarette butts in the planters and yards, being intoxicated, lighting fireworks, and basically oblivious to any type of fire danger during their brief stay. We residents living in the hillside neighborhoods certainly have witnessed this for years.

FYI, the City of La Habra Heights, just on the other side of the Whittier hills, prohibited all STRs in their city over 5 years ago. The fire hazard situation has not changed, in fact, it is getting worse, as we have seen with the Palisades and Eaton fires. **I sincerely hope that you keep your word and your original strongly-held beliefs of the fire danger, adhere to your votes, and ban all STRs in the Very High and High Fire Hazard Severity Zones, with no exceptions for "hosted" STRs. We need this ordinance to be enacted as soon as possible, with no changes to the complete ban in the two remaining fire zones, and with no further delays.**

Thank you.

Marilyn Avila