

From: Brent Ventura [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, May 19, 2025 2:57 PM
To: Council <Council@losgatosca.gov>
Subject: Attached Letter on need for Town to Consider adopting New Fire Building Code for projects exceeding 35; and 55'

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Different code requirements depending upon building height and proximity to wildfire severity zone as determined by CalFire earlier this year.

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Law Offices of BRENT N. VENTURA
[REDACTED]

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LAW OFFICES OF
BRENT N. VENTURA
Inactive



May 13, 2025

Mayor Matthew Hudes and
Honorable Town Council Members
Town of Los Gatos
110 E. Main St.
Los Gatos, CA 95030

**Re: Every SB 330 Builders Remedy Projects Currently Pending
Approval in Los Gatos:**

101 S Santa Cruz Ave.
14288 Capri Dr.
15300- 15330 Los Gatos Blvd.
14849 Los Gatos Blvd.
5459-16392 Los Gatos Blvd
15349-15367 Los Gatos Blvd
15171 Los Gatos Blvd

14917-14925 Los Gatos Blvd
101 Blossom Hill Rd.
16492 Los Gatos Blvd.
143-151 E. Main St.
16250-16270 Burton Road
980 University Ave.
101 S. Santa Cruz Ave.
178 Twin Oaks Rd.
14789 Oka Rd.

Dear Mayor Hudes and Honorable Council Members,

Since the filing period for SB 330 projects has expired and the review process has first of which was two urban wildfires in the Los Angeles metropolitan area that manifested current fire codes and standards that identified inadequacies for emergency responders to save life and property. Firefighting resources proved woefully inadequate and the urban/municipal water supply was exhausted briefly after the conflagration commenced. The extreme risk of wildfire spreading in wildfire risk zones can be seen in the rapid spread of wildfire in the urbanized and densely populated areas that occurred in quarter-mile leaps by windblown embers. These areas, once thought completely safe from the threat, helped with the

consideration of community development by illustrating entirely new threats to health and safety issues.

The second critical change after 1/1/25 that occurred was when CALFIRE finalized its zone maps, identifying Los Gatos zones to be at severe wildfire risk. As you are well aware, the land area of Los Gatos indicated to be at risk for severe wildfire has greatly increased from what previous analysis had predicted. There are some SB 330 projects proposed that are either within, adjacent to, or within a half mile of a severe wildfire risk zone. The idea of greatly intensifying residential densities in areas identified as subject to severe wildfire risk is objective grounds to question the health and safety of proceeding with these projects. commenced, there have been two critically significant changes to the health and safety and the sustainability of residential habitation in identified portions of Los Gatos. Both of these critically significant public health and safety changes occurred after January 1, 2025.

Whether these facts alone give the Town valid legal grounds to deny these projects is an open legal question, but it does seem prudent for the Town to make inquiry and require the State and/or HCD to issue clear guidance to jurisdictions reviewing these projects. It must be brought into question and consideration whether public health and safety is protected and satisfied by allowing the construction of high density residential towers immediately adjacent to or within a half mile of severe wildfire risk zones.

If the State mandates these projects despite the patent and severe risks, then the Town should be indemnified from liability at least. The State should immunize jurisdictions for compelling them to approve high-density residential projects under SB 330 when doing so clearly raises very significant health and safety risks to both current and future residents of the community.

Regardless, Los Gatos as an independent government entity in California can proceed independently, without any prior authorization, to act on an Emergency basis and immediately protect the health and safety of its current residents by enacting a new Fire Building Code.

My legal research indicates that the Town, as its own independent legal government entity in California, has the right to enact and adopt its own specific Fire Building Codes that reflect the specific risks- geography, climate, and topography- of our jurisdiction. Los Gatos is not obligated to adopt and implement any national or Statewide Fire Code. The Town has the legal authority to draft, adopt, and implement its own Fire Code reflecting the very specific firefighting risks facing a hillside community with 3 different severe wildfire risk zones within its borders.

The Town is currently endangering the health and safety of its citizens, to whom they have a sworn duty to protect, by delegating the Building Fire Permit authority to a Central Fire Clerk working with an outdated Fire Code that was drafted and implemented without absolutely any consideration of the health and safety issues pertaining to:

- The severe wildfire risk zones coming down from the hillsides directly into Downtown Los Gatos;

- The LA wildfires that showed the urban water supply system failure, leaving firefighters without sufficient water pressure and adequate water supply to fight the wildfire;

- The emergency evacuation Notice failure and first responders being unsuccessful in evacuating the region exposed to fire, thus resulting in extremely high deaths and injuries;

- That the Los Angeles conflagration spread, burning areas up to a half a mile away that were uninvolved in the initial firestorm by windblown burning embers, which firefighters had no ability to contain;

- That building very high density high rise residential towers within, adjacent to, or within a half mile of severe wildfire risk zones presents an imminent, clear and present danger to public health and safety.

Los Gatos needs to immediately adopt a new Fire Building Code that incorporates and mitigates the harsh realities and lessons from the tragic LA wildfires. It must also account for the large area of the community identified to be located within a severe wildfire risk zone.

If Los Gatos does not act independently and immediately, it will take years for the administrative process to collaborate and develop a new statewide Firefighting Building Code to incorporate the recent lessons learned. Los Gatos needs to immediately take the leash of this beast on an emergency basis. In light of the imminent, clear, and present threat to public health and safety, Los Gatos should adopt a new Fire Building Code that all new construction projects in Los Gatos must satisfy in order to obtain necessary permits before any construction can commence.

From my review of some of the revised development plans submitted for some of the taller projects that are 6-13 story towers, they indicate that the supply of water is only to that tower's fire suppression needs and will significantly lower the water pressure available to the surrounding neighborhood. The plans also indicate the specifics on their Fire Suppression Plans will be "deferred" until the time of submission of the permits. This appears to be an obfuscation and is misleading the Town and Central Fire of the wildfire and firefighting risks addressed in this correspondence.

There is no need or requirement under state law that existing homeowners and neighborhoods should have their emergency water pressure reduced in order to facilitate these SB 330 projects. In fact, the underlying guidance in SB 330 is that these projects should proceed only where consistent with insuring the general health and safety of current residents.

While these residential towers, with their sprinkler fire suppression systems and metal facades may be less prone to wildfire risks, they compromise the water pressure and water supply available for firefighters to suppress fire in the surrounding neighborhoods.

I urge the Town Council to immediately address this issue. From my limited research and without any specific expertise, I can advise that the following measures must be incorporated into Los Gatos' new Fire Building Code:

- Every new construction over 35' in height, located within a half mile of any severe risk wildfire zone must have an independent water supply system on site. Its fire suppression system must be independent of the existing urban water system and will not affect either the available water supply or water pressure to any of the surrounding area. Such on-site water supply system shall include dual gravity fed tanks and dual mechanically supplied water for its internal firefighting needs sufficient to suppress fire for 2 hours.
- Every new construction over 55' in height, more than a half mile away from any severe wildfire risk zone must have an independent water supply system on site, such that its fire suppression system is independent of the existing urban water system and will not affect either the available water supply or water pressure to any of the surrounding area. Such on site water supply system shall include dual gravity fed tanks and dual mechanically supplied water for its internal firefighting needs sufficient to suppress fire for 2 hours.

Thank you for your courteous consideration of this matter.

Respectfully submitted,

BRENT N. VENTURA

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