



City of Malibu News

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For Immediate Release

January 27, 2019

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NOTE: High-resolution photos from event, and photos and video from the home being built

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/f78sqc3aqe47jzt/AABjg04gTF5eeiMiNSixkK6Ka?dl=0>

City of Malibu Marks Major Milestone in Recovery from Woolsey Fire with the Completion of the First Owner-Occupied Rebuilt Home

(Malibu, CA) – Malibu City Councilmembers, Commissioners and staff, representatives from other public agencies, neighbors, friends and family joined homeowner Laurie Brennan to mark a major milestone in the community’s efforts to rebuild following the devastating Woolsey Fire. The Brennan’s home has been rebuilt after being destroyed by the fire and she is ready to move in.

City officials held an informal ribbon cutting of the newly reconstructed home and presented Brennan with the Certificate of Occupancy. The home in the Trancas Highlands of western Malibu is the first owner-occupied, primary residence that has been completely rebuilt after being destroyed in the November 2018 Woolsey Fire. Construction of one rental home was completed in mid-January.

“The Woolsey Fire is a dark chapter in Malibu’s history, but today, all of Malibu joins in celebrating an important turning point in the story of our recovery as the Brennan family moves back into their home,” Mayor Karen Farrer said. “We have a long way to go. There are hundreds of displaced families that are working hard to get their homes rebuilt and get resettled, and the City is doing everything possible to help them get there. I applaud the Brennans for their optimism and perseverance and I hope that this moment will serve as a light at the end of the tunnel for every other homeowner whose home was destroyed. You will get there, and we will help you!”

“I would not want to go through the experience of losing my house to the Woolsey Fire, but I feel truly blessed for all the wonderful people who have supported me and the good experiences that have come out of this,” homeowner Laurie Brennan said. “I could not have done this alone, nobody can do this alone, so get help. I had no experience building a home, so if I can do it, anyone can.”

“The last year has challenged all of us like never before,” City Manager Reva Feldman said. “The rebuilding effort is the most important thing that we as a city could undertake. So it is an honor to be able to share in this moment. Laurie’s resilience is an inspiration to me and everyone in City Hall. I am committed and the staff is committed to doing everything we can to help Malibu rebuild.”

“I am so happy for Laurie and being able to help people get through such difficulty is the biggest reward of my work,” said Yolanda Bundy, the Environmental Sustainability Director and City Building Official who is leading Malibu’s Woolsey Fire rebuilding efforts. “Every day, I can’t wait to get to work and help more families get their homes back. I urge anyone in Malibu who is rebuilding and needs any help or guidance to contact me personally, and I will offer all the resources we have to help them move forward.”

Bundy is applying her experience of leading the City of Ventura's rebuilding after the 2017 Thomas Fire, which destroyed more than 500 homes, toward Malibu's rebuilding efforts.

The Woolsey Fire started on November 8, 2018 and grew to nearly 100,000 acres, the largest wildfire in Los Angeles County history. It destroyed 488 homes in Malibu and 1,600 structures in total across Los Angeles and Ventura Counties. As of January 23, more than 200 single-family homes in the Malibu city limits that were destroyed in the fire were in various phases of the permitting and planning processes. Fifty-seven homeowners had received their permit to begin rebuilding construction work. Rebuild progress can be tracked on the City's rebuild web portal at www.MalibuCity.org/WoolseyStats.

Owners of about 200 destroyed homes have yet to decide whether they will rebuild, and Bundy urged any homeowner having trouble weighing their options, budgets, timelines, designs and plans to contact her for personal guidance. Bundy and other staff have been reaching out directly to those homeowners to offer assistance.

Bundy offered some perspectives on why some Woolsey Fire rebuilds are progressing much faster than others. The Brennans received their permit to build in June 2019, started construction immediately, and were able to complete construction in about seven months. The homeowners' constant, hands-on involvement in everything from the initial plans to construction details was critical in speeding up the entire process, according to Bundy. Other important factors are responding quickly to requests for information or corrections, turning in forms and applying for permits as fast as possible, and staying in constant communication with the design professionals.

Background

Since the fire, the City has been committed to doing everything possible to help residents rebuild and recover. The City Council created an expedited permitting process with fee waivers for "like-for-like," or houses that are about the same size as the destroyed house, plus up to 10%.

The City eased regulations on trailers and temporary dwellings including to make it easier for residents to live on their property while they rebuild.

Additional contract staff were hired to support the Planning, Public Works and Building Safety Departments and move rebuilding projects forward.

A special walk-up Fire Rebuild Counter was installed at City Hall that is staffed during all open hours to offer help and answer questions for applicants.

The City worked with the Los Angeles County Fire Department and the Waterworks District to ease the water flow levels requirements for firefighting to remove an obstacle to rebuilding while infrastructure is worked on to increase the fire flow levels.

A new website, www.MalibuRebuilds.org and a text message and email notification system were created to help residents navigate the rebuilding process and find information and resources about loans, grants, mental health support, donations, contractors, request plans and records and apply for permits.

The City got a Fire Department official stationed at a counter at City Hall once a week to offer specific guidance on Fire Department permitting issues.

The City Council, during the 2019/2020 Budget Hearings, established the Woolsey Fire recovery as the city's second highest priority, after protecting public safety.

The City has held, hosted and participated in, numerous town hall meetings and workshops with officials from the Fire Department, County Public Works, the State Insurance Commissioner, experts and contractors in Malibu to provide guidance on specific issues to help people through the process, assist with forms and paperwork and meet regulatory requirements and deadlines.

To make a one-on-one appointment for fire rebuilding information or assistance, please contact the Fire Rebuild Team at acruz@malibucity.org or call 310-456-2489 or visit the Fire Rebuild Counter at City Hall during open house (Mondays through Thursdays, 7:30 AM to 5:30 PM and Fridays, 7:30 AM to 4:30 PM). City Hall is located at 23825 Stuart Ranch Road, Malibu, CA 90265)

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