

Recommendations for Policy & Practice (Cont.)

7. Prioritize people-centered recovery, which means prioritizing place-centered recovery.

People live where they live for a reason — and typically for a host of reasons, from family and cultural roots, to a love of the physical environment, to being close to work. These ties don’t change just because of a fire or another disaster, and they are at the core of household recovery decision-making. If we ignore or discount the power of place-based ties, we do so to our detriment.

8. Work with fire-affected communities to engage with and responsibly restore the natural environment.

After wildfire, nature has the potential to help survivors heal as it heals, and engaging in ecological restoration and time in nature can be therapeutic for community members. Thoughtful design for best practices in nature-centered therapy can help community members navigate ecological damage and losses. Though community members may feel a strong desire to return the natural environment to a pre-fire state, the recovery period represents an opportunity to make adjustments focused on ecosystem health that make communities more hazard resilient (but just as beautiful and culturally appropriate).

9. Creating memorials helps people cope and heal.

Recovery takes decades, or more. Thoughtful memorials and commemoration events can heal, inform, and connect. Community engagement in the design process ensures memorials and events reflect a diversity of experiences and are meaningful to survivors. Further, it provides an opportunity for community members to envision a more resilient future together.

10. Plan for a changing climate — with the community

After a disaster, the drive for a quick recovery can be at odds with the need for sustainable recovery. Policy makers can best address these challenges through the intentional integration of community feedback and through thoughtful consideration of the impacts of changing climate scenarios. For example, housing materials and community land-use can help reduce future wildfire risk and encourage energy efficiency and affordability.

Additional recommendations from California study areas:

- Ban insurance itemization requirements, which place undue stress on survivors.
- Proactively work to align conflicting goals in state and local policies, e.g. housing mandates.
- Prioritize the use of available federal and state funds to support residents in rebuilding better, by subsidizing the cost of rebuilding with fire resistant materials and other similar mitigation measures that are not adequately offset by insurance.

