

# THE Hollywood REPORTER

## Where L.A.'s Wealthiest Evacuees Are Fleeing After the Fires

January 31, 2025  
By Hadley Meares

Displaced residents of the city's most affluent enclaves are paying obscene prices to relocate to "safer" neighborhoods across the Westside: "People are looking as high as \$100,000 a month."



*With much of Pacific Palisades now uninhabitable, uprooted residents are flocking to communities like Bel Air and Manhattan Beach.*

As blazes rage across the Southland, those uprooted by the wildfires that have devastated some of the wealthiest enclaves of Los Angeles — in the Pacific Palisades and Malibu — are desperately looking for a new place to settle down.



This has unleashed chaos at open houses in the area. “There’s a tremendous amount of frustration” says Mauricio Umansky, also of The Agency. “People are coming in from everywhere to look at houses, and the stuff they’re seeing, they’re not happy with. And then they’re fighting for the house with 10 people, and nine people get rejected.”

Inventory was low before the fires. It’s now dramatically lower. “We’ve lost thousands and thousands of homes,” Umansky says. “There are not thousands of homes available to lease.”

Leases for family homes in Brentwood and surrounding neighborhoods are prohibitively expensive. “We’re seeing probably anything that’s \$20,000 [a month] and below is being snatched up,” Schwartz says. “People are looking as high as \$100,000.”



*FREDERIC J. BROWN/AFP/Getty Images*

Such considerations are swaying many to move to Bel-Air, Beverly Hills and Century City and seeking condos rather than houses. Some searching for more affordable options are heading to family-friendly Mar Vista; others eager to maintain their beachside way of life are choosing to go farther away. “There is a crazy migration to the South Bay, and that’s just purchases, that’s not even rentals,” Schwartz says.



Cindy Ambuehl of Christie's International Real Estate agrees. "A lot of people feel that they can take their kids and their family and go to Manhattan Beach, Hermosa Beach and enroll them in a really healthy school that's intact, where their kids can get back into a classroom with other kids and go play on a playground," she says. "The air is safe. And there are stores and shops and restaurants. They can take a walk."

Moving from the Westside to the South Bay is giving survivors a chance to heal, say real estate agents. "It's providing infrastructure and stability and safety and calmness in what has just been pure chaos and devastation," Ambuehl says.

While many Palisadians are wary of moving to the supposedly déclassé Valley, realtors believe many will end up buying there, especially in idyllic communities like Calabasas. "You get a lot for your money in the Valley," says Ambuehl. "So it's a great alternative for families right now."



*Some former residents of the Palisades and Malibu are overcoming their disdain for the Valley and considering moving to such family-friendly areas as Calabasas.*

As the ash settles and survivors regroup, realtors are surprised by how quickly behaviors are shifting. "At the very beginning, people were obviously in shock and went to friends and family, and then we saw a complete frenzy with leasing," says Carl Gambino of The Gambino Group at Compass. "And now we're starting to see people really think about what they want to do and if they're going to buy within the city, and we're actually seeing purchases being made."

But for others, the stress of the market is just too much to deal with after the trauma of losing so much, so fast. “Some are just saying, ‘You know what, we’re not even going to think about doing that right now. We’re going to take a break. We’re going to move somewhere else,’ ” says Paul Salazar of Hilton & Hyland. “I have a family whose house burnt down in the Palisades. They have two young kids, and they moved to Texas to their family house temporarily because they’re just like, ‘It’s too much of a zoo right now. It’s just too chaotic.’ ”