



Connect

MAGAZINE

2025: ISSUE TWO • THE PUBLICATION OF CAI-GREATER INLAND EMPIRE



**Through Fire, We Endure—
Through Unity, We Find . . .
A NEW HOPE!**

**SAFEGUARDING COMMUNITIES: BEST PRACTICES FOR
FIRE PREVENTION THROUGH LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE
IN FUEL MODIFICATION ZONES**

DAMAGE AND DESTRUCTION CLAUSES IN YOUR CC&Rs

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

GREG BORZILLERI, 2025 CHAPTER PRESIDENT
THE ARBOR GROUP

A long time ago...

Well, actually, not so long ago at all ... our Chapter faced challenges that tested our resilience, creativity, and unity. But just like the brave heroes of a galaxy far, far away, we rose to the occasion. And now, in 2025, I am proud to proclaim that **The Inland Empire Has Struck Back**—stronger, bolder, and more unified than ever before.

This year's Chapter theme has been more than just a fun nod to a beloved franchise—it has become a rallying cry, a symbol of our resurgence, and a powerful reminder that when our members come together, there is no obstacle too great and no goal too ambitious.

A Triumphant Return to Full Force

In every corner of our region, the energy is unmistakable. Our events have been more than successful. Attendance has soared, new members have joined our ranks, and the collective enthusiasm of our community is palpable.

- **The Top Golf Event and our Golf Tournament** were true blockbusters—filled with valuable education, lively networking, and a true sense of unity. From lightsaber photo ops to a Jedi-worthy breakout session, we struck the perfect balance between professionalism and fun.
- Our **Luncheons** have seen record engagement. Members leave more informed, more empowered, and more equipped to serve their communities with excellence.
- And let's not forget the galactic-level camaraderie at our social events like our **Comedy Night for CLAC or Trivia Night**. These moments of connection—whether through a laugh or a brainstorming competition over appetizers—are the fuel that keeps our Chapter vibrant and engaged.

A New Hope for Community Leadership

This Chapter is more than an organization, it's a community. And at its heart are people who care deeply about building better places to live. Whether you're a community manager, a homeowner leader, or a business partner, your efforts matter. Together, we are shaping stronger associations, encouraging sound governance, and promoting better quality of life for the thousands of residents who rely on our expertise.

One of the most exciting developments this year has been the emergence of **new leaders within our Chapter**. Like the Rebel

Alliance, we are seeing a new generation step forward—bold, talented, and ready to lead. Our mentorship initiatives and leadership opportunities have inspired more members than ever to get involved, volunteer, and share their voices.

Gratitude for the Heroes Among Us

None of this success happens in a vacuum. I want to take a moment to thank the true heroes of our Chapter—the committee members, Board members, and business partners who work tirelessly behind the scenes. But I would be joining the Darkside if I didn't also give a special thank you to our Executive Director, Erica Tenney. You all are the ones who bring this galaxy to life. Your dedication, generosity and passion are the **Force** that allows our Chapter to shine so brightly.

To our sponsors and industry partners, thank you for believing in our mission. Your support gives us the power to provide top-tier events and resources. You are essential allies in our continuing journey.

And to every member who shows up, asks questions, shares their experiences, and brings others into the fold—you are what makes this Chapter feel like home.

The Journey Ahead

Yes, the Inland Empire has struck back—and we're already plotting the next jump to lightspeed. As your President, I've never been more confident in our trajectory. We are not only rebuilding—we are redefining what it means to be a successful, forward-thinking CAI chapter.

May the Force Be With You

In the words of Yoda: "Do or do not, there is no try." This year, we have not only tried—we have done. And we will continue to do.

I invite all of you to keep riding this wave of momentum. Attend an event, volunteer for a committee, mentor a new member, or simply reach out with an idea. This is your Chapter, and it's stronger when you're an active part of it.

Thank you for allowing me the honor of serving as your President. It has been an incredible journey so far, and the best is yet to come. Together, let's keep striking back—with purpose, with unity, and with the unstoppable spirit that makes the Inland Empire Chapter truly out of this world.

Greg Borzilleri

Greg Borzilleri
2025 CAI-GRIE Chapter President





EDITORS' LINK



A.J. JAHANIAN, ESQ.
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As we unveil the second issue of the CAI-GRIE *Connect Magazine* for 2025, we continue to proudly celebrate the 35th anniversary of our Greater Inland Empire Chapter—a milestone that echoes the spirit of resilience and community. Our celebratory reflection was tempered at the beginning of the year by the catastrophic Southern California wildfires, which left parts of our region in a state of ongoing recovery. Our hearts remain with those that are still rebuilding their homes and lives.

In this issue, we explore the evolving insurance landscape, particularly in light of the unprecedented fires, and offer insights to help communities navigate its complexities in these challenging times. We also examine the damage and destruction provisions in CC&Rs (sections that are often entirely unknown to most boards and manager) and provide practical guidance for associations confronting the realities of disaster recovery. As a proactive measure, we evaluate the essential role of defensible space, protective landscaping, and other wildfire mitigation strategies in long-term community planning and landscaping.

While the challenges facing our communities are serious, they also highlight the value of strong, steady leadership. In that spirit, we proudly continue our tribute to the legacy of our past Chapter Presidents and Hall of Fame recipients, whose vision and commitment have not only guided our organization through difficult times but have also built the foundation for the progress and resilience we celebrate today.

As we mark 35 years of service, education, and advocacy, we continue to be inspired by our community's resolve to "Strike Back" against adversity, with unity and determination. Thank you for being part of our journey. We hope this issue informs, empowers, and uplifts as we move forward together.

A.J. Jahanian, Esq.
Committee Co-Chair and Co-Editor in Chief



Daniel Heaton, Esq.
Committee Co-Chair and Co-Editor in Chief



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The CAI—Greater Inland Empire (GRIE) Chapter hosts educational, business and social events that provide the Chapter's Business Partners various opportunities to promote their companies' products and services to Community Association owners and managers serving the Community Association Industry. It is expected that all participants in Chapter events – whether they be educational, business or social – will conduct themselves in a professional manner representative of their business or service organization so as not to detract from the experience of others seeking to benefit from their membership in the Chapter.

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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

ERICA TENNEY, CMCA, AMS
CAI-GREATER INLAND EMPIRE CHAPTER

As we reach the halfway point of the year, I'm thrilled to reflect on the incredible progress our Chapter has made. The energy and excitement at each of our events have been truly inspiring—and seeing them consistently sold out and filled with engaged members brings me immense pride.

When I stepped into this role, one of my top priorities was increasing member involvement. I know firsthand how valuable active participation in CAI can be—personally and professionally—and it's been so rewarding to watch that momentum grow within our Chapter. It's been a joy to reconnect with familiar faces and get to know so many new ones. The influx of new members has been incredible, and I'm proud to share that our retention rate has jumped from 69% in October 2024 to an impressive 92% as of April 2025.

This year also marks a special milestone—our Chapter's 35th Anniversary! Celebrating this legacy has been a highlight, especially as we've looked back on our early days in the '90s. The photos we've shared during pre-event slideshows have sparked so many great memories, and based on your feedback, they've brought joy to many of you as well. Keep an eye out for more of these nostalgic snapshots throughout our publications this year—including this one.

As always, I welcome your feedback. Please don't hesitate to reach out with ideas or suggestions on how I can better support you. My goal is to ensure you continue to see the value and benefits of your CAI membership.

Here's to continued growth, stronger connections, and lasting friendships. Cheers to an incredible year ahead!

Erica Tenney
Erica Tenney, CMCA, AMS
CAI-GRIE Executive Director

35 YEARS
cai
GREATER INLAND EMPIRE

THE INSIGHT CORNER

PERSPECTIVES FROM COMMUNITY LEADERS

“

Fire Safety Prevention

“Managing communities with dense landscaping and mature trees has reinforced the importance of proactive fire prevention. Annual fuel modifications and preventive maintenance play a crucial role, but effective communication and community participation truly make the difference. Each year, I review local fire regulations and coordinate a safety assessment with local authorities to identify potential risks and develop a preparedness plan. Involving business partners, such as landscapers, in these assessments ensures that expectations are clear and action steps are taken efficiently. Clear, consistent communication through newsletters, weekly updates, and town halls keeps residents informed and engaged. While thorough planning may seem exhaustive, it is ultimately life-saving.”

”



—Jessica Clifford, CMCA, AMS
Senior Community Manager
FirstService Residential



CAI-GRIE MARCH EDUCATIONAL LUNCHEON RECAP

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES THROUGH LOCAL GOVERNMENT RELATIONSHIPS

On March 5, 2025, the CAI-GRIE Educational Luncheon spotlighted an engaging and insightful discussion led by Larry Vieira, Vice President of his Homeowners Association and member of the City of Chino Planning Commission, and Jessica Clifford, Senior Community Manager and active member of both the CAI-GRIE Education and Monte Carlo Committees.

The duo took the floor to discuss the importance of building strong, collaborative relationships with local government. Their presentation highlighted how meaningful connections with city officials can directly impact the success of community associations, business partners, and developers.



Larry shared real-life examples from his tenure as both a board member and planning commission member, illustrating how direct lines of communication with local officials can significantly benefit associations. He emphasized the long-term value of proactive engagement in city planning and decision-making.

Jessica offered a complementary perspective, focusing on the critical role trust, organization, and early alignment play in relationships with developers. She emphasized the power of utilizing business partners as a “secret weapon” during developer turnovers, project management, and other key transitions. Her approach reaffirmed how strategic partnerships and local government collaboration can elevate the level of service and success delivered to communities.

Together, Larry and Jessica emphasized a shared message: by nurturing relationships with local officials and leveraging the network around us, community managers and board members alike can ensure stronger, more resilient communities for residents, partners, and cities as a whole.



Throwback: Tradeshow with Founding Member Jon Epsten (right).



CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE: PCAM RECEPTION

After a few years on hiatus, we brought back the PCAM Reception. On March 21st, Chapter members, PCAMs, and those that celebrate them gathered at King's Fish House in Corona to honor the achievements of all those that have received the highest professional recognition available nationwide to managers, the Professional Community Association Manager (PCAM) designation awarded by the Community Associations Institute.

The PCAM Reception offered a unique blend of casual elegance and professional recognition, bringing together designees, colleagues, and supporters to celebrate the dedication, expertise, and leadership that define this prestigious credential. Against the warm and welcoming backdrop of King's Fish House, attendees enjoyed an evening of networking, recognition, and camaraderie.

From heartfelt conversations to shared stories of professional growth, the event was a testament to the value of connection in the field of community association management. It was a night to honor the hard work of PCAM recipients and to inspire others who seek to reach this level of excellence.

Thank you to all who attended and helped make the evening such a success. We look forward to continuing to celebrate all the outstanding professionals who elevate our industry every day.



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A DEFINITION OF

wildfire

BY: KIMBERLY LILLEY, CIRMS, CMCA

Most of us have been impacted by the insurance crisis in California, and if we haven't been impacted yet, we will be. California has billions of dollars of property that needs insurance, and as losses piled up between 2017 and 2022, carriers in the state tightened their underwriting criteria or limited the amount of properties they would insure—or they left the state entirely—in order to stay solvent. This constriction in the insurance marketplace left many without affordable or adequate insurance, and too often, with no insurance options at all. The situation worsened after the LA fires in January 2025. Carriers that were considering reentry into the California insurance market due to fewer losses in 2023 and 2024 stopped considering it altogether.

In this vacuum, carriers are being creative in finding ways to write insurance in that state, while reducing their risk reasonably enough to make coverage economically feasible. One way of managing risk is to spread it out over multiple carriers, so each only takes a small part of the risk, ensuring that none of them hold the lion's share of the losses if one should occur.

We've seen examples of this in the past, specifically with the flood and earthquake markets. Insuring the risk of a building being damaged by fire AND the risk of it being damaged due to earthquake was too much for most carriers, so the risk was separated out, allowing different carriers to insure the same structure for different causes of loss.

This has already begun in the California insurance marketplace with regard to fire vs. wildfire. Carriers have begun to separate out wildfire

as a risk apart from “regular” fire (kitchen fire, candle fire, chimney fire, etc.) so that the risk can be shared by different carriers. This is especially helpful in areas with high wildfire risk that wouldn't otherwise be able to get ANY insurance.

But here's where the wrench gets thrown in. Carriers have let us know that they are hesitant to offer these policies in the state because the CA Department of Insurance (CDI) does not recognize the difference between “fire” and “wildfire.” In other words, they might hold a carrier that has excluded wildfire (so that another carrier can cover it) responsible for wildfire losses because there is not an agreed-upon definition of “wildfire” that everyone is happy with. This limits the availability of these creative policies and therefore, delays the California insurance marketplace's recovery.

In order for California to increase the health of its insurance marketplace, we need to encourage more carriers to participate. We have to reverse the constriction and increase the availability of insurance. Coming to an agreed-upon definition of “wildfire” can go a long way to help that happen. The policies are ready and waiting to be written. Let's do what we can to invite them in.



Kimberly Lilley, CIRMS, CMCA serves as the Chair of the CAI-CLAC Insurance Task Force..

TRIVIA NIGHT RECAP:

A NIGHT FULL OF LAUGHS, LEARNING, AND FRIENDLY COMPETITION!

Bridget Dolan, Special Events Committee Co-Chair

On March 27, CAI-GRIE members gathered at Heroes Restaurant & Brewhouse in Eastvale for a lively and laughter-filled Trivia Night, and what a night it was! Hosted by our fantastic trivia sponsors, Anthony Harris of Reconstruction Experts and Adrian Lemus of Securitas Security Services USA, Inc., the event brought together sharp minds, quick wit, and a whole lot of fun.

Teams tested their knowledge across a wide range of topics—from pop culture to music history, internet milestones, and even CAI-specific trivia! Some of the crowd-favorite questions included:

- *What is the name of the coffee shop in Friends?*
- *Eleven actors have played Batman onscreen. Name five (5).*
- *Which artist is known as the “Queen of Pop”?*
- *Who was the first solo artist to have five number-one singles from a single album on the Billboard Hot 100?*
- *In what year was the Internet opened to the public?*

And just when teams thought they had it mastered, a bonus round of CAI-related questions challenged them even more:

- *In what year did Elda start working for CAI-GRIE?*
- *How many Chapters worldwide does CAI have?*
- *Name one of the four Chapter Goals for 2025 featured at each Education Event?*

With great snacks, great company, and a whole lot of competitive spirit, the energy was high and the laughs were constant. It was the perfect mix of fun and community connection, with everyone walking away a little smarter!



A big thank you to all our sponsors and the teams who came out to play. We're already studying up for the next round!

DAMAGE AND DESTRUCTION CLAUSES IN YOUR CC&Rs: CRITICAL TOOLS OR HIDDEN LIABILITIES?

BY: DANIEL HEATON, ESQ. OF DENICHILO LAW, APC

Most board members and community managers have never read the “Damage and Destruction” provisions in their CC&Rs. Many don’t realize these sections exist. That could be a significant problem. These obscure provisions, often buried deep in the governing documents, are rarely invoked – until a fire, earthquake, or other disaster strikes. When they are needed, the cost of having outdated or inadequate language can be catastrophic.

WHAT ARE THE DAMAGE AND DESTRUCTION PROVISIONS?

Associations have provisions within their CC&Rs that dictate what happens when a disaster or other catastrophic event damages or destroys part (or all) of a common interest development. They typically address who makes decisions about reconstruction of the damaged units or structures, how those decisions are made, and what happens if there’s not enough money to cover the cost to rebuild.

Damage and Destruction provisions are particularly vital in condominium projects or other communities where shared walls, roofs, and foundations complicate individual versus collective responsibilities. In many CC&Rs, the provisions also generally dictate the process and vote threshold for homeowners to terminate the association in circumstances where insurance proceeds are woefully insufficient or if reconstruction is otherwise financially or practically infeasible.

HOW HAVE I NEVER NOTICED THESE BEFORE?

Because Damage and Destruction clauses are seldom needed (at least until disaster strikes), they often go overlooked compared to other sections of the CC&Rs that more commonly attract the attention of homeowners, such as the articles detailing use restrictions or assigning maintenance responsibilities. In some associations, these CC&Rs provisions stay unexamined from the time they were originally drafted, often decades ago. Unfortunately, this means that boards and community managers may never notice the existence of outdated or problematic language in these clauses until a disaster finally exposes how inadequate the original provisions have become.

WHY DO THESE PROVISIONS MATTER NOW?

The current insurance market presents unprecedented challenges for community associations. With changing coverage availability, rising premiums, and evolving policy terms, associations need to ensure their CC&Rs align with available insurance coverage. Many governing documents were drafted when insurance coverage was more comprehensive and readily available. Today’s boards must review their damage and destruction provisions to confirm they provide appropriate flexibility given current insurance realities.

This new reality, where coverage is often difficult or expensive to obtain, has the potential to create serious tension with existing CC&Rs that:

- Have outdated restoration requirements that don’t account for current insurance or financial realities.
- Fail to consider and allow for the possibility of a partial or “as-is” rebuild.
- Lack appropriate and efficient mechanisms for conducting a community-wide vote on the issue of whether to rebuild, terminate, or sell the property.
- Fail to provide sufficient guidance on the obligations of individual homeowners in circumstances where the association’s insurance falls short.

Reviewing these provisions now gives boards a chance to adapt them to current insurance and financial realities, to better protect both the association and individual homeowners, *before* they are forced to make high-stakes decisions under duress.

WHICH TERMS SHOULD MY COMMUNITY EVALUATE?

When reviewing your Damage and Destruction provisions, don’t just ask what’s missing; ask whether the existing terms still make sense given your community’s structure and current capabilities. Key areas to evaluate may include:

- 1. Rebuild or Reconstruction Flexibility:** Older governing documents may not provide sufficient flexibility in addressing reconstruction costs and insurance proceeds. Associations should ensure that their governing

documents provide options that reflect present-day realities. That includes scenarios where insurance proceeds are partial, the cost to rebuild has skyrocketed, or the membership no longer supports returning the project to its pre-loss condition. Provisions should allow flexibility for partial, “as-is,” or alternative rebuilding strategies when appropriate.

2. Termination and Sale Procedures: If rebuilding is not feasible (or has become undesirable), do the documents outline a clear process for winding down the project or selling the property? Is there a defined and efficient process for voting on or otherwise making the decision against reconstruction? Your CC&Rs should include clear procedures and voting thresholds for making these decisions, including how to handle insurance proceeds, title interests, continuing mortgages, and any surplus or deficit following termination.

3. Decision-Making Authority Post-Disaster: Who gets to decide what happens after a disaster? Is it the board, the membership, or both? Review whether your governing documents clearly outline the scope of board authority versus the need for owner approval. Ambiguities can lead to inaction or disputes at a time when swift decisions may be critical.

4. Insurance Proceeds and Disbursement Rules: Does the language explain how insurance funds should be allocated if the association does not rebuild? Consider whether the provisions direct proceeds to be distributed equally among the membership, in proportion to unit values or size, or by some other method. Account for potential claims by mortgagees, assessment delinquencies, or liens. The more detailed the disbursement framework, the less room there is for conflict.

5. Authority to Levy Special Assessments or Secure Funding: Despite having insurance, associations may still face significant shortfalls when it comes to rebuilding after a disaster. Boards should be prepared to close the gap through special assessments or alternative financing.

Under Civil Code § 5605(b), boards are generally restricted from imposing special assessments that exceed 5% of the association’s annual budget without member approval. But Section 5610 carves out an exception: the 5% cap does not apply to assessments needed to address an emergency, including unforeseen repairs to common areas. In most disaster scenarios, this emergency exception allows boards to act without a vote.

However, outdated or unclear CC&Rs can create practical roadblocks. If the documents are vague about how assessments are allocated, whether borrowing is permitted, or what procedures the board must follow, confusion or owner pushback can delay critical action. Boards may hesitate or unnecessarily seek member approval, not because the law requires it, but because their documents don’t provide clear internal guidance.

Reviewing CC&Rs to align with current law and ensure clear, decisive authority in post-disaster scenarios helps boards to avoid delays, reduce disputes, and accelerate recovery.

6. Member Communication Requirements: Your documents should support transparency. Consider whether they require timely notice to members regarding disaster impacts, proposed reconstruction plans, assessment estimates, and available insurance funds. Clarity up front builds community support and ultimately helps avoid claims of non-disclosure later.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BOARDS AND COMMUNITY MANAGERS

1. Review Your CC&Rs Now: Don’t wait for disaster to strike before you realize that your Damage and Destruction Clause might be outdated or have inadequate provisions to meet your specific association’s needs. Get ahead of the game.

2. Conduct a Legal Audit: Have legal counsel evaluate whether your governing documents still align with present realities, especially considering the current volatility of the insurance market. This is a good idea for your CC&Rs as a whole, not just the Damage and Destruction Clauses.

3. Amend When Necessary: Consider updating your CC&Rs to provide for:

- More flexible decision-making thresholds on rebuilds.
- Clear, efficient, and economical procedures for community votes to sell, terminate, or partially rebuild.
- Equitable methods to distribute insurance payouts, particularly in situations where the overall amount available may be significantly deficient or the damage at issue is only to a portion of the community.
- Clear authority for the board to impose special assessments for the full amount needed to rebuild (i.e., beyond the statutory 5%) or for alternative funding mechanisms.

4. Budget for Necessary Legal Work: Amendments aren’t free – but neither is litigation or, worse, the financial impact of having a community that does not have the tools it needs to able to rebuild.

5. Communicate with Owners: Ensure your members know that these clauses exist and how they will operate in the event of a catastrophe that may trigger their use. Discuss how these provisions can significantly affect the financial exposure of both the association and the individual homeowners personally.

6. Stay Informed on Insurance: Work closely with your insurance agents and brokers to better understand your association’s current coverage limits and risks – and how they intersect with the various requirements found in your CC&Rs.

The “Damage and Destruction” provisions are a critical framework that guides your community’s response when certain damages occur. In today’s evolving insurance landscape, boards and community managers should be aware of how these provisions are framed in their governing documents and ensure that they provide clear guidance and appropriate flexibility to protect both the association and individual homeowners.

Disaster is not the time to discover that your CC&Rs may be out of sync with reality. Boards that act now, before a crisis hits, position their communities to recover faster, smarter, and with less risk.



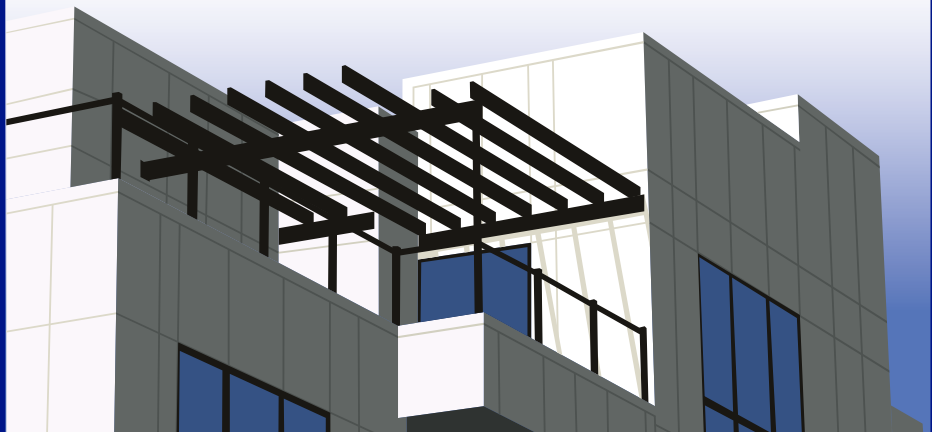
Daniel C. Heaton, Esq. is a Senior Associate at DeNichilo Law, APC, exclusively representing community associations throughout California as corporate and litigation counsel. He may be contacted at Daniel@DLawAPC.com or 949.654.1510.



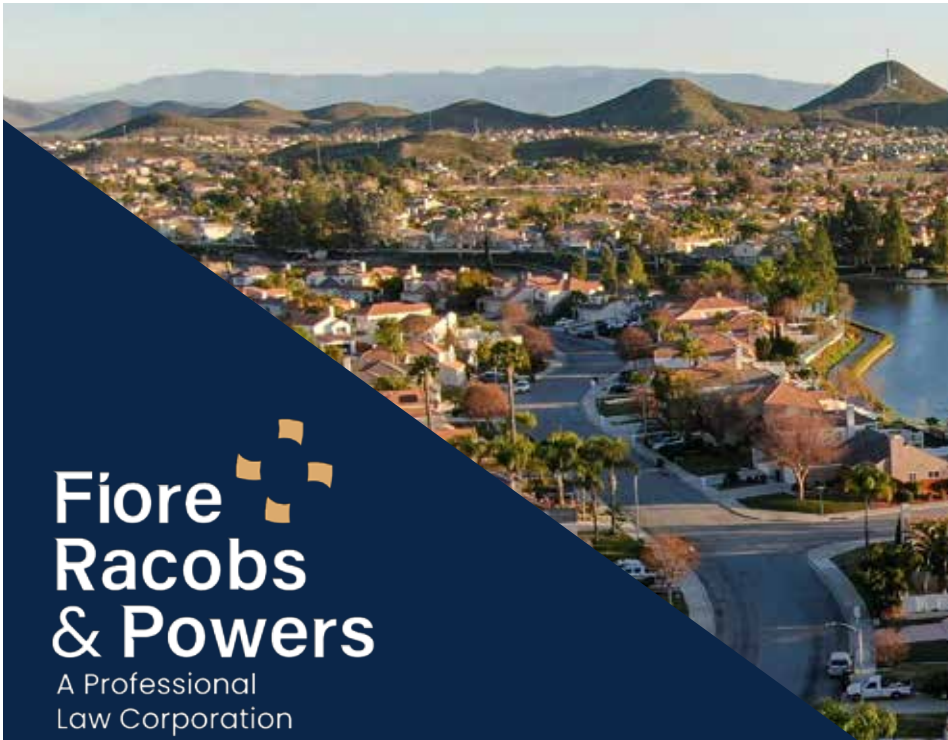
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SAFEGUARDING COMMUNITIES: BEST PRACTICES FOR FIRE PREVENTION THROUGH LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE IN FUEL MODIFICATION ZONES

BY: NICK MOKHLESSIN AND JONATHAN CACERES OF EVERTHRIVE LANDSCAPE COMPANY

Maintaining a properly maintained landscape within fuel modification zones is essential to reduce wildfire risk in Southern California and ensure the safety of surrounding communities, people, and homes. Fuel modification zones, typically located along the edges between native brush and residential or common area landscapes, serve as buffer areas that can be strategically managed to prevent the spread of fire. These zones play an essential role in creating defensible space and controlling fire intensity when wildfires occur. When properly established and maintained, they slow fire spread, give firefighting crews a tactical advantage, and create defensible space as required by California Fire Code (CFC) § 4907.

In this article, we outline the best practices for maintaining landscapes in fuel modification zones to minimize the risk of fire and enhance fire prevention efforts.

1. Understanding Fuel Modification Zones and Their Importance

Fuel modification zones are designated strips of land where vegetation and combustible materials are selectively removed, reduced, or replaced to interrupt wildfire paths. In Southern California, local jurisdictions often require these zones along property lines abutting wildland areas, particularly within state mapped Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones (VHFHSZ) under Public Resource Code § 4201. Their primary purpose is to serve as barriers that slow or halt the spread of wildfires, offering a chance for firefighting efforts to be more effective.

By creating defensible spaces within these areas, we can reduce the amount of combustible material that fuels wildfires, giving firefighters time and space to protect homes, trees and common area components such as parks and clubhouses.

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2. Fuel Management: Reducing Plant and Combustible Materials

One of the most effective ways to prevent wildfires is to manage landscape and vegetation to reduce the fuel load. Fuel load refers to the accumulation of combustible materials such as dry grasses, shrubs, dead trees, and other vegetation. Excessive fuel can increase the intensity and speed at which a fire spreads. Regular vegetation management is necessary to maintain fuel modification zones and ensure they perform as firebreaks.

- **Mowing and Cutting Grass:** Routine mowing of tall grasses reduces the amount of fine fuel available to a fire. For example, CAL FIRE defensible space regulations require grass height in coastal sagebelt and chaparral edges to be maintained below 4 inches (CFC § 4907.10).
- **Clearing Dead or Dying Vegetation:** Dead trees, fallen branches, and dry shrubs act as prime fire fuel. Removing these materials lowers the risk of fire escalation. CAL FIRE inspections often cite failure to clear “combustible growth” within 100 feet of structures (PRC § 4291).
- **Pruning Trees:** Elevating the canopy by trimming lower branches helps prevent fire from easily spreading from the ground to tree crowns. Per CAL FIRE’s “Home Ignition Zone” guidelines, a minimum 6- to 10-foot separation should be maintained between low-hanging limbs and ground vegetation.
- **Removing Invasive Species:** Some non-native plants are highly flammable and may contribute to faster spreading fire. Identifying and removing these species is a crucial part of fuel modification zone maintenance. Target invasive, high-risk species common in Southern California, such as fountain grass (*Pennisetum setaceum*) and pampas grass (*Cortaderia selloana*), which ignite readily and carry flame into native brush.

3. Creating Defensible Space Around Structures

One of the most critical objectives of fuel modification zones is to create defensible space around structures, including homes, barns, and outbuildings. A defensible space refers to the area around a structure that is cleared of combustible materials to prevent a fire from reaching the building. Fuel modification zones, when well-maintained, provide a buffer zone that acts as a protective perimeter.

- **Clear a Zone of 50-100 Feet Around Buildings:** Depending on local guidelines and terrain, clearing vegetation and debris within 50 to 100 feet of buildings helps to prevent fires from spreading directly to structures. Many Southern California cities require cleared zones to be inspected annually.
- **Use Fire-Resistant Landscaping:** Planting fire-resistant plants such as succulents, native grasses, and fire-retardant shrubs can reduce the amount of fuel near homes. Creating firebreaks using gravel, rock, or bare soil is also effective in limiting the spread of fire.
- **Removal of invasive or non-native plant material:** Fuel modification work should target invasive species which typically pose a greater risk of fire hazard than ornamental or native plants.
- **Grassy Weeds, Mustard and Tumble weeds** all dry out once temperatures rise and must be removed within the defensible space.
- **Separate Trees and Shrubs:** Avoid clustering trees and shrubs too closely together. A minimum spacing of 10 feet between tree crowns and the removal of dense, low-lying shrubbery can help reduce fire intensity.

4. Soil and Irrigation Management to Maintain Moisture Levels

Dry soil can intensify fire behavior, especially during Southern California’s extended drought cycles. Maintaining proper moisture levels within the fuel modification zones is essential to slow down fire development.

- **Soil Stabilization:** Use native groundcover, or erosion control fabrics to prevent soil dryness and reduce the risk of dust and flammable debris. Avoid hydromulch that dries into combustible mats.
- **Watering and Irrigation:** During periods of drought or heightened fire risk, maintaining a consistent irrigation schedule for grassy or vegetative areas can help maintain moisture levels and reduce the flammability of plants.
- **Avoid Over-irrigation:** While maintaining moisture is important, excessive irrigation can lead to fungal growth and weakened plants, making them more susceptible to fire when dry conditions return. Fungal pathogens weaken roots and create pockets of dead material.



5. Fire-Resistant Materials and Infrastructure

Along with landscape management in fuel modification zones, fire prevention should extend to the surrounding infrastructure, such as fencing, gates, roads, and power lines.

- **Non-flammable Fencing and Barriers:** Install fire-resistant fences made from metal or stone instead of wood and vinyl. These can act as barriers to slow fire spread. Comply with CAL FIRE’s Hardening Homes and Communities Guidelines.
- **Fire-resistant Road Access:** Ensure that access roads are cleared of vegetation and debris to allow for quick fire department intervention. Maintain a 10-foot clearance on either side of all access roads; prune overhanging branches to 13½ feet minimum vertical clearance (per CAL FIRE Fire Safe Council standards) to accommodate firefighting apparatus.
- **Coordinate with Utility Providers** (*e.g.*, SCE, SDG&E) to manage vegetation around power lines, mitigate ignition from downed lines, and ensure right-of-way clearance of at least 5 feet of non-combustible ground cover.

6. Regular Monitoring and Maintenance

Maintaining a fire-safe landscape is an ongoing process. Regular monitoring of fuel modification zones for potential fire risks is crucial to ensure the area remains effective as a buffer zone.

- **Seasonal Inspections:** Conduct regular inspections, particularly during dry seasons, to assess the condition of vegetation and the accumulation of dead material.
- **Community Collaboration:** In areas where large agricultural or rural landscapes exist, working with neighbors and local fire departments can lead to coordinated efforts in maintaining firebreaks and other critical zones.
- **Training and Awareness:** Educate your community on fire prevention strategies, including safe outdoor burning practices, fire safety measures, and how to report potential hazards. Provide homeowners and residents with CAL FIRE's Ready! Set! Go! Evacuation Planning Toolkit.

7. Integrating Technology for Improved Fire Prevention

With technological advancements, land managers can incorporate modern tools to help monitor fuel modification zones more effectively. Remote sensing, drones, and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) are valuable tools for tracking vegetation health, identifying fire risk areas, and planning targeted fuel reduction strategies for your defensible space.

- **Fire Behavior Modeling:** These programs predict the movement and spread of fires based on local environmental factors, helping land managers identify the most vulnerable areas for fire prevention efforts.
- **Satellite Imagery:** Remote sensing through satellite imagery can help detect changes in vegetation health and fire risk in real time. Use NASA's FIRMS (Fire Information for Resource Management System) to monitor hotspots and evaluate post-burn recovery.
- **Drones:** Drones equipped with thermal imaging cameras provide a detailed view of potentially hazardous areas, enabling quick detection of fire hotspots.

8. Annual Service and Weed Abatement

Maintaining the landscape of fuel modification zones involves more than just seasonal work; it requires a proactive, ongoing approach to manage invasive species and maintain the health of vegetation year-round. Annual service and weed abatement are key aspects of landscape maintenance, helping to reduce fire risks, prevent the spread of non-native species, and ensure the long-term effectiveness of firebreaks.

Annual Service Tasks:

- **Vegetation Assessment and Pruning:** At least once a year, assess the health of trees and shrubs. Remove dead or dying plant material to prevent it from becoming dry and highly flammable. Pruning low-hanging branches can also help reduce the risk of fire spreading from the ground to the treetops.
- **Tree and Shrub Replacement:** If certain areas of the fuel modification zone have lost vegetation due to disease, drought, or fire damage, replace them with fire-resistant plant species that are well-suited to the local climate and fire prevention needs. The goal is to maintain a balanced and fire-resilient landscape year-round.
- **Weed Abatement:** Weeds can quickly overrun fuel modification zones and contribute to increased fire risk by adding to the overall fuel load. Some invasive species, such as cheatgrass or bull thistle, are

particularly flammable and can spread fires quickly. Effective weed abatement programs are critical to prevent these species from taking over and ensure the landscape remains healthy and fire-resistant.

Best practices for weed abatement include:

- **Early Detection and Control:** Regularly inspect the fuel modification zone to detect invasive weed species early. Early intervention is crucial to preventing the weeds from spreading and becoming entrenched in the area.
- **Mechanical Weed Removal:** In some cases, using tools like mowers, weed eaters, or even specialized equipment for larger areas can help control weed growth without the use of chemicals. These tools are especially effective in managing grassy weeds, which can quickly dry out and become highly flammable.
- **Herbicide Application (when necessary):** While mechanical methods are preferred for many areas, selective herbicide application may be needed for persistent or particularly invasive weed species. Always follow local regulations and guidelines for herbicide use and apply them carefully to avoid harming native plant species.
- **Soil Health Management:** Weeds often thrive in disturbed or poor-quality soils. Improving soil health through aeration, composting, and mulching can help create an environment that discourages weed growth. Proper soil care also promotes the growth of native, fire-resistant plants. Aerate compacted soils before the rainy season (December through February), amend with coarse sand and organic compost (2-3% by volume) to improve drainage. Cover bare earth with weed barrier fabric under 1-2 inches of mulch to inhibit germination.

By including annual service and weed abatement as part of a comprehensive fire prevention strategy, homeowners and communities can ensure that their fuel modification zones remain effective, healthy, and resilient in the face of ongoing fire risks. Regular upkeep reduces the accumulation of dangerous fuel, supports native plant growth, and strengthens the overall fire protection strategy.

Conclusion

Fuel modification zones are an essential component developing your defensible space for reducing fire hazards, and their proper maintenance is critical for safeguarding lives, property, and ecosystems. By following effective landscape management practices, ranging from vegetation control to creating defensible space and leveraging modern technology, communities can significantly reduce the risk of fires spreading in these zones. Collaboration, monitoring, and ongoing maintenance are key to ensuring that fuel modification zones remain effective buffers against the devastating impacts of wildfires.

In the face of increasing wildfire risks due to climate change, maintaining these zones is no longer optional but a mandated, vital part of proactive fire prevention.



Nick Mokhlessin,
Everthrive Landscape Company.



Jonathan Caceres,
Everthrive Landscape Company.

“As a person who wants to contribute and bring value to the CAI chapters I am a member of, this workshop is an excellent tool. The four classes focus on different elements in the process of writing an article. The workshop format is a great way to learn from others. I enjoyed being able to share ideas and learn from the instructors and other workshop members. I receive a lot of motivation and encouragement from the class.”

— Craig D. Aron

CAI-GRIE WRITING WORKSHOP

On March 25th and April 3rd, CAI-GRIE hosted its annual two-part *Writing Workshop*, an engaging, **no-cost** opportunity for Chapter members to transform their industry knowledge and expertise into compelling, publication-ready content. Led by Editors-in-Chief **A.J. Jahanian** (Beaumont Tashjian) and **Daniel C. Heaton** (DeNichilo Law, APC), the sessions provided step-by-step, practical guidance for those eager to share their insights—but unsure where to begin.

Over the course of the Workshop, participants learned how to:

- **Select timely, relevant industry topics** that resonate with association audiences
- **Structure an article** for clarity and impact from intro to conclusion
- **Tailor content to a specific readership**
- **Stay focused and avoid common writing pitfalls**
- **Craft engaging introductions** that capture attention
- **Develop memorable, eye-catching titles**

Attendees also earned 4 CE credits for their participation.

If you missed this year's program, don't worry—the Chapter plans to bring it back in 2026. Whether you're a first-time writer or a seasoned contributor, this Workshop is a great way to hone your skills, get published, and contribute meaningfully to the industry conversation.



“I highly recommend AJ Jahanian's ‘Writer's Workshop.’ Whether a beginning or a seasoned writer this workshop will inspire you to write an article and provide you with excellent guidance from the instructors and feedback from the group. With little to no pressure you'll review the key elements of what makes a good article and put them to work writing your own. Then you'll review your completed or partial article and get immediate applause and vital feedback for your efforts. Who knows, you might even get published!”

— Steve F. Escoto, Board member, Villa Avanti Association

CAI GRIE APRIL EDUCATIONAL LUNCHEON

Tiffany Petty, CMCA, AMS,
Senior Community Manager
Seabreeze Management Company

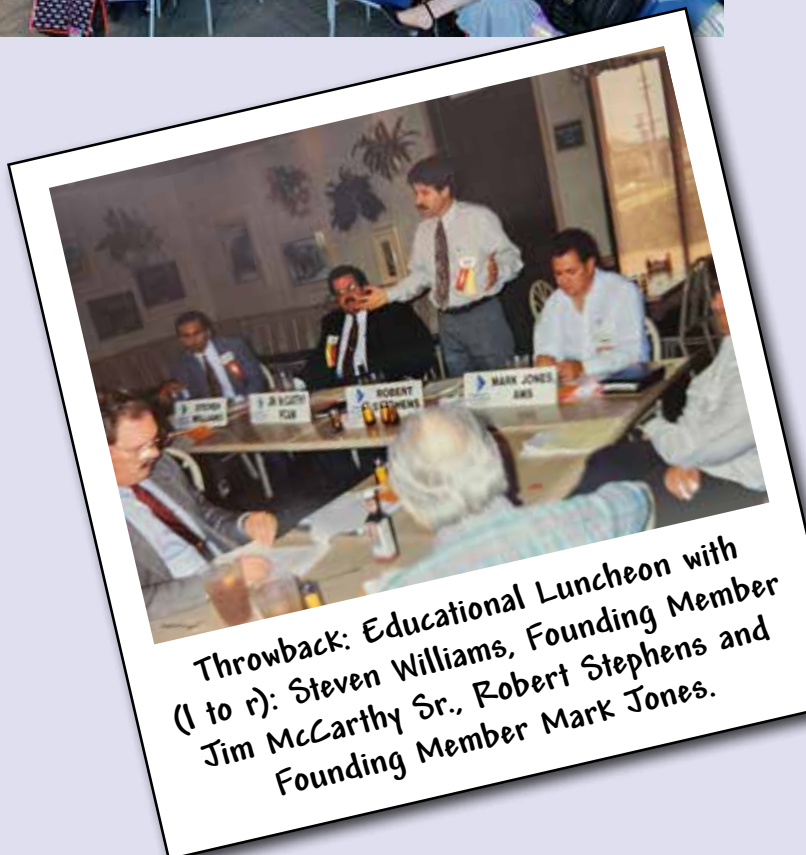
On April 2, we gathered at TopGolf Ontario for our Educational Luncheon on CAI Designations. After meeting with all our wonderful business partners in the patio area, we headed upstairs for the education portion of the event. I had the privilege of speaking with Sean Andersen, RS and Phil Hakopian, CIRMS. Our session explored the growing importance of certifications and designations in our specialized industry serving common interest developments.

As a community manager, my perspective emphasized how professional certifications not only enhance individual credibility but also elevate industry standards as a whole. Our panel discussed how certifications, for business partners, community managers, and homeowner leaders alike, demonstrate a commitment to ethical practices, regulatory compliance, and continuing education, all of which are vital in today's increasingly complex community association landscape.

We also addressed the tangible benefits received by both managers and the communities they serve, including improved service delivery, stronger client trust, and a more proactive approach to problem-solving and governance.

It was an engaging and insightful experience to connect with peers, share perspectives, and advocate for the kind of structured knowledge and training that makes a lasting difference in our profession.

We ended the day networking with one another in the TopGolf Bays with some friendly competition.



Throwback: Educational Luncheon with
(l to r): Steven Williams, Founding Member
Jim McCarthy Sr., Robert Stephens and
Founding Member Mark Jones.

Celebrating 35 YEARS cai GREATER INLAND EMPIRE

Spotlight on Hall of Fame Inductees and Chapter Past Presidents

2025 marks the 35th Anniversary of the Greater Inland Empire Chapter and in each issue of *Connect* this year, we will feature long-standing members who will share some memories. In this issue, Past President Jeremy Wilson, Past President and Hall of Fame inductee Robert Riddick and Hall of Fame inductee Scott Oksnee share perspectives and memories over the years. We will continue to spotlight Hall of Fame Inductees and Chapter Past Presidents in each *Connect* Issue during this special year of celebration.



**Jeremy Wilson, MBA, CCAM, CMCA, AMS, LSM, PCAM
2017 Past President**

Favorite memory of involvement with CAI?

One of my favorite memories from my time with CAI-GRIE was the sense of community that I felt during a particularly challenging period in my personal life. I had the privilege of working alongside dedicated professionals who, through their support, helped me stay focused and motivated. It was during that time that I truly realized the strength of the network within CAI. They weren't just

colleagues—they were friends, mentors, and people I could rely on when I needed it most. The camaraderie and shared dedication to the industry made that memory one that will always hold a special place in my heart.

Benefits CAI brings to the industry?

CAI plays a pivotal role in elevating the professional standards within the community association industry. The organization provides a wealth of resources, from educational programs to networking opportunities, ensuring that individuals and businesses stay on top of industry trends and best practices. CAI has helped foster a culture of continuous learning, and it has been a vital force in advocating for legislative change that benefits community associations across the nation. For me, CAI was not just a source of professional development, but also a lifeline during difficult times, offering the guidance and connections I needed to navigate both personal and professional challenges.

How did you grow/how did service in your role change you and make you better?

Serving as president of CAI-GRIE was one of the most rewarding experiences of my career. It challenged me in ways I hadn't anticipated, particularly in terms of leadership and resilience. It taught me how to navigate complex situations, make difficult decisions, and, most importantly, how to lead with empathy and understanding. My time in this role expanded my perspective, not only on the industry itself but also on the importance of fostering supportive relationships within professional networks. It was through this service that I learned the value of collaboration and being a resource for others, as much as they are for me.

How has the industry changed from when you first became involved—how is it different now?

When I first became involved in CAI, the industry was already evolving, but the pace

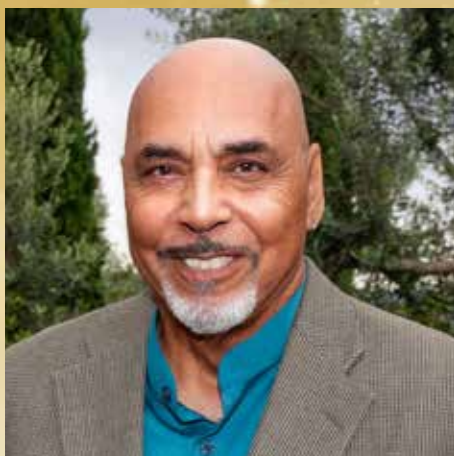
of change has accelerated significantly over the years. Technology, especially, has had a profound impact, transforming how community associations operate, communicate, and manage their day-to-day activities. Social media and digital tools have allowed for faster, more effective communication, but they have also brought new challenges, such as the need for enhanced cybersecurity and transparent governance. The industry's growing focus on sustainability and inclusivity has been

another notable shift, and it's exciting to see how CAI has embraced these changes and continues to guide the industry toward a more forward-thinking future.

Main things you've learned from your involvement?

My involvement with CAI has taught me countless lessons. First and foremost, I've learned the importance of resilience—both in business and in life. The challenges I faced personally were made easier by the

incredible support system I had within CAI. Professionally, I learned the power of ongoing education, collaboration, and adaptability. The industry is constantly evolving, and staying engaged with CAI has shown me the importance of continually refining skills, sharing knowledge, and embracing change. Lastly, I've learned that leadership is not about titles or authority—it's about supporting others, listening actively, and always striving to lift those around you.



Robert Riddick, CMCA 2012 Past President; 2013 Hall of Fame Inductee Sunnymead Ranch PCA

Favorite memory of involvement with CAI?

This is a hard one, with so many favorites to choose from having experienced during my tenure as a member of our GRIE chapter. But, having to choose one, I'd have to say that it was probably, more than not, my time that I served as the first homeowner volunteer leader to preside as president of our Chapter. And during that period of time having had the opportunity of watching our membership grow substantially, while managing an impressive member retention-rate, successfully keeping the Chapter more than financially sound, and making sure that our membership enjoyed first-class industry-related educational programs as well as social functions, all designed to strengthen the Chapter's support of our amazing membership. Close to that would be the personal pride created by our Chapter being recognized several times at past national CAI conferences, for our Chapter's accomplishments.

Benefits CAI brings to industry?

At the top of the list of benefits that CAI brings to the industry is the multitude of educational opportunities afforded to its membership. Whether as a homeowner volunteer leader, or as a business partner, or

as a management company associate, I've seen that CAI has an almost unlimited depth of educational resources that are made available to members of each specific member-group. It also provides enormous opportunities for business partner members to grow and expand their businesses through their direct involvement with CAI and its membership. And I've seen how CAI advocates on behalf of all three member groups, in advocating for legislation that protects the quality of life of HOA homeowners, while also advocating against legislation that could be harmful to any or all of our member groups. Overall, I'd like to think that CAI brings an undeniable amount of credibility as an educational and advocacy organization whose sole purpose is to increase the overall quality-of-life for all residents of HOAs, both state-wide as well as nationally.

How did you grow/how did service in your role change you and make you better?

Prior to joining CAI in 2007, I had truly never heard of the organization. My first important experience was my attending the 2008 national CAI Conference, which was held in close-by Las Vegas that year. From that single event, and the educational, social and networking opportunities it afforded me while attending, I knew that CAI was an organization I could enjoy immersing myself into, having just entered retirement prior to that. How did I grow? From that first conference attendance I was fortunate in having the opportunity to expand my involvement with CAI, including being elected to the national CAVL member group. That was followed by being a member of the national CAI Board of Trustees. Following that I became a member of CAI national's Foundation for Community Association

Research, ultimately serving as its president. In 2010 I also joined the GRIE board of directors as a homeowner volunteer. Between 2010 and 2023, I served a total of 12 years on our GRIE board. Beginning 2018 through 2023, I also served on the board of directors for the San Diego Chapter as well. I've also served as our GRIE CLAC Liaison for 6 years, and for the past 4 years I'm serving as one of our CLAC delegates. How did my roles change me, and for the better? Easy answer: I learned an enormous amount about organizational leadership and how to use it in order to be successful in accomplishing those organizational goals and objectives. I've learned how to empower individuals that I work(ed) with in helping them reach their own personal goals and objectives. I've learned that there will often be failures, no matter how hard you try to avoid that reality, as much as there will be successes, with each measured by the eyes beholding or affected by them. I've learned that patience and determination, along with a fair share of humility, are powerful traits to embrace when involved in organizations such as CAI. Being willing to better understand human nature in all of its variances, and being empathetic when necessary, are also tools that I've learned to embrace whenever the opportunity arises to do so. Most of all, I've come to meet and respect so many members of our Chapter over the years. Respect for their work-ethic, respect for their professionalism, respect for their acceptance of me as a peer, and respect for their granting me that same level of respect back. Overall, I can honestly say that my years of involvement with CAI have been both overwhelmingly rewarding, as well as personally enlightening. And I hope to continue for many years to come.

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How has the industry changed from when you first became involved—how is it different now?

The biggest change I've seen personally has been the emergence of a younger and more diverse group of individuals joining the ranks of our membership. For instance, when I first joined CAI, I recall attending educational luncheons where the number of people-of-color was limited to just myself and perhaps one other person that "looked like me". And that included business partner members as well. My experience at the CAI national level wasn't much different. At those events I was usually the proverbial "only one" in the room. I'm glad to say that today the landscape is a little different, and that's a good thing to see. Even so, there's still and always will be room for improvement. For that to happen it's

going to take CAI making a real and concerted effort in reaching out to those who, like myself initially, have no clue as to the existence of CAI and all that it offers its membership. Will it happen? Only time will tell. Other differences I've seen over time include more and better use of social media as a tool for attracting new members to the Chapter. The efforts made so far have proven to be reasonably successful, and using it to promote the CAI identity can only increase awareness to those who have never heard about our organization. We have a great team leading that effort, and I wish them only continued success.

Main things you've learned from your involvement?

If you want things to happen for the better, you've just got to be willing to put in the

time, the effort, and the willingness to work as a team in accomplishing your goals and objectives. This is an organization that allows for anyone to do just that. No exceptions. CAI is composed of some great and equally amazing individuals. During my tenure I've had the honor and distinct pleasure of being able to forge many new and satisfying relationships, both personal as well as business-related, with some of the most incredible, inspiring, knowledgeable, unselfish, and just downright good people, all of who make up the membership of our Chapter. The demographics will continue to evolve and change, as they should. But no matter what, CAI will always be an organization to be proud of being a part of. It's been a "great ride" so far, and I'm not disappointed in the journey in the least bit.

Scott Oksnee
Hall of Fame Inductee, LaBarre/Oksnee Insurance

Favorite memory of involvement with CAI?

I helped to create the first golf tournament for CAI in California - first in OC, and then in the Greater Inland Empire. It's a cool legacy for me, and I imagine it is a good memory for those who have attended tournaments ever since. I know it is one of the Chapter's biggest fundraisers, and I'm glad that I contributed to supporting the Chapter year after year. I had an amazing committee, including Janet Powers, Ellen Elish, Curt LaBarre and Jeff Olson.

Benefits CAI brings to industry?

I learned so much from being a part of CAI that I know from personal experience that education is a big part of what CAI brings to the industry. It's not just the day-to-day of how community associations work, but also the other details of how to be successful dealing with managers and management companies, and ways to run your business that you might never have thought of without the information from the people you meet in CAI. I also know that the education we do

for legislators can make a big difference in how smoothly our industry runs, and how successful our community associations are.

How did you grow/how did service in your role change you and make you better?

I learned so much from people who had been in the industry already. I was changed by meeting amazing people who helped me in business and helped how I saw business. Karen Bennett, second in command at PCM at the time, told me to never complain and never explain. I live by that. I was young (24) when I got in the industry: I was ready to learn. A leader at Merit told me to join and get involved. Without CAI we probably wouldn't be in the business today – it had that big of an impact on our success.

How has the industry changed from when you first became involved—how is it different now?

The people who started the management companies in California have all left now. Management companies, and business

partners, too, used to be more mom n' pop companies. Now they are made up of private equity, public companies, etc. Something else that has changed, but not how I would have hoped, is that per-door rate today is as low or LOWER than it was 40 years ago. The value of managers and management companies is not looked at with the esteem that it deserves.

Main things you've learned from your involvement?

Relationships – amazing relationships. I still talk to people that I met 40 years ago and I continue to learn things in a lot of different areas. I know insurance, but when I joined there were many things about the industry that I didn't know. Those relationships were, and are, key to continuing to learn and stay relevant in this industry.



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In a time when things change rapidly, we know it can be tough to know what's going on in your CAI Chapter. Luckily, you have a place to get the most up-to-date information about CAI-GRIE social events, education expos and online education opportunities.

Find out what's coming up at
CAI-GRIE.ORG/CALENDAR



2025 2ND QUARTER CAI-CLAC LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

*Jasmine F. Hale, Esq., CCAL
California North Chapter Delegate*

CAI's California Legislative Action Committee (CLAC) held its annual Advocacy Week event in Sacramento the week of April 22, 2025. This year we returned to the Hyatt Regency for this sold out event. In addition, CLAC held virtual legislator meetings with CLAC members, supporters, and CAI representatives from throughout the state on April 23, 2025. Altogether, CLAC and its 134 Advocacy Week participants had over 70 meetings with legislators and their staff members throughout the week. This is the highest Advocacy Week participation we have had since pre-Covid, so it was exciting to see and participate in!

While CLAC monitors and takes positions on a large number of bills before the legislature, one of the primary objectives of Advocacy Week is to highlight CLAC's positions on the most impactful and important pieces of legislation, to either help support their successful passage or to help blunt their forward movement through the legislative process. Unlike recent years, this year CLAC did not have any sponsored bills (i.e., when we advance the pending legislation), and the focus of our advocacy efforts was spent trying to eliminate entirely, or at the very least to amend the otherwise harmful laws that, if passed, would have dramatically reshaped common interest living as we know it.

This year, our Advocacy Week participants focused on explaining to the legislators and their staff that we met with why CLAC opposed the laws, their potentially harmful impacts, and we aimed to provide them with a better understanding of common interest communities in general. In addition, we also invited conversations with all legislators over the ongoing concerns about insurance, which CAI and CLAC are acutely aware of and endeavoring to help shape in a positive direction moving forward. As insurance is a complex and massive topic, CLAC's efforts in having a dialog with legislators will help in the long run by ensuring they have heard and understand our perspectives as changes to regulations and future legislation may be considered by them.

The week was buzzing with activity. Before we even started our meetings, the Senate Housing Committee heard testimony from our CLAC advocate, Louie Brown, and CLAC members throughout the state concerning Senate Bill 677 (Weiner) regarding Senator Weiner's proposed amendment to the Davis-



Stirling Act to mandate that associations must allow lot splits in planned developments, which is something we know was uniformly disliked by CLAC members for its lack of allowing communities to decide from themselves how they felt about this hotly contested issue. Much to our delight, SB 677 did not pass in the Senate's Housing Committee and it is referred to the 2026 legislative calendar, so we happily dodged this bullet this year!

We also advocated against Assembly Bill 21 (DeMaio) which, if it had passed, would have regulated everything from requiring associations to publish board packets for all members regardless of the confidential and private information in them, to prohibiting Board members from emailing each other, and more. Happily, the legislators recognized the bill for the onerous and unnecessary overreach that it was and it too was defeated in the Assembly's Housing and Community Development Committee.

We lastly advocated against Senate Bills 681 (Wahab) that would impose a limitation on association enforcement fines to no more than \$100 per violation and 770 (Allen) that would remove the sensible requirement that associations that are obligated to allow installations of electric vehicle charging stations in common area locations, the homeowners who install and use such stations should also have a duty to have their association added as an additional insured on their homeowners insurance policies. While both these bills continue to make their way through the legislative process, we know that all our hard work and advocacy made (and makes) a meaningful impact in helping legislators and their staff have a more complete understanding of the real world impacts these laws will make, and not always for the better.

We capped the week's events with a fantastic awards cocktail party and fundraiser after our legislative meetings on April 23, 2025 and a wrap-up meeting the morning of Thursday, April 24, 2025. For anyone who has been curious about legislation impacting our industry and the 13 million plus homeowners we advocate on behalf of, as someone who has been attending this event for over a decade, I encourage you to consider joining us for Advocacy Week 2026!

Perspectives from CLAC Advocacy Week Attendees



My Experience Attending CLAC Advocacy Week via Zoom



*Diane Weissberg
Fiore Racobs & Powers*

This is my second year attending CAI's Advocacy Week virtually via Zoom. CLAC made it easy to click on the links to participate in the meetings. I was impressed at the attentiveness of the representatives and legislative staff during the Zoom meetings. They listened and documented the concerns of CAI on the proposed bills in California as well as the impact they would make on the quality of life of 55,000 associations and their members. I would highly encourage CAI members to participate next year.



My Experience Attending CLAC Advocacy Week



*Sarah Karlovic, CMCA
Seabreeze Management Co.*

I've been in this industry for about 16 years and have attended many legislative update trainings. These updates often trigger either relief or grimaces—typically the latter. Yet, I never really stopped to consider how the legislation actually comes to be. That changed when I joined the CAIGRIE LSC and learned about Advocacy Week through my service on the committee. Wanting to prove myself as their newest appointee, I signed up to attend, not knowing what to expect or what we would be doing.

When I arrived in Sacramento, I was pleasantly surprised to find a well-organized event filled with purpose, collaboration, and fun. Several important bills were up for discussion, and our industry's insight was critical in highlighting some of the unintended consequences.

Now, I'm encouraging as many of my colleagues and peers as possible to participate next year—and every year after. In my view, few other volunteer efforts have the potential to impact our industry as meaningfully as this one. I'm also calling on management companies to prioritize this initiative by budgeting for their team members to attend. Advocating for HOA-friendly legislation is one of the most important ways we can serve and protect the communities we manage.

continued on page 28





My Experience Attending CLAC Advocacy Week



*Betty Roth, CMCA®, AMS®, LSM®, PCAM®
Homeowner Board Member, Heritage Lake Master Association
CLAC Executive Board Member
CAI-GRIE Executive Board Member*

As a homeowner leader in the CAI GRIE chapter I was again honored to attend, in person, Advocacy Week at the Capitol in Sacramento. My name is Betty Roth and I have had the opportunity to attend Advocacy Day each year since 2010, both in person and virtually. I am currently a member of the CLAC Executive Committee and the CAI GRIE Legislative Support Committee.

Attending the CAI Advocacy week in person, still strongly confirms my beliefs that we are able to show up in the legislator's offices and make a difference by giving them first hand experiences from the associations we manage, service and live in as managers, vendors and homeowners. Representing the millions of community residents in California by impacting legislation that can improve the quality of life for all homeowners in these vibrant communities is the reward in itself.

The legislators and staff have heard from us for many years now and are more knowledgeable about community association needs because

of our efforts each year. They asked great questions. Our legislators and/or their staff were very well versed on CAI and CLAC so the meetings were full of information on CAI CLAC's positions on the bills at hand. The legislators and/or staff were very receptive and supportive when listening to our speakers. Giving our input on bills led to the defeat of AB21 and SB677, both of which could have had negative consequences for community associations statewide had they become law. The legislators and staff also wanted to get more involved in the insurance efforts as well.

It is important that we all as homeowners living in associations show the California legislators what legislations is going to serve our communities well in the coming years. As a CAI-CLAC volunteer I will continue to work hard for all of our communities. And I look forward to seeing many more of you at Advocacy Week in Sacramento next year. We need our voices heard.



Attending CLAC Advocacy Week: A Newcomer's Perspective



A.J. Jahanian, Esq.
Beaumont Tashjian

As a first-time attendee at the CAI-California Legislative Action Committee's (CLAC) Advocacy Week in Sacramento, held the week of April 22, 2025, I was thrilled to enter the world of legislative advocacy. The event, hosted at the Hyatt Regency near the State Capitol, was a sold-out affair that brought together 134 participants for over 70 meetings with legislators and their staff. As an attorney new to this scene, I was amazed at how organized, productive, and impactful the week turned out to be, thanks to CLAC's efforts and our advocate, Louie Brown, whose work clearly resonated with lawmakers.

Stepping into the Action

The week kicked off with a well-structured orientation, setting the stage for what was to come. CLAC also held virtual legislator meetings on April 23, 2025, ensuring voices from across the state were also heard. Being one of those collective voices, our goal was clearly defined and articulated by Louie Brown and CLAC's esteemed team of organizers and volunteers: *To educate legislators about CLAC's positions on key bills that could reshape common interest living.* As a newcomer, I appreciated how CLAC was able to explain the stakes of our trip to the Capitol, by drawing from years of experience (and I'm sure, trial and error). Having a dedicated leader in the insurance industry, Kimberly Lilley, serving as the Chair of CLAC's Insurance Task Force, also proved invaluable in light of the ongoing insurance crisis affecting communities—a topic that was critical for legislators to grasp from our perspective, before the end of our time in Sacramento.

Organized Breakout Groups, Diverse Perspectives

One of the standout features of Advocacy Week was the breakout groups assigned to meet with legislators' offices. My group was a fascinating mix of backgrounds: an HOA board member, an insurance expert, a community manager, and me, HOA legal counsel. This diversity gave our discussions depth and credibility. The HOA board member shared real-world challenges of managing a community, the insurance expert broke down the complexities of coverage issues, and

the community manager brought practical insights into daily operations. As the attorney, I chimed in on legal implications, which helped round out our pitches to legislators' staff members. The organizers did a stellar job ensuring each group was balanced and prepared, with clear talking points and schedules that kept us on track.

Our meetings were productive, and I was struck by how receptive legislators and their staff were. Louie Brown, CLAC's advocate, set the tone with his articulate testimony on opposition of SB 677, which as a result of our efforts, did not pass the Senate Housing Committee and was instead pushed to the 2026 legislative calendar. Not only was this a win for CLAC and community associations everywhere (as it would have *mandated* acceptance of lot splits in planned developments, stripping away community autonomy), but it gave us tangible momentum heading into our breakout meetings as we presented our pitches on the remaining HOA bills.

As other bills were still moving through the legislative process, our meetings gave state representatives a clearer picture of the real-world impacts. Their staff diligently took notes, asked poignant questions, and engaged with our group's perspectives. But what stood out most to me was how collaborative the CLAC community was. From the orientation on day one, to the breakout groups, to the final day "wrap-up" breakfast, Advocacy Week was a masterclass in meticulous planning, organization, and implementation of tried-and-true strategies.

I left Sacramento exhilarated and looking forward to contributing to CLAC and Advocacy Week in 2026 and beyond. The value of "making your voice heard" can't be understated. Having the ear of those who shape policy for our state and, more intimately, our communities sure beats a Facebook post or a Tweet. Though politics might often feel like an impenetrable sludge of bureaucracy and inaccessibility, Advocacy Week is a rare opportunity to see the wheels of representative democracy turning at the Capitol in real time.

'FORE' THE GLORY

CELEBRATING THE RETURN OF OUR ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT

BY: SEAN FLOODY, HARVEST LANDSCAPE

The CAI-GRIE's "May the Course Be with You" Golf Tournament, held April 11th at Eagle Glen Golf Course in Corona, was an outstanding success. The Tournament brought together a full field of 144 golfers and featured 18 tee sponsors, a 19th hole sponsor, and several specialty sponsors, all contributing to an unforgettable experience. Participants enjoyed the beautiful sunny day, on-course contests, raffle prizes, and the opportunity to network with fellow Chapter members.

It was truly heartening to see the Chapter's members come together in support of the organization, making this the most successful golf tournament in recent years. Led by our new Executive Director, Erica Tenney, the collective enthusiasm demonstrated by all attendees emphasized the strength and unity of our Chapter. This event not only celebrated the sport of golf but also reinforced the bonds that make our membership thrive. Thank you to the Chapter staff, the Golf Committee Chairs and Members, all the sponsors, and everyone who participated for making this Tournament a remarkable occasion. We can't wait for the new Glow Golf Tournament in the Fall!



—With 14 years of experience in marketing, Sean Floody previously served as the Chapter's Director of Marketing. Now, as the Creative Director of Marketing at Harvest Landscape, he continues to support the Chapter as a Golf Committee Co-Chair and also regularly attends and sponsors other Chapter events.



Throwback: 1997 Golf Tournament



1st Place Winners- Environmental Concepts Landscape Management Team



Cigar Cart Sponsor, Tinnelly Law's Ramona Acosta (left) with Raffle and Replenish Cart Sponsor, The Arbor Group's Miranda Noble



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GoldStar Asphalt, Best Tee Booth Winner



(l to r): Judith Lopez, Sandra Flores, Erica Tenney, Jennifer Sanders and Bridget Dolan



(left): Executive Director Erica Tenney, Precision Landscape Solutions



Title Sponsor, Southwest Landscape and Maintenance's Pete Marcy



CAI NATIONAL CONVENTION – ORLANDO, FLORIDA

BY: ANNEMARIE HERNANDEZ, EMPIREWORKS RECONSTRUCTION

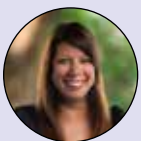
As a proud business partner and active member of multiple CAI chapters across Southern California, as well as nationally, attending and exhibiting at the 2025 CAI Annual Conference & Expo was an incredibly rewarding experience. It offered the perfect blend of professional growth, meaningful connections, and community engagement.

Not only did I get the chance to support my Florida team and connect with their local colleagues and management professionals, but I also had the pleasure of reconnecting with familiar faces from my home chapters in Orange County, Greater Inland Empire, Coachella Valley and Greater Los Angeles. From fellow business partners to management executives and CAI Executive Directors, the networking opportunities were endless.

The energy throughout the event was electric—there was something for everyone. Whether you were there to network, learn, or explore new opportunities, the atmosphere was welcoming and lively. I especially enjoyed seeing the CAMICB booth, as we frequently collaborate with them on our presentations.

A personal highlight was watching some of my clients receive well-deserved recognition. The educational sessions were insightful, and the CAI-sponsored social events added a fun and relaxed vibe to the experience. Our booth on the expo floor saw excellent traffic and engagement, making it clear that our investment of time and resources was well worth it.

All in all, it was a fantastic event that reminded me just how strong and supportive the CAI community truly is.



—AnneMarie Hernandez is with EmpireWorks Reconstruction.

CAI-GRIE MAY EDUCATIONAL LUNCHEON RECAP:

TALK LESS, SAY MORE (LEGALLY)

THE BOARD AWAKENS: BRINGING BALANCE TO CONFIDENTIALITY AND TRANSPARENCY

On May 14, 2025, the CAI-GRIE Education Committee hosted A.J. Jahanian, Esq.; Sarah Karlovic, CMCA; and Daniel C. Heaton, Esq., to deliver an engaging luncheon presentation focused on achieving the difficult balance between transparency and confidentiality in community association communications.

Everything kicked off with a jam-packed Exhibitor Hall that was visited by over 65 community managers and homeowner leaders. While everyone enjoyed a delicious lunch from Luna Grill, the panel opened with a discussion on why robust, clear, and legally compliant communication is essential for trust-building and operational success in associations. As a seasoned community association manager, Sarah highlighted real-world examples which successfully navigated good communication without compromising sensitive information. A.J. dove into the legal nuances between stakeholders (*i.e.*, owners vs. tenants vs. managers vs. trustees, etc.), and what level of information access each should be afforded. This discussion included tips from Sarah on how to verify access rights and communicate effectively with different stakeholders of the community.

Daniel then shared his legal expertise as to which records *must* be produced under California law, and how to handle these requests both efficiently and timely. He also addressed cost recovery, managing repeated or harassing requests, and best practices for avoiding disputes as an experienced litigator.



May Luncheon Speakers: (l to r): Daniel Heaton, Esq., Sarah Karlovic, CMCA, and AJ Jahanian, Esq.

The panel concluded with a focused discussion on privilege and what to do if confidential information is inadvertently disclosed. Further complicating this sensitive issue is the evolving landscape of artificial intelligence and ubiquitous implementation of new technologies which, unknowingly, might be compromising confidentiality and privacy. The panel underscored the importance of policy implementation by boards and management executives alike to help navigate these new (and old) technologies.

The shared message of the trio was that legal compliance and protection of confidential information do not, necessarily, have to come at the expense of effective, transparent communication, and trust-building.



Throwback: Educational Luncheon





2025 CAI-GRIE UPCOMING EVENTS

JULY

July 25

Angels Baseball Game

Bus pickup in Corona at 5:00 p.m.

Game: 6:35 p.m.

Angel Stadium – Anaheim

AUGUST

August 13

Free Legal Panel

Educational Luncheon

11:00 a.m.

DoubleTree Ontario Airport – Ontario

If you have questions for free legal,

please email them to

ExecutiveDirector@cai-grie.org

ahead of the luncheon.

August 28

Bowling Tournament

6:00 p.m.

Pins 'n' Pockets – Lake Elsinore

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The California Legislative Action Committee (CLAC) is a volunteer committee of Community Associations Institute (CAI), consisting of homeowners and professionals serving homeowner associations (HOAs).

CAI is the largest organization in America dedicated to the monitoring of legislation, educating elected state lawmakers and protecting the interests of those living in community associations.

CAI-CLAC is working toward legislative solutions that are right for California homeowner associations.

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