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Middle-Class Dreams Lie in Ruins in Palisades Mobile Home Park

The Los Angeles wildfires destroyed mobile homes, leaving people who saved to build a middle-class life digging through rubble for anything that remained.



The remnants of the Pacific Palisades Bowl Mobile Estates, a mobile home community destroyed by fire. Credit...Ariana Drehsler for The New York Times

By [Jacob Bernstein](#), Reporting from Los Angeles - Published Jan. 11, 2025 Updated Jan. 12, 2025

Up on Amalfi Drive in the Pacific Palisades neighborhood of Los Angeles, luxury homes owned by celebrities are still standing. But down at the Pacific Palisades Bowl Mobile Estates, a mobile home community on Pacific Coast Highway just across from the beach, all of the nearly 200 homes are destroyed.

“Nothing but ruins,” said Maria Nol, who lived in a mobile home there with her daughter, her son-in-law and her three grandchildren.

Ms. Nol was one of many people who worked and struggled their way to a middle-class life but has now been digging through rubble for anything that remained.

“The media is advertising and publicizing all the celebrities that lost their homes, but the people who live here inherited homes from their parents who bought in the ’70s,” Ms. Nol’s daughter, Lynda Park, 43, said on Friday.

Ms. Park had worked at the [Pacific Palisades Presbyterian Church](#). That also burned to the ground this week. So did the home of the family her mother worked for as a cleaner.

Ms. Nol owned the house in the 16000 block of Pacific Coast Highway but did not have an insurance policy on it. Getting one had become too expensive, she said, given the high probability of a natural disaster in this scenic but fire- and landslide-prone area.



A street sign in the Pacific Palisades Bowl Mobile Estates this week. Credit...Ariana Drehsler for The New York Times

“The only things we have left are the clothes we have on,” Ms. Park said.

She wore a blue down vest on top of a white T-shirt and Gap jeans. Her mother had on a red zip-up sweatshirt and black sweatpants. Ms. Nol estimated her own clothes cost around \$50.

A few feet away was their neighbor, Bonnie Kanner, 63.

That morning, Ms. Kanner had been so frazzled that she put her top on inside out. Now, she was using her iPhone to photograph the debris around her home, as required by her homeowners insurance policy. The policy provides for \$400,000 in coverage, she said, including the property itself and for personal effects.

She would have to submit an inventory of her possessions to collect the full amount, but all her records burned in the fire.

Left of her was a hollowed-out washer and dryer. To her right was a circular object about three feet in diameter with charred springs.

“My trampoline,” she said.

Ms. Kanner used a metal detector to look for her sterling silver cutlery. After it started beeping, she extracted something metallic that resembled Play-Doh from the rubble. Her forks, knives and spoons had melted together.

She left the ruins of her home with the melted clump of silver. She said she might be able to resell it, probably for a few hundred dollars.

[Jacob Bernstein](#) reports on power and privilege for the Style section.