



DISTRIBUTION DATE: Sept. 15, 2020

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR &  
CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Joe DeVries  
Director, Interdepartmental  
Operations

**SUBJECT:** Wildfire Prevention Planning

**DATE:** September 14, 2020

---

City Administrator   
Approval

Date: Sep 15, 2020

---

### INFORMATION

On November 19, 2019, the City Council adopted Resolution No. 87940 C.M.S., declaring Wildfire Prevention a top priority for the City of Oakland and requesting the City Administrator to present a comprehensive report to the Public Safety Committee (PSC) that addresses Oakland's Wildfire Prevention Strategies within 180 days. The specific guidance in the resolution was as follow:

Submit a Report That Addresses: 1) How City Departments Will Address Wildfire Prevention In Their Planning, Programs And Projects For Oakland's Wildland Urban Interface (WUI), Including The Extent To Which The Strategies Will Involve Multi-Disciplinary And Multi-Agency Teams In The Development Of Pre-Fire Plans, 2) What Wildfire Prevention Plans Will Include Such As Home Hardening, Evacuation And Other Wildfire Prevention Strategies For Both Private And Public Properties, And Public Communication Strategies, Before, During And After A Wildfire Event, And 3) The Extent To Which Wildfire Prevention Will Be Addressed In The Next Updates To The City's General Plan, Safety, Open Space, Hazard Mitigation Plans And Other Similar Plans.

### BACKGROUND / LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

Wildfires are a natural part of California's landscape and the potential risk of wildfires impacting communities in, and adjacent to, forested areas is at an all-time high. In the last few years, California has experienced the deadliest and most destructive wildfires in its history. Oakland's history of wildfires is no secret in California, the Oakland firestorm of 1991 was one of the largest urban wildfires. The fire started on the border of Oakland and spread throughout the Oakland and Berkeley hills. Ultimately 25 lives were lost, 150 people were injured, over fifteen hundred acres of land were burned, and thousands of homes were destroyed. The high winds, steep terrain, and heavy fuel load made fighting this historic blaze a major challenge. The economic loss from the fire was estimated at \$1.5 billion.

The City Council adopted Resolution No. 87940 C.M.S. in response to the increased concerns of the past few fire seasons. As a response to this concern, the City established a Wildfire Prevention Working Group that meets regularly to both address short term needs and to continue the various long-term strategy planning and implementation. The Wildfire Prevention Working Group consists of the following Departments: Oakland Fire Department (OFD), Oakland Public Works (OPW), Department of Transportation (OakDOT), Bureau of Planning and Building (P&B), Oakland Police Department (OPD), and the City Administrator's Office as convener. Additionally, City Council staff serving constituents in the High Fire Hazard Zones in the hill areas were invited to attend.

This report is organized to be responsive to the three subject areas posed in the resolution and stated above. It also highlights some short-term actions that have been taken recently to reduce the risk of wildfire in Oakland. These include traffic control and parking restrictions in high fire danger areas, vegetation removal efforts, and coordination with outside agencies and jurisdictions.

1) **How City Departments Will Address Wildfire Prevention In Their Planning, Programs And Projects For Oakland's Wildland Urban Interface (WUI), Including The Extent To Which The Strategies Will Involve Multi-Disciplinary And Multi-Agency Teams In The Development Of Pre-Fire Plans**

**Oakland's Vegetation Management Plan**

The most critical piece to the City's planning efforts at reducing the risk of wildfire is the Oakland Vegetation Management Plan (the Plan). The Plan is complete and OFD is preparing the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) on it to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The Plan outlines a framework for managing fuel loads and vegetation on City-owned properties and along roadways in the City's wildland urban interface (WUI) areas to reduce the likelihood of a catastrophic wildfire, such as the 1991 Oakland Hills Fire, and to reduce the likelihood and scope of injury and property damage if such a fire occurs.

The Planning Area encompasses approximately 1,925 acres, and 308 miles along roadsides, including City surface and arterial streets, State Routes 13 and 24, and Interstate 580. Staff provided an update to the Oakland City Council Public Safety Committee on December 3, 2019 and to the full Council on December 10, 2020 on the Plan.

Below is a link to the Agenda Report:

[https://oakland.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4249996&GUID=62C57E61-1BD7-4D2D-A104-4BC20395DD2E&Options=&Search=.](https://oakland.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4249996&GUID=62C57E61-1BD7-4D2D-A104-4BC20395DD2E&Options=&Search=)

The timeline for the Plan is as follows:

- Horizon/Dudek provided the Administrative Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to City (August 2020);
- City reviewing Administrative EIR draft (Fall 2020);
- City publishes the Public Draft EIR (Fall 2020);

- Forty-five-day Comment period on Draft EIR commences (Fall 2020);
- City presents the Draft EIR to Planning Commission and receives public comment (Fall 2020);
- Horizon/Dudek prepares final EIR including responses to comments received (Fall/Winter 2020);
- City revises Draft EIR and Revised Draft Plan (Fall/Winter 2020);
- City presents the Plan and EIR to the Planning Commission (Winter 2020);
- Certification of Plan and EIR by the City's Planning Commission (Spring 2021);
- City Council Committee meetings (Public Safety and Public Works) (Spring 2021);
- City Council Hearings (expected Spring 2021);
- Adoption of the Plan by the City Council (Spring 2021); and
- File Notice of Determination filed with Alameda County Clerk Recorders Office and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) State Clearinghouse (Spring 2021; must be posted for 30 days).

**Financing of Plan Implementation [Source: Council Informational Memo, December 10, 2019, <https://oakland.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4249996&GUID=62C57E61-1BD7-4D2D-A104-4BC20395DD2E&Options=&Search=>]**

Members of the public have expressed interest in how the implementation of the Plan will be financed. The Plan itself does not provide any recommendations regarding sources of funding to implement the Plan. Those decisions are made by the City Council during the City's Biennial Budget and Mid-Cycle Budget processes. However, the Plan does include preliminary estimates for the costs of actions contained in the Plan. Please refer to Section 12.5, Implementation Costs, on page 236 of the Plan and Appendix H of the Plan for more information. It should be noted that these costs will fluctuate over time, based upon a number of different factors; however, these estimates will provide baseline information that can help inform the City's budget discussions and any planning for any future assessment.

Until 2017, OFD was able to use proceeds from the Wildfire Prevention Assessment District (WPAD) to pay for vegetation management activities. In order to provide funding for vegetation management and mitigation programs/services specific to the WPAD, a ten (10) year parcel assessment on properties located within the designated WPAD was approved by voters in 2004. The assessment resulted in an annual WPAD budget with expenditure line items recommended and approved by the WPAD Citizen Advisory Board in conjunction with the OFD, to be used for vegetation management and mitigation programs/services. The WPAD provided the City with an average of one million seven hundred thousand dollars (\$1,700,000) in revenues that could be used for wildfire hazard reduction services in the Oakland Hills. These services were described in the 2013-14 Engineer's Report for the Assessment District as: Goat Grazing; Property Owner Chipping Program; Vegetation Management Program; Roving Fire Patrol Program; Support Services for Inspection Programs; and Public Outreach.

In November 2013, a ballot measure to continue the property tax assessment and activities supported by the WPAD was forward to voters; however, the WPAD failed to earn the

affirmative vote of more than 2/3 of the electorate in the District. As a result, the parcel tax expired in 2014 and the remaining fund balance was completely expended by June 30, 2017. OFD Vegetation Management currently relies on funding appropriated from the General Purpose Fund (Fund 1010) by City Council in the City's Adopted Policy Budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2019-2021. For FY 2019-20 and 2020-21, OFD Vegetation Management was appropriated two million nine hundred and twenty-six thousand, five hundred and thirty dollars (\$2,926,530) and two million forty-six thousand, two hundred and twelve dollars (\$2,046,212), respectively. These amounts include for each FY one-time funding of one hundred thousand (\$100,000) for the Plan and one million one hundred thousand dollars (\$1,100,000) in lieu of a renewed Wildfire Prevention District. An additional nine hundred thousand dollars (\$900,000) in one-time funding was also provided in FY 2019-20 (Year 1 of the biennial budget) with the intention of accelerating vegetation management operations to prepare for FY 2020-21 (Year 2) wildfire season.

### **The Creation of a Multi-Disciplinary and Multi-Agency Approach to Wildfire Prevention**

Until the launch of the Wildfire Prevention Working Group, City departments were not entirely coordinated on the topic of wildfire prevention or large-scale emergency preparedness. The simple act of launching the Working Group focused on this single topic expanded the lens of City departments to see how each of their respective functions play an important role in how the City prevents, prepares for, and responds to wildfires.

During regular meetings, which occur twice monthly, working group members representing several departments have an opportunity to explore and learn about the range of strategies the City of Oakland uses to proactively mitigate wildfire risk, like the Fire Prevention Bureau's vegetation management program. It also provides a chance for staff to ask and respond to questions from other City staff, elected officials, community organizations and residents on issues such as how we approach parking restrictions in the hills, best practices for home hardening, evacuation planning, and coordination with outside agencies such as PG&E or jurisdictions like East Bay Regional Park system.

The following sections of this report will break down the Multi-Disciplinary and Multi-Agency Strategies the City is applying in order to ensure it is strategic in its efforts to prevent the ignition, spread, growth and intensity of a wildfire in our city.

### **The Fire Prevention Bureau: Vegetation Management and Annual Inspections**

The Fire Prevention Bureau's Vegetation Management Unit, a division of the Oakland Fire Department, has made outstanding progress in 2020 with regards to Wildfire Planning and Prevention. Beginning in March of 2020, the Vegetation Management Unit initiated the release of abatement contracts for roadside clearances and clearing of City owned parcels throughout Oakland's designated Very High Fire Severity Zone. To date, 33 contracts have been released for competitive bid, and 19 of those abatement contracts have been completed, 4 are in progress and 10 are awaiting the encumberment of funding to begin. The Vegetation Management Unit anticipates releasing another 10 contracts before the end of the fiscal year. For the first time since

2014, the Vegetation Management Unit has been fully funded (an additional \$1,000,000.00 was added into the Vegetation Management Unit 19/20 fiscal budget in October of 2019) with regards to its abatement account.

Major egress route roadways within the Oakland Hills were cut and cleared of hazardous roadside vegetation prior to the July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday, increasing the community's safety and decreasing the fire threat. Additionally, through the contracted goat grazing program with Ecosystems' Concepts Inc., goats were deployed in April 2020 to the Grizzly Peak Open Space, North Oakland Sports Field & Tunnel Road City Parcels and in June to the Kings Estates Open Space and Joaquin Miller Park with Knowland Park and Sheffield Village completed in July 2020.

The Vegetation Management Unit is on track to abate over two thirds of the City owned undeveloped parcels and parklands prior peak fire weather conditions of late August, September and October of 2020. The Acting Vegetation Management Supervisor and his team of Fire Inspectors are actively inspecting privately owned vacant lot parcels for fire code compliance and guiding the annual Residential Inspections conducted by the Engine Company Firefighters at 11 Oakland Hills Fire Stations that began in June 2020. While facing increased fire probability due to the weather patterns of the spring of 2020, the OFD as a team has made significant progress in wildfire mitigation this fire season.

### **Fire Prevention Inspections**

In addition to the City's current efforts to manage wildfire risk on its property, the City also adopts amendments to the California Fire Codes which requires owners of both public and private properties in the High and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones (H/VHFHSZ) to take additional safety measures to reduce the likelihood of wildfires and to prevent their spread. Examples of these safety measures includes installing sprinklers on new structures or those undergoing a major remodel; and maintaining defensible space around a building. Defensible space is defined as an area around a building where vegetation, trash and debris, and other types of flammable fuels have been treated, cleared, or reduced to slow the spread of fire both to and from the building. Low-cost measures like maintaining defensible space or screening attic vents can help protect Oakland's housing stock and increase fire safety community-wide.

The Oakland Fire Code not only establishes building and property maintenance standards, but also provides for their enforcement. The Vegetation Management Unit coordinates the City's vegetation inspection efforts. Each year, property owners in the Oakland hills receive an annual inspection by OFD. Although properties are inspected once a year, they are expected to maintain defensible space around their property year-round.

### **Recent Inspection System Upgrade**

OFD transitioned to a new inspection and permitting database called Accela which has been used by the Planning and Building Department for several years. This transition involved moving from paper/pen documentation to compiling inspection data with electronic devices (iPads and

iPhones). An essential piece of this conversion includes the documentation of inspections with photo images collected with electronic devices. By capturing images of the property/site at the time of inspection, OFD can document Compliance or Non-Compliance, ensure inspections are completed in accordance to inspection requirements, respond to complaints, use photos for inspection training and provide transparent inspection data to registered property owners and their authorized agents.

Digital images of the inspection site and status at the time of the inspection allows OFD to compile an accurate account of the inspection details. This information can then be reviewed to ensure quality inspection and training; and give a transparent account of the inspection. In combination with the use of the citizen facing portal called ACA (Accela Citizen Access), a registered user can access the record details in the Accela database. This project is a complete renovation of the former manual inspection system to the use of new software and hardware to document inspection details with real time data.

The technology provides clearer documentation of the inspections completed. It also allows inspection documentation to take place much more quickly and be linked to other vital information about the property through the Accela system.

OFD began using the technology in May of 2018 to process vegetation inspections in the Wildfire Protection areas of Oakland. These inspections are completed by firefighters and vegetation inspectors on an annual basis. The technology was deployed out of the Fire Marshal's office with joint staff from the Fire Prevention Bureau and OFD command staff. The technology is used daily by the engine company staff and inspectors from the Fire Prevention Bureau to document scheduled inspections and complaints.

OFD is in the process of converting all of its fire inspections to the Accela system which will mean that any code, commercial, or other type of inspection will be tracked and stored in this system. This will create efficiencies that will improve fire safety citywide by allowing for more inspections to occur on an annual basis and will help identify problem properties where an elevated fire hazard may exist.

### **Additional Interdepartmental Coordination**

#### **Oakland Public Works**

##### *OPW – Keep Oakland Clean and Beautiful*

Keep Oakland Clean and Beautiful (KOCB), a unit in OPW, clears public right of ways and hardscape medians below I-580. KOCB has a seven-person crew for this purpose. While the OFD is primarily responsible for vegetation management in the former Wildfire Prevention Assessment District areas, there are some instances where OPW provides service. For example, if there is vegetation in the right-of-way that is obstructing the view of a regulatory sign or traffic, OPW will attempt to resolve those issues. Previously, KOCB was also able to partner with non-profit organizations such as the Center for Employment Opportunities and the Alameda County Sheriff's Work Alternative Program to assist with roadside clearance.

## **OPW – Parks and Tree Services Division**

The Parks and Tree Services Division of OPW oversees tree removal activities for the City as well as landscaping on improved City of Oakland properties, such as Woodminster Amphitheater, Joaquin Miller Park, Leona Lodge, Sequoia Lodge, Montclair Golf Course, etc. On improved parcels, brush is cleared a distance of at least fifteen (15) feet from buildings and structures. The Division also maintains landscaped medians throughout the City. Although the work was not done specifically as a wildfire prevention project, OPW did contract for the removal of ninety-five (95) dead and hazardous trees along Skyline Boulevard in 2019-20. As a result of budget reductions that occurred, OPW does not maintain City owned open space, nor does it prune or maintain trees for the purpose of wildfire prevention.

## **The Planning and Building Department**

The Strategic Planning Division within the Planning and Building Department is addressing wildfire prevention strategies in several different areas in coordination with multiple departments and outside agencies. The department participates in the Working Group and their contribution to those efforts are covered below in section 3.

## **Department of Transportation**

### *Fire Safe Streets Program (2015- Present)*

Traffic Engineering Staff partners with OFD to determine ways to reduce the time it takes for OFD to arrive to the scene of emergencies. Every minute of a medical call, fire or other emergency, is critical to preserve lives and property. Cities and counties often use emergency response time as an evaluation measure. Further, responders require physical space in order to deploy their equipment at the scene, space which may be constrained by street design.

Poorly designed or inadequate infrastructure can hamper fire-suppression efforts and put residents and firefighters at risk. Reducing the risk of wildfire damage and destruction may require the City to implement measures beyond those involving an individual building or parcel. It is also essential to enhance mitigation measures at the neighborhood and community levels, which will effectively expand the zone of protection beyond an individual parcel or building.

In 2015, the team began evaluating traffic and life safety issues regarding emergency vehicle access and evacuation routes in the Oakland hills and what is commonly referred to as the Very High Fire Severity Zone.

The conversations stemmed from incidents where there was a delayed emergency response, and ongoing questions and concerns that were raised by residents about evacuation routes in the hills due to parked cars blocking the roadway.

The pilot program was launched, whereby twenty-one (21) streets were successfully surveyed and designated as “no parking.” The program allowed the City to proactively restrict parking on narrow streets to test effectiveness and public reception. The target area for the pilot was

neighborhoods north of Highway 13 between the Contra Costa/Berkeley border (to the west) and Keller Avenue (to the east). Community feedback about the program was very positive overall.

In 2019, the program transitioned from a pilot program to full implementation with the aim of providing safe passages throughout the designated Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (a state designated fire hazard zone) in Oakland.

The street segments below were identified by the OFD as locations where on-street parking has consistently obstructed emergency-vehicle access. For that reason, “No Parking Anytime” signs and, in some cases, red paint has been installed/refreshed on some or all of these roads:

Alvarado Road, Bristol Drive, Brunell Drive, Chelsea Drive, Dwight Way, Dwight Place, Gravatt Drive, Stonewall Road, Vicente Road, Vicente Place, Westview Drive, Florence Terrace, Westover Drive, Charring Cross Road, Capricorn Avenue, Norfolk Road, Ocean View Drive, and Heather Ridge.

Hazardous street conditions are brought to the attention of the City in the following ways:

- Correspondence from resident to City staff or Council member.
- Social media posts or comments.
- Community meetings.
- News Inquiries (typically initiated by community interest).
- Letters from community organizations.
- Reports from OFD crews following incidents.
- Calls to Oak311 and Parking Enforcement Dispatch

Streets are then surveyed, and some are identified as a roadway with limited emergency vehicle access. Streets are evaluated for sufficient width and space to allow safe passage and room to deploy equipment and personnel. Streets with limited access create significant challenges in providing emergency response for fire apparatus and ambulances year-round. Additionally, these streets may be the only option for escape during an escalating wildfire event or large-scale disaster. Unfortunately, OFD experienced this reality of vehicles not being able to navigate a road safely while evacuating and delaying emergency responders during the 1991 Firestorm, and other communities throughout California have experienced this more recently. Therefore, the following criteria are used in evaluating streets, and the determination of whether parking restrictions are necessary are specific to each road:

- Roads should be wide enough to allow evacuation and emergency vehicles simultaneous access. As a rule, the minimum width is 20 feet.
- However, street width is not the only determining factor used as most streets in the hills do not have consistent widths.
- Horizontal curves also require a wider clearance for vehicular passage and shoulder conditions, such as the presence of vegetation, walls, and other structures that affect how much a parked car would encroach onto the street, also contribute to the decision.

- Firefighters need room to deploy equipment and personnel. They also need to keep firefighters and equipment out of the collapse zone of structures. When working at the scene of an incident, fire departments usually need to accomplish some or all the following tasks:
  - Open cab doors so that firefighters can exit the apparatus
  - Retrieve equipment from compartments on the side of vehicles
  - Retrieve ground ladders from the vehicle
  - Connect fire hoses to pumps on the fire engine
  - Move equipment and vehicles around or beside the first fire vehicle to arrive at the scene
  - Keep firefighters and equipment at a safe distance from a structure or landscape collapse zone, if possible
  - When using an aerial ladder, OFD deploys stabilizers (a.k.a. outriggers) to prevent the ladder truck from tipping over when the ladder is extended to the side of the vehicle.
- The space that emergency responders need to be able to accomplish these tasks can vary considerably, depending on the kind of fire apparatus and other emergency response equipment chosen by a department, the type of incident, and the design of the neighborhood's streets, building design and street network.

#### *Heather Ridge Way Example*

Between 2018-19, residents on Heather Ridge Way continuously expressed concerns about emergency services being able to access their homes and if needed their ability to escape during a wildfire.

In 2019, Heather Ridge was evaluated several times by both OakDOT and OFD, and it was determined that the entire street met the requirements for restricted parking/emergency access. This evaluation consisted of measuring the entire street at different locations to determine where it fit into the Oakland Municipal Code (OMC).

The OFD and OakDOT staff met on site in May 2019 and drove a fire engine down the street (after measuring) to see if any areas could be used for "on street" parking and it was determined that was not practical and/or safe. All parties who worked on the project were dedicated to trying to accommodate the needs of the entire Heather Ridge community while also finding solutions to address the restricted ingress and egress issues.

Fire and OakDOT staff met in person multiple times with residents on the Heather Ridge. A community meeting was convened by Councilmember Sheng Thao's office with neighbors and staff. OFD sent three letters to the neighbors to residents impacted by the issue and participated in several local media interviews highlighting the importance of creating safe access routes.

Ultimately, it was determined that a large portion of the street had to be designated "No Parking" in accordance with the OMC and to ensure preservation of life and property.

### *Enforcement*

OakDOT's Parking Enforcement Unit has supported these efforts the past several years in many ways, including attending staff and community meetings, promoting its dispatch service (available Monday through Friday, 8:30am to 5:00pm by calling 311 or 510.238.3099), and conducting special enforcement campaigns along the network of streets in Phase 1, 2 and 3. In addition to regular patrols, the Parking Enforcement unit now deploys technicians to the hills whenever there is a red flag warning. This standard procedure was implemented in mid-August with the City's first red flag warning of the year, resulting in the issuance of two citations along the approximately 35 street segments targeted. A second red flag warning campaign produced similar results, indicating fairly good compliance with the new parking regulations.

### **Recent Efforts to address immediate hazards on Grizzly Peak**

When the Wildfire Prevention Working Group first came together in the spring, an immediate concern about Grizzly Peak Blvd was brought to the forefront. Large gatherings in the evenings, especially on weekends, were creating many hazards, especially with increased numbers of illegal fireworks being discharged leading up to the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Holiday. OFD tracked 6 wildfires on Grizzly Peak in a short 6-week period, the majority of which were caused by fireworks. Additionally, as people gather late into the evening and consume alcohol, traffic accidents are especially dangerous along this winding stretch of roadway and there have been incidents of violence/shootings occurring at the turn-outs. The majority of this problematic behavior is occurring in the evening. There are nine separate turn-outs where this activity occurs and those locations are all accessed by the City of Oakland roadway but the underlying turn-outs are under the jurisdiction of UC Berkeley, the City of Berkeley, and East Bay Regional Park District.

The Wildfire Prevention Working Group evaluated different measures to mitigate these issues in the short and long term. On July 4<sup>th</sup>, the City closed Grizzly Peak Blvd. to all through traffic (except pedestrians and bicyclists) and successfully avoided any fires that day. This plan was supported with freeway signage by Caltrans and all the adjacent jurisdictions supported the effort as well.

The group evaluated three options as a long-term approach:

1. Closing these turn-outs 24/7 during the fire season using some form of traffic barriers that could be removed when the fire season ends. This could entail using K-rails in the short term and then engineering removable barriers in future years. OakDOT provided cost estimates to use barriers to close all the turn-outs during this fire season and the cost is very prohibitive, ranging from \$300,000 to \$500,000. There is the potential that people would still stop to observe the panoramic views of the Bay Area and block a travel lane which would create an additional hazard. Also, the loss of those scenic locations for people to enjoy the views during the day was a consideration that many neighbors have cited as a reason to keep them open.
2. Closing Grizzly Peak completely in the evenings to through traffic during the fire season. A daily closure at the main entry points would require a smaller investment in physical barriers but would require staffing to close the gates each night, patrol the entire stretch to

allow people to leave (so they are not locked in), and then reopening in the morning. This poses too many logistical issues and a potential new safety issue for some neighborhoods that might use Grizzly Peak as an evacuation route (it is an identified evacuation route for the El Toyonal neighborhood of Orinda).

3. Prohibiting Stopping at all turnouts between 9pm and 6am and making them tow away zones on Red Flag Days.

The Wildfire Prevention Working Group selected option 3, and signs were installed on the week of August 29<sup>th</sup>. This measured approach gives law enforcement the proper signage to enforce the restriction through warnings and citations. The other jurisdictions that share responsibility can also issue citations, and the Wildfire Prevention Working Group can track the effectiveness this year and evaluate if more permanent barriers need to be installed or if this is sufficient. Also, this option allows for responsible persons to enjoy the view up until sundown while keeping the area off limits when the greatest potential hazards can occur.

The group is also evaluating locations on Skyline Blvd. in Council Districts 4 and 7 for a similar intervention due to large gatherings where fire hazards are high. Because the Wildfire Prevention Working Group meets on a regular basis with staff from all key departments, it has the ability to respond to emerging concerns quickly. The recent work on Grizzly Peak and recent efforts on Red Flag days are an example of that coordination.

### **Oakland Police Department**

OPD has fully embraced the importance of Wildfire Safety and its impact on the Oakland Community. As a participant in the Wildfire Prevention Working Group, OPD will employ the following strategies to deter dangerous activity linked to wildfires:

- Police Area 2's Community Resource Officers opened a community policing project with community organizers, stakeholders, and City partners to address short-term and long-term improvements to Grizzly Peak public safety fire dangers.
- The OPD Public Information Officer (in conjunction with City and OFD media teams) will assist with public outreach and education regarding the importance of fire safety and the dangers of firework and unlawful activity related to fire danger in the City of Oakland.
- OPD will maintain the ability to monitor a Fireworks Tip—Line for use during high-risk seasons or dates; the line will have the ability to accept anonymous information regarding fireworks.
- Community Resource Officers will run educational/enforcement operations to address illegal activity in the "Very High Fire Severity Zone(s)" such as Grizzly Peak
- OPD will be the lead agency regarding the multi-jurisdictional annual shut down of the Grizzly Peak area during the July 4<sup>th</sup> (Independence Day) holiday.
- Neighborhood Services Coordinators will continue to work closely with community groups to identify evacuation routes, problematic locations and other resources available

- When resources, personnel and priorities permit, high fire danger areas will be patrolled by patrol officers and community resource officers to mitigate fire danger and other public safety issues that potentially aggravate public safety fire danger.

### **Outside Agencies/Partnerships**

The City's partners in Wildfire Fire Prevention include the East Bay Regional Parks District, Moraga – Orinda Fire Department, East Bay Municipal Utilities District (EBMUD), CALTRANS, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, U.C. Berkeley and PG&E. Through cooperative communication, our partners have completed numerous vegetation management projects throughout their respective lands within or adjacent to the City of Oakland that benefit our residents through the reduction of roadside fuels, thinning of invasive eucalyptus trees and goat grazing.

The East Bay Regional Parks District Fuels Management Crew has already completed brush removal in Tilden Park along Grizzly Peak and in Redwood Regional Park along Skyline Blvd. The Moraga – Orinda Fire Department recently completed controlled burns (June 2020) in both Moraga and Orinda (just 2.5 miles east of Oakland residential homes).

EBMUD conducted an invasive tree thinning project on watershed lands east of Grizzly Peak Blvd and south of Tilden Park that reduces canopy fire transfer along the wind-swept ridgeline to the northeast of Claremont Canyon area homes.

CALTRANS continues to abate the highway roadside vegetation along Highway 13 and Highway 580 with guidance from the OFD's Vegetation Management Unit.

Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory has deployed goats which are actively grazing on their parcels below the Panoramic Way homes of Oakland.

U.C. Berkeley has completed extensive fuels reduction north of Claremont Canyon including invasive tree removal on its properties below Grizzly Peak Blvd and along Claremont Avenue.

PG&E created a fuel break from Highway 13 at Highway 24 east adjacent to Pali Court and through the canyon and ridgeline south of the North Oakland Sports Field to Broadway Terrace at Skyline Blvd. to protect its high voltage transmission lines and provide a buffer to the homes of upper Broadway Terrace.

This work by PG&E was completed with input from Oakland's Fire Prevention Bureau and its Vegetation Management Unit through monthly meetings provided by the Hills Emergency Forum, Diablo Fire Safe Council of Alameda and Contra Costa Counties and the OPW/ CALTRANS bi-monthly meeting.

The City's efforts continue to mitigate hazardous vegetation wherever present within the Oakland Hills. The City is fortunate to have built proactive relationships with our partnering agencies who recognize that these actions are necessary to protect the City's infrastructure,

preserve life and property and enable the City to prosper without catastrophic loss due to wildfire.

Overall, the City's initiatives in this regard are working. The declared fire season of 2019 lasted 203 days in Oakland from May 13, 2019 to December 2, 2019. During that time, Oakland Fire responded to 11 wildland fire events in the Oakland Hills. No structures or lives were lost. That's a 94.58 % fire free success rate due to the fuels abatement project's work, reducing the probability of ignitions and most importantly, providing Firefighters time to respond and arrive on scene BEFORE an ignition event increases in size. Additionally, regular meetings with adjacent municipal Fire Departments, CALFIRE and other stake holder agencies provides familiarity with their Command Staff that transfers into efficient Fire Suppression Operations when fire events occur.

2) **What Wildfire Prevention Plans Will Include Such As Home Hardening, Evacuation And Other Wildfire Prevention Strategies For Both Private And Public Properties, And Public Communication Strategies, Before, During And After A Wildfire Event**

**Home Hardening**

In regard to Home Hardening, much of the work is captured in the inspections that are conducted on an annual basis and discussed above. Additionally, the Vegetation Management Plan covers this topic but most importantly is public education and that is covered below under the communications strategy section.

**Evacuation Planning**

The City of Oakland Emergency Management Services Division, OFD, OPD, along with other public safety agencies throughout Alameda County have identified the need to create a countywide evacuation plan. During the Summer of 2018, OFD, the Alameda County Fire Department, Berkeley Fire Department, Hayward Fire Department, CalFire, and the Alameda County Sheriff Office created the Alameda County Evacuation Task Force (XALETf). The core mission for the XALETf is to develop a countywide evacuation plan that will allow for the facilitation of an organized and integrated wildfire evacuation that isn't restricted to city or county boundaries.

In the fall of 2019, the multi-agency group initiated discussions with Zonehaven, a company that was creating technology to address the evacuation concerns of San Mateo County, Moraga/Orinda, and El Cerrito/Kensington. In early 2020, the XALETf agreed that the Alameda County Sheriff Office of Emergency Services would be the lead agency for coordinating the required funding utilizing grant allocations, facilitate sole sourcing, and negotiate a contractual agreement. The sole source process was completed early 2020, along with identifying a funding source to secure a five-year agreement with Zonehaven.

Unfortunately, in March 2020 progress on securing a contract was paused due to COVID 19. Nonetheless, as County Counsel and Zonehaven work to finalize the contract, Zonehaven is

moving forward in creating the county evacuation zones and is working with the XALETF to develop a review and implementation plan. The XALETF anticipates having a preliminary platform in service by December 2020 assuming a contract can be executed in a timely manner and no additional unforeseen situations impede progress.

### **The Evacuation Management Platform**

The Zonehaven Evacuation Management Platform is a zone-based application that makes it easy for OFD, law enforcement and the County Office of Emergency Services to collaborate, build, and maintain evacuation plans, train using evacuation simulations and scenarios, and notify agencies and the community in the event of a live emergency. The need for this cutting-edge technology has been demonstrated throughout California due to recent wildfires and in Oakland during the 1991 Tunnel Fire.

This evacuation platform will provide access to technology that will allow for the OFD, OPD, and Emergency Management Services Division to better understand community risk and assist with planning a safe and effective evacuation plan. Zonehaven is being developed as a regional evacuation application that will hopefully be utilized in all nine Bay Area counties eventually.

Zonehaven will be providing Oakland with a standardized evacuation plan that works on a common operating platform to facilitate essential cross boundary coordination. It will provide Oakland residents and first responders immediate evacuation warnings and orders when the situation dictates. The platform will empower OFD and OPD to make decisions on when to evacuate, which zones to evacuate, allow for monitoring critical evacuation traffic information in real-time, assist with creating pre-established traffic control points, pre-identify temporary refuge areas, and provides an interface to facilitate real-time wildfire modeling by Incident Commanders at the scene. Once operational, the vision is that a Zonehaven interface will be established that allows for connectivity with AC Alert, the Alameda County mass notification system that the City of Oakland utilizes (acalert.org). This concept of inter-connectivity is still in development between the two vendors. If successful, it will allow for evacuation information to be accelerated when needed. The Zone Haven Evacuation Management Platform will be used for all risk disaster mitigation that may include flooding, hazardous material leaks/spills, tsunami, and wildfires.

For more information about Zonehaven, go to the following links:

<https://info.zonehaven.com/resources>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P3pXJ9NKEfc&feature=youtu.be>

### **Communications Strategies Pre/During/Post Events**

#### **Timely, Accurate and Reliable information on the City website**

With the onset of fire season and a range of current events happening concurrently, including the Covid-19 global pandemic, the City of Oakland's citywide public information team made up of

staff from several departments is working aggressively to create a single location on the City website where residents and other interested parties can locate and learn about the best ways to prepare and respond to emergencies before, during and after they occur. The current webpage addressing wildfires can be found here: <https://www.oaklandca.gov/resources/wildfire-event>

Residents deserve to have access to a single reliable and accurate source where they can stay informed, and in the event of a major wildfire can get access to information at the following points:

- Before a fire: to prepare their household in advance
- When fire threatens: to stay ready in case they need to evacuate
- During a fire: for information on how and when to evacuate
- After a fire: for information on when they can return and what they're returning to.

The homepage on the City website will have a banner year round to direct people to guidance regarding emergencies, especially for wildfires preparedness and red flag warning days which are often triggered by anticipated stretches of extreme heat, high winds and low humidity.

### **Helping Residents Stay Informed in the Moment**

Another public education initiative that has been underway for the last year is an effort to increase the number of Oakland residents subscribed to AC Alert. Oakland residents need to be ready to evacuate in a wildfire with or without notice from public safety officials. Signing up to receive [AC Alert emergency notifications](#) via phone, text and email, is the most effective tool available to ensure we can reach community members if an evacuation is ordered.

Meanwhile, as the City promotes the benefits of AC Alert to its residents, it continues to seek out ways to enhance its own use of the tool and is working internally and with its county partners to formalize the type and scale of event that would prompt an AC Alert notification, and the most effective messaging to use during such events. The intent is to have the AC Alert notification from the City link back to a specific emergency page on the site, thus providing not just a notification but educational resources as well.

### **Emergency Preparedness Starts at Home**

OFD's Emergency Management Division is in the midst of a major moment of growth, in terms of adding talented staffing capacity while seeking out opportunities for enhanced community partnerships. The City is looking forward to reinstating a community preparedness program similar to Citizens of Oakland Responding to Emergencies (CORE) that would build relationships between the city and its residents, and creating neighbor-to-neighbor communication channels. Over the last year, the City has cultivated partnerships with organizations focused on fire safety and community preparedness. Among those groups is the Oakland Community Preparedness and Response, which is linked to the Oakland Firesafe Council, which is funded through grants from CAL Fire and the California Fire Foundation. Their website provides residents with awareness, educational workshops, detailed guides and

“support to residents of the city of Oakland to help increase the overall community preparedness level and to improve disaster response capabilities. The City has the expressed approval of the Firesafe Council to promote their materials on our website and social media channels.

### **Socializing Fire Safety Tips and Information**

In addition to the pages in development on the website, the City uses a range of public information tools to provide timely accurate information regarding emergency incidents and events. Unfortunately, sometimes the volume of options where people can gather information can have a negative impact as people may get confused or overwhelmed by the varying styles or volume of information available depending on the platform.

Currently, the City’s public information team utilizes the following tools to reach Oakland’s diverse constituencies:

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- Nixel, used by OPD primarily to share crime prevention tips and traffic alerts
- KTOP (public access Television)
- Press Release to the City’s media list
- NextDoor
- Active Campaign, an opt-in subscriber-based application used disseminate messages and newsletter style content from the City Administration.

In 2019, during the Public Safety Power Shutoff events, the public information team relied heavily on elected officials’ ability to share timely information with their constituents via their newsletters and social media regarding power outages, timelines and projected impacts to city services. In turn, the City benefitted from hearing back from those elected officials and community partners about what information residents needed in real time, as opposed to after the fact.

Staff recognizes that there is no greater tool to support communication efforts than neighbors speaking with neighbors and trusted community organizations sharing well-crafted and accessible informational materials with their members, clients and supporters.

In addition to evaluating its communications tools, the City is consistently considering what the most appropriate sequence is for notifying the public of emergency events or issues in the community.

In Oakland, the City Administration has benefitted immensely from the dedicated groups, many of which are based in the high fire hazard severity zone and have made it their mission to promote and educate people on the very real threat that wildfire poses in based on Oakland’s topography and its proximity to other threat zones. Over many years and to this day, these groups have been on the front lines promoting the annual inspection program, community preparedness

and emergency response training, while providing critical guidance to City leaders and departments about the need for greater departmental alignment and focus in the area of wildfire prevention.

**3) The Extent To Which Wildfire Prevention Will Be Addressed In The Next Updates To The City's General Plan, Safety, Open Space, Hazard Mitigation Plans And Other Similar Plans.**

As mentioned above, the Strategic Planning Division within the Planning and Building Department is an active participant in the Working Group and, by definition, its efforts are primarily focused on planning efforts including the General Plan and its various elements as detailed below.

*ADU Ordinance*

A planning effort that is currently underway, is writing the new ordinance to conform to the recently passed State Laws for accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and incorporating regulations restricting ADUs in the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, which are included in the S-9 Fire Safety Protection Combining Zone. As part of writing the ADU ordinance, planning staff is coordinating with both OFD and OakDOT.

*Local Hazard Mitigation Plan*

The City's Local Hazard Mitigation Plan will be updated by July of 2021 and the City will be reviewing and revising as necessary its wildfire prevention strategies. The plan will be led by the Emergency Management Services Division with the Strategic Planning Division assisting and coordinated with the Wildfire Prevention Working Group as well as the Department of Race and Equity along with outside agencies of Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC)/Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), East Bay Municipal Utilities District, East Bay Regional Parks District, and San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission.

*Housing Element and Safety Element*

The City will be updating its' Housing Element and Safety Element as well as adopting a new Environmental Justice Element that are all due in December of 2022. As part of the update of these elements, the City will be reviewing and revising, where appropriate, its wildfire prevention strategies. Updating and creating these elements will involve the City Administrator's Office and a number of departments, including Planning and Building, Fire, Housing and Community Development, Human Services, Race and Equity, Public Works as well as outside agencies of MTC/ABAG, East Bay Municipal Utilities District, East Bay Regional Parks District, and San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission.

*Land Use and Transportation Element*

The City will be updating the Land Use and Transportation Element (LUTE) as well as the Open Space, Conservation, and Recreation Element. Densities and subdivisions within the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone and S-9 Fire Safety Protection Combining Zone will continue to be

limited, and updates for wildfire prevention strategies will be analyzed as well. There will also be multiple departments involved in this effort including Planning and Building; Transportation; Public Works; Economic and Workforce Development; Parks, Recreation, and Youth Development; Race and Equity, Human Services, and Public Library along with outside agencies of MTC/ABAG, East Bay Regional Parks District, Alameda County Transportation Commission, and AC Transit.

### **PUBLIC OUTREACH / INTEREST**

The work of wildfire prevention requires everyone to be involved, especially the public, as their actions are the most important to preventing wildfire. The Hill Area Neighborhood Councils regularly discuss wildfire prevention and the Neighborhood Services Coordinator for those beats is a member of the Wildfire Prevention Working Group. Also, the Fire Safe Council of concerned neighbors meets regularly and has a strong ongoing relationship with City staff. On August 31, a Joint District 1 and 4 Town Hall meeting was conducted during which the main components of this report were shared.

Because wildfire prevention is an ongoing task, this report is a living document and receiving public input helps shape more effective decisions by the team.

Respectfully submitted,



---

Joe DeVries, Director, Interdepartmental  
Operations, Office of the City Administrator

For questions, please contact Joe DeVries, Director, Interdepartmental Operations, at (510) 238-3083.