

# Vegetation Management Program Vision and Proposal

Public Safety Subcommittee

Division Chief Fire Marshal Scott Moon  
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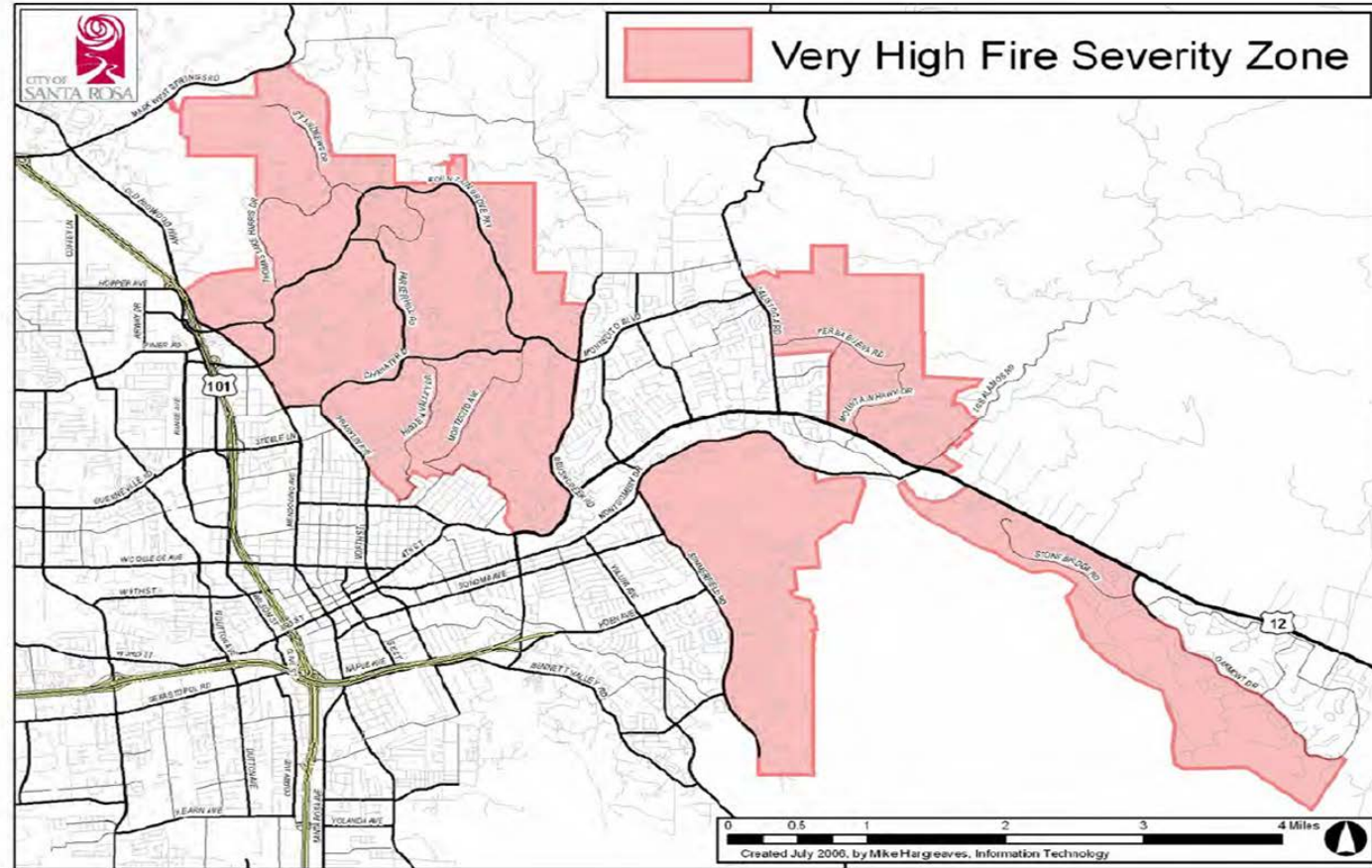
September 25, 2020

Fire Department

# History

As a result of the Oakland Hills fire of 1991, the Bates Bill (337) was passed in 1992 requiring CAL FIRE to work with local governments to identify high fire hazard severity zones within local responsibility areas (LRA) throughout each county in the state.

A Very High Fire Hazard Severity Map was adopted for the City of Santa Rosa – Local Responsibility Area (LRA).



# Actions taken in the 1990's



Per the mandates of the Bates Bill (AB 337 - *The "Bates" bill, Government Code Section 51175*) Fire Department Staff notified homeowners within the VHFHSZ's of their requirements to comply with the new language as spelled out below:

1. Clearing and pruning flammable vegetation within 30 – 100 feet of structures to prevent a path of fire travel,
2. Remove tree branches within 10 feet from chimney openings,
3. Provide a ½" mesh screen or approved spark arrester on stove pipes and chimney openings of any heating appliances in which solid or liquid fuel is used,
4. Clean the rain gutters and roofs free of leaf litter and debris and remove dead branches within 6 feet of the roof,
5. A local requirement was added for residents to provide address numbers that area clearly visible from the street.

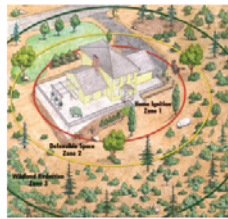


## Vegetation Management

**HOME IGNITION ZONE**  
(The home plus 10 feet distance)

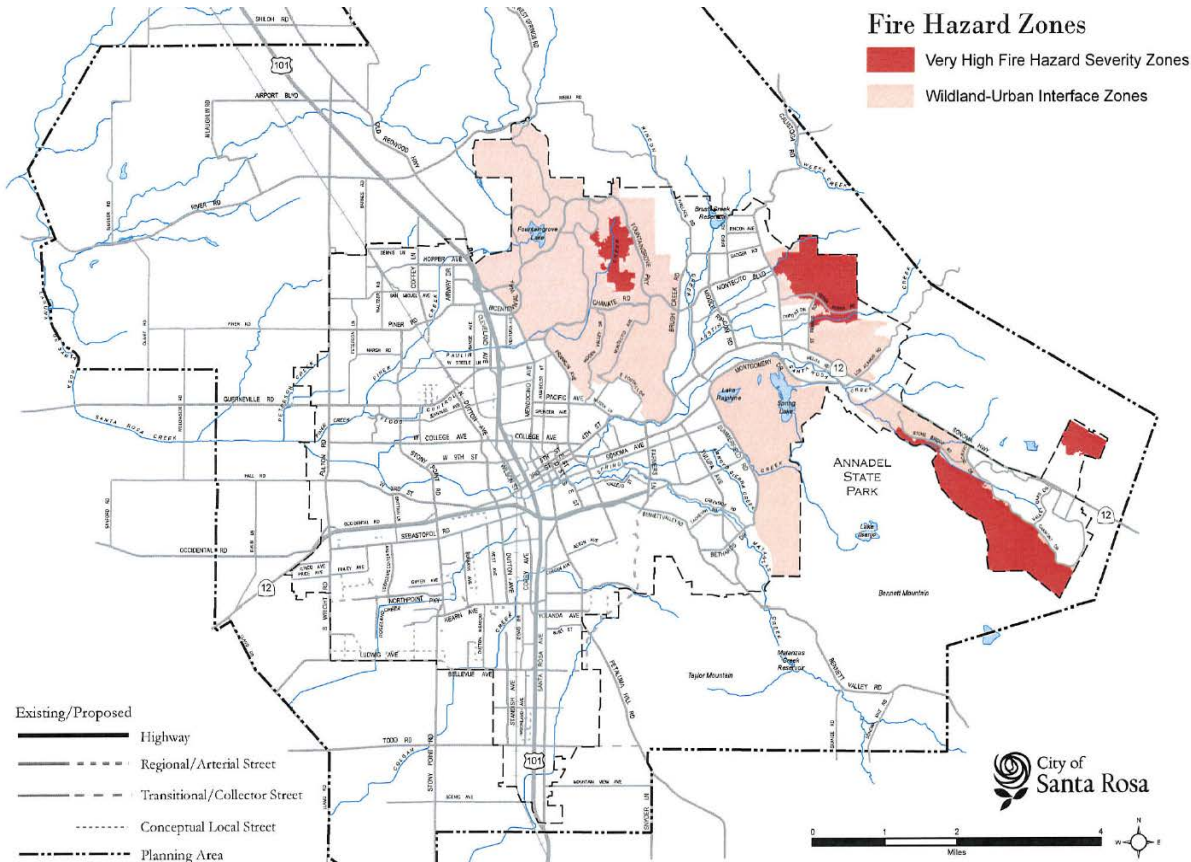
**DEFENSIBLE SPACE ZONE**  
(100 feet + away from home or to the property line)

**WILDFIRE FUEL REDUCTION ZONE**  
(\*The outlying area beyond the required defensible space)



\*In the early 2000's the program was paused due to growing demands related to calls for service, mandated training, inspections, staffing and other duties related to the growing community.

# Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone Map – Proposed by Cal Fire 2007



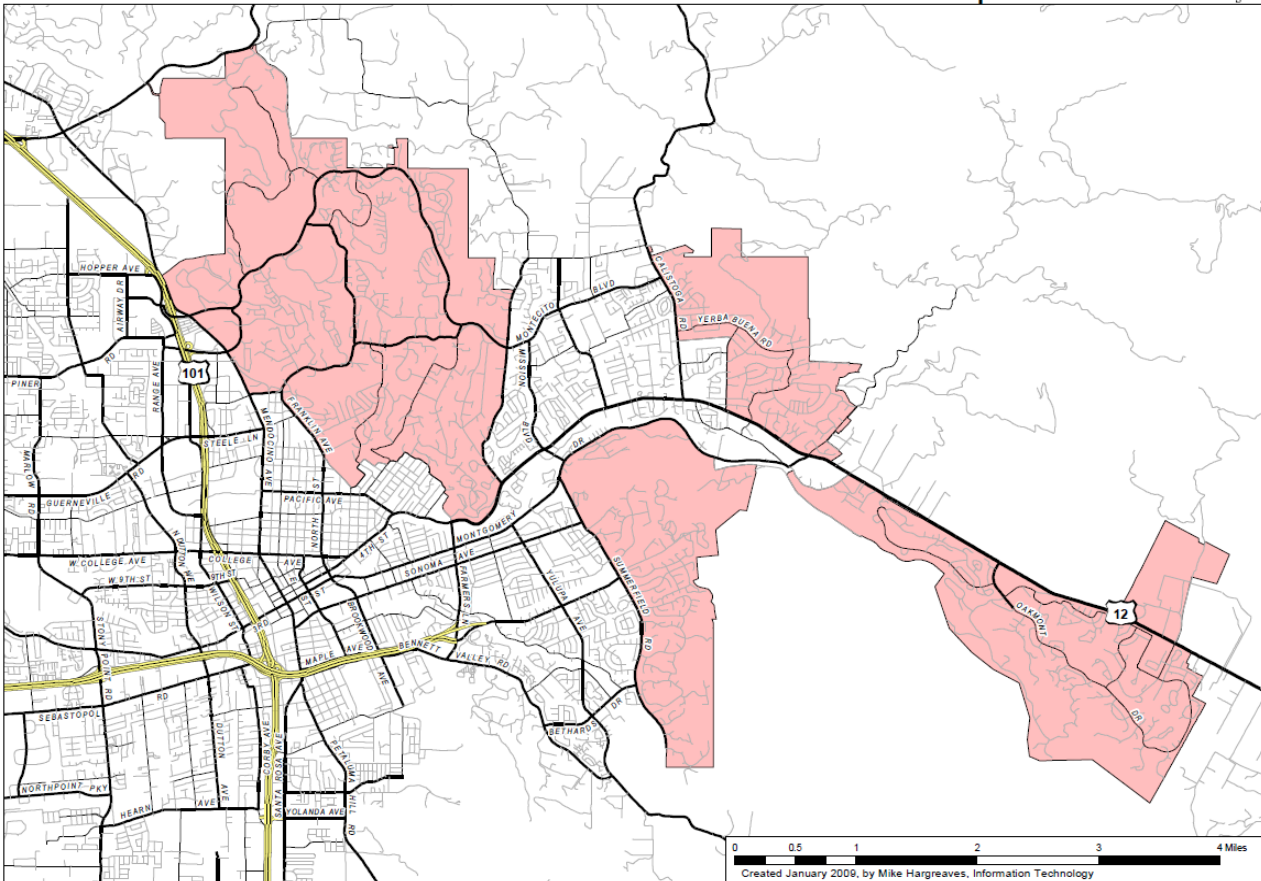
The map was updated in 2007 by the Director of CAL FIRE, greatly reducing the areas classified as VHFHSZ's within the City's LRA.

In 2008 the final maps were released to the LRA's by the State, and the LRA's were granted to authority to maintain their prior boundaries through a local ordinance adoption process if they so chose.

The boundary would be referenced as a Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Area (WUI). This new language would coincide with the newly established Building Standards related to construction materials and defensible space requirements in the California Fire Code.



## Wildland Urban Interface Fire Area Map



# Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Area Map Post-2009 Local Ordinance

The City adopted a local ordinance to maintain the original boundary of the VHFHSZ's and rename them as Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Area's per the process laid out by the Director of CAL FIRE.

These areas with in the LRA still include the VHFHSZ's as defined by the Director of CAL FIRE.

By maintaining the larger WUI areas within the City we ensured that all new building construction within those areas would comply with more restrictive building standards moving forward.

# Funding Struggles and Reimplementation of a Vegetation Management Program



Since 2010 we have been pursuing multiple grants to help jump start a vegetation management program. Unfortunately, we have had little success.

Unlike weed abatement, which is a seasonal program, vegetation management is a year-round effort with multiple components and significant costs.

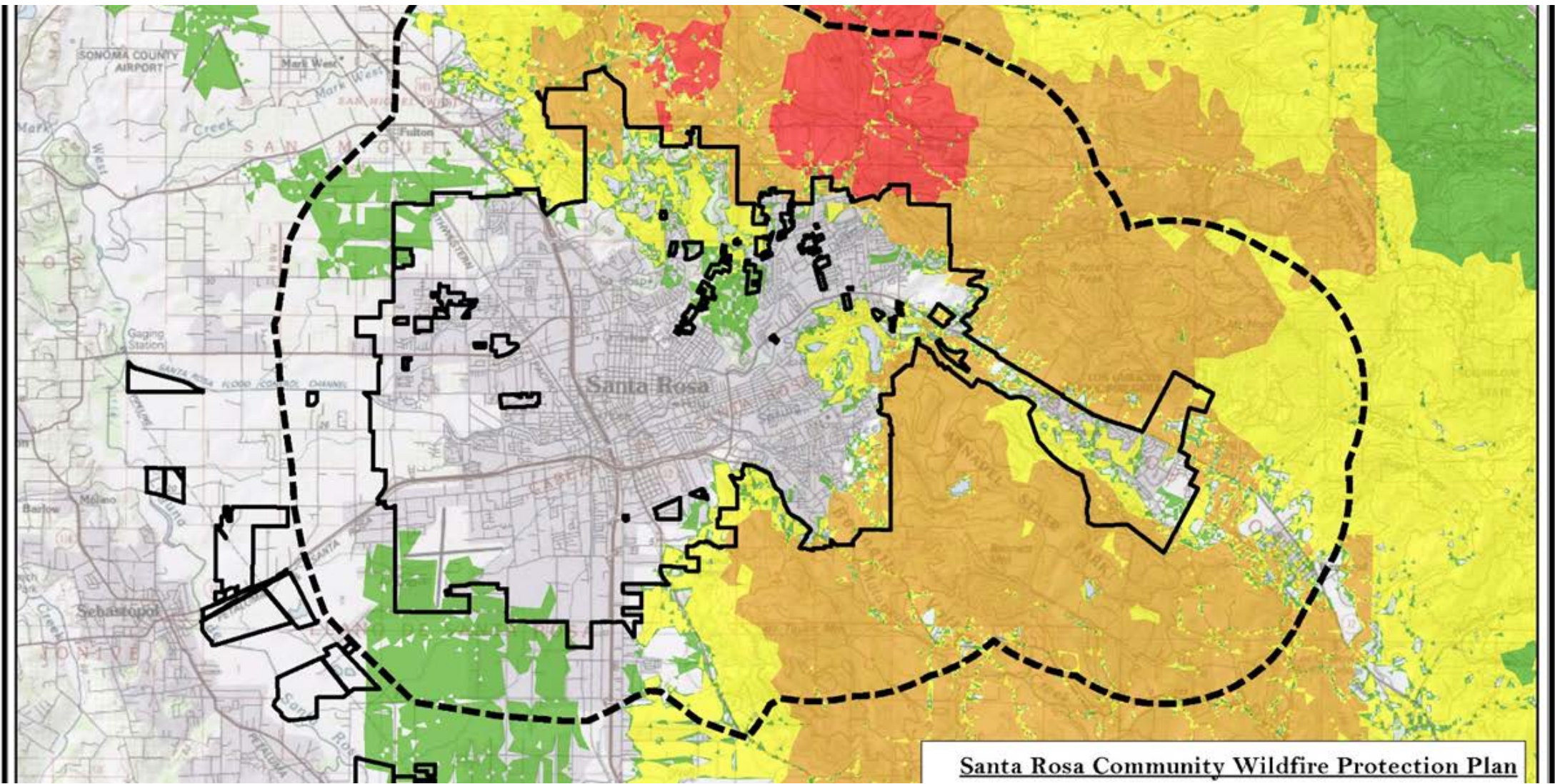
Assistance to Firefighters Grant  
SAFER Grants  
Fire Prevention and Safety Grants



Homeland  
Security

Between 2010 and the 2017 fires we received one competitive grant through Homeland Securities Fire Prevention and Safety Program that helped fund an educational campaign in the WUI for one year. Since the 2017 fires we have received one grant out of seven attempts, and that provided us the assistance to develop a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)

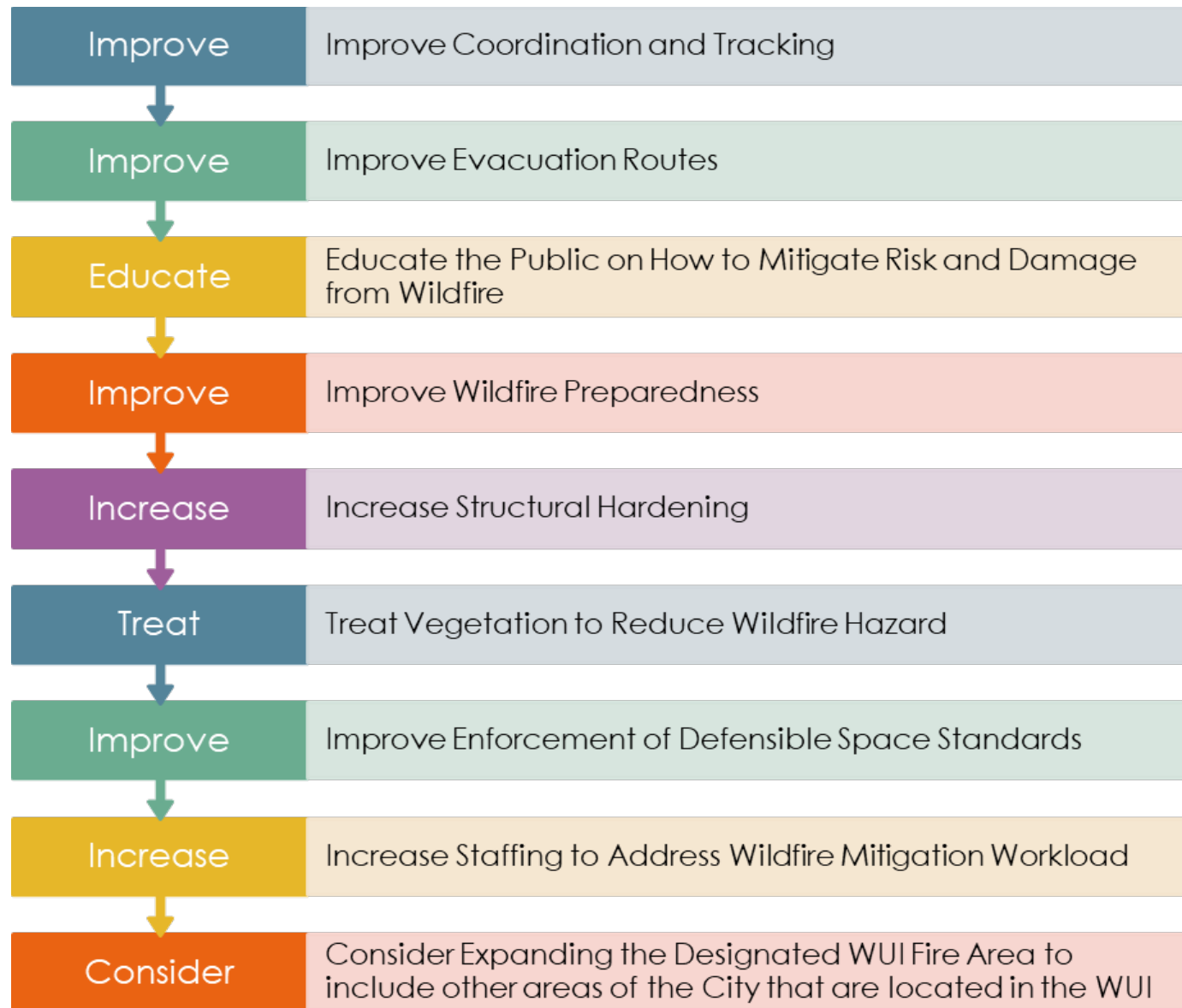




Santa Rosa Community Wildfire Protection Plan

# CWPP Action Plan

Through the development of the CWPP there were nine objectives with forty-six actionable items.





# Vegetation Management Program Vision

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- Educating the public on how to mitigate risk and damage from wildfires
- Develop a GIS database to track fuel treatments occurring on private and public lands
- Improve evacuation routes by performing fuel treatments along the roadsides of designated roadways
- Develop ordinance and permitting guidance to allow burn piles under specific criteria for fuel reduction

# Key Actionable Items

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- Development of the defensible space enforcement program
- Treatment of vegetation within the wildland urban interface using the priorities developed in the Plan
- Outreach to additional homeowner association and individuals within the designated fire area to assist in the planning and implementation of treatments.
- Created a new fulltime position within the Fire Department to allow program coordinator to focus on building community relations, coordinating with resident groups and implementing actional items in this Plan

# Key Actionable Items

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In preparation of taking on this challenge, we are in the process of finalizing a reorganization of the Fire Prevention Division to allow for program management and will bring forward a request to fill a three-year limited term Fire Inspector position. The Department continues to work on grant funding opportunities including FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) grant program. Funding to assist with the implementation of actionable items identified in the CWPP is a priority.

We find ourselves at a crossroads and realize this will be a heavy lift. The three-year pilot is the beginning, and we will seek funding where possible to sustain this program moving forward.

