

CITY OF SANTA ROSA

SANTA ROSA FIRE DEPARTMENT

COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN

2024 ANNUAL REPORT



Introduction

The purpose of the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) is to enhance protection of human life safety and reduce the wildfire threat to community assets such as homes, commercial structures, critical infrastructure, businesses, and natural and historic resources within the City of Santa Rosa. The goals and objectives of this Plan were developed in collaboration with the Santa Rosa Fire Department (SRFD), CWPP Steering Committee, stakeholders, and from input received from the public. The annual report provides an update on the budget of the Vegetation Management Program and the action items that were established and outlined in the CWPP to meet the goals and objectives of the Plan.

Budget

On April 27, 2021, Council approved a total of 5.25 million dollars to fund the Fire Department's Vegetation Management Program through the PG&E 2017 Wildfires Settlement. A total of approximately \$1.25 million has been allocated for our cost share of roughly \$4.9 million in the Hazard Mitigation Grant Programs that are currently underway. Phase 1 of these projects was awarded in 2022; Phase 1 closeout was submitted, and the City is awaiting approval of Phase 2 to proceed with projects that include home hardening and roadside fuel treatments. The City was awarded an additional \$500K in 2023 through the Community Development Block Grant Mitigation Planning and Public Services program which continued to fund WildfireReady, outreach, and the development of the new Vegetation Management Ordinance.

Actionable Items

The following table is a list of priorities and recommendations that identify actions that the City is taking to reduce the wildfire threat to community assets.

These items were developed from the results of the public survey, wildfire assessments, public workshops, steering committee meetings, and existing reports and documents. This list of actionable items is intended to assist with project tracking, accountability, and planning outcomes for this Plan.

The Plan outlined nine objectives and forty-six action items. The Fire Department has initiated activities on multiple action items. Seven items have been completed, however, some of them will require additional work and or maintenance to keep current and or relevant.

Actionable Items

| Objective | Number | Action | Departments | Status | Actions Taken |
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| A. Improve Coordination & Tracking Many public and private entities are currently taking actions to reduce wildfire intensity and provide greater community protection; however, the lack of a centralized point of contact for the City or data management protocols has led to what is believed to be an incomplete picture of all ongoing fuel treatment activities. No mechanism is in place to collect and manage the data from projects currently being implemented by the variety of partners. Knowing the location and extent of ongoing actions is an essential element of developing an effective overall fuel treatment strategy. | A-1 | Develop a robust GIS database of fuel treatments occurring on public and private lands in order to fully understand the extent of these existing actions. At a minimum, the following categories should be used to track projects including project name, georeferenced data, date started, date completed, method of treatment, acres or feet completed, and total money spent. | Fire Department GIS Staff | Ongoing | The map was functional as of June 2021. Efforts will be made to make it publicly accessible. |
| | A-2 | Through outreach to homeowner associations, open space management associations, and other large parcel owners within and adjacent to the City, establish a mechanism where fuel treatment actions can be reported and managed by a single City data manager. | Fire Department - GIS Staff | Ongoing | Have continued to import grazing and fuel treatments on large privately owned common areas. Continued to add fuel treatment projects on City-owned parcels. |

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| | A-3 | Establish an ad hoc homeowners' group to serve as a single point of contact with the Fire Department for the collection of private property fuels treatment spatial data. | Fire Department | | Several FireWise communities are being established with support from Fire Safe Sonoma |
| | A-4 | Support ongoing actions by providing technical support from Fire Department personnel with wildland fire expertise to assist in treatment design, maintenance standards, and funding opportunities. | Fire Department | Ongoing | Fire prevention staff (limited term and permanent) employees are continuing to engage with the community and provide guidance on treatment needs. |
| B. Improve Evacuation Routes Fuel treatments adjacent to roads can reduce fire behavior along important travel routes. Utilize evacuation route fuel treatment prescriptive guidelines to treat the following priority roads: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skyfarm Drive • Saint Andrews Drive • Cross Creek Drive • Fountaingrove Parkway • Wallace Road • Brush Creek Road • Calistoga Road • Yerba Buena Road • Saint Francis Road • San Ramon Way • Mountain Hawk Drive • Los Alamos Road | B-1 | Identify parcel-owners along primary evacuation routes and establish agreements with landowners to perform fuel reduction. | Fire Department GIS Staff | Ongoing | Used GIS to identify parcels for grant opportunities. Successful HMGP funds to roll out Phase 1 of an evacuation route fuel treatment project. We have established a comprehensive list of properties along the evacuation routes who have opted into our grant program. We are waiting for approval to proceed with Phase 2 to conduct the work. |
| | B-2 | Establish an MOU with the County for fuel reduction work on County lands within the administrative boundary of the City. | City Attorney Fire Department | | Working on the development of FireWise communities in Santa Rosa and the County of Sonoma around Mark West Springs Road and Skyfarm/Fountaingrove areas to supplement this effort. |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Montgomery Drive Channel Drive Summerfield Road Chanate Road | B-3 | Identify and fund a lead agency for the treatment of herbaceous and woody fuels along City controlled right-of ways. | Fire Department Public Works – Field Services | | Integrated Pest Management Plan was approved by Council. Fire, Parks and TPW working on funding and workflow requests for treatments. |
| | B-4 | Investigate the efficiency and public support for the use of naturally based herbicides to treat invasive species, (Bromus spp.) along evacuation route rights-of-way. | Fire Department Public Works – Field Services | | The Integrated Pest Management Plan was approved by the Council. Fire, Parks, and TPW working on funding and workflow requests for treatments. |
| | B-5 | Establish responsibility for the management of weedy vegetation in median strips within the community. Work with the responsible agency to develop a program to treat these herbaceous fuels prior to September 1 annually. Focus areas should be east of Highway 101. | Public Works – Field Services Fire Department | Ongoing | The Fire Department assisted Field Services with prioritization of landscape maintenance (weedy growth) in medians, shoulders and right of ways. Fire meets with TWP and Parks annually and ahead of fire season to discuss priorities and issues. |
| | B-6 | Seek grant funding for the removal of fire damaged trees which may fall and impede vehicular traffic along major travel routes. | Fire Department | Ongoing | The Fire Department was successfully awarded Phase 1 of an HMGP project to address some of the fire-damaged trees along designated evacuation routes. An ordinance was developed to address fire damaged trees within burn scars and within 30' of a right of way. |
| C. Educate the Public on How to Mitigate Risk and Damage from Wildfire A challenge for all communities is how to generate interest and maximize awareness of the wildfire threat and encourage participation | C-1 | Increase public education to residents on defensible space, fire safe landscaping, home hardening, evacuation, wildfire preparedness. | Fire Department Communications & Intergovernmental Relations Office | Ongoing | Continuing to host an annual Wildfire/Ready Santa Rosa event, Weekly content provided to City Connections, property owner resource library updated (srcity.org/WildfireReady), Fire Inspectors and Community Outreach staff in field |

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| <p>in preparing for a wildfire at an individual and community level. Public education is critical to community preparedness and citizens need to know where to obtain accurate information before an event occurs.</p> <p>Survey questions 15 through 18 looked at educational resources to determine if they were adequate and were being utilized. Only 14 percent of 460 respondents (question 15) felt there were adequate resources. While only 23 percent of 459 respondents (Question 16) had used the online resources to prepare for wildfire. Only 8 percent of 459 respondents (Question 17) had participated in a neighborhood education program (See Appendix B for details).</p> <p>Some recommended action items were developed based on the public's response to types of educational resources that would be most beneficial.</p> | | | | | meeting with residents and HOAs. We have implemented a property inspection/WUI inspection request form where residents can request a consultation with the Fire Department to promote defensible space and home hardening best practices. |
| | C-2 | Provide community and/or homeowner/neighborhood training classes on wildfire preparedness | Fire Department | Ongoing | Veg Man Fire Inspector meeting with HOA and neighborhood groups. Asst Fire Marshal and Community Outreach Specialist hosting and attending HOA and large-scale neighborhood meetings regularly |
| | C-3 | Create online YouTube videos to educate residents on defensible space, fire safe landscaping, home hardening, evacuation, and wildfire preparedness. Utilize local residents and homeowner associations to develop content and provide local faces. | Fire Department Communications & Intergovernmental Relations Office | Ongoing | Videos were developed following the 2023 WildfireReady event. The videos are now available on the WildfireReady website. |
| | C-4 | Develop a voluntary neighborhood inspection program to provide more detailed information to residents on home hardening techniques, defensible space, and fire safe landscaping. | Fire Department Communications & Intergovernmental Relations Office | Planning | This is part of our three-phase approach to an inspection program for defensible space that will be included in a Vegetation Management Ordinance. The ordinance was developed in 2023 and will go into effect in early 2025. Education and inspections will be initiated in the WUI. |

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| | C-5 | Redesign SRFD's website to better organize wildfire education. Include information on defensible space, fire safe landscaping, structural hardening components, WUI building construction requirements, Red Flag Warning Program. Centralize information to allow users to obtain information from a single location. | Communications & Intergovernmental Relations Office Fire Department | Complete | Although the redesign was completed, the improvements and updates will be ongoing in an effort to meet the needs of our community. |
| | C-6 | Create a document with graphics, which clearly explains defensible space requirements found in PRC 4291 and City specific requirements. Have information available on the website and as a handout | Fire Department | Ongoing | Created content, including defensible space requirements and guidance using grant funding (\$500K HCD MIT-PPS) |
| | C-7 | Create a document with graphics that clearly defines the City's specific requirements. Have information available on the website and as a handout. | Fire Department – Communications & Intergovernmental Relations Office | Ongoing | Using standards and linking to them from the property owner resource library at srcity.org/WildfireReady . Community Outreach Specialist designed content and handouts through grant funding. |
| | C-8 | Continue educating and updating the community on the evacuation program and evacuation drills. Keep website up to date. | Fire Department Emergency Management Communications & Intergovernmental Relations Office | Ongoing | Maintaining website, srcity.org/ReadySR , improved used of Temporary Evacuation Point, and drilled with Spring Lake Villages. |
| | C-9 | Create educational material on evacuation of vulnerable populations, small pets, and large animals. | Fire Department Emergency Management Communications & Intergovernmental Relations Office | Ongoing | Maintain website, srcity.org/ReadySR , updated educational materials and developed new information. |
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| D. Improve Wildfire Preparedness Wildfire preparedness involves a range of measures that include the coordination of multiple governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations. Creating connectivity between agencies and organizations can strengthen the community's response to a significant wildfire. | D-1 | Work with the County to increase the number of City residents that are trained and active in the COPE program. | Fire Department Emergency Management | Ongoing | Fire and Emergency Management staff regularly meeting with facilities, HOAs and neighborhoods. |
| | D-2 | Develop a plan to effectively utilize COPE teams during a wildfire. | Fire Department Emergency Management | Ongoing | Developing a new COPE map to allow organized groups to "register" and us to better track and communicate with them. |
| | D-3 | Work with the County to increase the number of City residents trained and active in the LISTOS Spanish-speaking community program. | Fire Department Emergency Management | Ongoing | Fire Department Community Outreach Specialist working with LISTOS. |
| | D-4 | Develop a plan to effectively utilize LISTOS teams during a wildfire. Other organizations, such as the County and the League of California Cities can be used as a model for development of the plan. | Fire Department Emergency Management | | |
| | D-5 | Develop a program to address evacuation vulnerable populations in the City. | Fire Department Emergency Management | Ongoing | Staff have continued to address the needs of vulnerable populations (Care facilities, NOAA weather radios, direct outreach, etc.) |
| E. Increase Structural Hardening The 2019 California Building Code and amendments require new development and properties completing alterations to meet WUI Fire Area construction standards; however, there are still a large percentage of structures | E-1 | Continue to work with City Building officials, County Fire Departments, CALFIRE and the State Fire Marshal to develop and adopt building standards that will increase structure resiliency. | Fire Department Planning and Economic Development – Building | Ongoing | Amendments to California Building Code and Fire Code through local ordinance adopted and went into effect January 1, 2023. The New Vegetation Management Ordinance was developed in 2023, rolled out in 2024, and goes into effect in January 2025 |

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| <p>within the WUI Fire Areas built prior to 2008 WUI building construction standards that are vulnerable to loss from wildfire. The cost of retrofitting existing structures with wildfire safety improvements can be significant, but retrofitting structures combined with adequate defensible space will make a difference in whether a structure survives a wildfire.</p> <p>Survey responses from the community for question 41 through 43 showed that 79 percent supported more stringent building and fire code requirements for new development and 62 percent supported more stringent building and fire code requirements for existing structures within the WUI Fire Areas.</p> | E-2 | Research Senate Bill 465 to determine if the City's WUI Fire Areas are eligible for PACE program financing to help property-owners retrofit existing non-conforming structures to current WUI building construction requirements (See Appendix A, Policy and Regulatory Framework, SB 465). | | Complete | Agreement approved by City Council Resolutions for agreements on February 9, 2021 |
| | E-3 | If the City's WUI Fire Areas are eligible for California's Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) Program, identify finance procedures that need to be taken by the City to make PACE financing available for wildfire safety improvements. | | Complete | Agreement approved by City Council Resolutions for agreements on February 9, 2021 |
| | E-4 | Seek grant funding opportunities that may be available to property-owners to help retrofit existing non-conforming structures to current WUI building construction standards. | Fire Department | Ongoing | <p>Approved for Phase 1 of an HMGP grant for \$2.1 million that includes retrofitting gutter guards and vent screens. 25% cost share to come from PG&E settlement funds.</p> <p>Waiting on FEMA approval to initiate the work for Phase 2</p> <p>Phase 1 is being completed (opting residents in). Expect to move onto Phase 2 in 2025.</p> |
| | E-5 | Develop a voluntary home or community inspection program to provide property-owners with specific information on how they can address the specific structure hardening needs of their homes. | Fire Department | Ongoing | Continuing to provide information to community members on efforts that they can take. We have implemented a property inspection/WUI inspection request form where residents can request a consultation with the Fire Department to promote defensible space and home hardening best practices. |

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| | E-6 | Research opportunities to incentivize property-owners to harden structures through tax breaks and/or cost sharing. | Fire Department | | |
| <p>F. Treat Vegetation to Reduce Wildfire Hazard</p> <p>Treatment of vegetation within the wildland urban interface can reduce the risk of loss and damage from wildfire. The greatest responsibility for the protection of improvements in the community rests not with the City, but with the individual property-owner through the development of adequate defensible space.</p> <p>The City and open space management associations have completed and maintain vegetation treatments within their respective jurisdictions. Maintenance of existing treatments and designing and implementing additional treatments will further reduce the risk of unwanted consequences of wildfire.</p> <p>Question 15 in the CWPP Survey asked if vegetation management resources within the City are adequate. Responses from the community indicate 64% of the public were unaware of what resources were available while 20% felt current resources were inadequate.</p> | F-1 | Support the existing vegetation management programs of Fountaingrove II Open Space Management Association, Fountaingrove Ranch and Oakmont Village Association. This can be accomplished by providing letters of support for grant applications as well as coordinating planning and implementation of treatments between HOAs and the City. | Fire Department | Ongoing | <p>Wrote initial assessment to make Oakmont and the Alta Vista Heights HOA Fire Wise certified communities. The Fire Department will assist in their renewal. Continuing to work with various HOAs and the OSMA.</p> <p>Continuing to support OVA, OSMA, Skyfarm II and FGMRA</p> |
| | F-2 | Utilize treatment priorities identified in this Plan when developing new projects (Proposed Treatments Tables 19 & 20). Utilize site specific prescriptive guidelines provided in Sections 6.6.1.1 and 6.6.1.2 for planning and implementing vegetation treatments. | Fire Department | Ongoing | <p>Working with HOAs on utilization of treatments needed as outlined in the CWPP.</p> <p>Fire funded the fuel treatments in 2024:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parktrail on City-owned property leading into Annadel. - Chanate and Fountaingrove interchange - Thomas Lake Harris Open Space - Woodley Place Water Tank in Oakmont - Chanate at Cobblestone - |
| | F-3 | Outreach to additional homeowner associations and individuals within designated WUI Fire Areas to identify existing vegetation treatments. Assist in planning and prioritizing where treatments would be effective but currently do not exist. | Fire Department | Ongoing | Working with HOAs on utilization of treatments needed as outlined in the CWPP. |

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| | F-4 | Establish permitting protocols for the use of prescribed fire pile burning. | Fire Department City Attorney Office | Complete | Ordinance approved April 2021. |
| | F-5 | Seek grant funding opportunities such as the California Climate Investments (CCI) Fire Prevention Grant Program, FEMA Fire Protection and Safety Grants, PG&E Resilient Communities Grants. | Fire Department | Ongoing | The City has 3 grants in progress: 1) HMGP – Evac Routes \$2.8M 2) HMGP – Def. Space & Home Hardening \$2.1M 3) HCD – Veg Man \$500K |
| | F-6 | It is recommended that the City establish a monitoring program to ensure that fuel treatment activities remain effective. Details on methods for photo monitoring can be found at: www.fs.fed.us/pnw/pubs/gtr526/ . | Fire Department | Ongoing | Using GIS to support this need. |
| G. Improve Enforcement of Defensible Space Standards Defensible Space, Home Ignition Zone concepts and City codes outlined in Section 6.4.2, Reducing Structure Ignitability when applied to the community will increase structure survivability. CWPP Survey responses showed a high percentage of respondents would support the enforcement of defensible space requirements within the WUI Fire Areas (See Appendix B for details). | G-1 | Within designated Wildland Urban Interface adopt and enforce California Public Resources Code 4291 requirements for defensible space. Develop an inspection program that focuses on property-owner education for the initial two years prior to enforcement. Target 10% of properties in the WUI for annual inspections. | Fire Department Planning | Ongoing | A three-phased plan is being developed and implemented that includes, education, inspection, and enforcement. Inspections to start in Spring 2025 |
| | G-2 | Develop a staffing plan to support defensible space enforcement and seek funding to implement the plan. | Fire Department Human Resources | Completed & back In Planning | Two limited term fire inspectors and a community outreach specialist have been hired to support the Veg Man Program. Staff primarily being funded by grants and Veg Man Program funds. Need long-term funding to maintain program (i.e., LT to FE). |

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| <p>Survey questions 54 and 55 asked if respondents would support implementation of a fire safe landscaping review process for new and existing developments and 86 percent of the respondents supported the implementation of a fire safe landscape review process for new development while 74 percent supported a fire safe landscape review process for existing development.</p> | G-3 | Develop a program where property owners who fail to comply with PRC 4291 are assessed via their property tax for the cost of the city to complete fire hazard mitigation work. | Fire Department City Attorney | Ongoing | <p>A three-phased plan is being developed and implemented that includes, education, inspection, and enforcement.</p> <p>Inspections are to start in Spring 2025.</p> |
| | G-4 | Utilize Senate Bill 190 (described in Appendix A) to support the development of the defensible space enforcement program. | Fire Department City Attorney | Ongoing | Outreach materials are being developed to outline the requirements of the Hazardous Vegetation and Fuels Reduction Ordinance that will require defensible space in the City's WUIFA. |
| | G-5 | Work with CAL FIRE to develop a program to enforce defensible space requirements on SRA lands surrounding the City's WUI Fire Area. | Fire Department CAL FIRE | Completed | The Hazardous Vegetation and Fuels Reduction Ordinance was passed in Early 2024 and will go into effect early 2025 that will require defensible space in the City's WUIFA. |
| | G-6 | Develop fire safe landscape standards to ensure compliance with defensible space requirements within the WUI Fire Areas. | Fire Department Planning and Economic Development Water City Attorney Office | Completed | Fire Department coordinated a multi department meeting to ensure landscape requirements do not conflict with defensible space requirements (ordinance) and existing laws. |
| | G-7 | Incorporate fire safe landscape standards into the City Development Review Process within the WUI Fire Areas. | Fire Department Planning and Economic Development Water City Attorney Office | Ongoing | The Fire Department has implemented a 3-5 ft non-combustible zone around homes permitted for construction effective January 2021. Noncombustible fences adjacent to structures was added for January 1, 2023. |

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| <p>H. Increase Staffing to Address Wildfire Mitigation Workload</p> <p>Survey question 65 and 66 asked if the City had adequate resources to implement the actions identified in the CWPP. Of the 398 respondents, 43 percent believed the City did not have adequate resources, while 74 percent were supportive of a new position in the Fire Department to educate, implement, and assure compliance with the actions identified in this Plan.</p> | H-1 | Create a new fulltime Wildfire Specialist position within the Fire Department to focus on building community relations, coordinating with resident groups, and implementing actionable items in this Plan. | Fire Department Human Resources | Nearing Completion & Potentially Ongoing | <p>The Fire Prevention Division assigned a third Assistant Fire Marshal. This allowed a one of three AFMs to focus on the development of the City's Vegetation Management Program and implement the CWPP.</p> <p>Two limited term fire inspectors and a community outreach specialist have been hired to support the Veg Man Program. Staff primarily being funded by grants and Veg Man Program funds. Need long term funding to maintain program (i.e., LT to FE).</p> |
| <p>I. Consider Expanding the Designated WUI Fire Area to include other areas of the City that are located in the WUI</p> <p>Structures and neighborhoods outside of the designated WUI Fire Areas were lost during the 2017 Tubbs Fire. These have the same or elevated risk of loss as areas currently identified as WUI Fire Areas.</p> <p>CAL FIRE's Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones does not adequately identify WUI as was observed during the 2017 Tubbs Fire.</p> | I-1 | Utilize the National Wildfire Coordinating Group's definition of WUI, which is "The line, area, or zone where structures and other human development meet or intermingle with undeveloped wildland or vegetation fuels" to redefine the WUI Fire Areas within the City. | Fire Department | Ongoing | <p>Staff determined that the current areas outside of the existing WUI do not meeting the intention of the designation (Coffey Park).</p> <p>CAL FIRE released draft FHSZ maps for the State responsibility areas. Staff will monitor for implications to City.</p> <p>Based on draft maps, there may need to be an increase to the City of Santa Rosa's WUIFA generally around the fairgrounds and off Petaluma Hill Road.</p> |
| | I-2 | Assess potential fire insurance implications on property-owners of any newly proposed WUI Fire Areas, prior to adopting. | Fire Department | Complete | Staff determined that the current areas outside of the existing WUI do not meeting the intention of the designation. |

