



# Opportunities to Link Wildfire and Land Use Planning Tools

This document defines land use planning tools and describes opportunities to link wildfire with local plans and regulations. For more information about land use planning tools to reduce wildfire risk, visit <https://planningforwildfire.org>.

## PLANS

*Policy documents created by multiple stakeholders and a public input process which provide analysis and specify future actions to achieve desired outcomes.*

### **Comprehensive Plan** (also referred to as General Plan, Growth Policy, or Master Plan)

A community's foundational local policy document that guides long-term planning decisions for growth and change. Plans include an analysis of existing conditions and future trends, and provide goals and policies to implement a community's vision for the future.

- ✓ Include goals, objectives, and policies that address local wildfire planning issues. Topics should include community safety, resilient housing, disaster preparedness and recovery, the role of fire on the landscape, and protection of natural resources.
- ✓ Ensure policies to address wildfire are compatible with other policies, such as where growth is planned to occur in the community.
- ✓ Reference other plans, such as the Community Wildfire Protection Plan, to provide readers with additional sources of information on wildfire.

### **Sub-Area Plan**

Detailed plans prepared for a smaller geographic area within a community (e.g., downtowns, special districts, neighborhoods).

- ✓ Include actions that address wildfire based on unique geographic conditions.
- ✓ Ensure sub-area policies are compatible with wildfire risk reduction objectives (e.g., design guidelines, tree preservation requirements).

## Functional Plan

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Topic-specific plans that are not geographically constrained to a subarea of a community (e.g., transportation, capital improvements, community forestry, trails and open space, post-disaster, sustainability/resiliency plans).

- ✓ Identify opportunities to include wildfire-related information and actions to further the goals of the plan (e.g., trails and open space plans can incorporate vegetation management to reduce hazardous fuels/ wildfire conditions near neighborhoods).
- ✓ Reference other plans that provide additional wildfire information and policies/actions (e.g., Community Wildfire Protection Plan).
- ✓ Align project spending with land use policies that promote investment in “safe growth” areas or reduce future wildfire risk.

## Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)

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A community-developed functional plan focused specifically on wildfire hazard. Must meet minimum requirements of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act, and may be implemented at different scales. Can be adopted as part of the Hazard Mitigation Plan (see below).

- ✓ Align policies and actions align with the Hazard Mitigation Plan and Comprehensive Plan.
- ✓ Include local land use planning staff on the development and update of city and county CWPPs.
- ✓ Link wildfire risk reduction actions with land use planning decisions, such as the location of future development and building regulations for reducing structural ignitability.

## Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) (also referred to Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan)

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FEMA-approved plans that identify a community’s local hazards and associated risks, potential mitigation actions, community capacity, and a prioritization of hazard mitigation projects. Often developed at the county level in coordination with local jurisdictions.

- ✓ Align mitigation actions with the CWPP and Comprehensive Plan.
- ✓ Include local land use planning staff on plan development and update committee.
- ✓ Link wildfire risk reduction actions with land use planning decisions, such as the location of future development and building regulations for reducing structural ignitability.

## CODES & REGULATIONS

*Legally-binding requirements as designated by an authority to implement a specified action or set of actions. Development and implementation of codes and regulations is based on applicable local, state, and federal legislation.*

### Building Code

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Sets of regulations governing the design, construction, alteration, and maintenance of structures. Minimum requirements are intended to adequately safeguard the health, safety, and welfare of building occupants.

- ✓ Require fire-resistant building materials and construction techniques to address wildfire vulnerabilities (e.g., windows, doors, roofs, siding, vents, decks/attachments).
- ✓ Always check with state laws to determine if local jurisdiction can adopt more stringent requirements to address wildfire hazard.

### Fire Code

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Set of regulations prescribing minimum requirements to prevent fire and explosion hazards, ensure life safety and provide fire access and water supply; often works in conjunction with building code.

- ✓ Provide minimum requirements for fire response access (e.g., road/driveway widths, grades, turnarounds) and firefighting water supply requirements (e.g., hydrants, minimum fire flow).
- ✓ Include life safety requirements (e.g., refuge areas and escape, usually within buildings).
- ✓ Include minimum requirements to prevent fire spread between buildings.
- ✓ Include minimum requirements for hazardous uses (e.g., chemical warehouses).
- ✓ Check for overlap or conflict between building codes, WUI Code, and subdivision regulations.

### Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) Code

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Standalone code, ordinance, or set of regulations that compile and establish minimum requirements to address wildfire hazard in designated wildland-urban interface areas. Typical topics include vegetation management, construction, water supply, and access.

- ✓ Designate wildland-urban interface based on a defensible process.
- ✓ Ensure code addresses ignition vulnerabilities at building, lot, and neighborhood scales.
- ✓ Model codes are available that provide most recent standards based on ignition science and testing; local amendments should reflect jurisdiction's objectives for risk reduction.

## Land Use and Development Code

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Implements the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan by regulating how property is used and developed within a jurisdiction. Jurisdictions create land use codes differently, which may include Subdivision Regulations and Zoning Regulations (see below).

- ✓ Specify development standards that establish unique requirements for areas subject to wildfire hazard (unless specifically addressed in another code administered by the jurisdiction).
- ✓ Adopt language for a review and referral process to perform required mitigation.
- ✓ Align with other development requirements, such as landscaping, fencing, and screening, to avoid regulatory conflicts.

## Subdivision Regulations

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Standards for dividing land into lots or parcels to make the property suitable for development. Regulations typically include requirements for drawing and recording a plat and necessary public improvements such as adequate streets, utilities, drainage, and vehicular access.

- ✓ Require applicants to identify wildfire hazard areas at early stage in approval process to determine if mitigation is necessary.
- ✓ For identified hazard areas, require applicants to submit and perform vegetation management by qualified professionals prior to approval.
- ✓ For identified hazard areas, require detailed drawings that identify multiple points of egress, adequate water supply, and any other conditions as required by local fire protection district.

## Zoning Regulations

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Standards to govern the use of land, and the location, size and height of buildings. Zoning divides a jurisdiction into multiple districts, with each district containing a distinct set of regulations that are uniformly applied to all property within the district.

- ✓ Require conditional use permits rather than permitting them by-right for unique land uses in identified hazard areas (e.g., location of hazardous materials would require additional setbacks and mitigation).
- ✓ Ensure landscaping standards are compatible with wildfire hazard mitigation requirements.
- ✓ Require site plan review and on-site assessments for development in identified hazard areas to ensure wildfire mitigation is incorporated into the development review and approval process.