



# Final Recommendations for Deadwood, South Dakota



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## Background

Each year, wildfires affect communities across the United States. Some of their impacts bring positive ecological outcomes, such as improved forest health and habitats. Other wildfires, however, can have devastating consequences to communities' public and first responder safety, homes and businesses, local economies, parks, roads, watersheds, forests, hospitals, and more.

The Community Planning Assistance for Wildfire (CPAW) program helps communities prepare for wildfire by identifying what's at risk in the "wildland-urban interface" (WUI, pronounced "WOO-EE") and addressing these risks through improved land use planning strategies.

Communities voluntarily apply and are competitively selected to participate in the program on an annual basis.

The City of Deadwood, SD was selected to receive technical assistance in 2018 from CPAW's team of professional land use planners, foresters, risk modelers, and researchers. Assistance varies based on a community's needs; due to the timing of the city's Comprehensive Plan update, CPAW is focusing its work with Deadwood on including wildfire goals and policies in the next Comprehensive Plan.

CPAW was established by Headwaters Economics and Wildfire Planning International in 2015 and is funded by the USDA Forest Service, the LOR Foundation, and other private foundations. Since its inception, CPAW has worked with communities of varying sizes, capacities, and locations across the United States. More information is available at: [planningforwildfire.org](http://planningforwildfire.org)

## Local Context

The Black Hills ecosystem is largely a fire-dependent landscape with frequent and significant fire occurrence. The region has experienced fires regularly throughout history. Some years (1890, 1911, 1931, 1959, and 2002) experienced notable fire activity. The region has also experienced several significant fires that have directly affected the City of Deadwood, including the 1959 Deadwood Fire and the 2002 Grizzly Gulch Fire.



CPAW team member Kelly Johnston discusses the city's fire history with Bob Nelson Jr. (Zoning Administrator) and Mike Runge (City Archivist).

## Recommendations

In April 2018, the CPAW team met with local stakeholders from the city's Comprehensive Plan Committee, Deadwood Fire Department, and Lawrence County Planning and Zoning Department for a goal setting exercise. During this exercise, CPAW team members solicited input and feedback on how to address local wildfire challenges and opportunities in the Comprehensive Plan update.

Stakeholders provided the CPAW team with relevant examples on how local residents, businesses, and tourists could be affected during a wildfire. Stakeholders also shared historical references of past fires and information on current mitigation activities. The CPAW team synthesized this input and performed additional research to create the following recommendations for the City of Deadwood to consider in its Comprehensive Plan update.

**1. Add information in the Comprehensive Plan to acknowledge wildfire as both a necessary natural disturbance and natural hazard.**

Currently, there is no reference to the significance of wildfire as a natural disturbance process or natural hazard in the City of Deadwood’s Comprehensive Plan. Adding a brief overview on wildfire’s role as a natural disturbance on the landscape and its potential impacts to the community can elevate public awareness on the topic. It also introduces the need for community goals and policies to address wildfire.

**2. Add goals and policies in the Comprehensive Plan to prepare Deadwood for the next wildfire.**

Community goals and policies for wildfire provide the City of Deadwood with a long-term roadmap for action to support public and first responder safety, a healthy ecosystem, and thriving businesses. The following goals and policies reflect local input by stakeholders. (Note: goals and policies are numbered below for ease of reference only; any numbering scheme for adopted goals and policies should be updated to align with the city’s Comprehensive Plan.)

| <b>TABLE 1: RECOMMENDED WILDFIRE GOALS AND POLICIES FOR DEADWOOD’S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE</b>   |  |
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| <b>GOAL 1: Deadwood leaders, residents, and businesses will be prepared for the next wildfire by knowing their roles and ensuring adequate resources are in place.</b> |  |
| Policy 1.A:  | Prepare an organizational structure based on the Incident Command System that enables a fast, efficient and effective wildfire response.   |
| Policy 1.B:  | Develop a community wildfire preparedness plan to identify key community roles required to continue all levels of critical government and non-government operations and services during and immediately following a wildfire (e.g. finance, emergency response, utilities, healthcare, food supply, etc.).   |
| <b>GOAL 2: Deadwood residents, businesses, and visitors will be safe and secure during a wildfire.</b>   |  |
| Policy 2.A:  | Develop a community evacuation plan that identifies and maintains evacuation routes, and communicates emergency evacuation information to residents and visitors. Plans should consider: directional signage; multiple access roads that are safe from anticipated hazards (e.g., flame impingement or bridge load failures) and lead neighborhood evacuees to safety; mass evacuation procedures for managing large scale events (festivals, etc.) or high visitor presence during wildfire season. |
| Policy 2.B:  | Partner with businesses to develop evacuation and security procedures for their properties during a wildfire.  |
| Policy 2.C:  | Work in partnership with neighboring communities in establishing the potential locations of appropriate and safe wildfire evacuation reception centers and support services.   |

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| <b>GOAL 3: Deadwood will quickly recover from a wildfire by having a post-disaster wildfire-recovery plan in place.</b>   |   |
| Policy 3.A:   | Develop a plan and procedures for assessing post-wildfire damages to properties and other affected areas of the community and landscape.  |
| Policy 3.B:   | Promote neighborhood awareness and education to understand post-fire susceptibilities, such as post-fire flooding hazards or structural damage.   |
| Policy 3.C:   | Create a post-fire communication strategy in partnership with businesses to assist businesses in re-opening to the public after a wildfire.   |
| <b>GOAL 4: All emergency responders will be safe and uninjured during and after a wildfire event.</b>   |   |
| Policy 4.A:   | Attract and retain volunteer firefighters and provide adequate training and equipment to volunteer firefighters and other first responders to ensure responder safety during response and pre- and post-fire operations.  |
| Policy 4.B:   | Enforce existing building codes and develop new wildland-urban interface codes that prioritize life safety for occupants, the public and first responders.  |
| <b>GOAL 5: Deadwood's existing and future development, including landscaping, will be fire-resistant and fire-resilient to wildfire.</b>  |   |
| Policy 5.A:   | Require fire-resistant construction materials on future homes and neighborhoods to improve community safety.  |
| Policy 5.B:   | Promote and incentivize the replacement of existing roofs with fire-resistant roofing materials and construction to reduce wildfire ignitions on structures, while ensuring that the city can adhere to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation for historic properties. |
| Policy 5.C:   | Adopt property landscaping policies to require fire-resistant vegetation within 30 feet of homes to reduce wildfire ignitions in vegetation.  |
| Policy 5.D:   | Align current ordinances with wildfire mitigation best practices and enforce ordinances to address nuisances such as weeds or other yard waste that contribute to wildfire hazard.  |
| Policy 5.E:   | Develop a set of wildfire mitigation guidelines (and a future ordinance) that addresses both wildfire hazard and historic preservation requirements with the intent to reduce structural ignitability and retain local character.   |
| <b>GOAL 6: Deadwood will coordinate with other land management partners to restore and maintain a healthy and diversified natural ecosystem to preserve the community's scenery and reduce wildfire hazard.</b> |   |
| Policy 6.A:   | Develop appropriate and specific vegetation management prescriptions that address wildfire hazard reduction and sustainable forest ecosystem health, based on the assessment of wildfire hazard, other natural hazards, and ecosystem factors.  |

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| Policy 6.B: | Coordinate management and restoration efforts with local, regional, state, and federal partners (e.g., Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, residents, businesses, county, and state agencies) to unify activities as a team.  |
| Policy 6.C: | Identify and incorporate other hazards created as a result of wildfire, or wildfire mitigation, such as flooding or landslides, to mitigate the potential for additional disasters.   |
| Policy 6.D: | Educate the public on the local natural role of fire, the local ecosystem and local landscapes, including unique considerations and fuel treatment activities in wildfire hazard areas, to promote awareness of the balance between healthy ecosystems and multi-hazard mitigation. |

**3. Link the Comprehensive Plan to other local hazard plans and partnerships.**

These recommended goals and policies are intended to support other local and regional wildfire planning efforts, such as those addressed in the Lawrence County Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan or the Lawrence County Community Wildfire Protection Plan. Additional functional plans or regulations will likely require consideration in order to effectively implement these goals and policies. When applicable, the implementation of Comprehensive Plan wildfire policies should be coordinated with other agencies to leverage resources and avoid duplication. Future updates to hazard plans should also consider the planning efforts of Deadwood to reinforce local activities.

**Additional Resources**

**General Planning Guidance**

Community Planning Assistance for Wildfire: [WUI and Wildfire Hazard Resources](#). (2018)

Federal Emergency Management Agency: [Public Assistance Program and Policy Guide](#) (2018)

**Specific Guidance for Mitigation and Recovery for Historic Properties**

Federal Emergency Management Agency: [Integrating Historic Property and Cultural Resource Considerations in Hazard Mitigation Planning](#). (2005)

Florida Division of Historical Resources: [Guidance for Disaster Planning for Historic Structures and Resources](#). (2018)

Minnesota Department of Administration: [Disaster Planning for Historic Buildings](#). (2018)

National Park Service: [Preparing Your Historic Resources for Disaster](#) (contacts and checklist). (2015)

National Park Service: [Resilient Heritage: Protection Your Historic Home from Natural Disasters](#). (2015)

National Trust for Historic Preservation: [Disaster Recovery](#). (2018)