



## Wildfire Adapted Communities

Wildfires are getting bigger and more frequent, which increases the risk to people and property. Preserving agricultural and forest lands, a cornerstone of Oregon’s statewide land use planning system, reduces the number of houses at risk in the wildland urban interface (WUI)<sup>1</sup>. Additional land use strategies implemented at the local level could further reduce wildfire risk and protect Oregonians.

Senate Bill 762 (2021) directed the Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) to recommend changes to the statewide land use planning program, including recommendations regarding comprehensive plans and zoning codes that minimize wildfire risk and create more wildfire adapted communities.

DLCD submitted the *Wildfire Adapted Communities Recommendation Report*<sup>2</sup> to the Oregon Legislature and to the Wildfire Programs Advisory Council (WPAC) on September 30, 2022. During the 2023 session, the legislature will consider DLCD’s recommendations and any additional recommendations from the WPAC. The legislature may direct DLCD to implement some or all of the recommendations.

### Summary of Recommendations

- DLCD’s report, informed by a robust community engagement process, includes six recommendations, and identifies implementation options and needed state and local resources.
- The recommendations focus on land use and transportation actions that are likely to provide the most protection at a community, subdivision, or neighborhood scale. They complement other requirements of SB 762 and existing regulations that are more focused at the building scale, such as home hardening standards and defensible space.
- Each recommendation will require substantial state funding and technical assistance to support local implementation, particularly for cities and counties with limited capacity. The legislature, when deciding on the best means of implementation, may need to prioritize resources.

<sup>1</sup> See DLCD’s *Oregon Farm & Forest Land Use Report, 2018–2019*, for more information on how protecting farm and forest land reduces encroachment of development into resource areas; [https://www.oregon.gov/lcd/Publications/2018-2019\\_Farm\\_Forest\\_Report.pdf](https://www.oregon.gov/lcd/Publications/2018-2019_Farm_Forest_Report.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.oregon.gov/lcd/NH/Documents/20220930\\_DLCD-Wildfire-Recommendations-Report.pdf](https://www.oregon.gov/lcd/NH/Documents/20220930_DLCD-Wildfire-Recommendations-Report.pdf)

### Wildfire Impacts

*Record-breaking wildfires have threatened communities, businesses, landscapes, and wildlife across Oregon.*

#### By the numbers...



**1M+**  
ACRES BURNED  
IN OREGON 2020



**4,000**  
HOMES DESTROYED  
IN OREGON 2020



**AVERAGE  
ACRES**  
BURNED ANNUALLY  
OVER THREE DECADES



**\$1.4B**  
SPENT  
FIRE FIGHTING  
SINCE 2017

*Smoke from wildfires and the associated health and economic impacts are some ways that many Oregonians have been impacted by wildfires.*

*In addition to the devastating loss of life, homes, and businesses, other significant social, economic, and environmental implications include loss of infrastructure, cultural resources, and tourism; transportation and power interruptions; and negative impacts to watersheds, wildlife habitat, timber, agriculture, and recreation.*

Sources: Office of Senator Jeff Golden; Doug Grafe, Wildfire Programs Director, March 2022



**Recommendation 1:** Cities and counties prioritize robust and inclusive community information and engagement in planning efforts to create wildfire adapted communities.

- It is critical to engage community members, particularly those from traditionally under-served and under-represented populations, and representatives from a variety of agencies, districts, service providers, and community-based organizations.
- Recommendation 1 applies to cities and counties that undertake wildfire preparedness, evacuation, adaptation, mitigation, and recovery planning outlined in recommendations 2 through 6. It is not intended as a stand-alone activity.

**Recommendation 2:** Cities and counties assess and improve transportation networks for safe evacuation and firefighting response.

- In coordination with emergency management, transportation, and fire agency professionals, work across jurisdictional boundaries with regional, state, and federal partners and Tribal governments.
- Cities and counties may need to amend transportation plans, policies, and programs to address identified gaps or deficiencies in transportation infrastructure.
- The need for safe evacuation is present in all areas of wildfire risk.
- Recommendation 2 applies at the community planning scale.

**Recommendation 3:** Cities and counties review and amend local land use codes for new development to ensure safe evacuation and efficient firefighting response.

- In consultation with state and local emergency management and fire protection professionals, review and amend zoning and land division codes to increase street connectivity and site access for new development.
- Recommendation 3 applies at the community, neighborhood, and subdivision planning scale.

**Recommendation 4:** Cities and counties review and amend comprehensive plan policies and implement land use codes to incorporate wildfire risk mitigation requirements for new development.

- Intended to reduce wildfire risk at the community or neighborhood and subdivision scale, with standards or applications that may differ depending on the scale or type of development.
- Recommendation 4 applies at the community, neighborhood, and subdivision planning scale.

**Recommendation 5:** Cities and counties prepare for post-disaster recovery in local communities through recovery planning.

- After a wildfire disaster, cities and counties often need additional capacity to process land use and related permit applications and engage in broader community recovery efforts to support rebuilding and the return of people to their communities in timely manner.
- Recommendation 5 applies at the community planning scale.

**Recommendation 6:** Cities, counties, special districts, and Tribes increase the effectiveness of natural hazards planning through the coordination of Community Wildfire Protection Plan and Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan processes and adoption of policies and actions into comprehensive plans and codes.

- Statewide Planning Goal 7: Areas Subject to Natural Hazards directs a local government to address natural hazards in their comprehensive land use plan by adopting a natural hazard inventory, policies, and supporting land use codes developed through a public planning process.
- Recommendation 6 applies at the community planning scale.

For questions or more information visit: [www.oregon.gov/lcd/NH/Pages/Wildfire-Adapted-Communities.aspx](http://www.oregon.gov/lcd/NH/Pages/Wildfire-Adapted-Communities.aspx)  
or email [DLCD.Wildfire@dlcd.oregon.gov](mailto:DLCD.Wildfire@dlcd.oregon.gov)

Related agency work: <https://www.oregon.gov/gov/policies/Pages/wildfire-programs-council.aspx>