



# CITY OF COLORADO SPRINGS COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN

**DRAFT**



The Colorado Springs Fire Department would like to thank all contributors of the 2026 Community Wildfire Protection Plan for their time, effort, and expertise. This plan is made possible by the efforts of all of our local, state and federal partner agencies. This plan has been approved by all of the following partners.



# CITY OF COLORADO SPRINGS COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN

**Recommended:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Wildfire risk in Colorado Springs continues to evolve, driven by longer fire seasons, warmer temperatures, drought cycles, high-wind events, dense vegetation, and expanding development in the City's western and eastern Wildland Urban Interfaces (WUI). Since our last published Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) in 2021, we have made great strides in continuing our vision of improving our community's resilience to wildfire.

The 2026 CWPP is more than a document—it is a roadmap for resilience. It builds on lessons learned from local catastrophic events such as the Waldo Canyon and Black Forest Fires and reflects our commitment to safeguarding life, property, and natural resources. This is a five-year plan with measurable goals, annual reviews, and adaptive management to ensure accountability and progress. Some of the key highlights of this plan include:

#### Mitigation Strategies:

- Hazardous fuels reduction
- Prescribed fire planning
- Ecosystem restoration

#### Fire-Adapted Communities:

- Expanded homeowner education, defensible space creation, and updated building codes
- Increased staffing, equipment, and partnerships to scale mitigation efforts citywide
- Community Engagement – We have completed over 20,000 wildfire risk ratings since 2021; 32 Firewise USA® communities established; neighborhood chipping and cost-share programs will continue to grow
- Expand our WUI to include undeveloped lands on the eastern boundary of our city

Fire service leader Mark von Appen once said that “Risk is relevant to how engaged your populations is.” Sharing the responsibility has always been the foundation and guiding principle for our Wildfire Mitigation program. Through collaboration with local, state, and federal partners, and with the active participation of our residents, we will reduce wildfire risk and strengthen community preparedness. Together, we can create a safer, more fire-adapted Colorado Springs.

**Kris Cooper**  
**Fire Marshal**  
**Colorado Springs Fire Department**

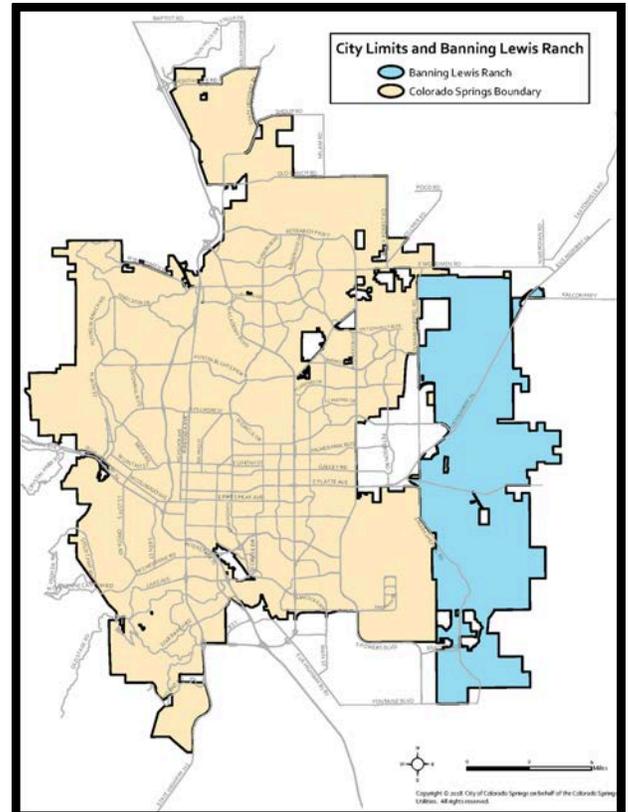
# INTRODUCTION

Catastrophic and destructive wildfires continue to impact and devastate communities throughout the country and particularly those within landscapes with a historical fire regime. As wildfire risk evolves and changes, communities must proactively plan for longer fire seasons and increasingly unpredictable conditions.

The Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) for the City of Colorado Springs was first developed in 2011 to summarize current wildfire conditions and plan for future projects for wildfire risk reduction. The CWPP was later updated in 2021 to capture expanded wildfire risk reduction efforts in the years following the Waldo Canyon and Black Forest Fires, two catastrophic and influential fires impacting the Pikes Peak Region. The purpose of the 2026 edition of the CWPP is to assess how wildfire risk continues to take shape in the City of Colorado Springs and what actions should be implemented

to protect life, property, and the environment. Updating the CWPP is a required measure listed in the 2D resolution passed on November 23, 2021 (refer to page Appendix, Section D for more details). Per this approved measure, the CWPP must be updated every 5 years to properly plan for wildfire risk reduction.

The 2026 edition of the City of Colorado Springs' CWPP was created through community-wide partnerships and adheres to federal, state, and local laws related to wildfire risk-reduction requirements. Implementation of proposed actions in this CWPP will assist to protect life, reduce property loss, and safeguard environmental resources.



**Figure 1:** Map of City found at <https://coloradosprings.gov/plancos/book/vibrant-neighborhoods-framework>

# COLORADO SPRINGS

## JURISDICTION DESCRIPTION

The City of Colorado Springs, located at the eastern edge of the Southern Rocky Mountains, spans approximately 195 square miles and is the most prominent metropolitan area within the Pikes Peak Region of Colorado's Front Range. Just 60 miles south of Denver at an elevation of 6,035 feet, Colorado Springs sits within the foothills of Pikes Peak (14,115 feet). Governed by a mayor-council system, the City oversees a diverse landscape and serves as a regional hub for aerospace, defense, technology, tourism, and outdoor recreation.

The City encompasses a wide range of landscapes, from densely forested foothills to expansive grassland prairies, each presenting distinct wildfire risks. The foothills area serves as a transitional zone between the grasslands and the Rocky Mountains, characterized by topographical features like hills, canyons, bluffs, valleys, and mesas. This area also contains vegetation types typical in both forest and grassland environments.

### AT A GLANCE

<b>MAYOR-COUNCIL FORM OF GOVERNMENT</b> 1 Mayor 9 Council Members 3 At Large 6 Districts	<b>POPULATION</b> 493,554 Established as of July 1, 2024  Steadily Increasing ↗	<b>LAND</b> 195.4 Square Miles 6,035 Feet Above Sea Level	<b>TOP INDUSTRIES</b> Aerospace Defense Technology Tourism
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### Economy

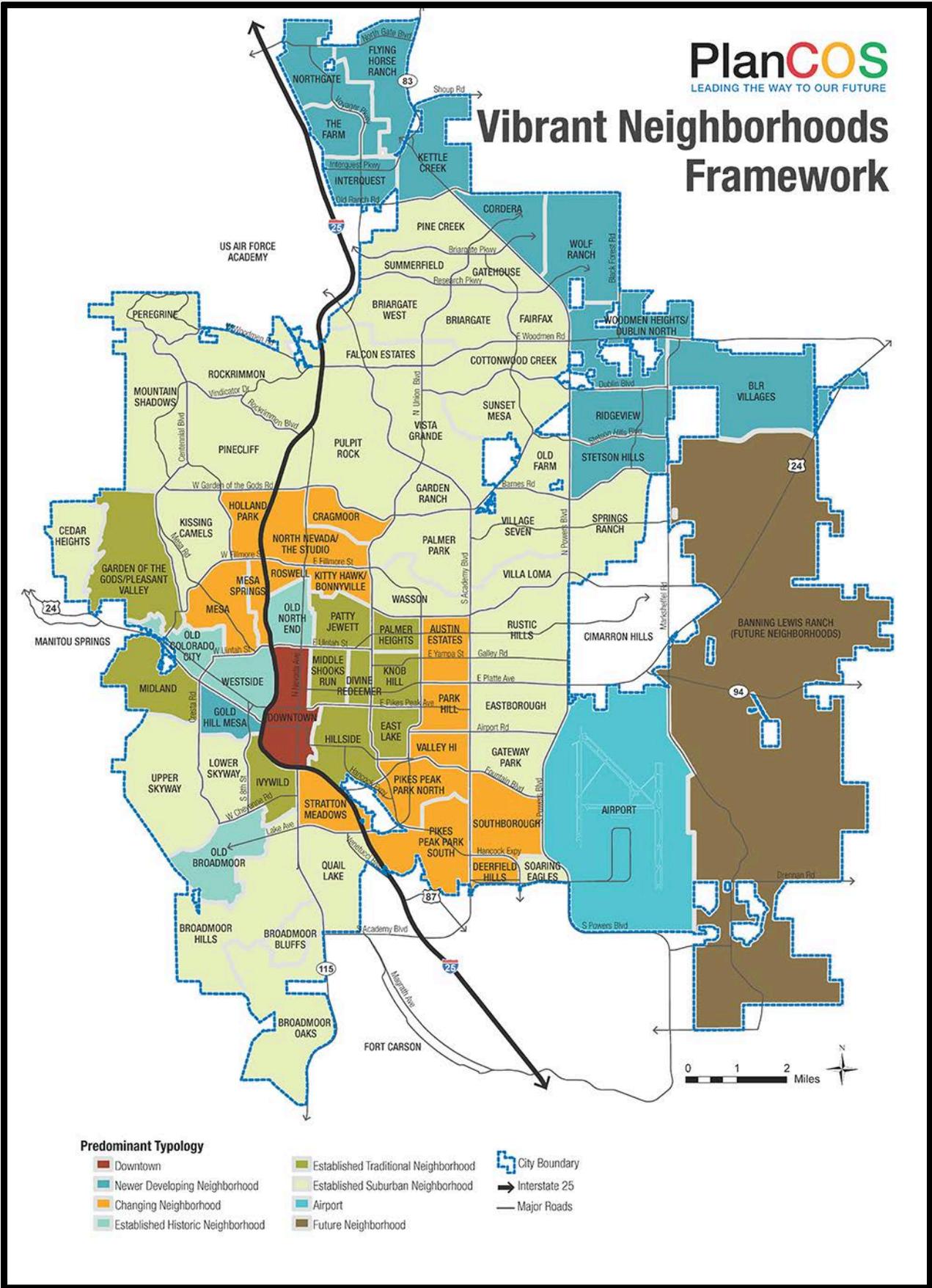
On January 14, 2025, Milken Institute released its annual list of best performing cities based on a nationwide analysis of economic growth. Colorado Springs was named as No. 5 in the nation of best performing cities, which is the highest ever placement for Colorado Springs and the highest in the state (Milken Institute, 2025). The City's previous highest ranking was No. 9 in 2022. In 2024, Colorado Springs placed No. 15 and was No. 37 in 2023.

“The Milken Institute’s Best Performing Cities ranking confirms what we’ve known for a long time – that Colorado Springs has a high performing, well-rounded, diverse and resilient economy. Selected as the top 5 economy across all large cities in our country, we are consistently adding new jobs and are laser focused on continuing to bring new opportunity to our thriving and vibrant city.”

**Mayor Yemi Mobolade**



# Vibrant Neighborhoods Framework



**Figure 2:** Map of City's neighborhoods found at <https://coloradosprings.gov/plancos/book/vibrant-neighborhoods-framework>

# TOP INDUSTRIES

## Aerospace

Colorado Springs is a nationally recognized center for aerospace innovation, defense operations, and space technology. Its unique blend of military infrastructure, private-sector investment, and academic support makes it one of the most strategically important aerospace hubs in the United States. Key industry players include Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, Boeing, Raytheon Technologies, and Kratos Defense & Security Solutions.

**150+** AEROSPACE COMPANIES

**\$3.1B** ECONOMIC IMPACT

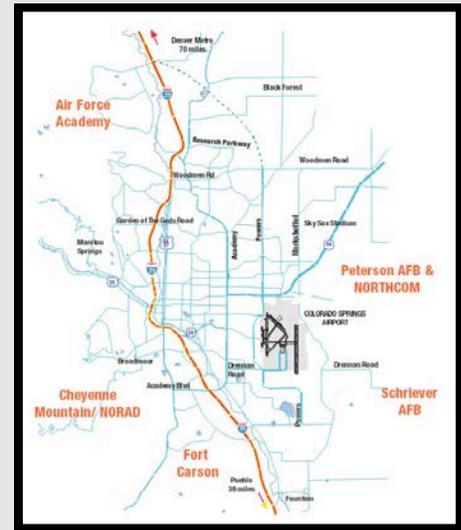
## Defense

Colorado Springs is home to Fort Carson Army Post, Peterson Space Force Base, Schriever Space Force Base, United States Air Force Academy and Cheyenne Mountain Space Force Station. These installations make Colorado Springs a national center for military innovation, space defense, and joint operations.

**5** MILITARY INSTALLATIONS

**\$2.5B** ECONOMIC IMPACT

**70,000** MILITARY LABOR FORCE



**Figure 3:** Colorado Springs Military Installations

## Technology

Colorado Springs is rapidly emerging as a dynamic hub for technology innovation, blending its military heritage with a growing ecosystem of private-sector tech companies. The City's tech landscape spans several high-impact sectors, each contributing to its reputation as a forward-looking, business-friendly environment.

**28,000** CYBERSECURITY EMPLOYEES

**11,600** MANUFACTURING WORKFORCE

**500+** MANUFACTURING COMPANIES

**53,000** MEDICAL MANUFACTURING WORKFORCE

**\$6B** ECONOMIC IMPACT

All content on this page is derived from the Colorado Springs Chamber & EDC's Economic Development webpage.

## Tourism

Colorado Springs is a premier destination in the Rocky Mountain region, drawing millions of visitors annually with its stunning natural landscapes, rich cultural heritage, and unique attractions. Tourism is a vital economic engine for the city, contributing billions of dollars to the local economy and supporting thousands of jobs across hospitality, retail, transportation, and recreation sectors. Colorado Springs' key attractions include Pikes Peak, Garden of the Gods, U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Museum, and Cheyenne Mountain Zoo (Colorado Springs Chamber & EDC n.d.).

**24.8M VISITORS**     **\$2.9B ECONOMIC IMPACT**

## EXPANSION AND GROWTH

Colorado Springs has experienced remarkable growth in manufacturing and commercial development, driving the need for strategic community development planning efforts. The City's Planning and Neighborhood Services Department monitors economic growth to plan for infrastructure expansion and revitalization. Revitalization efforts seek to attract new businesses, residents, and visitors. City planning efforts continue to engage with residents, stakeholders, and partners to develop plans that reflect the needs and aspirations of the residents. Expansion and growth planning measures can be found in the City's annual report located at: <https://coloradosprings.gov/system/files/2024-10/2023PlanningandNeighborhoodServicesAnnualReport.pdf>.

## PARKS AND CULTURAL SERVICES

The City of Colorado Springs has over 18,632 acres of park land and 326 miles of trails. These trails and parks help connect residents and visitors to recreational resources of regional and community significance. A list of parks and open spaces can be found online at <https://coloradosprings.gov/parks>.

Colorado Springs is a dynamic city whose culture, history, government, and people are deeply intertwined with wildfire resilience. The region's diverse topography, ranging from the foothills of the Rocky Mountains to expansive grasslands, creates a complex wildland urban interface that heightens wildfire risk. With a growing population, including vulnerable groups and expanding neighborhoods, proactive planning is essential to safeguard lives and property.

# WILDFIRE HISTORY

## IN COLORADO SPRINGS

Through lessons learned from wildfires across Colorado, and specifically the impacts left behind from the Waldo Canyon Fire in 2012, Colorado Springs has established codes and ordinances to protect lives, property and the environment. This section outlines wildfire history in Colorado Springs.

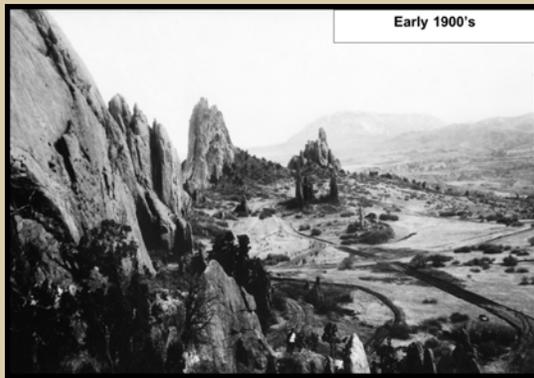
- **1854** The Big Burn Fire occurred in the area later to be founded as Colorado Springs. The impacted area burned from Colorado Springs to Wilkerson Pass.
- **1871** The City of Colorado Springs was founded.
- **1935** The United States Forest Service enacted the 10 am policy that any wildfire must be under control by 10 am the day after the fire was reported. This policy led to overgrown forests more susceptible to catastrophic fire.
- **January 17, 1950** The Camp Carson Fire destroyed approximately 92 structures, caused \$5 million in damages, injured 50, and resulted in 9 fatalities.
- **1960s** Fire ecology studies determined that wildfires provide beneficial impacts to the environment and that fire suppression tactics have caused an increased fuel load on the landscape.
- **1980s** Several historical fires that were catalysts for policy action in Colorado.
- **April 1, 1993** First edition of wildfire codes and ordinances specific to the hillside overlay zone for wildfire mitigation. This code established fuels management requirements.
- **June 8, 2002** The Hayman Fire destroyed 133 homes, burned approximately 138,000 acres, and caused \$42 million in damages.
- **2003** Class A Roofing ordinance enacted to require ignition resistant roofing for all new homes built Citywide.
- **May 8, 2006** The Westwood Fire threatened the Peregrine and Woodmen Valley neighborhoods.
- **September 28, 2007** The Manitou Springs Incline Fire burned 30 acres.

- **April 18, 2009** The Turkey Creek Fire occurred south of Colorado Springs.
- **June 23-July 10, 2012** Waldo Canyon Fire occurred in Colorado Springs, impacting the Mountain Shadows community, destroying 347 homes and resulting in 2 fatalities.
- **January 6, 2013** Appendix K created immediately following the Waldo Canyon Fire to strengthen codes based on lessons learned.
- **June 11, 2013** The Black Forest Fire burned 14,280 acres northeast of Colorado Springs and killed 2 residents.
- **April 17, 2018** 117 Fire burns south of Colorado Springs.
- **June 4, 2018** Appendix K updated to include specific provisions for the wildland urban interface instead of the hillside overlay.
- **November 19, 2020** The Bear Creek Grass Fire burned in Colorado Springs.
- **June 30, 2023** Structure hardening section of Appendix K updated with the adoption of the 2021 Colorado Springs Fire Code for reconstruction and modification of structures and updated fuels management requirements.
- **March 10, 2024** Grassfire burns across Marksheffel and Drennan roads.
- **June 18, 2024** Grassfire burns 1.88 acres near Woodmen Valley Chapel.
- **March 13, 2025** Blair Bridge Open Space Fire burns 8.86 acres near Kissing Camels.
- **July 1, 2025** 2025 Colorado Wildfire Resiliency Code adopted by Wildfire Resiliency Code Board setting policy standards for wildfire codes throughout Colorado.

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Data for this timeline is drawn from:

- Colorado Springs Fire Department Historical Records
- 2023-2028 Colorado Enhanced State Hazard Mitigation Plan
- United States Forest Service Website
- State of Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control (DFPC) 2024 Wildfire Preparedness Plan
- American Planning Association Hayman Fire Case Study
- Colorado Wildfire Resiliency Code Board Website

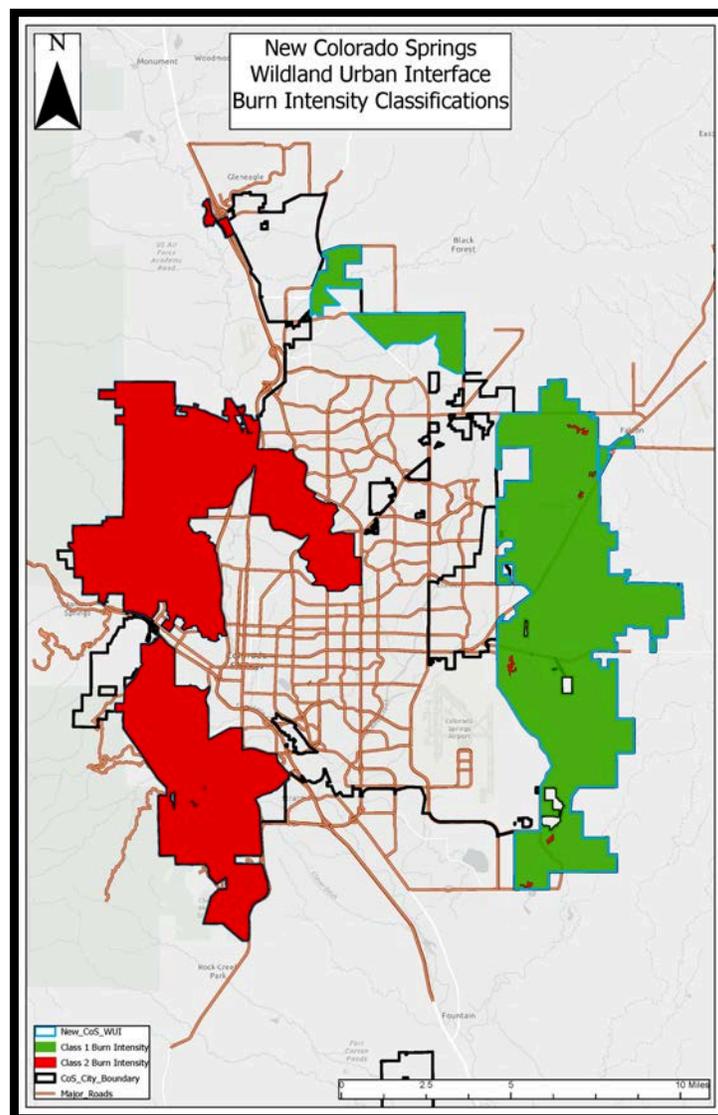


**Figure 4 & 5** - Photos from Garden of the Gods comparing the fuel density on the landscape from the early 1900's (left) to modern day (right).

Fire in the greater Colorado Springs area was historically more prevalent, less severe, and healthy for the surrounding ecosystems. Vegetation types were more open, with groups/clumps of vegetation and meadows in between. Fire resilient trees like ponderosa pine had thick bark, deep roots, and ability to shed lower limbs that allowed it to withstand fire and decrease the possibility of crown fires. For over 150 years, fire suppression and human development have drastically changed the landscape. This deviation has moved a once fire adapted landscape and ecosystem to one that is more prone to high severity fire, less resilient to fire, and overall detrimental to ecosystem health.

# WILDFIRE RISK DESCRIPTION

Wildfire risk is determined by the likelihood of a fire occurring, anticipated fire behavior and intensity, and the vulnerability of assets—including people, critical infrastructure, key resources, and the environment—along with the potential impacts to these assets. This section examines the primary factors influencing wildfire risk in Colorado Springs, such as fuel conditions, weather patterns, topography, ignition sources, development trends, and critical infrastructure. These elements form the foundation for targeted mitigation strategies designed to reduce risk and enhance community resilience.



**Figure 6:** Wildfire risks in Colorado Springs between the Eastern and Western Wildland Urban Interface.



19% CITY POPULATION

35,115 PARCELS

32,655 ACRES

51 SQUARE MILES

### WESTERN WILDLAND URBAN INTERFACE

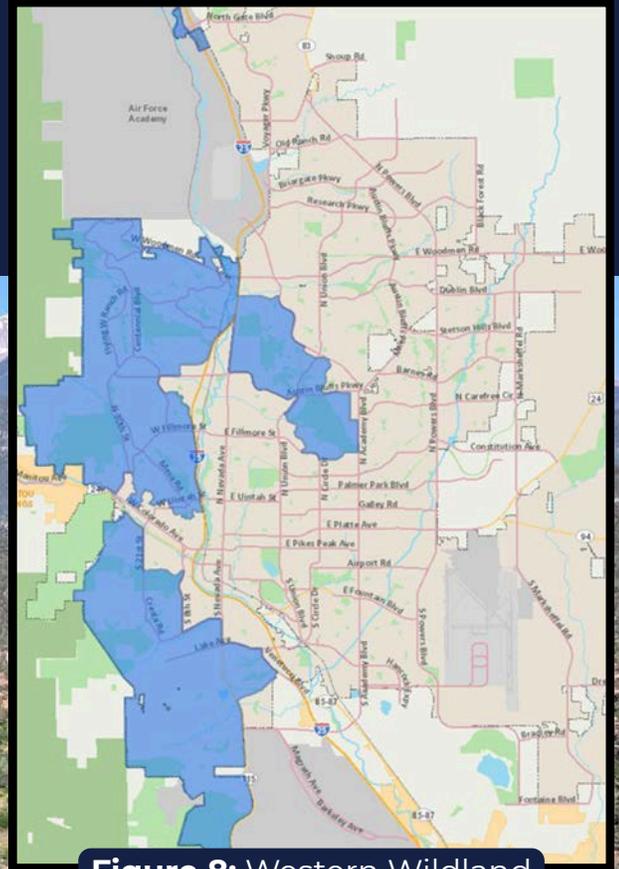


Figure 8: Western Wildland Urban Interface



### EASTERN WILDLAND URBAN INTERFACE

4% CITY POPULATION

11,821 PARCELS

29,312 ACRES

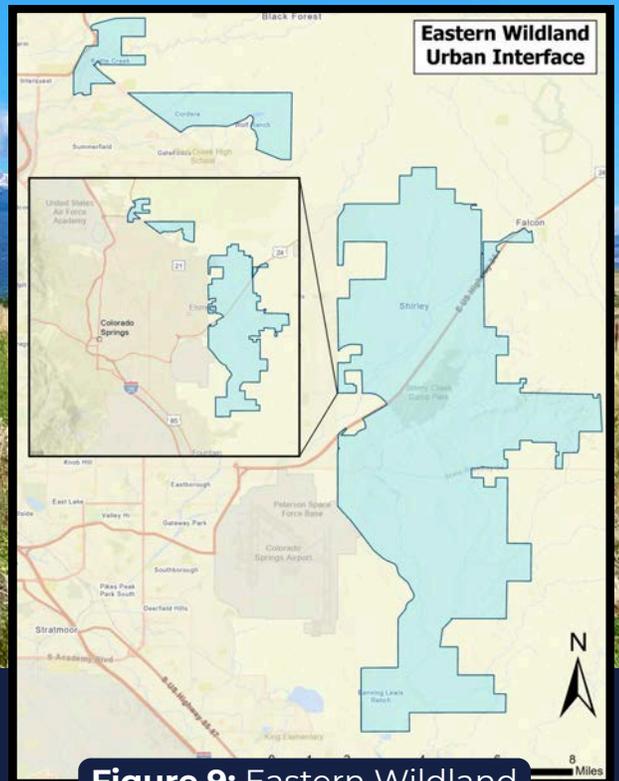
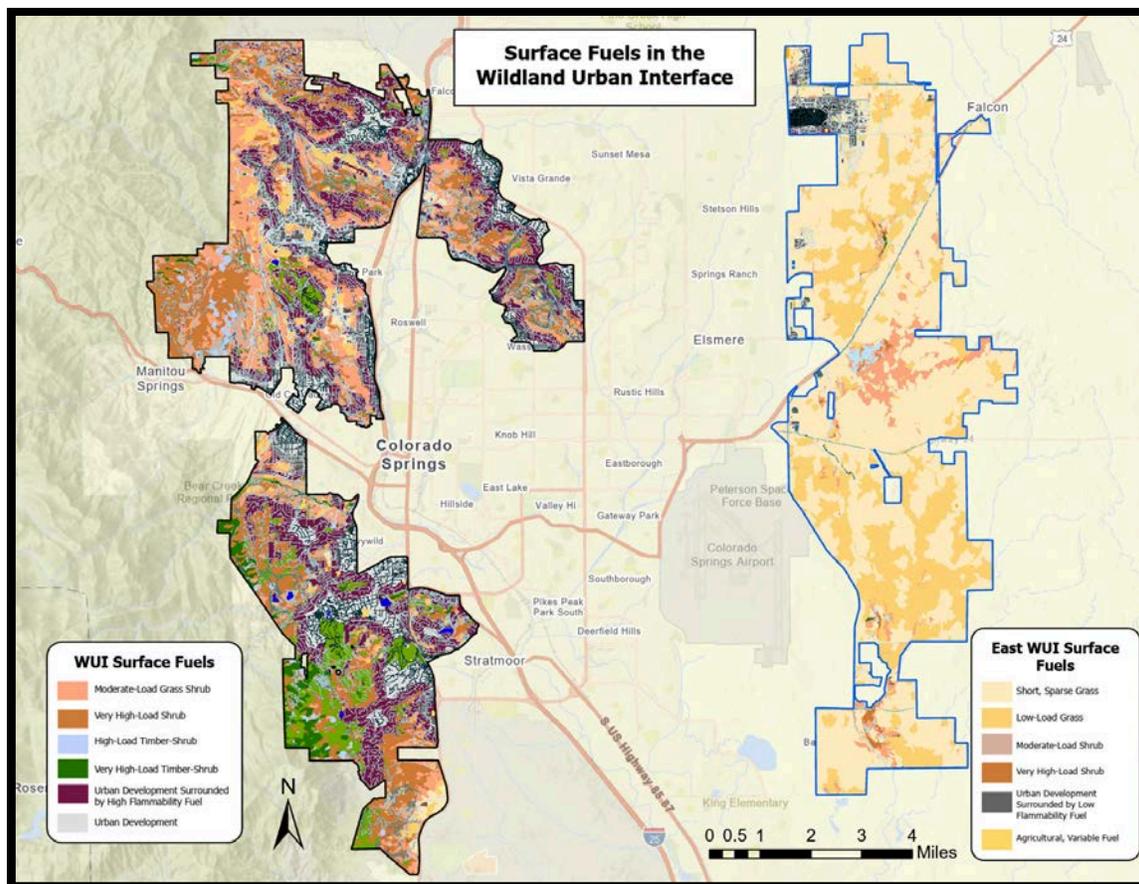


Figure 9: Eastern Wildland Urban Interface

# WILDLAND URBAN INTERFACE

The Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) is the zone where human development meets or intermingles with undeveloped wildland vegetation. This area is critical in wildfire planning because it combines highly flammable natural landscapes—such as forests, grasslands, and shrublands—with homes, infrastructure, and people. Within the City of Colorado Springs, areas of elevated wildfire risk are concentrated in two primary WUI regions: forested lands in the west and grassland and shrubland areas in the east.

The West WUI is characterized by vegetative fuels common in forests and topography consisting of steep slopes, canyons, ridges, and mesas. The East WUI is characterized by grassland or prairieland environments, low-growing vegetation, flat or gently rolling terrain, and high potential for fast-moving surface fires, especially during dry and windy conditions.



**Figure 10:** This figure showcases standard fuel types present in both the Western and Eastern Wildland Urban Interface. Other fuel types exist in the WUI of Colorado Springs, though the dominant or most relevant surface fuel types have been selected and shown in the legend. Highlighted are the profound differences between the type of vegetation seen throughout the WUI, indicating different expectations for fire behavior and thus different classifications.

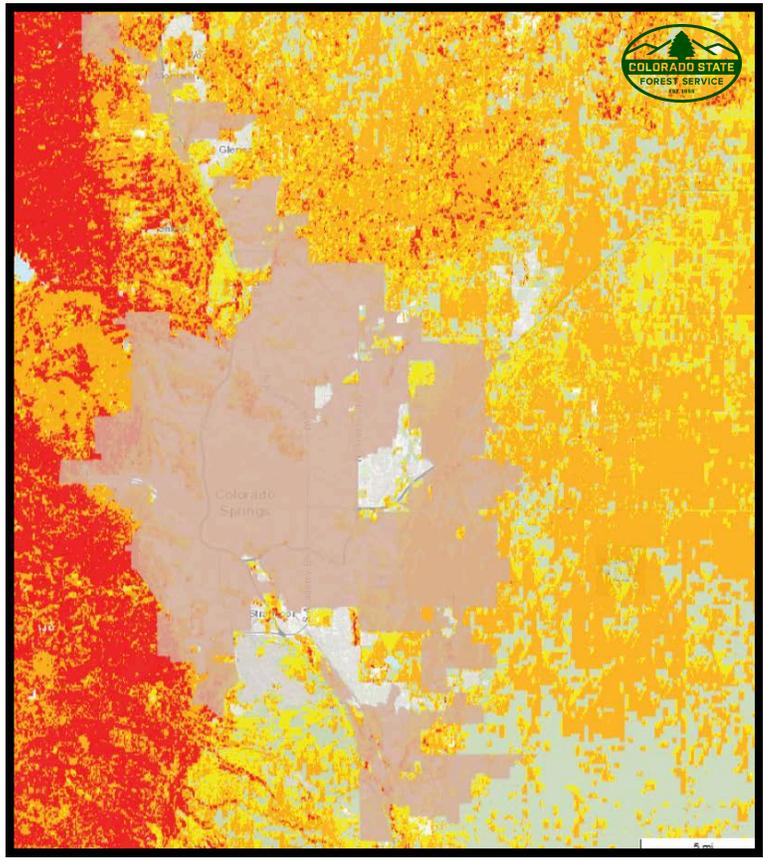
# FIRE REGIMES AND VEGETATION CHANGE IN FRONT RANGE GRASSLANDS, PONDEROSA PINE, AND DRY MIXED-CONIFER FORESTS

Frequent fire was a defining ecological process in grasslands, ponderosa pine woodlands, and dry mixed-conifer forests of the Colorado Front Range prior to Euro-American settlement. Grasslands typically burned every 1–10 years due to lightning ignitions and Indigenous burning, which maintained herbaceous dominance and prevented tree encroachment (Brown & Sieg, 1999). Ponderosa pine ecosystems experienced low-severity surface fires at intervals of approximately 5–30 years, producing open, low-density stands dominated by mature, fire-adapted trees (Fulé et al., 1997). Dry mixed-conifer forests burned at intervals of roughly 10–40 years, with mixed-severity effects that sustained a heterogeneous mosaic of species such as Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine (Sherriff & Veblen, 2007).

**Figure 10: Fire Intensity Scale for Colorado Springs**

Lowest Intensity	
Low Intensity	
Moderate Intensity	
High Intensity	

**Figure 11:** The Colorado State Forest Service wildfire risk viewer map below identifies the Fire Intensity Scale for the City of Colorado Springs. This scale measures where significant fuel hazards and associated dangerous fire behavior potential exist.

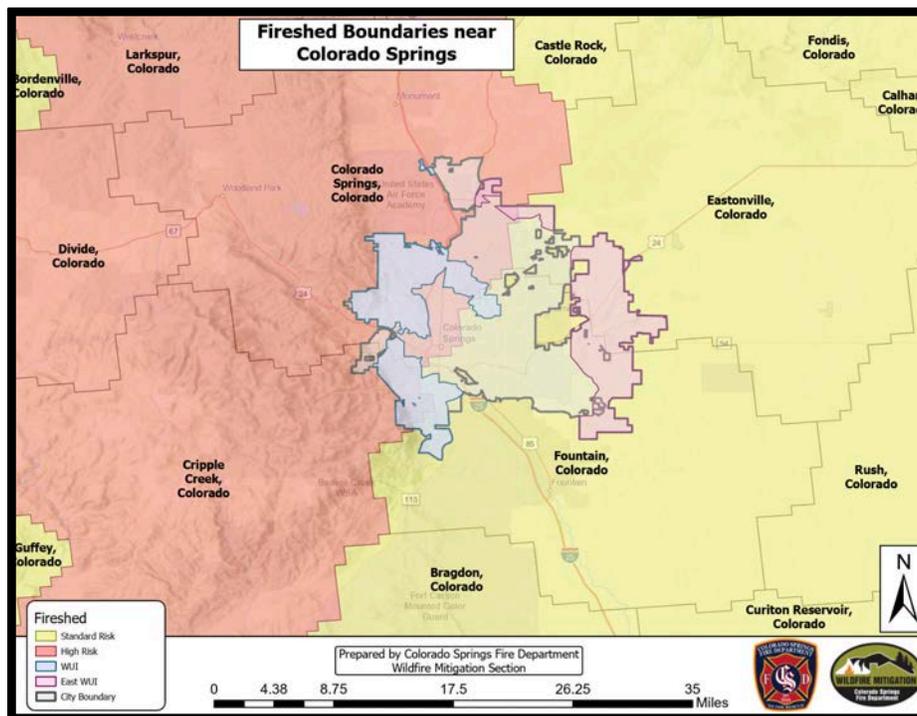


After the late 1800s, fire regimes shifted substantially due to anthropogenic influences. Widespread livestock grazing reduced fine fuels, suppressing fire spread in grasslands and ponderosa pine forests (Belsky & Blumenthal, 1997). Federal fire exclusion policies in the early 20th century further interrupted

natural fire cycles, allowing fuels to accumulate and enabling denser forest structures (Pyne, 2010). Logging practices removed large, fire-resistant trees and promoted dense regeneration, while land-use change fragmented landscapes and reduced natural fire continuity. In recent decades, climate warming has intensified fuel aridity and lengthened fire seasons, compounding the effects of historical fire suppression (Westerling et al., 2006).

The cumulative result is a marked contrast between pre-1860s and contemporary conditions. Historically, these ecosystems were characterized by frequent, mostly low-severity fires, low fuel loads, and open stand structures dominated by fire-adapted species. Today, fire intervals are substantially longer, fuel loads are higher, and forests exhibit greater tree density and vertical continuity. These changes have increased the likelihood of high-severity wildfire events, diminished the adaptive capacity of fire-resilient species, and elevated exposure and vulnerability for communities located within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI).

A fireshed is a geographic area where fires ignite and are likely to spread to communities. These boundaries are used to summarize factors that influence wildfire such as historical fires, vegetation, and fuels management activities. The fireshed extends across forested zones and residential developments, requiring coordinated mitigation strategies.



**Figure 12:** The firesheds that form the City of Colorado Springs.

## URBAN CONFLAGRATION

The continued growth and development of the WUI increases not only the risk of wildfire exposure, but also the potential for urban conflagration. Urban conflagration is defined as a large, catastrophic fire that spreads rapidly through dense built environments, moving from structure to structure via wind-blown embers, radiant heat, and direct flame contact. These fires can spread at an exponential rate, due to ember showers and simultaneous ignitions, quickly overwhelming available firefighting resources.

Urban conflagrations have occurred throughout history, including the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 and the fires following the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. More recent WUI events such as the Waldo Canyon Fire in Colorado Springs, Colorado; the Camp Fire in Paradise, California; and the Lahaina fire in Maui, Hawaii, demonstrate that conflagration remains a significant modern hazard, particularly in communities with dense development and vulnerable construction. The Palisades Fire—an example of the severe destruction possible in urban conflagration fires—burned 23,707 acres from January 7–31, 2025, resulting in 12 deaths and the destruction of 6,831 structures (City of Malibu, n.d.).

The most recent urban conflagration event to impact Colorado was the Marshall Fire that occurred on December 30, 2021 in Boulder County, Colorado. This fire resulted in 2 fatalities, over \$2 billion in losses, over 1,000 structures lost and over 6,000 acres burned.



**Figure 13:** Photo of CSFD wildland resources at the South Meridian Fire along Marksheffel Road on the east side of Colorado Springs. This fire burned over 3,000 acres on March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

Wildfires are generally managed through perimeter control and containment strategies, such as constructing firebreaks and leveraging natural barriers. In contrast, structural firefighting prioritizes life safety and limiting damage within individual buildings. Urban conflagrations, however, involve multiple simultaneous structure ignitions, making it operationally impossible to defend every building. Under these conditions, evacuation and life safety become the primary objectives, and the survivability of individual structures depends largely on their inherent fire-resistant design and defensible space. Lessons learned from past conflagration events have driven advancements in building codes, land-use planning, and fire response capabilities to reduce risk and improve resilience.

## **TOPOGRAPHY**

Topography refers to the shape and features of the land surface, including elevation, slope, aspect, and landform patterns such as ridges, valleys, and drainages. Fire typically moves faster uphill because the flames preheat the fuels above them, making steep slopes especially vulnerable to rapid fire spread. Aspect also plays a key role. South and west facing slopes receive more sunlight, resulting in drier fuels that ignite more easily and burn more intensely. North facing slopes are cooler and more shaded, thus delaying the drying of fuels. However, heavily vegetated north slopes can experience more severe wildfire. Valley and narrow drainages can act as chimneys, channeling heat, wind, and flames upslope.

Colorado Springs has a mix of grasslands, shrubs, and forested slopes varied with terrain that includes ridges, steep slopes, and drainages. The City's western boundary directly interfaces with the Pike National Forest, creating extensive wildland exposure. As forested lands to the west and grasslands to the east blend with the City's urban core, they give rise to scattered pockets of open space, parks, shared community areas, and easements woven throughout neighborhoods.

In March 2025, a fire occurred in the Blair Bridge Open Space near the Kissing Camels Neighborhood. This fire emboldened by the steep slope and light flashy fuel on the landscape quickly grew to 8.86 acres and ran uphill towards nearby homes before firefighters were able to extinguish the fire. Understanding topography is critical for effective wildfire mitigation because it helps identify high-risk areas like steep slopes and drainages where mitigation efforts should be utilized. By understanding the basics of topography, homeowners can better anticipate fire behavior and reduce the severity and impact to their homes.

## WEATHER

Drought conditions, warmer temperatures, an increasing number of homes in WUI areas, and declining forest health have elevated wildland fire from a manageable natural resource problem to a growing public safety concern that has caused catastrophic damage in the last two decades. Colorado Springs experiences a semi-arid climate characterized by low relative humidity, abundant sunshine (approximately 300 sunny days annually), and distinct seasonal variations. Summers are generally warm and dry, with average high temperatures in the mid-80s °F. Occasional afternoon thunderstorms associated with monsoonal moisture are common; however, these storms are often accompanied by gusty, erratic winds and lightning, which can increase ignition potential while providing limited moisture through rainfall.

Winters are cooler but typically sunny, with average daytime highs in the 40s °F and nighttime lows frequently below freezing. Snowfall is moderate and often melts quickly due to strong solar exposure, limiting long-term moisture retention. Spring and fall are characterized by rapid temperature fluctuations, low humidity, and frequent high-wind events, with conditions ranging from snow flurries to warm, dry afternoons within short time periods. Annual precipitation averages are approximately 16–18 inches, with average snowfall near 40 inches, though accumulation varies significantly by elevation, aspect, and exposure. Variability in snowpack and early seasonal melt can extend the fire season, particularly in grassland and lower-elevation areas.

Colorado Springs experiences both grassland and forest fire regimes, each presenting distinct wildfire hazards. Grass fires can spread rapidly under dry, windy conditions during the spring and fall, while forested areas are susceptible to high-intensity fire behavior during extended dry periods. Low relative humidity, frequent drought cycles, and recurring high-wind events, particularly downslope and Chinook wind conditions, are primary contributors to elevated wildfire risk in the City, leading to chronically dry fuel. Strong winds significantly increase rates of fire spread, spotting distances, and the likelihood of multiple simultaneous ignitions, reducing the effectiveness of suppression efforts.

Red Flag Warning conditions are common during late spring and early fall when dry fuels, low relative humidity, warm temperatures, and strong winds align. While more common in springs and fall, these conditions can be observed at any point in the year. Under these conditions, wildfire ignition and spread potential can exceed initial attack capabilities, increasing the risk of rapid fire growth, structure ignition, and evacuation challenges.

## **CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

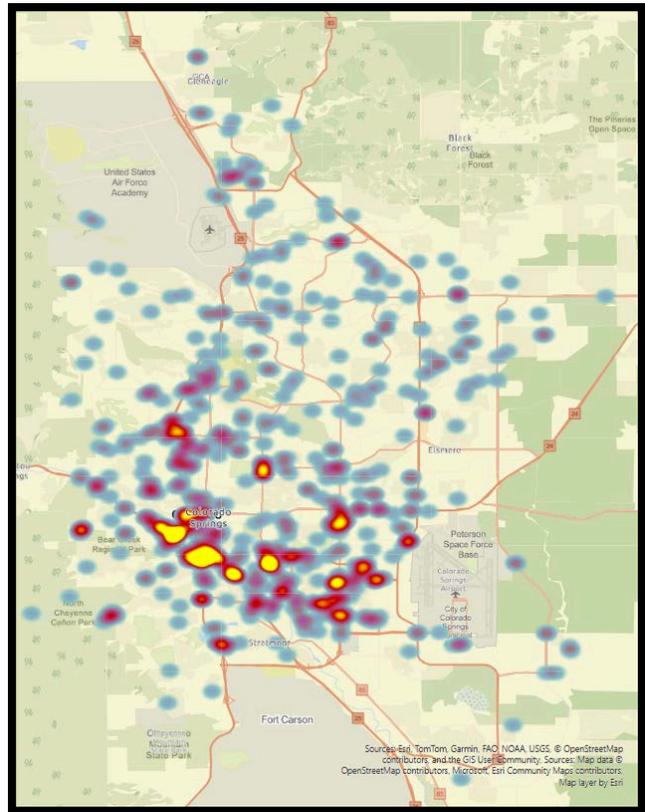
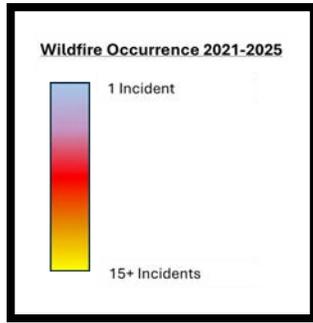
The City of Colorado Springs and Colorado Springs Utilities have a wide range of critical infrastructure that must be prioritized for protection in the event of a wildfire. Key assets include major transportation corridors, utility substations, water treatment facilities, and communication towers that support regional emergency response and public safety operations. Essential community lifelines such as hospitals, fire stations, schools, and evacuation routes require special consideration due to their role in sustaining health, safety, and continuity of services during a wildfire incident. In addition, the city's wildland urban interface neighborhoods, watershed areas, and key cultural or economic centers represent high-value resources whose loss would significantly impact community resilience. Protecting these interconnected systems is critical in ensuring Colorado Springs can withstand and recover from wildfire events.

The City also has several adjacent landowners. The United States Department of Defense is one of the primary land stakeholders with five individual military installations near Colorado Springs. The United States Army operates Fort Carson on the City's south side. The United States Space Force operates three installations, Cheyenne Mountain Space Force Station to the City's southwest, Peterson Space Force Base on the City's east side, and Shriever Space Force Base east of the city in unincorporated Colorado Springs. The United States Air Force operates the United States Air Force Academy on the City's northwest side. Additional landownership adjacent to Colorado Springs includes the United States Forest Service, who is the caretaker of the massive 1.1-million-acre Pike National Forest to the City's west side. Lastly the State of Colorado manages the 3,184-acre Cheyenne Mountain State Park to the City's southwest side.

## **IGNITION SOURCES**

Wildland fire can be started in a number of ways, however all ignition sources for wildfire can be placed into two categories, either natural or man-made. Man made fires can be either accidental or intentional. Natural ignition sources for wildfire can include lightning strikes, which account for the majority of natural wildfire ignitions. Accidental ignition sources of wildfire encompass most human causes of wildfire. Examples of accidental wildfire ignitions include smoking / improperly discarded cigarettes, dragging trailer chains causing sparks, unattended campfires, railroads, and heavy equipment. The last main source for wildfire ignition is intentionally ignited man-made fires. In 2024, there were 782 wildland fires in the City of Colorado Springs.

**Figure 14:**  
Wildfire  
Occurrence in  
Colorado Springs  
between 2021-  
2025.



## WATERSHED

The City of Colorado Springs is located within the Fountain Creek Watershed, a 930-square-mile drainage basin extending from the El Paso–Douglas County line south to the City of Pueblo, bounded by the Pikes Peak massif to the west and the eastern plains to the east. Hydrologic inputs originate primarily from high-elevation

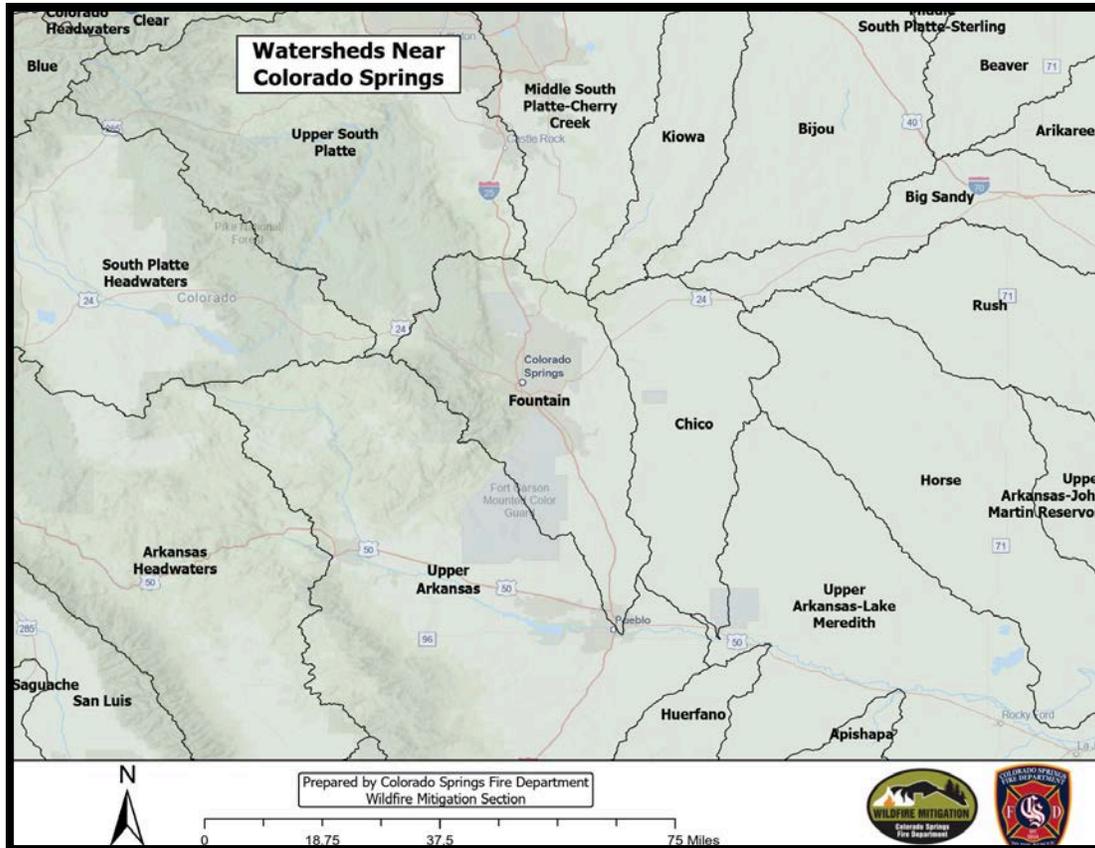
snowmelt and precipitation near Pikes Peak, feeding the headwaters of Monument Creek and Fountain Creek before ultimately flowing downstream into the City of Pueblo.

Colorado Springs owns and manages more than 34,000 acres of forested watershed lands that are deeded to the City and administered by Colorado Springs Utilities as part of the municipal raw water collection and distribution system. In addition, Colorado Springs Utilities collaborates with the U.S. Forest Service to support management of approximately 130,000 acres of federally reserved lands designated in the 1870s, specifically for municipal water supply protection. This long-standing partnership, now more than 140 years in duration, has been central to safeguarding the City’s source-water quality and hydrologic reliability.

Because Colorado Springs lacks a major river system and has no natural lakes, proactive watershed and forest management is essential to maintaining a stable water supply. The source of water for our community is primarily high-country snowmelt coming from three river basins in the state – Colorado River, Arkansas River and the South Platte River. This raw water is conveyed more than 100 miles through an integrated network of pipelines, tunnels, and conveyance structures to terminal reservoirs located near the city, many of which are situated on National Forest System lands mostly

on Pikes Peak. The system includes 25 raw-water storage reservoirs, six water treatment facilities, and more than 2,000 miles of potable water mains. Overall, the City relies on more than 260,700 acre-feet of raw water storage capacity.

**Figure 15:** Colorado Springs Watersheds.

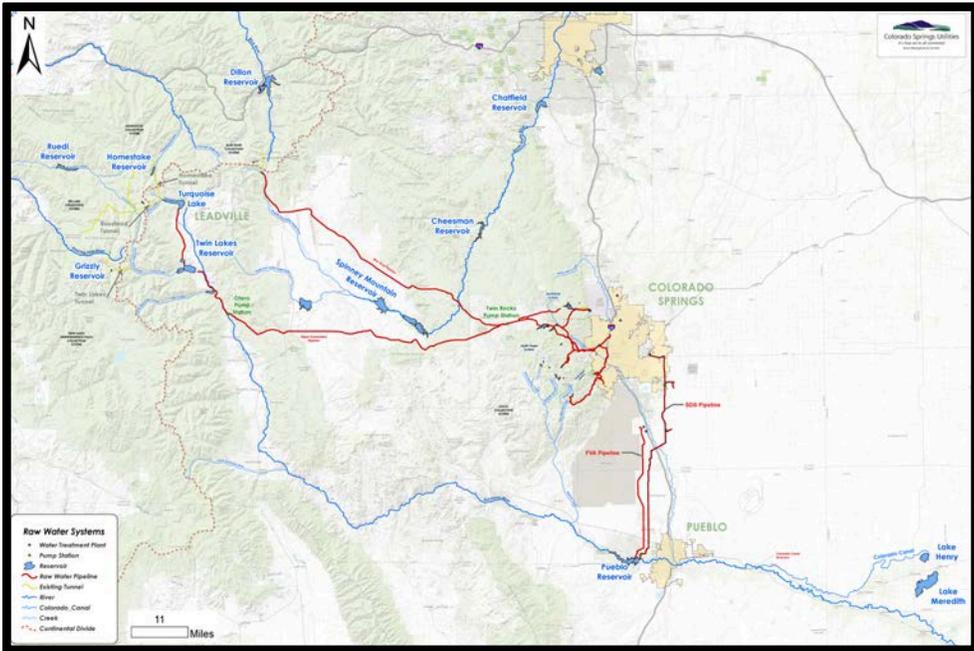


## WATERSHED PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT

Effective protection of these source-water areas requires coordinated management among Colorado Springs Utilities, the City of Colorado Springs, and the U.S. Forest Service. Key risks include high-severity wildfire, post-fire debris flows, sedimentation, and hydrologic instability, all of which can impair water quality, damage infrastructure, and reduce reservoir capacity.

Watershed lands provide essential ecosystem services, including drinking-water supply, raw-water storage, ecological habitat, and recreational opportunities. Management activities are guided by Memorandums of Understanding, Good Neighbor Authority agreements, and other interagency planning frameworks with the U.S. Forest Service and Colorado State Forest Service. These agreements support forest health treatments, fuels reduction projects, and long-term watershed resilience strategies.

Much of the ongoing work involves detailed hydrologic analysis, forest-stand assessments, risk modeling, and adaptive management. The City partners with federal, state, and local agencies, as well as nonprofit organizations, to ensure watershed conditions remain stable and resilient. Continuous monitoring and collaborative planning help maintain the reliability of water resources and infrastructure, particularly in the face of natural disasters, climate variability, and extreme weather events. Through collective engagement and shared responsibility for risk reduction, watersheds can be preserved for future generations, ensuring long-term reliability and safety through proactive forest management and the strategic use of prescribed fire.



**Figure 16:** Water supply map courtesy of Colorado Springs Utilities.

The watershed areas that support the City’s local water supply include the following watersheds:

- North Slope Watershed
- South Slope Watershed
- Northfield Watershed

The watershed areas and critical systems that support the City’s water collection supply include the following:

- Blue River System
- Homestake System
- Twin Lakes and Colorado Canal System
- Frying Pan-Arkansas River System
- Southern Delivery System

Colorado Springs Utilities has practiced wildfire mitigation for decades. Their Wildfire Mitigation Plan (<https://www.csu.org/safety/wildfire-mitigation>), published in 2025, focuses on a proactive, three-pillar strategy focusing on risk assessment, risk mitigation, and situational awareness. The utility identifies potential threats through advanced system modeling and LiDAR data. They then addresses those risks through vegetation management, watershed protection, and electric system hardening. These efforts are supported by a suite of situational awareness tools, including regional weather data, panoramic cameras, and ignition tracking, to ensure a rapid, informed response.

In addition to these tools, Colorado Springs Utilities has its own Catamount Wildland Fire Team. They also maintain community, state, and national partnerships dedicated to wildfire response, working with the CSFD to drive community-wide prevention and safety initiatives.

Use the following link for the City’s “From Watershed to Your Water Tap” map and resource page: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/27e6a3b997a74be181b9e06022f478f1>. Shortened link for “From Watershed to Your Water Tap” map: <https://hubs.ly/Q045WBZR0>

## COMMUNITY RISK PROFILE

As part of the CWPP development process, community members were invited to complete a wildfire preparedness survey designed to capture their experiences, concerns, and priorities related to local fire risk. The responses provided valuable insight into how residents perceive the threats posed by wildfire, the factors they believe contribute most to community vulnerability, and the types of actions they feel would most effectively reduce risk. These perspectives helped guide the recommendations and ensured that the strategies outlined reflect both local conditions and the community’s expectations for the Wildfire Mitigation Section’s role in wildfire mitigation.

The survey was open to all residents in the City of Colorado Springs and advertised through social media platforms and community organizers. The primary participants for this survey were long-time residents who owned property in the City’s Wildland Urban Interface, 60% having been affected by a wildfire before, with 2% of whom have lost their home to a wildfire. Only 53% felt that they were prepared for a wildfire and 58% felt prepared to evacuate in case of a wildfire.





# MITIGATION STRATEGIES

This section outlines strategies designed to reduce wildfire risk across both the natural landscape and the built environment. Wildfire risk in our region is shaped by two distinct but interconnected landscapes within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI): forests and the grass-dominated prairieland. Each presents unique challenges, from crown fire potential in dense conifer stands to fast-moving surface fires across open prairie. By fostering fire-adapted landscapes and fire-adapted communities, we can build resilience across ecological zones and ensure that our neighborhoods, infrastructure, and natural resources are better prepared for future wildfire events. These strategies reflect local conditions, community values, and best practices in wildfire risk reduction.

## **Goal #1 - Fire-Resilient Landscapes**

These strategies focus on managing vegetation, ecosystems, and land use to reduce wildfire intensity, spread, and severity.

- Identify areas for treatment
  - Identification of treatments is focused on several factors. These factors include but are not limited to: importance to protect lives and high value infrastructure to the City of Colorado Springs, existing vegetation and fuels arrangement, and feasibility (typically limited by slope percentage).
  - Once priority treatment areas are identified, jurisdictional and stakeholder engagement begins. The Colorado Springs Fire Department does not directly manage any lands, partnerships, agreements, and collaborations must be established for risk reduction and shared stewardship.
- Reduce hazardous fuels
  - Fuels reduction and/or rearrangement is critical to lessening wildfire risk. Reduction focuses on creating groups / clumps of vegetation while lessening contiguous fuel. Contiguous fuel may be vertical and horizontal in structure. Fuels reduction/rearrangement lessens continuity of fuel vertically and horizontally.
  - In fuels mitigated or reduced systems, the groups / clumps, lessened ladder fuels (fuels that can increase the fires ability to travel from the ground to the crown or top of vegetation), and or removed vegetation can lessen rate of spread for fire, reduce burn severity, lessen fire intensity, and allow greater time for wildfire resources to respond to a potential wildfire incident.

- Monitoring / Maintain previously treated acres
  - Fuels reduction areas are dynamic vegetation systems. These systems respond or grow in response to mitigation treatments differently.
  - Monitoring treatment areas is critical to inform mitigation specialists when re-mitigation or re-entry is necessary.
  - Monitoring informs mitigation specialists on project prioritization and is typically easier or financially less than the original entry for fuels reduction.
  - Maintenance of reduced fuel areas is integral to a fire resilient landscape and community.

## **Goal #2 Fire-Adapted Communities**

These strategies empower residents, organizations, and local governments to prepare for and respond to wildfire.

- Increase community education opportunities for new homeowners in newly built and existing homes.
- Increase public turnout to community education events.
- Establish the Eastern Wildland Urban Interface and increase awareness of resources available.
- Increase the community's understanding of wildfire risks.
- Conduct a comprehensive update of wildfire risk assessments across both the East and West Wildland Urban Interfaces, integrating the latest fire behavior modeling, vegetation data, and community development patterns.
- Create more audio / visual education materials for wildfire risk reduction.
- Conduct demonstration burns on sample home hardening and vegetation props that are common in the Wildland Urban Interface.
- Establish a process for ongoing tribal consultations for large scale fuels reduction project planning.

## **Goal #3 Wildfire Mitigation Program Expansion**

As wildfire risk continues to escalate across both forested and grassland regions of our community, expanding the scope and impact of our wildfire mitigation program is essential. This effort aims to build on existing successes while scaling up resources, partnerships, and outreach to meet the growing challenges in the throughout the Wildland Urban Interface.

- Increase program staffing to meet the growing demands of mitigation projects, education and outreach initiatives, and overall program expansion. This effort also includes replacing outdated equipment to ensure operational efficiency and effectiveness.

- Secure a dedicated facility to provide office space for all current and projected staffing needs and store all section fleet vehicles and equipment, ensuring security, organization, maintenance, and readiness for wildfire mitigation operations.
- Expand and strengthen partnerships with local, regional, and state agencies, community organizations, and private stakeholders. This includes formalizing collaborative agreements, increasing joint training opportunities, and leveraging shared resources to maximize impact. Enhanced partnerships will ensure coordinated planning, efficient response, and sustained community resilience in the Eastern and Western Wildland Urban Interface (WUI).
- Adopt, implement, and continually update WUI codes to ensure community safety and compliance with current standards.
- Continue to pursue and leverage grant funding opportunities to support wildfire mitigation projects, equipment upgrades, facility acquisition, and overall program development. This includes maintaining an active grant application strategy, building relationships with funding agencies, and aligning proposals with community resilience priorities.

## COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

**Figure 20** below shows the survey responses from our community when asked ‘what mitigation strategies should be prioritized?’



The community survey revealed that many community members struggle most with convincing all neighbors to participate in wildfire mitigation efforts. Survey participants would like to see more education for new neighbors, homeowners associations, and also utilizing tv and radio platforms to increase community engagement. These recommendations were reviewed and prioritized for the department’s overall strategy to promote fire-adapted communities.

# IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Implementing mitigation strategies requires a coordinated approach that translates planning into on-the-ground action. Each strategy should be assigned clear responsibilities, timelines, and measurable outcomes to track progress. By integrating these efforts into local planning and maintaining strong communication among partners, communities can build lasting wildfire resilience. The following three tables outline the implementation plans to foster fire-resilient landscapes, fire-adapted communities, and program growth.

<b>Fire-Resilient Landscapes</b>		
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
Identify Areas for Treatment	Prioritization of high wildfire risk areas	Ongoing
Reduce Hazardous Fuels	Reduction of wildfire risk	1 to 2 years, dependent on project size / complexity
Monitor / Maintenance	Annual monitoring, informing future mitigation efforts, project planning and prioritization	Annual Monitoring, project maintenance 5-20 years dependent on vegetation system

<b>Fire-Adapted Communities</b>		
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
Increase Community Education Opportunities for New Homeowners	Increase the amount of presentations conducted in neighborhoods throughout high risk wildfire zones	Quarterly
Establish the Eastern Wildland Urban Interface	Publish an official boundary of the Eastern Wildland Urban Interface	Year 1

Increase Community's Understanding of Wildfire Risks	Create method to measure the community's knowledge and understanding of wildfire risks	Ongoing
Wildfire Risk Assessment Update	Create an updated wildfire risk assessment that includes parameters from the Wildfire Resiliency Code	Year 1 - 5
Audio / Visual Materials	Create materials for structure hardening and fuels management for distribution on social media	Monthly
Demonstration Burns	Conduct demonstration burns that will present real-life wildfire threats	Annually

<b>Wildfire Mitigation Program Expansion</b>		
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
Increase Capacity	Increase program staffing, equipment, and programs	Year 1 - 5
Obtain a Wildfire Mitigation Building	Secure a dedicated facility to store all section resources	Year 1 - 5
Expand and Enhance Partnerships	Expand and strengthen partnerships with local, regional, and state agencies, community organizations and private stakeholders	Ongoing
Codes	Adopt and continually review WUI codes	Year 1 & Ongoing
Grant Funding	Continue to pursue and leverage grant funding opportunities	Ongoing



# MONITORING & EVALUATION

To ensure the long-term effectiveness of mitigation strategies outlined in the CWPP, a structured monitoring and evaluation framework will be implemented over a five-year period. This includes establishing clear benchmarks and performance indicators for each strategy and tracking annual progress of these markers. Annual progress reviews will be conducted by the wildfire mitigation section. These reviews allow for adaptive management, enabling the plan to evolve in response to changing conditions, new data, or unforeseen challenges. At the end of the five-year cycle, a comprehensive evaluation should assess outcomes against initial goals, identify lessons learned, and inform updates to the CWPP for the next planning phase.

## Annual Review

- Have community education opportunities increased?
  - Changes in any of the following:
    - Website traffic for [COSWILDFIREREADY.ORG](https://COSWILDFIREREADY.ORG)
    - Neighborhood meetings throughout the city
    - Distribution of educational booklets
    - Onsite consultations and stipends
- Has the community's understanding of wildfire risks increased?
  - Annual survey results and discussion
- Has any progress been made to update the wildfire risk assessment map?
- How many audio / visual education materials been produced? implemented?
- What wildfire risk areas should be prioritized and treated?
- How have previously treated project areas changed and when should they be retreated?
  - Review projects and assess vegetation regeneration
- What partnerships need to be expanded or developed?
  - What relationships did the program leverage the most this year?
  - Where does the program need more support?
- What grant funding opportunities should be pursued?
  - What grant opportunities exist for this jurisdiction and program priorities?
- What percentage of acres are considered high risk?
- What percentage of participants in wildfire mitigation programs are new?
- How has the budget changed?
- What percentage of the budget has been used for CWPP initiatives?

### **Year 1 Review**

- Has the East Wildland Urban Interface been established?
- Has the City implemented code changes based on the Wildfire Resiliency Code?
- Has a demonstration burn been completed?
  - How many viewers for this demonstration?
- What staffing, equipment or other resource challenges need to be addressed?

### **Years 2-4 Review**

- How have fuels reduction projects contributed to overall wildfire risk reduction?
  - Number of treated acres / high risk areas = percentage of acres with reduced risk.
- What changes or improvements should be made to the WUI codes?

### **Comprehensive Evaluation Years 1 - 5**

- What new topics need to be added to the 2032-2037 CWPP?
- How many acres were treated between 2026-2031?
- How many neighborhoods became Firewise between 2026-2031?

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The image shows a vast, misty forest landscape. The foreground and middle ground are filled with dense evergreen trees, their colors softened by a light haze. A semi-transparent grey horizontal band runs across the center of the image, serving as a background for the main text. The overall atmosphere is serene and natural.

# APPENDICES

# SECTION A: WILDLAND URBAN INTERFACE CODES

## APPENDIX K

The Colorado Springs Fire Department (CSFD) is responsible for enforcing the provisions defined in Appendix K of the City of Colorado Springs' fire code. The WUI codes are intended to define safe structure hardening and vegetation management techniques to build defensible space and increase home's stand-alone survivability during a wildfire. Newly built and newly modified structures in the WUI must adhere to the latest fuels management codes. The current codes and ordinances can be found at <https://www.coswildfireready.org/codes-and-ordinances>.

- **April 1, 1993** First edition of wildfire codes and ordinances specific to the hillside overlay zone for wildfire mitigation. This code established fuels management requirements.
- **2003** Class A Roofing ordinance enacted to require ignition resistant roofing for all new homes built Citywide.
- **January 6, 2013** Appendix K updated immediately following the Waldo Canyon Fire to strengthen codes based on lessons learned.
- **June 4, 2018** Appendix K updated to include specific provisions for the wildland urban interface instead of the hillside overlay.
- **June 30, 2023** Structure hardening section of Appendix K updated for reconstruction and modification of structures and updated fuels management requirements.
- **July 1, 2025** 2025 Colorado Wildfire Resiliency Code adopted by Wildfire Resiliency Code Board setting policy standards for wildfire codes throughout Colorado.

## **CONSTRUCTION PLANS**

Construction plans are required for all new construction in the City of Colorado Springs WUI. Development plans are submitted to the CSFD Construction Services Section for compliance with fire codes and ordinances. As part of this review, the Wildfire Mitigation Section will approve all construction plans for fuels management requirements in Section 103 of Appendix K. The fire code specifies that an approved inspection must be obtained from the fire code official prior to final inspection by the building code official and/or allowing occupancy of the residence.

Development plans are reviewed for the following fuels management requirements:

- K103.1 Scope
- K103.2 Brush patches or clusters
- K103.3 Clearance to the main structure
- K103.4 Pruning of dead limbs
- K103.5 Clearance of tree branches to structures or appurtenances

## **PRE-FRAME INSPECTIONS**

Newly constructed homes or additions to existing homes within the WUI must comply with the current codes as well as the current Appendix K code requirements. Prior to breaking ground on new construction in the WUI, a Pre-Frame Vegetation Inspection must be conducted. A Wildfire Mitigation Section staff member will inspect all vegetation within 30 feet of the home site and will mark any hazardous vegetation within 15 feet of the projected location of the home for removal unless otherwise allowed in Appendix K. Necessary vegetation within 30 feet of the home site can be noted for thinning. As of 2025, the Colorado Springs Fire Department has completed 32 Pre-Frame Vegetation Inspections within the City of Colorado Springs.

## **WILDFIRE RESILIENCY CODE PROPOSED UPDATES**

On July 1st, 2025, the Wildfire Resiliency Code was adopted by the Wildfire Resiliency Code Board. By April 1st, 2026, local jurisdictions must adopt a code that is as rigorous or more than the statewide code. These jurisdictions are required to be compliant with their versions of the code by July 1st, 2026. The next page outlines the important differences between existing Appendix K and the standards that must be adhered to in the upcoming version.

## Compliance Triggers

Appendix K, 2023	Wildfire Resiliency Code
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Code applies to all dwelling units and ancillary buildings constructed after January 15th, 2013.</li> <li>• Structures receiving 50% or more of siding/covering/material replacement on or after June 30th, 2023, must comply with Appendix K.</li> <li>• No map requirements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Code applies to all conditions arising after adoption of the code.</li> <li>• 25% of roof surface area replaced or where work to reconstruct, alter, or repair the roof covering effectively replaces such material, shall require the entirety of the roof covering to be replaced.</li> <li>• Requires a map highlighting fire intensity for low, moderate and high fire intensity classifications.</li> </ul>

## Structure Hardening

Appendix K, 2023	Wildfire Resiliency Code
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All WUI homes are subject to the same guidelines.</li> <li>• Fiber-cement board, stucco, masonry, stone or similar recommended as options.</li> <li>• No mention of requirements after weathering.</li> <li>• Gutters can be plastic so long as 5-foot buffer with no vegetation exists beneath.</li> <li>• No mention of vehicle access/garage doors.</li> <li>• Structure hardening applies to dwelling units.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requirement stringency is divided into Class 1 and Class 2.</li> <li>• Approved materials must also pass ignition-resistant expectations after weathering.</li> <li>• Gutters must be noncombustible.</li> <li>• Vehicle access doors must be built in such a manner that embers cannot intrude.</li> <li>• Detached accessory structures within 50 feet of structure with habitable space must follow siding guidelines of main structures.</li> </ul>

## Site & Area Requirements

Appendix K, 2023	Wildfire Resiliency Code
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All WUI homes are subject to the same guidelines.</li> <li>• No hazardous vegetation within 15 feet of main structures.</li> <li>• Character trees &gt; 12 inches in diameter can remain.</li> <li>• Safety zone (15-30 feet) focuses on fuels management.</li> <li>• Dead branches pruned up to 30% of the bole or 10 feet, whichever is less.</li> <li>• Branches cannot be within 15 feet of deck or other combustible projection.</li> <li>• Branches of large trees cannot overlap other trees. Tree clusters can be approved if sufficient clear area between clusters exists.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requirement stringency is divided into Ignition Zone 1 and 2.</li> <li>• Ignition Zone 1 (0-5 feet) cannot contain combustible material.</li> <li>• Mature trees &gt; 10 inches in diameter can remain.</li> <li>• Permanently posted addresses required.</li> <li>• Retaining walls must be constructed of ignition resistant materials when within 8 feet of structures.</li> <li>• Fencing within 8 feet of structure must be ignition resistant.</li> <li>• Ignition Zone 2 (5-30 Feet) focuses on fuel modification.</li> <li>• Dead plant material must be removed from live vegetation.</li> <li>• Tree crowns extending to within 10 feet of structure must be trimmed to maintain minimum clearance of 10 feet.</li> <li>• Tree crowns within 30 feet must be spaced to prevent structure ignition and to promote fuel discontinuity.</li> </ul>

# SECTION B: COMMUNITY EDUCATION

## COMMUNITY MEETINGS

Individual community members have a responsibility to understand what it means to live in the WUI. By educating homeowners, the City can decrease the stress and reliance on first responders and disaster relief programs by decreasing the number of impacted families during a wildfire disaster. If homeowners complete wildfire mitigation work, they can increase their stand-alone survivability and prevent damage to their home and property.



**Figure 21:** CSFD staff presenting to local communities.

2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
22 Meetings	35 Meetings	30 Meetings	48 Meetings	61 Meetings
601 Attendees	1,276 Attendees	1,212 Attendees	1,977 Attendees	2,061 Attendees

**Figure 22:** Table representing the public meetings provided and number of attendees between 2021-2025.

## FIREWISE, USA ®

Between 2021 and 2025, the Wildfire Mitigation Section has managed 32 Firewise, USA® communities. The Firewise, USA® program helps provide a framework for communities to plan actionable steps that will further their goal of becoming a wildfire resilient community. CSFD helps to facilitate Firewise, USA® sites by completing annual applications and validating that communities meet the annual criteria outlined in the next section.

- **Risk Assessment:** The assessment of the area within the site's boundary must reflect the wildfire risks for each home following the template used by Firewise, USA®. This risk assessment is completed by CSFD in partnership with the neighborhood organization. These must be updated every three years at a minimum.
- **Board / Committee:** Each Firewise site is required to have a board/committee that provides input to CSFD for the development of the action plan, educational outreach activities, and annual renewal process.
- **Action Plan:** A multi-year action plan was created by CSFD in partnership with neighborhood organization representatives, using the risk assessment document as a tool to determine priorities for the area within the identified boundaries. Action Plans are a prioritized list of mitigation investments, risk reduction projects, and education activities that participants will strive to complete each year.
- **Educational Activity:** Each participating site is required to hold a minimum of one wildfire risk reduction educational outreach event or activity annually.
- **Vegetation Removal:** A major component of wildfire risk reduction is the removal of vegetation (shrubs, brush, limbs, trees, etc.) from individual properties and common-area property. CSFD conducts annual tracking for vegetation removal within each community to include wildfire fuel that's been eliminated from the area.
- **Risk Reduction Investment:** Investing the equivalent of one volunteer hour (valued at \$33.49), per residential dwelling unit within the site's boundary, in annual wildfire risk reduction actions is a requirement of the national recognition program's criteria for maintaining an "In Good Standing" status. CSFD collects volunteer hours from every community to meet this requirement.

The 2025 Firewise communities include the following:

- |                              |                              |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| • Broadmoor Downs            | • Highland Terrace           |
| • Broadmoor Park             | • Hunters Point              |
| • Broadmoor Resort Community | • Kissing Camels             |
| • Canyons at Broadmoor       | • Mountain Oaks              |
| • Cedar Heights              | • Old Broadmoor Condominiums |
| • Comstock Village           | • Peregrine                  |
| • Constellation              | • Pine Creek Estates         |
| • Country Broadmoor          | • Pinecliff                  |
| • Country Club               | • Raven Hills                |
| • Discovery                  | • Skyway                     |
| • Golden Hills               | • Skyway Heights             |
| • Greencrest                 | • Spires                     |



- Thunderbird Estates
- Top of Skyway
- University Park
- Valley at Erindale
- Villa Sierra
- Woodmen Oaks
- Woodmen Valley

## NEIGHBORHOOD CHIPPING

The Neighborhood Chipping Program is a free service available to the West WUI to aid in reducing wildfire risk. The program encourages homeowners to perform their own wildfire mitigation work around their property and provides an easy way to dispose of the hazardous vegetation. Each homeowner is offered two chipping dates and must stack their woody material according to the program’s guidelines into curbside piles for removal. More information is available on our website at <https://www.coswildfireready.org/neighborhood-chipping-program>.

2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
4,140 Homes	7,301 Homes	5,409 Homes	6,396 Homes	5,429 Homes
1,895.18 Acres	2,977 Acres	1,785 Acres	3,008.83 Acres	2,548.46 Acres
362.43 Loads	591 Loads	382 Loads	480.50 Loads	409.43 Loads
4,349.16 CY	7,091 CY	4,620 CY	5,766 CY	4,913.16 CY
434.91 Tons	2,127 Tons	1,386 Tons	1,729.80 Tons	1,473.95 Tons
n/a	73,104 Hours	52,790 Hours	49,841.60 Hours	48,829 Hours

**Figure 23:** Table with chipping statistics from 2021-2025.



**Figure 24:** Chipping operations in Cedar Heights.

## NEW HOMEOWNER EDUCATION

In 2024, the Wildfire Mitigation Section kicked off a new program to educate homeowners that moved into existing homes within the WUI. These homeowners received a postcard or letter with information about the responsibility associated with living in the WUI. CSFD has also established a process for site visits for homeowners in newly constructed homes to ensure they are aware of the fire codes and ordinances that must be followed for newly built homes. CSFD’s construction services is also working with homeowners that modify, reconstruct, or alter structures to ensure that the latest fuels management requirements are applied to construction projects on existing homes. Since the beginning of this new outreach effort, 2,140 total homeowners have received education materials.

## ONSITE CONSULTATIONS & STIPENDS

The program offers free onsite consultations to homeowners throughout the City of Colorado Springs. Onsite consultations are prioritized for homeowners living in the WUI within the City of Colorado Springs but are made available to any homeowner in the City. During these visits, Wildfire Mitigation staff educate homeowners in wildfire mitigation, structure hardening, and vegetation management to build defensible space.



**Figure 25:** Depiction of the safety zone (are prioritized for wildfire mitigation)

Cost share stipends are offered through the Wildfire Mitigation Section annually to residents in the West WUI to mitigate hazardous vegetation within the safety zone (30 feet) surrounding homes. Homeowners can receive a \$1 for \$1 match, not exceeding \$500, to offset contractor costs for wildfire mitigation work.

2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
455 Onsites	630 Onsites	173 Onsites	307 Onsites	373 Onsites
115 Stipends	116 Stipends	131 Stipends	149 Stipends	150 Stipends

**Figure 26:** Table with onsite and stipend data from 2021-2025.

## REASSESSMENTS

Wildfire risk assessments are completed in person by representatives from the wildfire mitigation section. These in person assessments inform wildfire risk for individual parcels which can range from low, moderate, high up to very high and extreme. Factors that influence this rating include property characteristics out of the homeowner's control such as distance from a fire hydrant and slope on the property. There are five factors that inform wildfire risk within the homeowner's control. They include:

1. Proper building identification (visible address plate displayed on main structure).
2. Roofing materials.
3. Siding materials.
4. Defensible space around structures.
5. Vegetation density within 30 feet of structures.

To reduce wildfire risk, external components of homes should be comprised primarily of ignition resistant or noncombustible materials such as stucco or masonry siding and Class A roofing. Introducing more defensible space around structures, including no hazardous vegetation within 15 feet of the home and properly mitigating vegetation 30 feet and beyond is a great way to reduce wildfire risk rating. This correlates with the final controllable factor, vegetation density, aiming to reduce density of hazardous vegetation such as conifers and junipers within 30 feet from structures.

The wildland urban interface in Colorado Springs contains over 35,000 individual parcels. Between 2021-2025, 20,502 reassessments have been completed. Ensuring accurate assessment of properties means individually evaluating each parcel, which is a time-consuming process. Ideally, the WUI would be reassessed in its entirety every five years. While this is not always the case, individual reassessments can be requested by homeowners following mitigation activities if they feel their risk rating does not reflect the current state of their property. Wildfire risk ratings for individual properties are available to the public at: <https://www.coswildfireready.org/know-your-homes-wildfire-risk>.

# SECTION C: HAZARDOUS FUELS REDUCTION

Wildfire risk assessment within the Colorado Springs Fire Department's Wildfire Mitigation Section begins with coordinated planning among multiple jurisdictions and land-managing partners. The Wildfire Mitigation Section does not directly manage land. All mitigation efforts rely on collaboration with agencies such as the City of Colorado Springs Parks and Open Spaces, the United States Forest Service, the Colorado State Forest Service, Colorado Springs Utilities, and other stakeholders. Establishing agreements, shared objectives, and communication pathways is the first essential step before any on-the-ground evaluation can occur.

Once stakeholder coordination is in place, the Wildfire Mitigation Section initiates feasibility and risk assessment activities. This stage focuses on identifying hazardous vegetation, fuel accumulations, and other conditions that elevate wildfire risk. Modern best-management practices guide this evaluation, and findings are translated into prescriptions or scopes of work that outline recommended mitigation actions. These prescriptions help ensure that treatments are both effective and aligned with current science and land-management standards.

Feasibility analysis is conducted alongside risk assessment to determine whether proposed mitigation work can be safely and realistically implemented. Key considerations include slope percentage (how steep the terrain is), site accessibility, equipment limitations, and resource availability. These factors help determine whether a project is practical, what methods can be used, and how work should be sequenced or adapted to site conditions.

After risk and feasibility information is collected, the Wildfire Mitigation Section develops a prioritization of areas based on wildfire hazard, treatment potential, and stakeholder objectives. This prioritization serves as a strategic road map for reducing risk across the landscape. However, the plan remains dynamic rather than static. Future mitigation work is influenced by available funding, changing environmental conditions, and evolving land-management goals or resource concerns identified by partner jurisdictions. This flexibility ensures that the Wildfire Mitigation Section can adapt to new information and shifting priorities while maintaining a clear, risk-informed approach to protecting the community and surrounding natural areas.

**Figure 27:** Table of wildfire mitigation fuels reduction projects from 2021-2026

<b>Project</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Source</b>
Austin Bluffs Open Space	13.12	2023	Front Range Arborists
Peregrine	4.3	2023	Garrett Tree
Valley at Erindale	2.4	2023	Seedmasters
University Park	2.7	2023	Seedmasters
Highland Oaks	1.21	2023	Front Range Arborists
Highland Terrace	1.26	2023	Front Range Arborists
Fishers Canyon	89.3	2023	Miller Timber
Comstock	3.56	2023	CSFD
Golden Hills	5.4	2023	Front Range Arborists
Brandywine Drive	0.38	2023	CSFD
Sanctuary at Peregrine	13.7	2023	N & D Tree Service
Beacon Hill Way	0.3	2023	CSFD
Loganwood Court	3.9	2023	CSFD
CSU/ Gardiner Rock Lane	0.5	2023	CSFD
Mountain Oaks	8	2023	CSFD
Lower Broadmoor Bluffs	1.6	2023	CSFD
University Park	1.1	2023	CSFD
Cedar Heights (Units 4-7)	135	2024	N & D Tree Service
Austin Bluffs (Units 1-6)	69.91	2024	Deer Creek Forestry
Broadmoor Resort Community	14.85	2024	Front Range Arborists
Highland Terrace	2.32	2024	Front Range Arborists

<b>Project</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Source</b>
Cornerstone	0.25	2024	CSFD
Mesa Point	2.5	2024	Robertson's Landscaping
Valley at Erindale	0.46	2024	CSFD
Sanctuary at Peregrine	1.52	2024	CSFD
Palmer Park (Units 4-5, 12)	56.2	2024	Front Range Arborists
Stratton (Units 1-4)	174.16	2024	N & D Tree Service
Raven Hills	0.65	2024	CSFD
Golden Hills	8	2024	Deer Creek Forestry
Quail Lake	17.5	2024	CSFD
University Park	0.68	2024	CSFD
Stratton (Units 5-12)	88.2	2025	N & D Tree Service
Palmer Park (Units 1-2, 6-11)	80.3	2025	Front Range Arborists
Mesa and Uintah	1.15	2025	CSFD
Quail Lake Park	39.3	2025	CSFD
Cedar Heights	2.7	2025	N & D Tree Service
South Cheyenne Canon	3.28	2025	CSFD
Comstock	10.2	2025	CSFD
Glen Eyrie	14.29	2025	CSFD
University Colorado Colorado Springs	0.51	2025	CSFD
Cedar Heights Red Mountain	7.5	2025	CSFD
Black Canyon	3.5	2025	CSFD

Project	Acres	Date	Source
Cooking Club	0.91	2025	CSFD
Woodmen Oaks	1.66	2025	CSFD
Lake Ave	0.82	2025	CSFD
Saluting Branches Day	1.32	2025	CSFD
Cooking Club	1	2025	Front Range Arborists
Gold Stage	129.74	2025	N & D Tree Service
Cheyenne Mountain State Park	31.5	2025	CSFD
Golden Hills	5.1	2025	Garrett Tree
Bear Creek	17.5	2025	CSFD
Blodgett (Units 1-3)	54.4	2025	N & D Tree Service
Villas at University Park	2.48	2025	CSFD
Cheyenne Mountain State Park	32.08	2025	CSFD



**Figure 28:** Masticator used for hazardous fuels removal.



## 2026-2031 PROPOSED PROJECTS

The Colorado Springs Fire Department (CSFD) Wildfire Mitigation section develops strategic, landscape-scale project plans designed to reduce wildfire risk across the community. While all mitigation activities contribute to overall resilience, certain areas exhibit elevated risk due to factors such as fuel density, expected fire behavior, and proximity to populated areas. These conditions necessitate a focused and prioritized approach to mitigation.

The CSFD Wildfire Mitigation section remains committed to serving the residents of Colorado Springs and collaborating with regional partners to advance community protection. As the community evolves, so too do the conditions that influence wildfire risk. Changes in fuel conditions, shifting priorities, emerging partnerships, and operational considerations all affect the feasibility and sequencing of mitigation efforts. Consequently, prioritization is inherently dynamic, reflecting the continually changing landscape and the needs of the community.

In alignment with these realities, the program directs its efforts toward areas where the potential for wildfire impact is greatest, ensuring that mitigation operations remain responsive, risk-informed, and adaptive over time.

**Figure 30:** The table below lists all project opportunity areas for 2026-2031. These areas correspond to the CSFD Wildfire Mitigation Work Map. Please note that these areas are preliminary and subject to change based on funding levels, resource availability, operational capacity, and other influencing factors.

Project	Planned Years	Potential Acres
Gold Camp Old Stage (USFS & Other Large Landowners)	2026-2029	425-1,200
Blodgett Area	2026	150-200
Cloud Camp Ridge	2026	60-100
United States Air Force Academy	2026-2031	15-100
Red Rock Canyon Open Space	2026-2031	30-150

Project	Planned Years	Potential Acres
HOA Common Areas	2026-2031	75-200
Cheyenne Mountain State Park (City and State)	2026-2028	110-350
North Cheyenne Canon	2026-2031	75-200
Cheyenne Mountain Zoo / Will Rogers Shrine of the Sun	2027-2028	30-50
Garden of the Gods	2027-2029	150-350
Bear Creek - City & County	2027-2031	50-250
Austin Bluffs Open Space	2028-2031	100-300
Palmer Park	2028-2031	50-150
University of Colorado - Colorado Springs	2028-2031	30-75

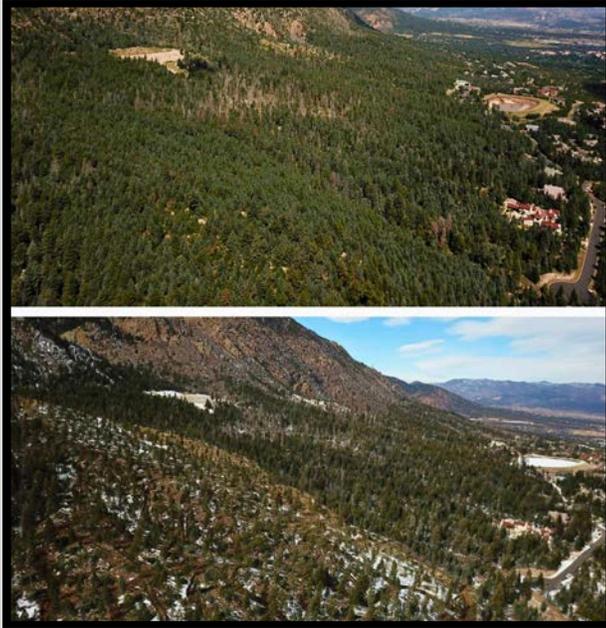
## CSFD - IN HOUSE PROJECTS

The Wildfire Mitigation Section uses a wide variety of equipment from hand tools to large equipment. The Wildfire Mitigation Section utilizes chain saws, brush saws, extendable pole saws, and walk behind brush hog mowers. Brush saws are large weed eaters with a saw blade allowing staff to cut down material up to a 3 inch diameter.

Extendable pole saws adjust to 10 feet in length, used to remove low hanging branches where ladder fuels can carry fire up the tree. Walk behind brush hog mowers cut down light flashy fuels and smaller vegetation, mulching the material as you move over it. The skid steer masticator has a drum mulcher attachment on the front that spins at a high rate of speed. The teeth chew vegetation into small chips. This machine can fell trees up to 9 inches in diameter. The Wildfire Mitigation Section utilizes ArcGIS Pro computer software to make project maps and maps for the public. All these tools and equipment allow the Wildfire Mitigation Section to reduce the risk of a catastrophic wildfire event in the Colorado Springs WUI.

## CONTRACTED PROJECT WORK

The Wildfire Mitigation Section manages large and small scale fuels mitigation projects throughout the WUI. When appropriate, a mitigation project will be contracted out to local companies to complete. Once the contractor is selected, the Wildfire Mitigation Section must make sure the contractor is completing the work according to the scope of work that was outlined in the contract. The scope of work lists how fuels will be reduced in the project area, either by mechanical treatment or hand thinning operations. In 2025, the Wildfire Mitigation Section treated 523.41 acres.



**Figure 31:** Before and after photos of the Fishers Canyon Project.

## PRESCRIBED FIRE

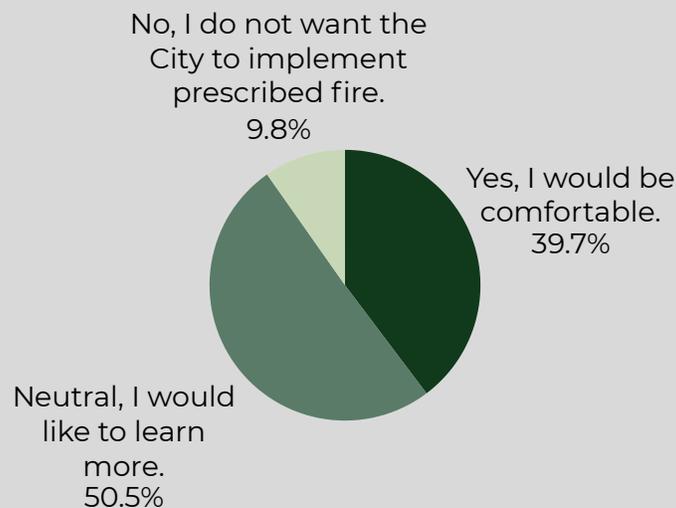
The City of Colorado Springs does not presently implement prescribed fire as an operational fuel management tool. Its future use remains an important component of long-term wildfire resilience planning. Prescribed fire, ranging from targeted pile burning to landscape-scale broadcast burning, has been widely recognized as an effective method for reducing hazardous fuels, restoring ecological function, and mitigating the severity of unplanned wildfires. As the City continues to face increasing wildfire risk due to atypical weather conditions, vegetation, and topographic factors, the intentional and carefully managed introduction of prescribed fire represents a proactive strategy for supporting a fire adapted community.

The safe and effective use of prescribed fire requires rigorous planning, specialized training, and strong interagency coordination. While Colorado Springs has not yet implemented prescribed fire within city limits, staff regularly

train with partners who have long-standing experience in its application, including the U.S. Forest Service Pikes Peak Ranger District, Colorado Springs Utilities, and the Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control. These partnerships ensure that local personnel remain familiar with best practices in fire behavior modeling, smoke management, ignition techniques, contingency planning, and resource coordination. Prescribed fire is intended to complement, not replace, the City's existing suite of mitigation practices, which include but are not limited to hand thinning, mechanical thinning, mastication, chipping, and the removal of hazardous fuels. By maintaining operational readiness and shared expertise, the City positions itself to adopt prescribed fire responsibly when conditions, policy, and community readiness are aligned.

Integrating prescribed fire into future land management strategies will strengthen the City's ability to reduce fuel loads, enhance defensible space, and improve the effectiveness of wildfire response. When implemented with clear objectives, robust planning, and appropriate resources, prescribed fire becomes a critical tool for reducing the intensity of future wildfires and protecting both the wildland urban interface and community high value infrastructure. Used in conjunction with more conventional mitigation methods, prescribed fire will help create a more balanced and effective approach to fuel management. As Colorado Springs continues to advance its Community Wildfire Protection Plan, the thoughtful exploration and eventual use of prescribed fire, supported by strong partnerships and a commitment to safety, will play a vital role in building a more resilient, fire adapted community

**Figure 32:** Public answers collected in response to the question - would you be comfortable about the City adding prescribed fire (a fuels treatment method already in use throughout the Pikes Peak Region on USFS land) within City limits as a hazardous fuels treatment method?



## **USFS PIKES PEAK RANGER DISTRICT PARTNERSHIP**

The City of Colorado Springs (City) with direction by the Wildfire Mitigation Section of the Colorado Springs Fire Department (CSFD) has sought an agreement between the City and the United States Forest Service (USFS) Pikes Peak Ranger District. This Participating Agreement is a mutually beneficial agreement between the City and USFS to leverage resources collaboratively to reduce wildfire risk and improve health resiliency of forest and watersheds.

Both CSFD and USFS have a mutual interest in reducing the risk to communities from severe wildfire and restoring forest health. The Agreement has and continues to provide the framework for cooperative development, planning, implementation, and monitoring of forest health projects and/or activities in National Forest Service lands within the Pike National Forest, Pikes Peak Ranger District, to reduce catastrophic wildfire, improve the health and resiliency of the forest, and provide firefighter safety during suppression efforts. All activities and projects that have been and will be conducted under this Agreement will require reconnaissance, project design, layout, prescription development, and project administration.

This Agreement is critical in the continued development and creation of a resilient wildfire community. Wildfire occurs irrespective of jurisdictional boundaries and therefore planning and response must be reflective of all risk and boundaries.

# SECTION D: WORKING GROUPS AND FUNDING

## COLORADO SPRINGS WILDFIRE MITIGATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

On November 23, 2021, the Colorado Springs City Council unanimously voted to allow voters in the November 2021 ballot to decide whether or not the City can retain and spend up to \$20 million to be used solely for wildfire mitigation and prevention overseen by the Colorado Springs Fire Department (CSFD). The amount voted on reflected the estimated 2021 revenues above the 2021 Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR) revenue/spending limitations.

This initiative passed and allowed CSFD to be able to spend 5% of the funds each year without increasing or creating new taxes. This funding was made available in fiscal year 2022. The management of this funding is led by the Wildfire Mitigation Section in partnership with the Wildfire Mitigation Advisory Committee. This working group meets quarterly to determine the wildfire mitigation priorities for spending for TABOR funding.

This working group includes representatives from:

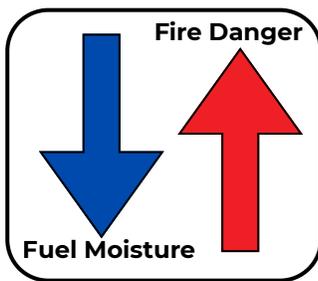
- Colorado State Forest Service
- Colorado Springs Utilities
- Colorado Springs Fire Department
- Cheyenne Mountain Zoo
- Colorado Parks & Wildlife
- El Paso County Sheriff's Office
- City of Colorado Springs
- U.S. Air Force Academy
- Fire Chiefs Council
- Fort Carson Fire Department
- U.S. Forest Service
- Cheyenne Mountain State Park
- Citizens at large from the region

# SECTION E: FIRE DANGER AND FUELS

The Wildfire Mitigation Section of the Colorado Springs Fire Department assesses the potential for wildfire each day. This daily assessment considers important factors influencing fire behavior, such as temperature, wind speed, and moisture found in both the air and fuel. These factors help inform how fire may behave.

Fire danger rating is assigned daily and can range from low, to moderate, high, very high and extreme in accordance with the National Fire Danger Rating System. This data informs firefighters, city officials and citizens to help make sound decisions regarding outdoor activities, resource deployment and emergency planning. This information is available online at [www.coloradosprings.gov/fire](http://www.coloradosprings.gov/fire) and is updated daily at local fire stations.

There is generally an inverse relationship between fuel moisture and fire danger. Drier fuel ignites more easily and spreads fire more readily which leads to dangerous conditions that make wildfire difficult or even impossible to control. Days with higher humidity, lower temperatures and thus a higher barrier to fuel ignition will be indicated by lower overall fire danger.



**Figure 34:** Inverse relationship between fire danger and fuel moisture.

Because these conditions change constantly, consistent evaluation of fire behavior factors is important for wildfire preparedness. Fuel samples are collected weekly by the Wildfire Mitigation Section and moisture content is calculated for a hands-on understanding of fuel moisture at various sites around Colorado Springs.



**Figure 33:** CSFD Fire Danger Sign



**Figure 35:** Example fuel moisture samples.

# SECTION F: BUILDING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

This section outlines roles of the Wildfire Mitigation Section to build community resilience following a wildland fire impacting the City of Colorado Springs. During post-fire planning and recovery efforts, Wildfire Mitigation staff coordinate and address immediate needs as assigned, while also planning for long-term restoration. Recovery is a key part of community resilience because proper planning can help communities recover more quickly and efficiently following a disaster. What happens after the fire can be as important as what happens before a fire. Wildfire planning doesn't only mean stopping a fire before it starts, but also thinking about post-fire recovery and planning. Communities can risk losing momentum, funding, and leadership without proper recovery planning.

## **Before the fire...**

Colorado Springs last experienced a catastrophic wildfire in 2012 as a result of the Waldo Canyon Fire. From this experience, we have learned about the following strategies that will help recovery planning efforts before a fire occurs:

- Build relationships and agreements with partner agencies
- Plan wildfire mitigation projects near at-risk communities
- Educate homeowners on wildfire mitigation recommendations and resources
- Complete and constantly update the wildfire risk assessment map
- Identify critical infrastructure and resources
- Assess areas most at risk
- Develop a full cycle approach to wildfire planning that ensures preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery efforts are cohesive and working together

## **After the fire...**

The cycle of events following a disaster will start with first response and life safety measures by the operations division of the Colorado Springs Fire Department and other first responder partners. Following incident stabilization, the Wildfire Mitigation Section will address short-term recovery planning needs.

## **Short-Term Recovery Planning**

- The Wildfire Mitigation Section will plan and organize a community meeting for the impacted neighborhoods within one month of the incident. This meeting will include presentations from the following organizations:

- CSFD Operations
  - Fire Department response briefing
- CSFD Wildfire Mitigation Section
  - Fuels reduction projects that were impacted or nearby
  - Recommendations for home hardening and structure hardening
- CSFD Community Education and Outreach
  - Recommendations for emergency preparedness
- El Paso - Teller County Peak Alerts
- Colorado Springs Police Department
  - If the incident required evacuation, this is an opportunity for an overview and to answer questions.
  - Explain expectations of the public during an evacuation
- Pikes Peak Office of Emergency Management
  - Evacuation preparedness recommendations
- The Wildfire Mitigation Section may be tasked with debris removal operations following an incident to help clear roadways and public areas.

**Long-term Recovery**

- Following a wildfire incident in the community, the Wildfire Mitigation Section will work with teams throughout the Division of the Fire Marshal (fire code inspectors, investigators, and other partners) to assess the full impact to the community to include lives lost, property damaged, and property lost. This process will help inform the following:
  - Fire code review and update
  - Wildfire risk assessment
- The Wildfire Mitigation Section will stay alert of funding opportunities available to disaster impacted communities through the Colorado Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management and associated hazard mitigation programs.
- The Wildfire Mitigation Section will work with our partners to review project areas in or near the impacted area to assist with ecosystem restoration. The following measures will be important to consider for long-term recovery:
  - Slope stabilization
  - Soil burn severity
  - Reseeding and replanting
  - Watershed restoration

**Figure 36:** Phases of wildfire recovery, sourced from Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network.



# SECTION G: SMOKE READY COMMUNITIES

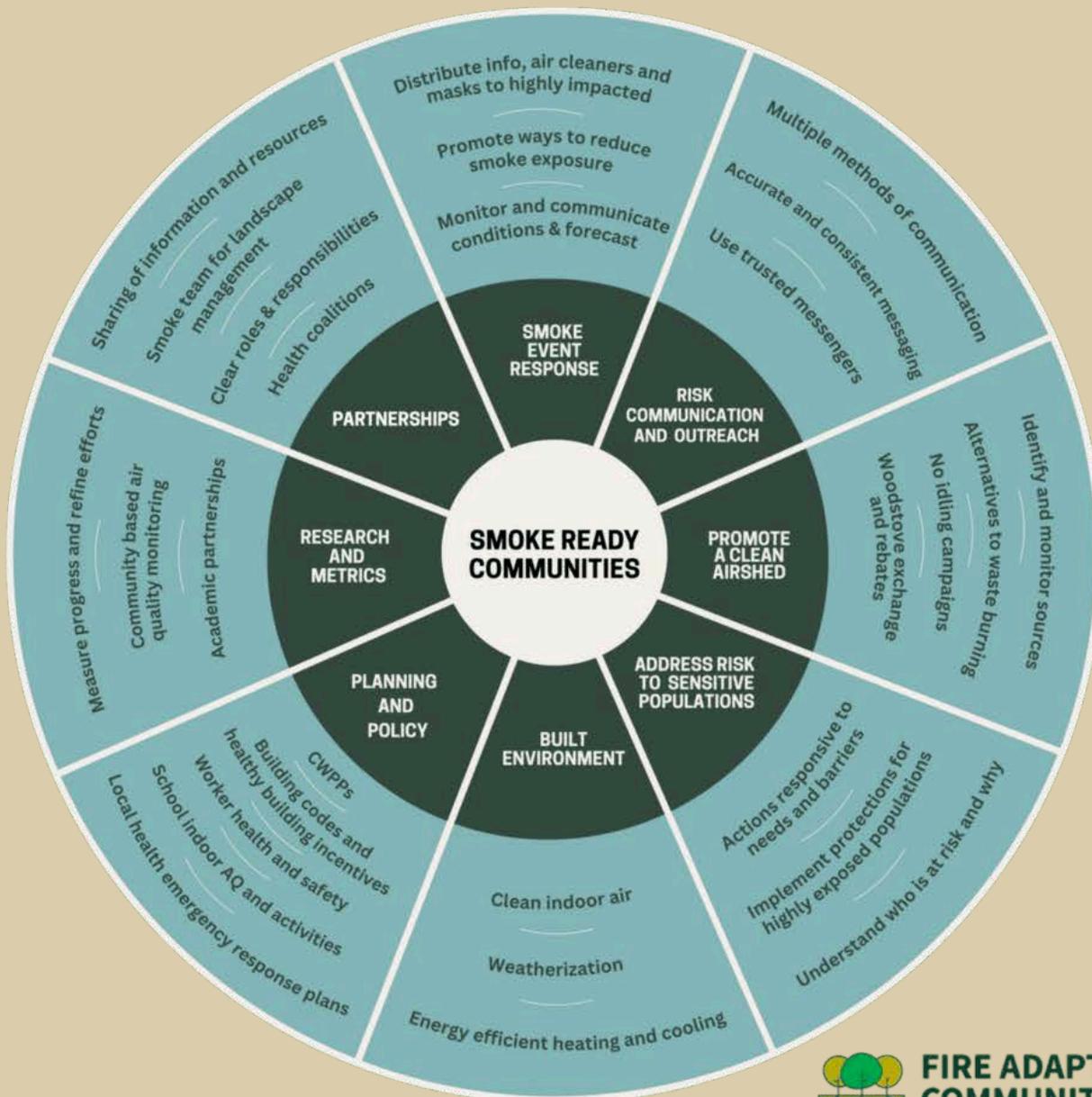
Wildfire in and around the City of Colorado Springs presents not only direct fire hazards, but also significant air quality concerns. Smoke from local and regional wildfires, pile burns, and broadcast prescribed fires can impact public health, visibility, and sensitive populations. As mitigation efforts expand, effective smoke management becomes essential to balance ecological restoration with community well-being. This section outlines planned actions for minimizing smoke impacts during fire-related events. By integrating smoke management into wildfire mitigation planning, the City aims to protect vulnerable residents, maintain public trust, and support the safe use of fire as a land management tool. To create a smoke ready community, the City of Colorado Springs must integrate air quality resources, messaging, and tools into pre-existing wildfire management programs. Here are the key initial actions to get started.



**Figure 37:** Smoke ready communities: who should be engaged?

## Partnerships and Resources

Creating effective partnerships among air quality stakeholders is essential for building a coordinated and resilient response to wildfire smoke and long-term pollution challenges. The intent behind these collaborations will be to bring together technical experts that serve populations at risk (public health agencies, environmental regulators, fire departments, community organizations, academic institutions, and technology providers) around shared goals of monitoring, managing, and mitigating air quality impacts.



**Figure 38:** Smoke ready communities framework proposed by Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network.

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) plays a central role in monitoring, regulating, and communicating air quality across the state, including during wildfire and prescribed fire events. Through its Air Pollution Control Division, CDPHE oversees air quality forecasting, issues advisories and Action Day Alerts, and provides real-time data to help communities respond to elevated pollution levels. The department collaborates with local agencies to manage smoke impacts, enforce open burning regulations and protect public health, especially for sensitive populations such as children, older adults, and individuals with respiratory conditions. CDPHE also supports public education efforts and promotes the use of clean air shelters and filtration strategies to reduce exposure during smoke events.

### **Monitoring and Communications**

Monitoring plays a vital role in community smoke preparedness by providing timely, accurate information that empowers residents and decision-makers to respond effectively to wildfire smoke events. Methods of monitoring and early detection will be conducted in partnership with CSPHE.

### **Community Smoke Preparation**

Wildfire mitigation efforts must plan for vulnerable and at-risk populations and include planning efforts for education and public awareness. These critical components will help to introduce a culture of preparedness and smoke readiness to reduce smoke exposure and reduce health impacts.

There are three main drivers of smoke exposure. These include times when there are heavy concentration of particulates in the air, spending prolonged time in an area with environmental exposures, and also when exercising. When people exercise or conduct activities that increase your heart rate, your breathing rate increases which causes more particulates to enter your lungs. Public education on how smoke exposure occurs will limit the number of individuals who are impacted with respiratory conditions. Smoke preparation will become a part of public meetings and community messaging.

As the City begins building prescribed fire treatments into fuels management plans, special consideration needs to be taken to plan appropriately on how this management tool could impact vulnerable populations. Messaging and communications will be critical for planned events like pile burning and prescribed fire.

# SECTION H: TRIBAL CONSULTATIONS

Tribal consultation within the Colorado Springs Fire Department's Wildfire Mitigation Section is a voluntary but highly valued practice rooted in respect for the longstanding knowledge and stewardship of Colorado's Indigenous Peoples. The Wildfire Mitigation Section, working in partnership with the City of Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services, recognizes that Tribal Nations have cared for these lands for thousands of years. Because of this, the City places great importance on listening, learning, communicating, and incorporating Indigenous perspectives into wildfire mitigation planning. Although not required by Federal, State, or local laws for most of our projects, this collaboration reflects a commitment to honoring Indigenous knowledge and building meaningful relationships.

When wildfire mitigation projects are being planned, the Wildfire Mitigation Section reaches out to Tribes through City Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services staff. This early communication ensures that Tribes are informed about proposed work and have the opportunity to offer insights or concerns before activities begin. Their input helps shape project decisions, enriches the understanding of the landscape, and supports culturally sensitive approaches to land management. As a next step in the process, City Archaeologists conduct a pedestrian survey to identify cultural resources on the ground in the project area(s). Tribal Consultants are then provided with a site inventory and the WFM section is informed by Tribal representatives and City Archaeologists about sensitive areas. Together, decisions are made about treatment practices with preservation in mind. Consultation does not end here. As mitigation work progresses or reaches completion, the consultation process continues on the ground. Tribal Historic Preservation Officers from interested Tribes are invited to visit project sites, observe the work, and provide additional feedback. These visits allow for direct dialogue and shared evaluation of the work's cultural and ecological impacts.

Tribal Historic Preservation Officers and City Archaeologists may continue to observe the site over time to assess how the work aligns with cultural expectations and resource protection goals. Their monitoring helps identify areas where future mitigation or management practices can be improved. This ongoing feedback loop ensures that tribal objectives and recommendations are not only heard but also integrated into future planning. It strengthens the City's

ability to protect cultural resources and adapt its practices in ways that reflect Indigenous knowledge and priorities.

Although this process is not mandated by regulation, the City of Colorado Springs Fire Department and the City's Parks and Recreational Cultural Services Department agree that it is an essential component of responsible land stewardship. By engaging Indigenous partners throughout planning, implementation, and monitoring, the City fosters a more inclusive, informed, and holistic wildfire mitigation program. This approach benefits the land, the community, and the tribes whose histories and cultural connections remain deeply tied to the region.



**Figure 39:** City of Colorado Springs staff during field assessments of archeological sites with Cassandra Atencio (Southern Ute Representative).

# SECTION I: NEIGHBORHOOD CHAMPIONS

Volunteers form the backbone of wildfire mitigation efforts because they create a grassroots movement that motivates neighbors to take action long before a fire ever starts. The Colorado Springs Fire Department calls these leaders Neighborhood Champions; residents who understand local risks, build trust within their communities, and inspire others to reduce hazards around their homes. A strong network of Champions is already active in the Western Wildland Urban Interface, and work is underway to expand this community-driven model into eastern neighborhoods where wildfire awareness and mitigation practices are still developing. Through the wildfire mitigation section, the department partners with volunteers to promote defensible space, home-hardening, and neighborhood-level preparedness, while many volunteers also lead independent efforts such as organizing community work days and writing localized Community Wildfire Protection Plans. Their leadership not only reduces physical risk but also strengthens a culture of shared responsibility that makes long-term resilience possible.

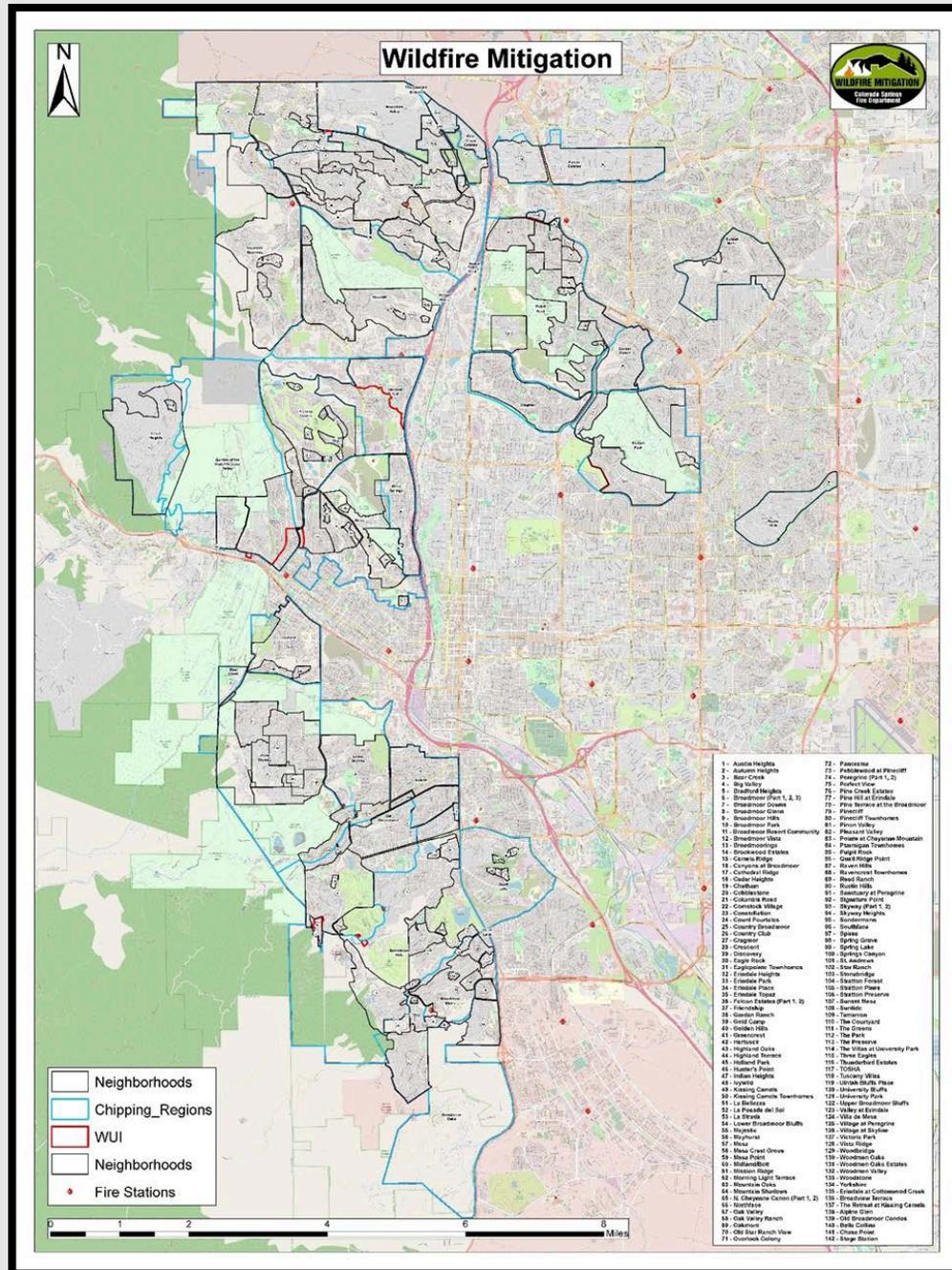
The West WUI is broken into 30 regions encompassing 143 neighborhood organizations. Of the 143 neighborhoods, there are over 250 resident leaders that volunteer to represent their communities. These volunteers act as liaisons for their neighborhoods to remain informed on the City's wildfire mitigation efforts. Neighborhood education in the East WUI is being established with only three participating neighborhoods.

Neighborhood	Project
Broadmoor Resort Community	Fuels Reduction
Golden Hills	Community Volunteer Day
Kissing Camels	Fuels Reduction
Woodmen Valley	CWPP

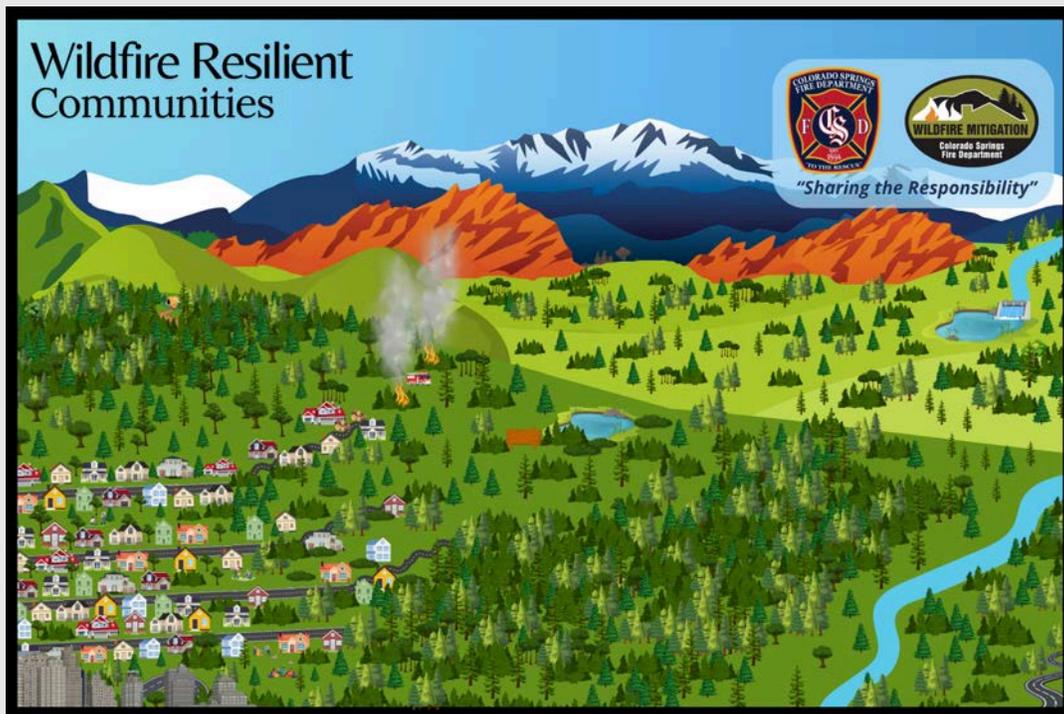
**Figure 40:** Table of some example neighborhoods and the special wildfire mitigation actions.

The West WUI is broken into 30 regions encompassing 143 neighborhood organizations. Of the 143 neighborhoods, there are over 250 resident leaders that volunteer to represent their communities. These volunteers act as liaisons for their neighborhoods to remain informed on the City's wildfire mitigation efforts. Neighborhood education in the East WUI is being established with only three participating neighborhoods.

**Figure 41:** Map of 143 neighborhoods in the western Wildland Urban Interface.



Neighborhood-level wildfire preparedness efforts are most effective when they align with the Colorado Springs Fire Department’s established wildfire mitigation recommendations. By using the department’s recommendations as a shared framework, neighborhoods can prioritize the most impactful strategies, maintain consistency across the city, and ensure that volunteer-driven efforts complement rather than duplicate or conflict with broader mitigation goals. This alignment also strengthens communication between residents and the wildfire mitigation section, making it easier to coordinate resources, track progress, and build a unified approach to reducing wildfire risk across both the western WUI and the expanding network of eastern communities.



**Figure 42:** Depiction of wildfire resilient communities in Colorado Springs.

**UPDATED AUGUST 2026**