



Memorandum

To: Planning Commission
From: Thomas Dansie, Director of Community Development
Date: August 1, 2025
Re: Wildland Fire Mitigation Strategies

Executive Summary

The Planning Commission has identified wildland fire mitigation strategies as a top work meeting priority. The prioritization of this issue coincides with recent Utah State Legislation ([HB 48](#)) that requires certain municipalities to adopt the Utah Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) code by January 1, 2026.

This memo: 1) outlines general wildland fire mitigation strategies, 2) discusses the requirements of the Utah WUI code, and 3) analyzes the requirements of HB 48 on Springdale.

General Wildland Fire Mitigation Strategies

While it is impossible to completely eliminate the potential for wildfires to ignite, there are a number of land use strategies that can be adopted to mitigate the spread, severity, and damage of wildfires. These strategies are generally grouped into property specific strategies and community-wide strategies.

Property Specific Strategies

1. **Defensible space:** This strategy focuses on keeping combustible materials (primarily vegetation and also including storage of combustible materials such as firewood and fuel) away from structures. The separation of combustible materials from the structure depends on the type of material, as well as the construction methods and materials of the structure.
2. **Non-combustible building materials:** This strategy requires new structures to be built out of non-combustible materials and also includes details on how structures are to be constructed (e.g. there are no gaps between the bottom of the non-combustible building material and the ground).
3. **On-site fire suppression:** In some instances improvements such as on-site sprinkler systems can be used to mitigate fire risk and keep a structure from igniting during a wildfire.
4. **Fire suppression access and preparedness:** Ensuring adequate access (road width, surface, grade, etc.) for a fire truck and other fire suppression equipment is an essential strategy to aid in quick and effective response to fires when they start.

Community-wide Strategies

1. [Community Wildfire Preparedness Plans](#) (CWPP). A CWPP is a cooperative effort amongst a variety of stakeholders (public land managers, wildland fire suppression crews, the municipality, land owners, etc.) that outlines community wide actions to lower wildfire risk.
2. **Community education.** Eight-five percent of wildfires are human caused. Educating the community about wildfire prevention is a key and critical strategy.

Staff recommends the Commission focus on property specific strategies at this point. These types of strategies are more in line with the Commission's role of regulating land use and development in the Town. The State of Utah has adopted a model Wildland Urban Interface Code that incorporates all of the property specific strategies and can be a resource for the Commission.

Utah Wildland Urban Interface Code

The Utah WUI Code is a code similar to the International Fire Code, modified to address the specific needs of fire prone communities. It includes strategies for defensible space, requirements for non-combustible building materials, and standards for fire access. The complete text of the Utah WUI Code is [available in this link](#).

The WUI Code is comprehensive and complex. It addresses all the strategies for property specific fire mitigation that the Town might need. Because it was developed by fire and code professionals it is more thorough and technical sound than anything the Town could develop on its own. For all these reasons the WUI Code is a good resource for the Town to use.

Because it is comprehensive and complex, the WUI Code also requires additional resources to administer and enforce. The Hurricane Valley Fire Protection District enforces the International Fire Code on all new development in the Town. However, they will not administer the WUI Code. The Town will be responsible to administer and enforce the WUI Code, if it is adopted. This will be an added administrative burden on Town staff.

The WUI Code requires the Town to identify the boundaries of the WUI. All areas of the Town in the WUI boundaries would be subject to the WUI Code requirements, if it is adopted. Utah Forestry, Fire, and State Lands (FFSL) has developed modeling to assist communities in identifying the WUI boundary. FFSL has an [online GIS mapping tool](#) that rates properties according to fire risk and "structure exposure score" (SES). FFSL recommends areas with an SES of 5 and higher be included in the WUI. Nearly the entire Town (with the exception of the SR9 right-of-way) has an SES of 5 or more. Based on this analysis, FFSL recommends the entire Town be included in the WUI. This would mean all new development in the Town would be subject to the WUI Code.

HB 48 Impacts on the Town

The State Legislature is concerned about the increasing risk of and damage associated with wildfires across the State. As a result, in the most recent legislative session they passed HB 48. This bill requires municipalities to adopt the Utah WUI Code in certain circumstances.

Based on staff's reading and analysis of HB 48 it is unclear whether or not Springdale meets the conditions to be required to adopt the WUI Code. However, the Wildfire Program Specialists at Utah FFSL have confirmed that HB 48 requirements apply to Springdale. Thus it appears that the Town will be required to adopt the WUI Code.

Therefore, the main policy consideration for the Commission to consider is where the WUI boundary should be located. As noted above, based on the State's online resources, the entire Town should be included in the WUI. If the Commission would like to do a more detailed analysis of the Town to refine where the WUI boundary is located that is an option. Doing so would require partnering with fire experts to survey the community and do a detailed property by property fire risk evaluation.

Conclusion

Recent legislation, HB 48, requires the Town to adopt the Utah WUI Code which contains a detailed and comprehensive suite of fire mitigation strategies for new development. Adopting the WUI Code will fulfill the Commission's goal of promoting fire wise development.

The Town has discretion on where the WUI boundary is located, thereby determining which properties are subject to the WUI Code. However, based on available information and modeling from Utah FFSL, it appears the entire Town should be included in the WUI.