



Memorandum

To: **Town Council**
From: **Thomas Dansie, Director of Community Development**
Date: **November 7, 2025**
Re: **Wildland Urban Interface Code**

Executive Summary

The Utah State Legislature has mandated that the Town adopt the [Utah Wildland Urban Interface \(WUI\)](#) Code by January 1, 2026 (see UCA 65A-8-203(9)). The Planning Commission has discussed the WUI Code, impacts of its adoption, and strategies related to adoption of the WUI in recent meetings. Staff has discussed the WUI with representatives from the State Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands as well as representatives from the Hurricane Valley Fire Protection District. Both groups have been very helpful and have offered the Town assistance in adopting and implementing the WUI Code.

In the Commission's October meeting the Commission made a formal recommendation to the Council to adopt the WUI Code. Since that time Council Member Aton has received information that the State may postpone the deadline for adoption. The Council should discuss the WUI Code and establish a strategy and timeline for adoption of the Code and the associated WUI boundary.

Analysis

Based on recent State Legislation, the Town is required to adopt the Utah Wildland Interface Code by January 1, 2026. The following excerpt from Utah Code 65A-8-203(9) establishes the requirement to adopt the WUI Code:

*"If the state under Section 15A-2-103 adopts an edition of the Utah Wildland Urban Interface Code, issued by the International Code Council, with the alternatives or amendments approved by the division, as a wildland urban interface building standard that may be adopted by a local compliance agency... for purposes of an incorporated area within a county, **the relevant municipality shall adopt and enforce the wildland urban interface building standard** described in this Subsection (9)(a)." (emphasis added)*

This section of Code is effective January 1, 2026 (see "Section 10" of the text of [HB 48](#) for the code effective date, which is the de facto deadline for the Town to adopt the WUI Code).

In his role on the HVFPD Board, Council Member Aton has received information that the State will not enforce the January 1, 2026 deadline for local governments to adopt the WUI Code. The State realizes local governments need additional time to adopt the Code, particularly in establishing the WUI boundary (discussed later in this report). Council Member Aton suggests the actual deadline for adoption will likely be in late 2026.

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](#).

According to technical experts at Utah Forestry, Fire, and State Lands, the Town is not able to alter the WUI to accommodate the Town's unique fire needs (except by making the Code more restrictive). The Town is required to adopt the WUI Code as it has been established by the State.

The WUI Code is comprehensive and complex. Because it is comprehensive and complex, the WUI Code 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, 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 boundary would be subject to the WUI Code requirements. Utah Forestry, Fire, and State Lands has developed mapping 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.

However, in his comments to the Planning Commission, Chief Joe Decker of the Hurricane Valley Fire Protection District suggested the WUI boundary should not include the entire Town. He suggested a more thoughtful approach to establishing the WUI boundary based on a property by property analysis. This analysis cannot be completed by January 1, 2026. Chief Decker has suggested this is part of the reason the State will not enforce the January 1 deadline. He has suggested the Town consider delaying adoption of the WUI until a realistic and supportable WUI boundary is established. Chief Decker said the wildland fire team at HVFPD is willing and able to assist the Town in establishing the WUI boundary.

Council Action

The Council should review the WUI Code and discuss strategies and timelines for adopting both the WUI Code and the associated WUI boundary. The Code must be adopted by resolution. Once the Council has established a strategy and timeline for adopting the Code, staff will schedule an action item on the Council's agenda to take action on a resolution of adoption.

The Council action at the present meeting should be giving direction to staff on how to proceed with a timeline for WUI adoption, and a strategy for establishing the WUI boundary.

Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)

In the document from HVFSSD chief Joe Decker spells out information on the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) that was passed by the Utah legislature in HB48. After talking with Joe, I have some updates and will attempt to answer some of the questions residents might have about the effects of HB48 on their property.

Right now, HB48 has a map of Washington county that shows the whole county as being red. That means it is all in Zone 3 (see Joe's information for what this means). We know and the state knows that this is not the case. HB48 also says that each municipality must adopt the WUI code by the end of this year. The good news is that the bill is going back into the special session of the legislature in November. Joe says that the legislature is going to change the municipal adoption date from the end of 2025 to the end of 2026. So, there is a little breathing room. One of the reasons for this is that the county must send an inspector to each property to assess which Zone that property falls under. This will not start until after the first of the year. Once all the properties are inspected, the map will change and the zones will be more applicable to the actual property. As an example, Joe thinks that all the property that is near SR-9 will be in Zone 1 because of all the buildings and the pavement and lawns around those buildings. He thinks that the properties in the foothills of Springdale will probably be in Zone 2. And if foothill property owners do mitigation on their property, that could be lowered to Zone 1.

Hurricane Valley Fire department has hired a new wildland fire chief. He starts on October 27. Joe said that if residents request an inspection of their property from HVFSSD after the new chief starts, they will come for free and inspect your property to tell you what you need to do to mitigate the fire danger to your structures.

- Council Member Randy Aton

Fire Chief
Joseph Decker

Treasurer
Megan Ayala

Clerk
Melinda Falaniko



Deputy Chief
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✉️ From the Chief's Desk: Protecting Our Community in the Wildland–Urban Interface

Chief Joe Decker – Hurricane Valley Fire District

Living Safely Where We Love to Live

As Hurricane Valley continues to grow, more homes are being built in the Wildland–Urban Interface (WUI) — the area where our neighborhoods meet the natural vegetation of southern Utah's desert and foothills. These settings are beautiful, but they also bring higher wildfire risk.

Our mission at Hurricane Valley Fire District is to protect lives, property, and the natural beauty that surrounds us. Wildfire safety in the WUI starts long before a fire begins — it starts with awareness, preparation, and defensible space.

🔥 Understanding the WUI

The Wildland–Urban Interface is where homes and infrastructure border flammable vegetation such as brush, grass, or forest. In these areas, fire can move quickly between the wildland and residential zones. Wind-driven embers can ignite roofs, decks, or dry vegetation in seconds.

By planning ahead and reducing hazards around our homes, we can make the difference between a small fire and a devastating loss.

🌿 Defensible Space: Your Home's First Line of Defense

Defensible space is the buffer between your home and the surrounding vegetation. It slows or stops the spread of fire and gives firefighters a safe place to defend your property.

Zone 1 – 0 to 5 feet:

Keep this area completely free of combustible materials. Use gravel or stone instead of bark mulch, and keep roofs, decks, and gutters clear of debris.

Zone 2 – 5 to 30 feet:

Space trees and shrubs, prune lower branches, and remove dead vegetation.

Zone 3 – 30 to 100 feet:

Thin dense vegetation, mow tall grasses, and maintain open areas to slow an advancing fire.

🏛️ Utah H.B. 48 (2025): Strengthening WUI Standards

In 2025, the Utah Legislature passed **House Bill 48 – Wildland–Urban Interface Modifications**, a major step forward for wildfire prevention across the state.

This law:

- Defines WUI zones and standardizes wildfire-risk terminology statewide.
- Requires cities and counties to adopt the Utah Wildland–Urban Interface Code, ensuring new construction meets ignition-resistant standards.
- Directs the Utah Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands to create a statewide wildfire-risk mapping tool for public use.
- Improves transparency between property owners and insurers regarding wildfire risk.
- Allows jurisdictions to require additional fire-safety features—like sprinklers or ignition-resistant materials—when homes don't meet WUI code standards.

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Most provisions take effect on **January 1, 2026**, giving local communities time to align codes and educate residents.

What This Means for Hurricane Valley Residents

The message is clear: **wildfire prevention begins at home**. You can make a difference today by taking these steps:

- Review your property and improve defensible space.
- Use fire-resistant materials when remodeling or building.
- Keep driveways and access routes clear for emergency vehicles.
- Ensure your address is visible from the street.
- Stay informed about local wildfire-risk maps and code updates.

Our firefighters are ready to respond, but the most effective fire protection begins with preparation and prevention.

Homeowner Tip Box: Small Changes, Big Impact

- Replace wood shake roofs with fire-rated materials.
- Screen attic and crawl space vents with 1/8-inch metal mesh.
- Store firewood and propane tanks at least 30 feet from the home.
- Clear gutters and decks regularly during fire season.
- Keep a 100-foot clearance from tall dry grasses or brush.

Together, We Build Resilience

Every homeowner in the Wildland–Urban Interface plays a vital role in protecting our community. By maintaining defensible space, using ignition-resistant materials, and staying aware of local wildfire risks, we can all help keep **Hurricane Valley** safe.

Thank you for doing your part to make our community stronger and more fire-resilient.

Stay alert. Stay prepared. Stay resilient.

— *Chief Joe Decker*

Hurricane Valley Fire District