



Recommendation for Action

File #: 23-1577, Agenda Item #: 57.

4/13/2023

Posting Language

Conduct a public hearing and consider an ordinance amending City Code Title 25 relating to mitigation of wildfire risk.

Lead Department

Austin Fire Department.

Fiscal Note

This item will have no fiscal impact.

Prior Council Action:

June 16, 2022 Council initiated amendments to City Code Title 25 to address wildfire risk and wildfire mitigation. Resolution No. 20220616-055

For More Information:

Thomas Vocke, Austin Fire Department, 512- 974-0266, tom.vocke@austintexas.gov

Council Committee, Boards and Commission Action:

Code and Ordinances Joint Committee: March 15, 2023, recommended with amendments. Approved on a vote of 5-0. Two vacancies on the Committee.

Planning Commission: March 28, 2023, recommended as amended. Approved on a vote of 13-0.

Additional Backup Information:

Access Streets: Allow a single-access street to be longer than 2,000 feet and serve more than 30 dwellings if the access street does not cross an area identified as Wildland-Urban Interface as shown on the Austin Fire Department Wildfire Risk map (as described in the Land Development Code 25-4-157).

The application of this change prevents Austin Fire Department (AFD) from creating unsafe conditions for evacuation. Determining a cost impact is difficult without having specific items or examples to review. The safe evacuation of residents is the highest priority.

Add mitigation of wildfire risk to the list of enumerated purposes in the General Planning Requirements Chapter (as described in the Land Development Code 25-1-21).

Given the significant wildfire risk in the Austin area, adding wildfire risk mitigation to the list of enumerated purposes for planning gives all stakeholders the best information to plan a safe and well-designed development. Determining a fiscal impact may be difficult but from a prevention, recovery and life safety standpoint the resiliency built into the community serves to minimize the fiscal impact of an adverse event. This is a direct response to the Community Planning Assistance for Wildfires plan by directing responsible growth into safe areas.

Right-Of-Way Dedication and Improvement Right-of-Way Alignment: Require the director to base right-of-way

alignment on engineering criteria related to the safe use and maintenance of public right-of-way, including grade, sight distance, turning radii, curvature, existing green infrastructure, and the existence of flood plain or wildfire hazards. These criteria are to be the primary considerations used in determining right-of-way alignment and are controlling over other criteria in the event of conflict (as described in the Land Development Code Section 25-6-54).

This is another case where adding wildfire consideration to a long list of concerns that need to be addressed in planning safe use and design of public right of ways could improve community safety. The addition of "wildfire hazards" can help relieve some current concerns regarding evacuation and ensure wildfire risk takes its proper place on the list of significant considerations in future roadway planning, design and improvement. Assigning a cost to a consideration is difficult, however, the potential to improve evacuation routes and road designs will create a safer community. Delaying implementation of this consideration will add to the lack of evacuation and response routes AFD is currently dealing with. Right-Of-Way considerations need to be included in the planning process to reduce life safety risk during potential evacuations.

General Definitions: Define "Fire Protection Plan" as a document prepared for a specific project or development proposed for the wildland-urban interface area that describes ways to minimize and mitigate the fire problems created by the project or development, with the purpose of reducing the effect on the community's fire protection delivery system (as described in the Land Development Code Section 25-1-21). Define "Wildland-Urban Interface Area" as an area designated by the city council as one where conditions affecting the combustibility of both wildland and built fuels allow for the ignition and spread of fire through the combined fuel complex (City Code 25-1-21) (consistent with the definition already adopted in [City Code 25-12-183 <https://library.municode.com/tx/austin/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TIT25LADE_CH25-12TECO_ART1BUCO_DIV1INBUCOLOAM>](https://library.municode.com/tx/austin/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TIT25LADE_CH25-12TECO_ART1BUCO_DIV1INBUCOLOAM)).

Strategic Outcome(s):

Government that Works for all, Health and Environment, Mobility and Safety.