

Agenda Report

June 23, 2025

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: Fire Department

SUBJECT: DIRECT THE CITY ATTORNEY TO PREPARE AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 14.28 OF THE PASADENA MUNICIPAL CODE, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "FIRE PREVENTION CODE" TO ADOPT NEW FIRE HAZARD SEVERITY ZONES.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council:

1. Find that the proposed action is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15061 (b)(3), the common sense exemption; and
2. Direct the City Attorney to prepare and return within 60 days with an ordinance amending Chapter 14.28 of the Pasadena Municipal Code, otherwise known as the "Fire Prevention Code" to designate Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZ) for Local Responsibility Areas (LRA) as identified by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) pursuant to Government Code Section 51178; and

BACKGROUND:

In 1996, the City Council enacted Ordinance 6683 which adopted the "City of Pasadena Fire Hazard Area Map", dated July 1, 1996, pursuant to the requirements of the California Government Code, section 51175, et seq. This map defined areas of the City identified by the Fire Department, in consultation with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), wherein additional fire protective construction requirements were warranted due to the presence of increased fire hazards caused by the urban-wildland interface. These areas are known as "Fire Hazard Severity Zones." CAL FIRE uses Fire Hazard Severity Zone Maps to identify areas with the highest potential for wildfires based on factors that include topography, vegetation, weather patterns, and historical fire activity. FHSZ Maps classify land into three hazard levels

which include moderate, high, and very high. Each level reflects how likely an area is to experience wildfire and level of intensity.

The California Government Code requires CAL FIRE to periodically review and make recommendations regarding the delineation of fire hazard severity zones in consultation with local fire departments. These maps were updated and adopted on July 28, 2008 by the City of Pasadena. The proposed Fire Hazard Severity Zone Map, dated March 24, 2025 is the result of the most recent review of local conditions conducted by Cal Fire and Pasadena Fire Department using updated technology, knowledge of fire behavior in the urban-wildland interface, and current local conditions. Local governments are mandated to adopt the updated maps for Local Responsibility Areas (LRA) under Government Code Section 51179. The updated FHSZ map affects building codes, defensible space requirements, and disclosure obligations for property transactions.

On March 24, 2025, City staff received an official transmittal from the State Fire Marshal of the Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZ). Government Code Section 51178.5 requires that the revised FHSZ Map be presented and made available to the public for review and comments within 30 days from the date of receipt of official transmittal. Subsequently and no later than 120 days from receipt of official transmittal, the FHSZ Map will be brought back to the City Council for consideration to adopt an ordinance either accepting the area of moderate, high, and very high fire hazard severity as currently shown on the revised FHSZ Map or the City Council may expand the area of FHSZ following a finding supported by evidence. The FHSZ in Pasadena are generally in the Arroyo Seco, west and north of the 210 freeway, and in east Pasadena in the upper Hastings Ranch neighborhood.

The FHSZ Map was presented to the public at several public meetings, and was publicized in the City Manager Weekly Newsletter and posted on Facebook, X, and Instagram. The FHSZ map was also made available for public comment on the City's website at cityofpasadena.net/fire. A total of eight public comments were received between April 22 and May 30. Comments were related to several items including: continuous fuel control in the Arroyo Seco, impact to insurance premiums, clarification of the defensible space requirements, and consider more areas of the City to include in the FHSZ map. Once adopted, the Ordinance and related documents will be submitted to the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection for oversight and compliance.

Adoption of the FHSZ Map creates no new regulatory requirements. The changes to the Map are relatively minor. The two-tiered zoning previously used (High Hazard and Interface Zone) have been divided into three zones consistent with the new State nomenclature- Very High, High and Moderate. The boundaries of the various zones have shifted to reflect current science and local conditions of wild land fire behavior. Based on the current map, there are 3,911 properties in the Very-High Fire Severity Zone. The new map would increase that to 4,610 properties. 887 parcels will be added and 188 will be removed. It's crucial for property owners in identified High and Very High Fire Severity Zones to be aware of defensible space requirements and take proactive steps to reduce wildfire risk. Builders also need to consider fire-resistant features in

these areas. These additional properties and parcels require inspections annually and represents an 18% increase. The Pasadena Fire Department will complete these additional inspections with existing staff and resources, and will work with property owners to take the necessary steps to reduce risks.

COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATION:

This action of updating the California State Fire Marshal High Hazard Severity Zone Maps supports the City Council's strategic goals to ensure public safety.

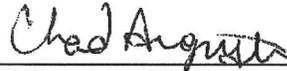
ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

The proposed action is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15061 (b)(3), the common sense exemption.

FISCAL IMPACT:

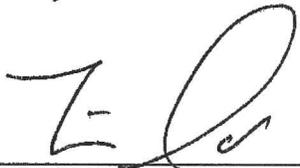
There is no fiscal impact as a result of adopting the proposed Fire Hazard Severity Zone Map from CAL FIRE.

Respectfully submitted,



CHAD AUGUSTIN
Fire Chief
Pasadena Fire Department

Prepared by:



Timothy Sell
Deputy Fire Chief / Fire Marshal
Pasadena Fire Department

Approved by:



MIGUEL MÁRQUEZ
City Manager

Attachment A – CAL FIRE 2025 Fire Hazard Severity Zone Map
Attachment B – Public Comments