



# Staff Report

City Council

Item No. 6.E

**Meeting Date:** April 23, 2025

**From:** Michael Contreras, Fire Chief

**Title:** 2025 Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZ) Update

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## **RECOMMENDATION:**

Receive and file this report on the updated 2025 Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZ) issued by CAL FIRE, and direct staff to assess local implications related to zoning, building codes, defensible space requirements, and public education. Consider public outreach regarding updated hazard classifications within local responsibility areas (LRA). The State of California mandate is for the city to adopt the FHSZ Map.

## **BACKGROUND:**

Pursuant to Public Resources Code 4202 and Government Code 51178, CAL FIRE is required to classify lands within the local responsibility area (LRA) into Fire Hazard Severity Zones—moderate, high, and very high. These classifications are based on fuel loads, terrain, weather, wind patterns, and other fire-related factors.

On March 23, 2025 Cal Fire released final maps for local responsibility area. This update integrates new climate science, fire modeling, and ember transport data to better reflect long-term wildfire hazards.

Additionally, Senate Bill 63 (Stern, 2021) mandates the inclusion of moderate and high FHSZs in local responsibility areas (LRAs), expanding beyond the previously designated Very High zones.

Cathedral City has no high or very high zones. According to the maps, Cathedral City has only moderate zones.

## **DISCUSSION:**

The new 2025 FHSZ maps represent a significant advancement in wildfire hazard identification. Key updates include:

- Model Enhancements: Updated 50-year fire behavior modeling now includes local

wind patterns, ember transport, flame length, and updated climate data (2003–2018).

- Scope of Classification: All 31+ million acres of SRA are now classified under the revised system. LRA maps are expected to be completed by Winter 2025.
- Building and Disclosure Impacts: Properties in High and Very High zones must comply with California Building Code Chapter 7A (Wildland Urban Interface standards), and sellers must include natural hazard disclosures.
- Public Access: Residents can find property-specific designations via CAL FIRE's FHSZ Map Viewer.
- Urban Edge Considerations: FHSZ boundaries can change rapidly due to proximity to wildland. Even visually similar neighborhoods may fall into different zones based on ember exposure modeling.
- LRA Coordination: CAL FIRE will assist local jurisdictions in map adoption and provide land use planning resources. The department aims to align development standards with hazard potential, not to limit growth.

While these maps are hazard-based (long-term likelihood and behavior), insurance providers use different short-term risk models, though they may use similar datasets.

There is no direct fiscal impact associated with receiving this report. However, future implications may include:

- Staff time and resources to review and update local hazard mitigation plans, development review processes, and general plan safety elements.
- Potential costs for public outreach, compliance inspections, and homeowner support related to defensible space and home hardening.
- Grant opportunities may be available for hazard mitigation and wildfire resilience initiatives through CAL FIRE and related agencies.

Staff will monitor the upcoming LRA mapping process and return with updates and recommendations as needed.

At a future meeting, staff will bring back the updated maps for the City Council's consideration for adoption.

### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

None

### **FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN:**

None

### **ATTACHMENTS:**

1. 2025 FHSZ Map