FINAL REPORT

ON THE

WILDFIRE PREVENTION ASSESSMENT DISTRICT

CITY OF OAKLAND

Public Safety Committee
Oakland City Council
JUNE 2017

2017 WILDFIRE PREVENTION ASSESSMENT DISTRICT

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Sue Piper (District 1) Chair

Martin Matarrese (District 7) Vice Chair

Steve Hanson (District 1)

Lin Barron (District 4)

Mike Petouhoff (District 4)

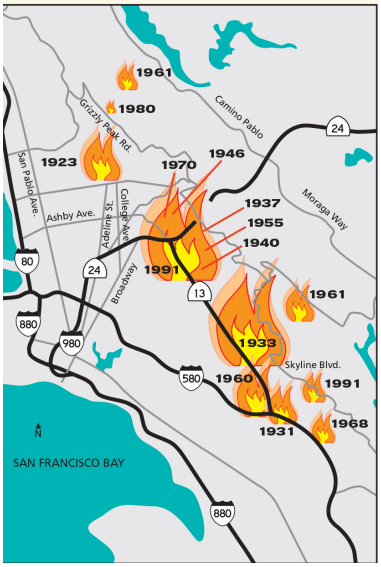
Glen Dahlbacka (District 6)

Doug Wong (At Large)

FINAL REPORT OF THE

WILDFIRE PREVENTION ASSESSMENT DISTRICT

History of the Wildfire Prevention Assessment District



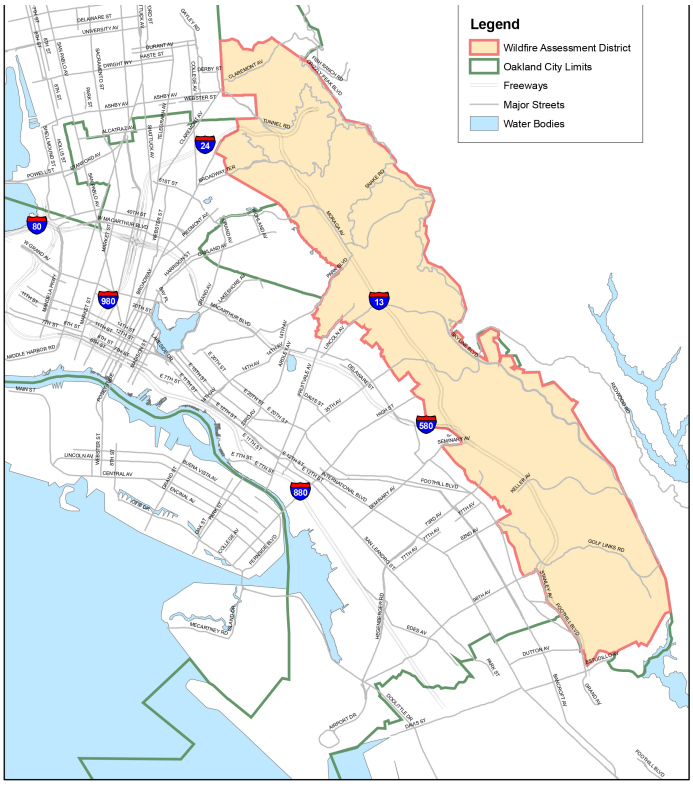
Since 1923, more than a dozen major wildfires have raged through the Oakland/Berkeley hills that resulted in extensive damage and loss of life. The Oakland-Berkeley Firestorm on October 20, 1991 ranks as one of California's largest home lost from a single wildfire; the 1923 Berkeley fire ranked fifth. More than 3,000 homes were lost, 25 people died, and 150 were injured. At a cost of $1.7 billion, it was one of this nation's most costly catastrophes and was one of the fastest moving wildfires in California history, doing most of its damage within the first 2 hours. Firefighters were able to begin to contain the fire 6 hours after it started when the winds died down, although it was not 100% contained until October 22.

In 1993 The Oakland City Council instituted a fire district to reduce the fuel load in the Oakland hills and to enhance fire services following the 1991 Oakland-Berkeley Hills Firestorm, but due to changes in state law in 1997, the Council needed to ask property owners in the designated area for approval. Voters did not approve a new district. From 1997-2003 the City allocated $1 million a year from its general fund to maintain basic brush removal on city properties and to maintain inspection services in the Oakland Fire Department.

The Wildfire Prevention Assessment District At A Glance

- 10,590 total acres
- 16.5 square miles
- 33 miles around perimeter
- 21.5% area of City
- 26,000 private properties
- 416 city properties--1400 acres
- 200 geographic locations are City-owned
- 300 miles of public access roadway

In the years immediately following, economic conditions jeopardized Oakland's ability to maintain the wildfire prevention program. A new effort to form a Wildfire Prevention Assessment District (WPAD) was again set before the residents within the geographic confines of the Oakland Hills designated by CalFire as a very high fire hazard severity zone in recognition of the critical need for stable, long-term solutions to avoid the historical pattern of a devastating fire every 20 years. It was approved by 74% of the property owners in January 2004 for 10 years.



Wildfire Prevention Assessment District

The Oakland Fire Department's Fire Prevention Bureau, under the supervision of the Fire Marshal's Office managed the WPAD. The WPAD ordinance established a Citizens Advisory Committee to develop and oversee the WPAD budget and to recommend program priorities to the Oakland Fire Department. The Advisory Committee consisted of two members appointed by City Council Members in Districts 1,4, 6 and 7, one member appointed by the Council Member-at-Large, and two by the Mayor. One of the Mayor's appointees is required to have fire fighting experience.

As the WPAD neared its 10-year lifespan, the City and community leaders led a campaign to renew the WPAD. Because of changes in case law, the new District was structured slightly differently and required a 2/3 approval, rather than the 50% +1 that was needed in 2003. Unfortunately, the election ran 66 votes short of the 2/3 threshold. The WPAD Advisory Committee continued to meet as long as there were still funds in the account. The final meeting of the WPAD Advisory Committee will be on June 15, 2017, as funds in the account are expected to be spent or encumbered through June 30, 2017. After that date, the responsibilities for roadside clearance and maintenance of defensible space on city properties through goat grazing and contracts will be funded out of the City's General Fund.

WPAD Accomplishments

Over the past 13 years, 36 residents served as volunteer members of the Citizen's Advisory Committee, which met once a month, first at City Hall and then at the Trudeau Educational Center at 15500 Skyline Blvd. within the confines of the district itself.

WPAD Advisory Committee Members

2004-05
Ken Benson (D7) Chair
Tamia Marg (D1)
Robert Sieben (D1)
Jill Broadhurst (D4)
Sally Kilburg (D4)
Susan Burnett (D6)
Carl Hackney (D6)
Allene Warren (D7)
Ben Fay (At Large)
Gordon Piper (Mayoral Appointee)
Ernest Robinson (Mayoral Appointee)

2005-06
Robert Sieben (D1) Chair
Tamia Marg (D1)
Barbara Goldenberg (D4)
Carol Berneau (D4)
Susan Burnett (D6)
Carl Hackney. (D6)
Ken Benson (D7)
Allene Warren (D7)
Ben Fay (At Large)
Gordon Piper (Mayoral Appointee)
Ernest Robinson (Mayoral Appointee)

2006-07
Robert Sieben (D1) Chair
Barry Pilger (D1)
Robert Faber (D4)
Barbara Goldenberg (D4)
Lilah Green (D6)
James Williams, Sr. (D6)
Ken Benson (D7)
Allene Warren (D7)
Douglas Wong (At Large)
Gordon Piper (Mayoral Appointee)
Ernest Robinson (Mayoral Appointee)

2007-08
Robert Sieben (D1) Chair
Barry Pilger, (D1)
Chris Candell (D4)
Barbara Goldenberg (D4)
Lilah Greene (D6)
James Williams. Sr. (D6)
Dinah Benson (D7)
Allene Warren (D7)
Douglas Wong (Mayoral Appointee)
Dee McDonough (Mayoral Appointee)

2008-09
Robert Sieben (D1) Chair
Barry Pilger (D1)
Chris Candell (D4)
Barbara Goldenberg (D4)
Lilah Greene (D6)
James Williams. Sr. (D6)
Dinah Benson (D7)
(D7) Vacant
Charles Bowles (At Large)
Doug Wong (Mayoral Appointee)
Dee McDonough (Mayoral Appointee)

2009-10
Barbara Goldenberg (D4) Chair
David Kessler (D1)
(D1) Vacancy
Chris Candell (D4)
Don Johnson (D6)
Lilah Greene (D6) Treasurer
Dinah Benson (D7)
(D7) Vacant
Chuck Bowles (At Large)
Nick Luby (Mayoral Appointee)
Doug Wong (Mayoral Appointee) Vice Chair

2010-11
David Kessler (D1)
Robert Sieben (D1)
Diane Hill (D4)
Barbara Goldenberg, Chair (D4)
James Williams, Sr. (D6)
Sean Walsh (D6)
Dinah Benson (D7
Donald Mitchell (D7)
Douglas Wong (At Large) Vice Chair
Nick Luby (Mayoral Appointee)
Dee McDonough (Mayoral Appointee)

2011-12
Doug Wong(At Large) Chair
David Kessler (D1) Vice Chair
Robert Sieben (D1)
Chris Candell (D4)
Diane Hill (D4)
Sean Walsh (D6)
(D6) Vacant
Dinah Benson (D7)
Don Mitchell (D7) Financial Liaison
Dee McDonough (Mayoral Appointee)
Nicholas Luby (Mayoral Appointee)

2012-13
Bob Sieben (D1) Chair
Barry Pilger (D1)

Diane Hill (D4)
Barbara Goldenberg (D4)
(D6) Vacant
(D6) Vacant
Don Mitchell (D7) Financial Liaison
Dinah Benson (D7)
Douglas Wong (At Large)
Nicholas Luby (Mayoral Appointee)
Ken Thames (Mayoral Appointee)

2013-14
Bob Sieben, (D1) Chair
Fred Booker (D1)
Barbara Goldenberg (D4)
Diane Hill (D4)
Lars Beyer(D6)
Katherine Moore(D6)
Dinah Benson (D7)
Don Mitchell (D7)
Doug Wong (At Large)
Nicholas Luby (Mayoral Appointee)
Ken Thames (Mayoral Appointee)

2014-15
Fred Booker (D1) Chair
Robert Sieben (D1)
Diane A. Hill (D4)
(D4) Vacant
Katherine Moore(D6)
(D6) Vacant
Dinah Benson (D7)
Donald Mitchell (D7)
Douglas Wong (At Large) Vice Chair
Ken Thames (Mayoral Appointee)
(Mayoral Appointee) Vacant

2015-16
Susan Piper (D1) Chair
Steven Hanson (D1)
Lin Baron (D4)
Michael Petouhoff (D4)
Clint Johnson (D6)
(D6) Vacant)
Martin Matarrese (D7)
(D7) Vacant
Dinah Benson (D7
(D7) Vacant
Douglas Wong (At Large)
(Mayoral Appointee) Vacant
(Mayoral Appointee) Vacant

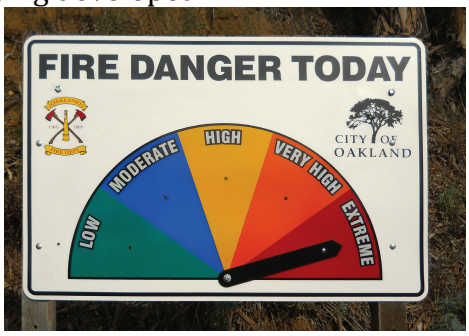
2016-17
Susan Piper, (D1), Chair
Martin Matarrese (D7) Vice Chair
Lin Barron (D4)
Glen Dahlbacka (D6)
Steven Hanson (D1)
Mike Petouhoff (D4)
Doug Wong (At Large)
(Mayoral Appointee) Vacant
(Mayoral Appointee) Vacant

Accomplishments:

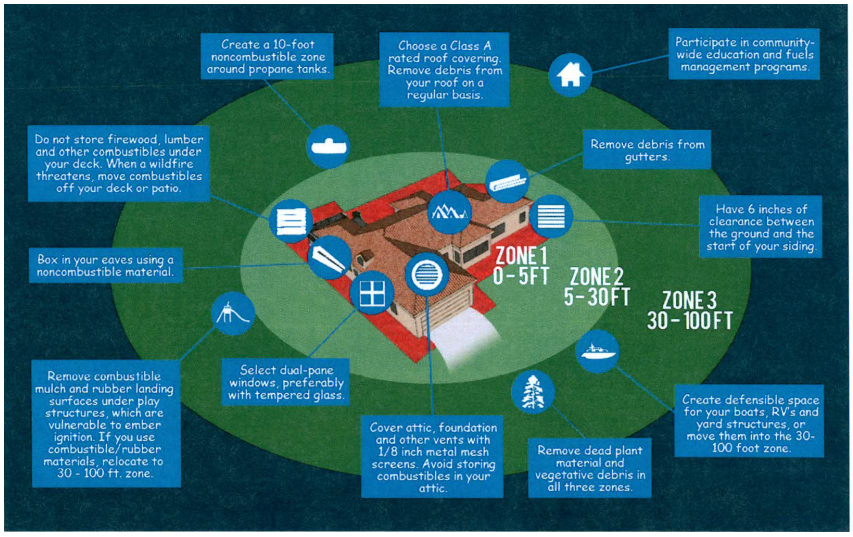
- **Goats annually graze 809 acres of city property (more than half of city-owned properties)**. Goat grazing has proved to be one of the most cost efficient strategies for creating defensible space on the city's large open spaces. The 2017-18 goat grazing contract is $491,000.
- **The City annually clears 10 feet on either side of 75 miles of the 300 miles of roads in the Oakland Hills**. The other roads have sidewalks or abut private property where roadside clearance is not appropriate. Roadside clearance keeps grass and brush low in case a fire should ignite from a thrown cigarette or a spark from a car at a cost of approximately $120,000 per year.
- **Provided up to $40,000 free chipping and removal services annually through April 1, 2017 to private property owners within the WPAD**. The free chipping encouraged private property owners to maintain defensible space on their properties. Early in the WPAD's existence, City Council negotiated an unlimited green waste pick up from private properties within

the WPAD in the Waste Management of Alameda County trash pick up contract.

- **Developed protocols for working in and around protected species**. During the early years of the WPAD, a contractor cutback grass in a median above Crestmont Homes (below East Bay Regional Park on Skyline) during the blooming season of the rare *Presido Clarkia*. Protocols were developed and incorporated into the contracts, with Fire Inspectors monitoring the contractors before, during and after the work to protect this rare flower. The current Fire Inspection Staff have been trained to oversee these provisions in the contracts, and a procedure manual is in the final stages of completion so that institutional memory can be transferred from inspector to inspector in the future.
- **Contractor Training**—the Fire Prevention Bureau annually trains contractors on WPAD contracting procedures, including working around creeks in the watershed and requirements for working around protected species. The new procedure manual along with best practices that will be incorporated into the Vegetation Management Plan now being developed will strengthen these efforts.



- **WPAD replaced 20 fire danger signs at key intersections in the hills, installed what not to do on Red Flag Day signs in several key areas, and purchased Red Flags to fly at hills fire stations and parks**.
- **The WPAD purchased and the Fire Department installed new Remote automated Weather Station (RAWS) at the north and south ends of the District**. RAWS provide specific data as to humidity, wind direction and other criteria to tailor fire danger assessments to the unique conditions in the Oakland hills. Otherwise, the Fire Department depends on assessments from CalFire and the National Weather Service, which cover a much larger region and doesn't necessarily take into account the fog patterns of the Oakland/Berkeley Hills. There have been instances when CalFire will call a Red Flag (high fire danger) Warning based on conditions in Contra Costa and the Central Valley, when the Oakland hills are much color and have higher humidity and therefore, less of a fire risk.
- **Developed WPAD signage for WPAD sponsored projects on City properties**.
- **Residential Outreach**—
    - Created and revised the **annual Vegetation Management**



Inspection notice so that included practical information and visuals to help property owners meet the City's fire code requirements for defensible space in the high fire severity hazard zone (WPAD). This and the funds designated for chipping, along with paying for temporary data entry staff to input the results of the private property surveys were the only items in the WPAD budget that supported private property compliance. The bulk of WPAD funds was designated for maintaining City-owned properties to reduce the spread of fire.

- Created a short DVD about the WPAD that was distributed to all property owners and appears on the City wildfire prevention website.
- Developed the WPAD website at http://www.oaklandnet.com/wildfireprevention to provide easy access to defensible space requirements, WPAD services, WPAD Advisory Committee agendas, minutes and reports. However, there are minutes and reports missing, especially for the years 2005-2010 due to turnover in the Fire Prevention Bureau.
- Collaborated with the community on commemorative events for the 10th, 20th and 25th Anniversary of the Oakland/Berkeley Hills Firestorm.

- **Contracting**—within the first few years of the district, the Advisory Committee worked with Fire Prevention Bureau staff to develop multi-year contracts that would save the WPAD funds (i.e. Goat Grazing contract) and expand the number of contractors bidding on WPAD contracts. However, during the last four or five years of the WPAD, the number of contractors has fallen to just 3 who are willing or able to meet the City's contracting requirements. The WPAD Advisory Committee met with OFD and Contracting staff in 2016 to see if contracts could be expanded to include CivicCorps and the less costly CalFire Delta Crews. The Fire Marshal has reported that OFD is in the process of working out Memoranda of Understanding with both organizations to expand the number of contractors so that work on city properties could be completed in a more timely fashion.

Challenges

- **Public confused about role of WPAD and rest of City in reducing risk of fire in the hills.** Private property inspections are the most visible wildfire prevention efforts in the City. Private property inspections are handled by the Fire Department and not the WPAD. Yet public perception of the effectiveness of these inspections significantly impacts their view of the effectiveness of the WPAD—and was a contributing factor to it not being renewed in 2013. The public—and other city departments—equated WPAD as the funding source with the responsibility for City of Oakland wildfire prevention, which has created great confusion and ineffective wildfire prevention efforts. The public assumed that the WPAD Advisory Committee could mandate actions both in project implementation and OFD personnel policy, which is not

the case. As an advisory committee, it only could set and oversee the budget with the funds available.

- **City departments are siloed and do not see wildfire prevention as a city-wide priority**. Wildfire prevention is the #1 public safety issue in the Oakland hills; yet whenever City leaders talk about public safety, they focus on reducing crime. City staff take their lead from the Mayor and Council and don't consider it their responsibility to help to make city properties in the high fire severity hazard zone more fire safe. City leaders undercut the ability of the WPAD to achieve its goals by shifting all of the management responsibilities to the Fire Department in 2004 and then in 2008 cutting back significantly on PWA involvement with park and open space management, and critically needed tree planting, care and removals. Throughout the WPAD's history, there were conflicts between the WPAD and the Public Works Department in managing trees in the City's Open Spaces.
- **Inefficient, insufficient staffing in the Fire Prevention Bureau** created numerous problems for the WPAD. In essence, the WPAD is merely a dedicated account—it only paid for one staff person (first, an education and outreach coordinator, and then for the past two years, a program analyst). While the Advisory Committee may set the budget and advise OFD on budget priorities, the Fire Department determined when and where to spend the funds. Throughout the past 13 years, Fire Prevention appeared to be a low priority for OFD. It became a significant issue as the end of the WPAD approached. High turnover in inspectors (including the part-time temporary fire inspectors due, in part, to lower salaries for wildfire inspectors), delayed inspections and impacted the quality of the inspections; lack of staff created backlogs in staff response time to public inquiries; lack of staff placed the workload on the shoulders of the few remaining staff, leading to burn out, delays and frustration on both staff and public's part:
    - The City doesn't have enough staff and no experts on staff like a botanist. The Vegetation Management Plan is an excellent step in finding out what we have without destroying everything.
    - No program analyst hired for 2 years. $190,000 set aside for public outreach funds were not spent. No botanist hired. WPAD web page not kept up to date. A significant number of minutes and agendas not filed with the City Clerk. One of the most competent part-time temporary fire inspects was not rehired. Time wasted on FEMA grants that didn't materialize.
    - Record keeping and retention, and accuracy of reporting inspections and compliance. Records from 2005 through May 2010 are missing
    - Regular turnover and missing records led to lack of continuity in inspections and monitoring of contracts. This was particularly

significant in the summer of 2013 when there was major turnover in the department.
    - The FEMA grant, Skyline Blvd. tree removal project and Chabot Observatory projects were poorly management or delayed, or in some cases funding lost outright. As a result, most WPAD funds went to annual maintenance projects, rather than to those that would have long-term impact.
    - In the summer of 2013, there were more than 1000 calls to the WPAD hotline that went unanswered. The public's perception of an unresponsive WPAD was a contributing factor to the district not being renewed in the fall.
    - Experience has shown that the Fire Prevention staff's expertise is not in project management or contracting, causing delays and inefficiencies over the past 14 years.

  The result has been an ongoing loss of institutional memory that leads to inconsistent inspections and monitoring of contracts.
- **Lack of support from OFD Administration of the Fire Prevention Bureau.**
    - Full time positions were not filled and a heave reliance on part-time temporary inspectors. It took two years to fill the program analyst position, which had sufficient funds in the WPAD budget.
    - In the last year, Fire Prevention inspectors were prohibited from working at night (to attend WPAD meetings) or on weekends (to staff volunteer efforts and to monitor contracted work that occurred on weekends). The lack of support for volunteer programs required the Advisory Committee to revamp its grant program so that only official city adopt-a-spot groups were eligible.
    - The Fire Prevention relied on old computers, walkie talkies and other essential communications equipment, that was not upgraded or was, in some instances transferred to other departments without replacement. This handicapped them from implementing WPAD programs effectively and efficiently.
    - Minutes from 2004 through May 2010 are still missing and apparently were never filed with the City Clerk, as required under the Brown Act.
    - The website was routinely out of date with incorrect information, including current Advisory Committee members and missing archival information.
- **Proper inspection and fines. Inconsistent enforcement of the Fire Code—**even though the Fire Prevention Bureau regularly reports 98-99% compliance among private property owners, residents and WPAD members repeatedly shared stories of properties that had passed but clearly were out of compliance. In 2014 there appeared to be fabrication of inspection results. Process was undercut by turnover in part-time and

full-time inspectors, causing backlogs as well as inconsistent inspections. Additionally, inspection of city-owned properties occurred late in the season, so that in October 2016, 130 of the City's 16 properties had either not been inspected or the data was in transition from the inspections to actual input into the data system. Throughout its history, WPAD Advisory Committee members repeatedly questioned why the City was inspecting, and then abating city-owned properties so late in the fire season. We've been assured that for this fire season, 2017, the Fire Prevention Bureau will inspect city properties in the same time frame as private properties.

- **No plan for replacing vegetation in aging and fire prone forest of the city.** Managing the fuel load in City-owned large open spaces such as Joaquin Miller Park were not addressed by the WPAD. WPAD funds were limited, and as a matter of triage, the fire inspectors focused on road side clearance and defensible space around city structures. When trees were cut, the stumps and debris were left. The City needs a plan to deal with long-term management of the fuel load in our large open spaces. With the cuts in funding for open space/park maintenance in the City's general fund, the City has had insufficient resources to clear trees that are dead/dying/fallen over. The Vegetation Management Plan now being prepared is designed to address this situation, so that by the time the plan and CEQA is presented to Council in December 2018, a plan will be in place to reduce the risk of spread of fire on all City parks and open spaces within the WPAD.
- **Contracting continues to be a challenge**: The workload for roadside clearance and managing fuel on city properties is fairly constant from year to year, although it may increase in years of heavy winter rains. The City has a legal responsibility and fiduciary responsibility to ensure that city-owned properties meet 365 days a year the City/State Fire Code for structures within the high fire severity hazard zone. A larger pool of contractors can not only increase competitive bidding, but also allows more workers to complete the work in a shorter period of time.
    - Early in the WPAD's history, the Advisory Committee worked with staff to increase the pool and in the early 2000's, the City routinely requested bids from 16 or more contractors. But in recent years, that number has dropped to only 3 contractors willing or able to meet the City's contracting guidelines. Many of these potential contractors are small local businesses that find it difficult to afford the $1 million liability bond requirement, or meet the City's local hire, minimum wage guidelines. Another issues is the contracting process that required staff to go out to bid in the middle of fire season.
    - The City's fiscal year occurs in the middle of Fire Season. The WPAD ensured there were funds available to initiate contracts before high fire season. In some years, contracts that could have

been signed at the beginning of the Fire Season where not let until just a few days before the work was needed in the middle of Fire Season. The process was cumbersome and caused city properties to be cleared very late in the Fire Season. These delays in clearance of city properties led to distrust of the WPAD.

- In 2016, the Advisory Committee asked the Fire Prevention Bureau to look at writing on-call contracts at the start of fire season to avoid this situation. Part of the challenge is that the contractors need to know actual time periods for the work, especially when they may be fulfilling contracts with other entities at the same time and need to manage their workload.
- Another challenge has been that OFD Fire Prevention Staff are not experienced in the contracting process, and may see guidelines as absolute regulations. There are situations where the guidelines can be waived. There is a need to review the City's guidelines in light of the pool of contractors available to do the necessary work.
- In 2016, the Advisory Committee recommended and Fire Prevention staff is exploring contracts with Delta Crews (at several hundred dollars per day) and with CivicCorps for FY 2017.

Missed Opportunities

- **Harnessing volunteer power**—Ever since its inception, members of the Advisory Committee and the public encouraged the WPAD to work with park stewards and corporate/large community volunteers on pulling broom and other safe, low tech fuel load reduction projects. For example, pulling French and Spanish broom in the winter before these highly flammable and invasive shrubs go to seed is a very effective wildfire prevention tool. Fire inspectors did work with a number of park steward groups (Claremont Canyon Conservancy, Garber Park Stewards, Friends of Montclair Rail Road Trail, Friends of Sausal Creek and Oakland Landscape Committee). But it wasn't until 2015—after the renewal failed—that the WPAD actually hosted a volunteer broom pulling effort on Skyline Blvd. between Keller and Grass Valley. Subsequent efforts were thwarted when the Fire Chief prohibited fire inspectors from working overtime or flex time on the weekend, when volunteers are typically available. There are a number of part steward groups that could be tapped. The hope is that the Vegetation Management Plan now being prepared would include a list of fuel load reduction projects on city properties that could be done by

volunteers, and thus leverage our limited resources for greater long term impact.

- **Partnerships with other public or private partners**— Other than having a presentation from the University of California Forest Research and Outreach during the first year of the WPAD, there was little visible effort to tap into the knowledge and experience of the wildfire experts at UC.
- **Education and outreach**. As noted above, the public is confused about the purpose of the WPAD. Even worse, homeowners don't know what creating defensible space really means.
    - The annual inspection notice and the city website provide specifics about creating defensible space, but there is little information about how to make structures—which are also major sources of fuel in a fire-- more fire safe.
    - The original WPAD ordinance talked about coordinating communication through the City's CORE program; very little coordinating or dissemination occurred.
    - The education and outreach coordinator paid for by the WPAD did not adapt to the change in information dissemination from print media to the use of social media and list servs. The result is that the public does not know what to do on Red Flag Days, is unclear about the City's defensible space requirements, is confused as to the role of the WPAD.
    - The confusion—and frustration with lack of timely response to calls-emails to the Fire Prevention Bureau (especially in 2013 when a wholesale transition in the department left a huge void) led to the loss of the renewal vote.

  The failure of the renewal election falls squarely at the feet of senior city staff. The mayor, city administrator and the fire chief. Volunteers—Oakland citizens on the WPAD—gave city staff the guidance and tools to fight this fight and win. It's not that those senior city staff dropped the ball, they refused to pick it up in the first place.
- **Use of latest GIS technology**. To date, only the chart that the Fire Prevention Bureau presents to the Advisory Committee tracks this information for the public (and at that, only since last summer.) It is manually put together because the information is located in different data bases that are not integrated with each other. It is unconscionable that our inspection reports have to be manually input into the City's data system
    - In 2015, the Advisory Committee recommended a specific list of items that could be included in a GIS data system so that the staff, the committee and the public could better monitor progress on inspections and abatement of properties.

- Developing a data base system that utilizes GIS and other new technology will improve accuracy, transparency and save much needed dollars.
- It is also critical that the Vegetation Management Plan consultants be and early part of this process. Once the plan is complete and CEQA has been finalized, the information about the City's properties and their special needs (protected species, watershed concerns) can be incorporated into a comprehensive data base. The resulting easy-to-read maps that can be posted on the website and allow the public to track progress.

Recommendations

It is the City's responsibility and fiduciary liability, regardless of the source of funding, to ensure that its own properties meet the city's fire code concerning structures in the wildland/urban interface 365 days a year. The challenges the WPAD Advisory Committee faced went beyond just dealing with city-owned properties. We present the following recommendations on the broader fire prevention issues to the City no matter which department is charged with managing wildfire prevention, based on lessons learned over the past 13 years:

- Need a **consensus on a vision** for what we want the hills to look like—a long term plan needs to be based on what we hope to accomplish, with preserving human life the top priority. It is not clear that the Vegetation Management Plan approach incorporates an inclusionary process for developing this vision.
- Need **full time fire inspectors** that are trained and connected to their neighborhoods so that inspections are consistent, accurate and that the public can trust the results. Use of fire fighter crews for initial inspections leads to too many inconsistencies in interpretation of the fire code. We need strong enforcement. Other cities require CalFire certification as a requirement to apply for a Fire Inspector's position. Oakland let's newly hired inspectors obtain the certification after their hire date. We need fire inspectors who demonstrate that they know the fire codes as they pertain to wildfire. They should be paid at the same scale as other inspectors in the city, otherwise we will continue to have revolving door.
- Place **Wildfire Prevention Management in the City Administrator's Office** rather than in the Oakland Fire Department. Fire Inspectors are skilled in inspections. Management of wildfire prevention contracts should go to staff that has experience in wildland project management and CEQA. The City Administrator can overcome the roadblocks among departments that have hampered OFD's ability to rely on other city departments to achieve the wildfire prevention goals.
- **Consider a City Urban Forestry and Landscaping Agency** or a different approach for effectively managing our vegetation on

public/private properties in the district. It should have a clear plan, capable and experienced staff and significant resources allocated to help in converting our fire-prone and rapidly aging vegetation on both public and private properties into a much more fire-resistant landscape—with long term goals, not just annual plans.

- Any effort must have a **robust public education and outreach plan** so that we can encourage the public to do their share to make Oakland more fire safe. Qualified staff should be hired to coordinate these efforts.
- Need to find more ways to **help private property owners** remove fire-prone vegetation to reduce the fire risk. The WPAD primarily focused on city-owned properties. There needs to be a coordinated approach to both private and public properties, as wildfire doesn't care whether the fuel it burns is on private or public property.
- Develop program to **include schools, youth groups and young adults in fire safety education.**
- Need to **incorporate volunteer activities into the city's efforts** in our parks and open spaces. Wildfire prevention staff need to provide technical support and supervision when volunteers work on the weekends.

- Need to **streamline the contracting process**. We need to expand the pool of contractors who may be deterred by the City's requirements.
    - A thorough review of city bidding requirements should be made to see if we can overcome perceived barriers.
    - We anticipate that the completed Vegetation Management Plan will spell out in detail specific special projects for reducing the spread of fire in our parks and open spaces. And it is our hope that the information concerning those projects, including protected species requirements, would be incorporated into a GIS mapping and data management system.
    - A larger pool of contractors will allow the City to complete more projects at a time and avoid running into past issues of contracting for work in the middle of high fire season.
    - The City's budget cycles does not coincide with the Fire Season. Annual vegetation management work is known,

except for the exact timing because the project depends on humidity, temperature and other local conditions at the project area. The City should consider on call contracts where the primary variable is when, not **what or where.**
    - The City Administrator should review the contracting and city budget process so that fire prevention contracts can be entered before the new Fiscal Year so that work is not delayed until after July 1st. This is a problem when the funds come from the General Fund, which is on a July 1 to June 30 schedule. In the last 5 years, Fire Season has actually run year round.
- **Use GIS for vegetation management**. As the City moves to a better data management system for OFD and for the Fire Prevention Bureau, planning for reporting data in a GIS mapping format should be part of the initial planning process. There should be little need for manual data input when technology can improve turnaround, accuracy and transparency. For the past several years the public is able to pinpoint data for Sudden Oak Death on their cell phones using a simple app. Current technology allows inspectors and fire fighters to input data in the field. The public should have easy access to inspection and project data on a user-friendly mapping platform.
- **Fire safety is more than vegetation management**, Blocked access on our narrow streets is problematic. There is a pilot project to work with neighbors about street access for emergency and residential vehicles. How houses are constructed and maintained as well as how landscaping is maintained, impacts the spread of fire. This should be part of the City's plan and outreach.
- Need a **youth employment component** to the plan.
- Need for regular public monitoring of city's progress on vegetation management and inspections
    - OFD or whoever is managing vegetation management **make monthly report to the Public Safety Committee** for regular oversight. The report should include presenting the matrix currently presented to the WPAD, which charts progress on inspections on private property, city property, goat grazing contracts and contracts for management of city-owned parcels.
    - Consider **establishing a fire commission** as a civilian/citizen advisory commission to advocate for the fire department and its mission as well as serve as an important conduit for citizens concerned about fire safety, public safety, budgets, inspections and staffing. Just like a police commission, the fire commissioners do not have to be experts -- they must simply advocate for priorities and

policies and provide oversight in a way that the City Council cannot.

- If there is a new district
    - It must be governed by a commission or committee that is more than advisory.
    - Need 3-year terms for board members.
    - It should focus on the projects identified in the Vegetation Management Plan once the plan and CEQA are approved.

We appreciate the opportunity to serve the public. The 36 members who have served on the WPAD Advisory Committee took their responsibilities seriously and will continue to advocate for the City's ongoing efforts to keep fires from spreading in our fire-prone wildland urban interface—the Oakland Hills. This is not just a matter of saving lives and properties, but keep in mind that the Oakland Hills are between the fire and the Bay—we want to keep wildfires from devastating the City of Oakland and the people who live here.