

SILVER CITY and the EXTRATERRITORIAL ZONE (ETZ) COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN (CWPP) -Three Page Summary-

INTRODUCTION. This summary of key features and the public engagement process in the new CWPP is provided for ease of initial public review. The goal of the Plan is to reduce the wildfire vulnerability of the SC/ETZ¹ area, with its current 9 high-risk communities (see attached map, Fig. 1). Each of the 9 communities will eventually be assessed for fire hazards and included as a separate Attachment. Wind Canyon was chosen as a point of departure for methodology due to its location, prevailing winds, slopes and heavy vegetation, as well as the existence of an active Neighborhood Watch Group for the CWPP Core Team to work with.

FIRE ENVIRONMENT. After several years of extended drought and major fires in the area, including the Quail Ridge, Whitewater-Baldy, Silver and Signal Fires, the wildfire danger as of June 5, 2014 was very high, and remained very high or high until the start of the monsoon season in early July. The current 9 high risk communities cover a substantial portion of the residential sections of the SC/ETZ area.

WUI AREAS AND HIGH FIRE RISK COMMUNITIES. The International Code Council defines a Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) as that geographical space where structures and other human development meet or intermingle with wildland **OR vegetative fuels**. Ten WUI areas have been identified with major roads as boundaries, and 9 high fire risk communities have been identified based in part on criteria of vegetation, topography and access.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT. Meetings with three high risk communities have been held (Wind Canyon and Cold Spring Park) or are scheduled (southeast section of Indian Hills, December 9, 2014). Stakeholders (e.g., businesses; institutions; insurance reps, realtors and builders; first responders; disabled/elderly; and non-profits) will be scheduled for January and February 2015. General public comments will be invited during the 30 day public review period planned for April 2015.

KEY FEATURES OF THE CWPP

- The Increased Priority of Evacuation² and Prevention. The increasing fire danger (dryness, heat, fire behavior) coupled with this area's wind, slopes and heavy vegetation – and lessons learned from the 2011 Quail Ridge fire and the deaths of 19 firefighters in Yarnell, AZ in 2013 – have led to a rethinking of fire response strategy locally and nationally. Depending on specific conditions, including assessment of life safety of both residents and firefighters, the response strategy to a given wildfire may be one of evacuate first and attend to structures second.

PREVENTION

- Stand-alone Properties. Given the priority of life safety and evacuation, emphasis must now be placed on prevention: having properties be able to withstand a wildfire event without the assurance that their property may be defended before or initially during a wildfire event. The objective of property preparedness is therefore both structure hardening and vegetative thinning³.
- Outreach, Education and Training. To implement the Plan, sustained multi-media outreach, education and training over years are necessary to raise public awareness about new strategies, roles and requirements.
- Fire-Adapted Communities. In response to federal legislation in 2009, the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy was developed. The Cohesive Strategy addresses the nation's wildfire problems by focusing on three key areas: 1) Restore and Maintain Landscapes; 2) Fire Adapted Communities (FAC); and 3) Response to Fire. FAC elements include:

¹ http://www.townofsilvercity.org/r/town_of_silver_city_NM.php?r=67,p7gkm

² Ready, Set, Go! Action Guide <http://www.emnrd.state.nm.us/SFD/documents/RSGActionGuideNM.pdf>

³ Ready, Set, Go! Action Guide <http://www.emnrd.state.nm.us/SFD/documents/RSGActionGuideNM.pdf>

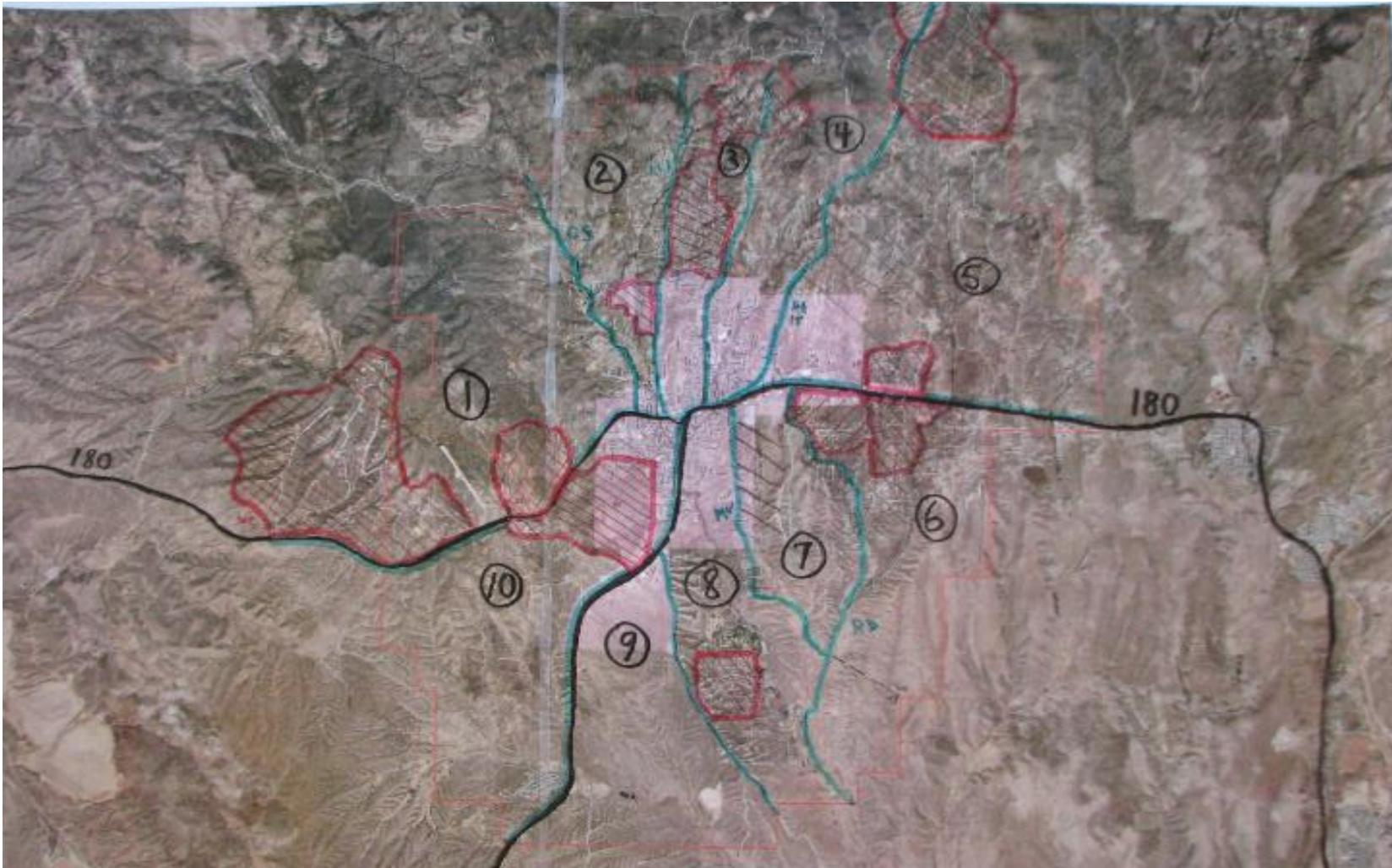
- Home and Neighborhood Preparedness: Residents work to reduce individual property ignition risks; talk to their local fire department about the Ready, Set, Go! Program; and work together on a neighborhood or subdivision level to become recognized by the Firewise Communities/USA Program.
- Partnerships: Community members and organizations identify wildfire risks and shared responsibilities as part of the CWPP. Partners use grant funds to reduce risk and teach wildfire safety in schools and other venues. The Town and County partner with individual risk communities whose residents want to reduce their risk. Part of this evolving partnership is the providing and operating of chippers for slash disposal organized by the local neighborhood.
- Other FAC Components: Fire Department Planning; Government Participation and Planning; Business Resilience; and Healthy Forests/Land Management.
- Community Risk Assessment.
 - **Risk Area Community** (Firewise). After an initial assessment by the Core Team and related VFD, NM State Forestry may conduct a risk assessment at the request of the Core Team or as part of a community's desire to seek Firewise recognition. The Firewise assessment⁴ would be presented to representatives of the community for a decision to proceed or not.
 - **Individual Properties** (Wildfire Assessment Program/WFAP). Home Assessments are planned to be available by trained firefighters and non-operational volunteers, to provide a service to homeowners. Home assessments will be performed using the training, tools and checklist of the Wildland Fire Assessment Program (WFAP), a joint effort by the U.S. Forest Service and the National Volunteer Fire Council.
- Insurance Industry, Homeowner Policies and Emerging Fire Prevention Requirements. Several major insurers have instituted home, property and vegetation requirements in order to be issued and/or maintain a policy. Companies may use inspectors and/or Google Earth, a property/house characteristics questionnaire, and a fire assessment computer program supplied by a third-party to determine risk level. If the risk level is considered unacceptable, the insurer will identify required mitigation actions. If these actions are not implemented, the insurer may not issue or renew the policy, and may even cancel it. This has begun to happen in the SC/ETZ area as a result of regional and national initiatives by Insurers.
- Evaluating the Need for Code and Improved Enforcement. As part of Council Resolution 2014-09, the Town will form a Code Committee to evaluate the potential adoption - in whole or in part or other options to decrease the risk of wildland fire - of the 2012 *International Wildland-Urban Interface Code*. The current evaluation of highest risk communities has developed designations that are mostly outside of the Town of Silver City. At this point it would be more advantageous to pursue a review of the County Codes that apply to the ETZ as well as the highest risk areas. As work progresses and areas are addressed, work will continue to educate the public and do neighborhood and property assessments. This will provide a much stronger baseline for justifying any modifications or additions to codes and the required resources to develop recommendations.

PRIORITIES. To protect life, property and community assets, the following priorities are identified for fuel reduction, in no particular order: 1) High risk communities; 2) Highway/Evacuation Route Right-of-Ways; 3) Critical Infrastructure (evacuation routes, municipal water supply structures and major power lines and communication systems); and 4) the Silver City Upper Watershed. For all of these, the issue of slash management is an important component, involving when and how to use the following: reduced or waived landfill fees; credentialed, supervised post-monsoon burning; permitted, open burning by property owners; and chipping.

⁴ <http://www.firewise.org/usa-recognition-program/program-criteria/more-about-the-wildfire-risk-assessment.aspx?sso=0>

12-9-14

Figure 1. BASE MAP - Silver City/ETZ: 10 WUI Areas and 9 High Risk Communities



High Fire Risk Communities* Within the 10 WUI Areas**

- | | | |
|--|----------------|-------------------|
| • Wind Canyon Estates | • Indian Hills | • Sunrise Estates |
| • Oakwood Estates | • Dos Griegos | • Silver Acres |
| • Greater Cold Spring Park
(Lower Little Walnut Road) | • Pinos Altos | • Boston Hill |

*not listed in any order of priority

**pie slices radiating out from Rt 180 and numbered clockwise for ease of reference, starting from the west