

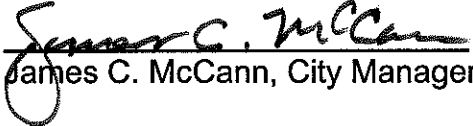
# City of Calistoga

## Staff Report

**TO:** Honorable Mayor and City Council  
**FROM:** Steve Campbell, Fire Chief  
 Brad Cannon, Building Official  
**DATE:** November 18, 2008  
**SUBJECT:** Local Responsibility Area Fire Hazard Severity Zone Map

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**APPROVAL FOR FORWARDING:**

  
 James C. McCann, City Manager

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**ISSUE:** Consideration of a Resolution adopting the Local Responsibility Area Fire Hazard Severity Zone Map.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Adopt Resolution.

**BACKGROUND:** On September 20, 2005, the California Building Standards Commission approved the Office of the State Fire Marshal's (SFM) emergency regulations amending the California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 24, Part 2, known as California Building Standards Code or California Building Code (CBC). The City Council adopted Ordinance No. 646 allowing for the adoption of the revised 2007 California Building Standards Code back on November 6, 2007.

Under the CBC Chapter 7A, Section 701A.3.2, new buildings located in any Fire Hazard Severity Zone within State Responsibility Areas, any Local Agency Very-High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, or any Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Area designated by the enforcing agency for which an application for a building permit is submitted on or after January 1, 2008, shall comply with all sections of the CBC Chapter 7A. of Title 24 California Code of Regulations (Title 15, California Building Standards Code Chapter 15.08 of CMC).

**DISCUSSION:** California law requires the State Fire Marshal (SFM) or now known as CAL FIRE to identify areas based on the severity of fire hazard that is expected to prevail in areas. These areas, or "zones," are based on factors such as fuel

24 (material that can burn), slope and fire weather. There are three zones, based on  
25 increasing fire hazard...medium, high and very high.

26 Fire Hazard Severity Zone maps evaluate "hazard," not "risk". They are like flood  
27 zone maps. "Hazard" is based on the physical conditions that create a likelihood  
28 that an area will burn over a 30 to 50 year period without considering modifications  
29 such as fuel reduction efforts. "Risk" is the potential damage a fire can do to the area  
30 under existing conditions, including any modifications such as defensible space,  
31 irrigation and sprinklers, and ignition resistant building construction.

32 Years of experience by fire agencies and others have led to a statutory strategy for  
33 reducing the chance of building loss or damage. It is a two-pronged approach: 1)  
34 defensible space – reduce flammable material around homes to keep direct flames  
35 and heat away from the side of the building. (The law already requires property  
36 owners to create 100 feet of defensible space around buildings); 2) Exterior wildfire  
37 exposure protection - construct buildings so that they have less chance of catching  
38 fire from burning embers. Experience has shown that changes must be made to the  
39 surrounding property and to the buildings themselves.

40 New buildings located in any Fire Hazard Severity Zone shall comply with one of the  
41 following:

42 1. State Responsibility Areas (SRA).

43 New buildings located in any Fire Hazard Severity Zone within State  
44 Responsibility Areas, for which an application for a building permit is  
45 submitted on or after January 1, 2008, shall comply with all sections of  
46 the CBC Chapter 7A.  
47

48 2. Local Agency Very-High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (LRA).

49 New buildings located in any Local Agency Very High Fire Hazard  
50 Severity Zone for which an application for a building permit is  
51 submitted on or after July 1, 2008, shall comply with all sections of the  
52 CBC Chapter 7A and are built to resist the intrusion of flames and  
53 burning embers projected by a vegetation fire.  
54

55 3. Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Area designated by the enforcing agency.

56 New buildings located in any Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Area  
57 designated by the enforcing agency for which an application for a  
58 building permit is submitted on or after January 1, 2008, shall comply  
59 with all sections of the CBC Chapter 7A.  
60

61 In 2007 the Director of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection  
62 (CAL FIRE) developed and released maps for all SRA lands in California. The  
63 Director of CAL FIRE is also responsible for the development and distribution of  
64 maps delineating Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones in Local Responsibility

65 Areas. CAL FIRE has been in the process of developing and validating these maps  
66 since early 2007. As of May 2008 the Director of CAL FIRE has released the final  
67 maps of Very High Fire Severity Zones in Local Responsibility Areas. According to  
68 Government Code, local jurisdictions shall adopt these maps or may modify them  
69 with a finding supported by substantial evidence in the record, that the requirements  
70 are not necessary for effective fire protection. A presentation by CAL FIRE is  
71 scheduled to better address Council and the public on this informative map.

72  
73 The Napa County Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone Map for LRA shows two  
74 areas that fall in the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. This equates to  
75 approximately 352 acres and 172 parcels. This is mostly land zoned RR-H, but  
76 does include some R-1-10 and "DC" properties at Lincoln Ave. and Foothill Blvd.  
77 One area is in the hills on the southwest side of Foothill Blvd in the City limits, and a  
78 second area in the area of Silverado Country Club near Atlas Peak Road.

79  
80 All "new construction or buildings" in the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones  
81 implement ignition resistant construction building standards, maintain vegetation  
82 clearance requirements as prescribed in the California Public Resources Code 4291,  
83 California Government Code Section 51182 and disclosed as a natural hazard at the  
84 time of sale. The noncombustible ignition resistant construction quality standards  
85 are SFM standards which include but not limited to:

- 86  
87       ▪ SFM 12-7A-1, Exterior Wall Siding and Sheathing;  
88       ▪ SFM 12-7A-2, Exterior Windows;  
89       ▪ SFM 12-7A-3, Under Eaves;  
90       ▪ SFM 12-7A-4, Decking.

91  
92 The CBC Chapter 7A requirements only apply to the design and construction of new  
93 buildings that are located in the Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Area or Very High Fire  
94 Hazard Severity Zone. There are no local requirements for improving exterior  
95 wildfire exposure protection materials and construction methods for remodel projects  
96 and no immediate changes to existing properties within this zone will be required.

97  
98 Furthermore, Government Code 51183.5 requires that the transferor of real property  
99 located within a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone disclose to prospective  
100 transferee's that the property is located within such zone.

101  
102 **ENVIROMENTAL DETERMINATION:** The City Council finds that adopting Fire  
103 Hazard Severity Zones, as recommended by the California Department of Forestry  
104 and Fire Protection, and the designation of those properties into the Very-High Fire  
105 Hazard Severity Zone is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act  
106 ("CEQA") pursuant to the following sections of the CEQA Guidelines: Section  
107 15061(b)(3), the rulemaking activity does not have the potential for causing a  
108 significant effect on the environment and is, therefore, exempt per the general rule  
109 that CEQA applies only to projects which have the potential for causing a significant

110 effect on the environment, and; Section 15378(b)(2) in that the activity is a  
111 continuing administrative activity (i.e., general policy and procedure making) and is,  
112 therefore, not a project.

113

114 **FISCAL IMPACT:** The City will not incur any costs associated with the adoption of  
115 this map. However, it should be noted that properties located within the Very High  
116 Severity Zone may experience increased cost for ignition resistant construction  
117 materials standards and potential increased insurance premiums.

118

119 **ATTACHMENTS:**

120

121 1. Draft Resolution

122 2. Local Responsibility Area Fire Hazard Severity Zone Map

123 3. Public Resources Code 4291

124 4. Government Code Sections 51175 - 51189