

**TOWN OF WOODSIDE  
FIRE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**Presented by: Neville Associates and  
Susan George, Town Manager**

## **“MOVING TOWARD A FIREWISE COMMUNITY”**

The attached Fire Management Plan provides a broad overview of areas that the Town of Woodside, with the cooperation of the Woodside Fire Protection District Board and staff, should subject to open discussion in the public forum within the upcoming months. The plan presents Neville and Associates’ findings and recommendations on fourteen topics, including:

1. Maintenance of Private Properties
2. Abatement of Fire Hazards on Private Property
3. Maintenance of Town-owned Properties and Rights-of-Way
4. Eucalyptus and Other Non-Native Trees
5. Engine Company Defensible Space Inspections
6. Woodside General Plan
7. Woodside’s Site Development Ordinance
8. The Site and Building Plan Review Process
9. Woodside’s Residential Design Guidelines
10. Design Review Handouts
11. Town Building Regulations
12. Woodside’s Municipal Code
13. Evacuation Plans
14. Uniform Fire Code, 2000 Edition (2001 California Fire Code), and Fire Suppression Water Resources

The last topic will be addressed in a separate report to the Town Council. Last minute revisions delayed Town staff’s ability to provide an advanced copy to the Fire Chief of the Woodside Fire Protection District. After the Chief has been afforded the professional courtesy of a preview of the findings and recommendations contained in the supplemental report, it will be presented to the Town Council and the public.

The fourteen topics that are discussed in the Fire Management Plan and the recommendations included to address the findings that were noted by Neville and Associates can be summarized by the following statements of concern:

- Private property owners in the Town of Woodside need to be afforded a better education about the fire risks and potential liabilities they face, both as individuals and as members of the community at large. Private properties should be more rigorously maintained to reduce fire hazards. The Town and the Fire District should provide whatever assistance they can to facilitate this critical maintenance effort. The Woodside Fire Protection District should undertake a proactive and aggressive approach with the owners of private properties who fail to meet minimum maintenance standards from a fire hazard standpoint in its role as enforcement agency for the fire code. Regular records of inspections, reported code violations, and remedial actions should be kept by the District and this information should be included in the annual report of the Fire Prevention Bureau that is to be transmitted to the Fire District’s Board of Directors, pursuant to the District’s Ordinance No. 7.**

- **The Town should adopt an annual and ongoing clean-up program to minimize or eliminate fire fuel accumulations on Town-owned properties and in the public rights-of-way. It is critical that the Town set an example for all other property owners in Town by proactively addressing its own fire safety hazards.**
  
- **The Town should examine all of its regulations and policies and decide, through a deliberate and open discussion involving the full community, how to modify its many public documents to ensure that sound fire safety and prevention practices and policies are provided the highest priority among competing objectives, as espoused in the General Plan, Municipal code, and supporting documents. The issue of fire safety versus aesthetics should receive special focus. Building Regulations should be upgraded to require meet higher fire safety standards, including those governing roofing assemblies and coverings on all structures. Acceptable landscaping materials should be limited to those that are fire resistive and the density of landscaping materials should be limited. The Town’s building and design standards should better incorporate fire safety considerations.**
  
- **The Town should carefully review the Uniform Fire Code, 2000 Edition, and the Woodside Fire Protection District’s adoption of that code. This topic will be the focus of an addendum to the Fire Management Plan in the near future.**

The Town and its residents have an opportunity to strengthen fire safety standards and practices and to reduce the risk of a major and devastating conflagration. The Town of Woodside is an Urban Wildland Interface community, where improved properties and wildland fuels exist side-by-side. The Town has, in fact, been included on a federal list of “Urban Wildland Interface Communities Within the Vicinity of Federal Lands That Are At High Risk From Wildfire.” There is much that the Town government and the fire district can do to reduce the risk of fire. The most important actions to be taken to protect Woodside, its residents, and the natural beauty of the area from fire threat, however, must be taken by the residents of the Town themselves.

After the Town Council has heard a full presentation of the findings and recommendations in the Fire Management Plan, it should “triage” the areas that require further discussion and review, direct the Town Manager to do whatever additional research might be necessary, and schedule each area for additional public review and debate. In order to generate public interest and participation, the contents of the Fire Management Plan will be summarized in a Special Edition of “The Woodsider.” As Town Council meeting dates are set for the further discussion of the Plan, staff will mail special agenda postcards to notice these meetings.

The changes that are envisioned within the recommendations in the Plan will not occur overnight and they will not come without disagreement or struggle, in some cases. The decision(s) to make the needed changes should result from a deliberate and considered community debate that should occur after the community is educated about its current fire risks and the remedies open for mitigating those risks.