

**SUBJECT: AN ORDINANCE TO DESIGNATE LOCAL RESPONSIBILITY
AREA FIRE HAZARD SEVERITY ZONE MAPS ESTABLISHED BY
THE CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE
PROTECTION WITHIN THE CITY OF WEST HOLLYWOOD**

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STATEMENT ON THE SUBJECT:

State law requires local agencies to designate, by ordinance, moderate, high, and very high fire hazard severity zones in its jurisdiction upon receiving final recommendations from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Office of the State Fire Marshal. As such, the City Council will consider introducing on first reading an ordinance designating fire hazard severity zones within the City of West Hollywood and amending the City's Municipal Code to add Section 14.04.060 to adopt and incorporate the Local Responsibility Area Fire Hazard Severity Zones map for the City of West Hollywood dated March 26, 2025.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1) Introduce on first reading, Ordinance No. 25-____: "AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WEST HOLLYWOOD AMENDING THE WEST HOLLYWOOD MUNICIPAL CODE BY ADDING SECTION 14.04.060 TO TITLE 14 (FIRE PROTECTION) TO DESIGNATE FIRE HAZARD SEVERITY ZONES WITHIN THE CITY OF WEST HOLLYWOOD BASED ON THE ESTABLISHED MAPS PROVIDED BY THE CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION, AND FINDING THE ACTION EXEMPT FROM CEQA."

(ATTACHMENT A)

- 2) Direct the City Clerk submit a copy of this ordinance to the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection within 30 days after adoption and take any necessary and proper actions to post all notices required under California Government Code Section 51179.

BACKGROUND / ANALYSIS:

Since 1982, Fire Hazard Severity Zone (“FHSZ”) maps have been mandated by state legislation, and they emerged because of major destructive fires that prompted the recognition of these areas and strategies to reduce wildfire risks. The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (“Cal Fire”) Office of the State Fire Marshal, which is the state agency responsible for fire prevention, protection, and resource management, is required to classify the severity of fire hazard areas across California communities. The Cal Fire Office of the State Fire Marshall classifies FHSZs into one of the following three classifications: 1) Moderate; 2) High; or 3) Very High.

Cal Fire FHSZ maps are developed using a science-based and field-tested model that assigns a hazard score based on the factors that influence fire likelihood and fire behavior. Many factors are considered such as fire history, existing and potential fuel (natural vegetation), predicted flame length, blowing embers, terrain, and typical fire weather for the area. According to Cal Fire, FHSZ maps evaluate “hazard,” not “risk”. They describe FHSZ maps like flood zone maps, where lands are described in terms of the probability level of a particular area being inundated by floodwaters, and not specifically prescriptive of impacts. Cal Fire defines a “hazard” based on the physical conditions that create a likelihood and expected fire behavior over a 30 to 50-year period without considering mitigation measures such as home hardening, recent wildfire, or fuel reduction efforts. They further describe “risk” as being the potential damage a fire can do to the area under existing conditions, accounting for any modifications such as fuel reduction projects, defensible space, and ignition resistant building construction.

Since April 2024, the Cal Fire Office of the State Fire Marshal has been developing updated maps for local areas and began providing maps to local jurisdictions this year on the following dates: Phase 1 - February 10, 2025; Phase 2 - February 24, 2025; Phase 3

- March 10, 2025; and Phase 4 - March 24, 2025. The City of West Hollywood ("City") FHSZ map was released as part of Phase 4 and Cal Fire published the City's map on March 26, 2025 (refer to ATTACHMENT B).

State law requires local jurisdictions, such as the City, to formally adopt these maps by ordinance to ensure proper implementation of associated building standards and fire safety requirements in identified hazard zones. The proposed ordinance formally adopts the established FHSZ map for the City, as identified by the Cal Fire Office of the State Fire Marshal, and authorizes its use for determining applicable building standards for new construction, implementing defensible space requirements, disclosure requirements for real estate transactions, and emergency planning and fire prevention efforts, among other things. The ordinance further proposes to add a new Section 14.04.060 (Fire Hazard Severity Zones) to Chapter 14.04 (Fire Code Adoption) of Title 14 (Fire Protection) of the West Hollywood Municipal Code to formally incorporate the recommended FHSZ map.

As part of the state-level adoption process of updating the Cal Fire FHSZ maps, the City was required to facilitate a 30-day public comment period. On June 30, 2025, the City issued a press release encouraging community members to review the West Hollywood FHSZ map and provide comments through the City's online platform "Engage WeHo". This 30-day public comment period, which began on July 1, 2025, and ended on July 31 of 2025, allowed community members to provide their feedback on the Cal Fire FHSZ maps. Although the 30-day public comment feedback does not alter or change the FHSZ maps that have been established by Cal Fire for West Hollywood, it did provide community awareness around this important item. During the 30-day public comment period, the City received 19 responses from the community. All of the 19 public comments as well as one additional public comment received after the 30-day public comment period are reflected in ATTACHMENT C.

Staff recommends the City Council accept and implement the updated Cal Fire designated FHSZ maps identified by the Office of the State Fire Marshal for the City. Staff further recommends that the City Clerk submit a copy of this ordinance to the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection within 30 days after adoption and take any necessary and proper actions to post all notices required under California Government Code Section

51179. Staff also attached the Cal Fire “Frequently Asked Questions” sheet about FHSZs as ATTACHMENT D to this report to enhance community awareness.

CONFORMANCE WITH VISION 2020 AND THE GOALS OF THE WEST

HOLLYWOOD GENERAL PLAN:

This item is consistent with the Primary Strategic Goal(s) (PSG) and/or Ongoing Strategic Program(s) (OSP) of:

- PSG-1: Maintain the City’s Unique Urban Balance with Emphasis on Residential Neighborhood Livability.
- OSP-7: Collaborative Public Safety.

In addition, this item is compliant with the following goal(s) of the West Hollywood General Plan:

- SN-7: Utilize law enforcement, fire protection and emergency medical services in a proactive and preventative way.
- SN-8: Provide public safety services in a manner that reflects and is sensitive to the characteristics and needs of the West Hollywood community.

EVALUATION PROCESSES:

Staff will continue to work with the community and the Public Safety Commission to evaluate and make policy recommendations to the City Council regarding public safety resources.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND HEALTH:

Staff will work with relevant community safety vendors and contracted agencies to ensure that resources procured are environmentally friendly whenever possible.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

The Public Safety Commission meets monthly and provides the community an opportunity to provide input on public safety related services.

OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:

COMMUNITY SAFETY DEPARTMENT / PUBLIC SAFETY DIVISION

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact at this time.

ATTACHMENTS:

ATTACHMENT A - Ordinance No. 25-_____

ATTACHMENT B - Cal Fire FHSZ Map Dated March 26, 2025

ATTACHMENT C – 30-Day Community Feedback Comments

ATTACHMENT D – Cal Fire FHSZ FAQs