



Staff Report

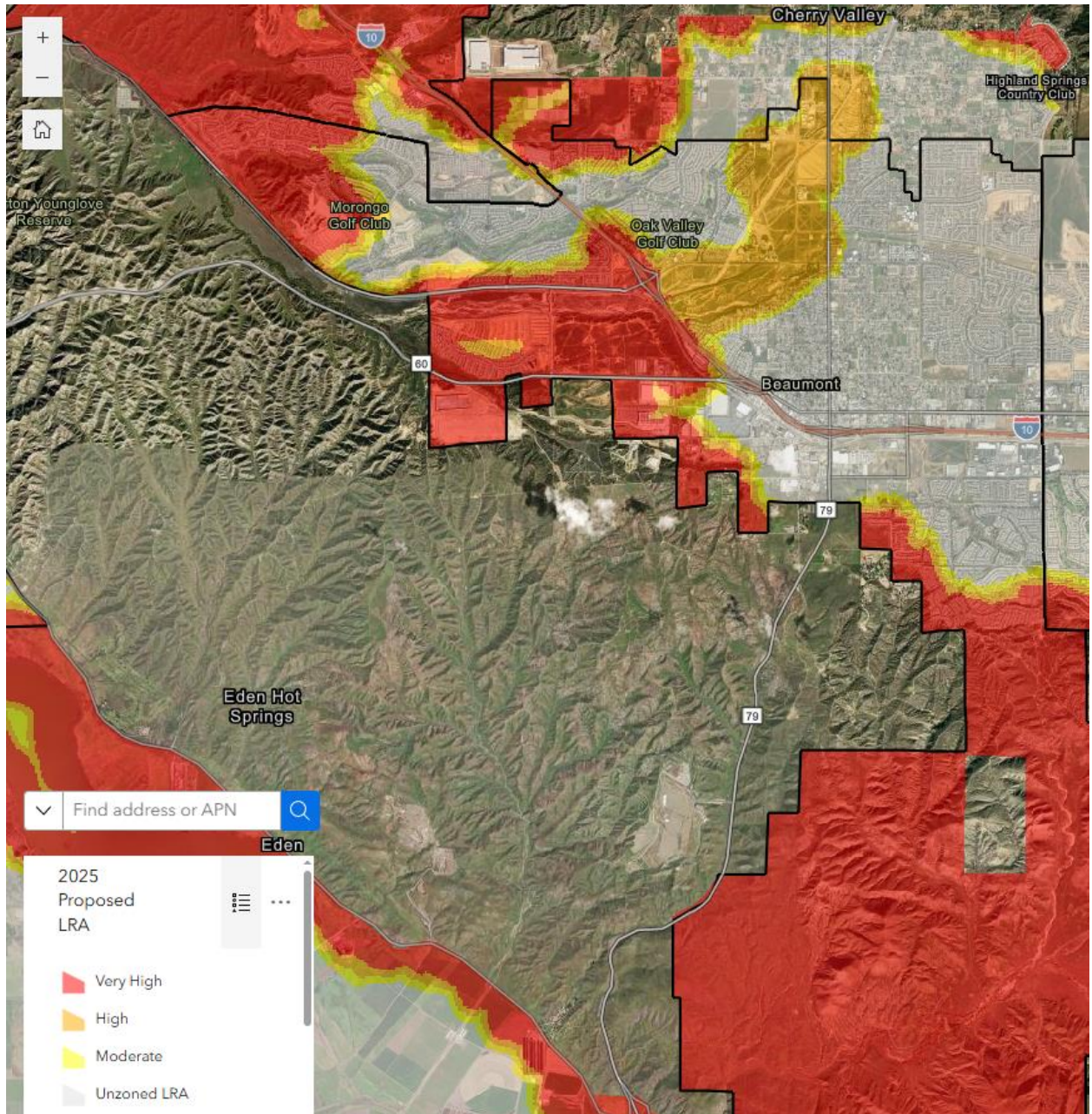
TO: City Council
FROM: Elizabeth Gibbs, City Manager
Darron Usher, Principal Management Analyst
DATE April 15, 2025
SUBJECT: Discussion on the State Fire Marshal's Updated Fire Hazard Severity Zone (FHSZ) Maps for Local Responsibility Areas

Description This report provides an overview of the recent Executive Order (EO) signed by the Governor and the release of updated Fire Hazard Severity Zone (FHSZ) maps for Local Responsibility Areas (LRA) by the Office of the State Fire Marshal. The update significantly expands designated fire hazard zones and includes regulatory implications for the City of Beaumont.

Background and Analysis:

On February 6, 2025, the Governor signed an Executive Order directing the update and distribution of FHSZ maps, which now designate an additional 200 cities across California—bringing the total to 389 cities, including the city of Beaumont.

The updated maps incorporate 1.4 million new acres into the “high” and “very high” fire hazard severity tiers. This reclassification will trigger required changes to local building codes and planning practices to address increased fire risk. Notably, the EO also instructs the State Board of Forestry to expedite the adoption of “Zone 0” regulations, mandating ember-resistant zones within five feet of structures in the very high fire hazard zones. The maps were distributed to the City on March 24, 2025, and a dedicated webpage was launched on April 2 to keep residents informed. The page was also shared widely across our social media platforms on April 4 to reach as many people as possible. The webpage included everything from maps to frequently asked questions, and even a form for the public to submit comments or questions directly to CAL FIRE.



Wildfire Preparedness: Defensible Space Guidelines (Zones 0, 1, and 2)

To reduce the risk of home ignition from wildfires, residents are encouraged to maintain defensible space around their homes through the following three zones:

Zone 0 – Ember-Resistant Zone (0–5 feet from the home):

This is the most critical area to protect against flying embers, which cause the majority of home ignitions during wildfires.

Key actions:

- Use non-combustible hardscape (e.g., gravel, pavers).
- Remove dead plants, debris, and combustible materials from roofs, gutters, decks, and porches.
- Trim tree branches within 10 feet of chimneys or stovepipes.
- Limit flammable items such as furniture and planters.
- Relocate firewood, lumber, and garbage/recycling containers outside this zone.
- Replace combustible fencing or arbors attached to the home.

Zone 1 – Lean, Clean, and Green Zone (5–30 feet from the home):

Creating space and clearing dead vegetation reduces fire intensity near structures.

Key actions:

- Remove dead plants, grass, leaves, and pine needles.
- Trim trees to maintain 10 feet of spacing between branches.
- Space trees and shrubs away from flammable items like furniture and playsets.

Zone 2 – Reduced Fuel Zone (30–100 feet or to property line):

Focus on reducing potential fire fuel and maintaining defensible space as required by Public Resources Code 4291.

Key actions:

- Mow grass to a maximum height of four inches.
- Maintain horizontal and vertical spacing between vegetation.
- Remove excess debris but allow natural materials up to 3 inches deep.
- Maintain 10 feet of clearance around wood piles, outbuildings, and propane tanks.

These actions collectively reduce wildfire risk and help protect homes and structures from ignition.

Fire Hazard Severity Zone Requirements

Per State law, cities are required to follow these statutory steps upon the release of the LRA maps:

1. **Public Review:** Make the maps available for public review and comment within 30 days of the release date.
2. **Local Ordinance Adoption:** Adopt the updated maps by ordinance within 120 days.
3. **State Notification:** Submit the adopted ordinance to the state within 30 days of local adoption.

Additionally, Cal-Fire has created a Frequently Asked Questions which is attached to this staff report to help residents better understand the changes (Attachment C). Below is a link to Riverside County's Fire website, which will provide additional information regarding the updated fire maps, including address specific information for residents.

<https://rvcfire.org/our-departments/fire-marshal/FHSZ-map>

Fiscal Impact:

The cost of preparing this staff report is estimated to be \$400.

There is no immediate fiscal impact associated with this discussion item. However, future fiscal considerations may arise from costs related to ordinance preparation, community outreach, and compliance with "Zone 0" regulations.

Recommended Action:

Receive and file. This item is informational only. A public hearing will be scheduled to adopt an ordinance in accordance with State law.

Attachments:

- A. Executive Order
- B. FHSZ – City of Beaumont
- C. Cal-Fire Frequently Asked Questions