

Wildland Urban Interface Land Use Policy Workshop

--- FOR THE COLORADO FRONT RANGE ---

Friday, 17 May 2013

9:00 am – 4:00 pm

Denver Art Museum

Schlessman Hall (North Bldg), 100 West 14th Ave Pkwy, Denver CO

WORKSHOP SUMMARY REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Workshop hosted by the following collaborative partnership:



Report prepared by:



1 Batterymarch Park, Quincy, MA 02169-7471
Telephone: +1.617.984.7281 Fax: +1.617.984.7010
Email: Foundation@NFPA.org www.NFPA.org/Foundation

July, 2013

© Copyright, Fire Protection Research Foundation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 17 May 2013 approximately six-dozen land use, fire protection, and safety professionals gathered in Denver, Colorado for a unique one day workshop to address land use policy on the wildland urban interface (WUI). This event, aptly titled “*Wildland Urban Interface Land Use Policy Workshop*”, is also referred to herein as the “*WUI Land Use Policy Workshop*”.

The Workshop and this Summary Report represent an effort to proactively address the significant losses in Colorado due to disastrous fires in the wildland urban interface. Speakers, panelists and attendees, representing leadership and policy makers, and wildfire mitigation practitioners for the Colorado WUI, provided thought-provoking perspectives on the problems that collectively confront us, a vision for the future of our WUI, and insight into how best to reduce the risk of wildfire on the Colorado Front Range.

The meeting was held in the Denver Art Museum in Denver, Colorado and provided a unique opportunity for local, regional and national stakeholders to come together to discuss WUI land use policy. This event was hosted and/or supported by a consortium of local, regional and national organizations composed of the following: American Planning Association – Colorado Chapter (APA CO); Colorado Counties Inc (CCI); Consensus Building Institute (CBI); Fire Protection Research Foundation (FPRF); Front Range Roundtable; and National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

Through the presentations and interactive break-out and discussion groups, many ideas emerged as potential areas that Colorado could explore to improve WUI land use policies. These ideas, referred to as recommendations in the report, reflect a spectrum of possible opportunities identified through the workshop. These ideas are not intended to represent the opinions of the individual sponsoring organizations or a consensus view of workshop participants, but they do offer interested readers insight into the ideas discussed and possible avenues for future discussion and possible action. The key recommendations outlined in this report include:

- 1) **Public Education Outreach** – Educate elected officials using recent data; create consistent, clear and easily understood messaging; and better utilize risk models for homeowners.
- 2) **Stakeholder Training/Involvement** – Provide training that promotes and improves dialog between the land planning agencies, fire officials and building officials; and provide training for wildfire mitigation efforts with private entities.
- 3) **Guidelines and Regulations** – Coordinate fire mitigation and non-fire related regulations (such as historic preservation, visibility, flood risk, etc.); enforce regulations over time once implemented; provide regulatory oversight of new subdivisions and developments; and utilize model documents in local jurisdictions such as model WUI building codes.

- 4) **Planning Tools** – Combine land use policy and guiding documents such as comprehensive plans with Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs); use fire hazard risk models that are openly available on-line for homeowners and regularly updated; and provide tax structures with incentives/disincentives for wildfire mitigation activities.

The discussion also yielded certain re-occurring key themes that may help in developing national, state, and local solutions to the most pressing WUI land use issues we face. These include:

- Land use planning is a local issue – one size does not fit all.
- It is important to share lessons learned and current, locally relevant data from recent damaging wildfires.
- Education is key; training is essential.
- There is a need to involve and coordinate stakeholders (including policy makers/government entities) in the discussions.
- There is a need to provide more data and statistics to stakeholders in order to heighten awareness and support changes in behavior.