

# LCI's Fire Hazard Planning Technical Advisory

Presentation to WMAC Land Use Working Group

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# Ascent's Wildfire Services

- Advancing solutions to California's wildfire crisis through regulatory compliance and community planning



- Clients: federal, state, local agencies; NGOs, private entities
  - USFS, BOF, Caltrans, DGS, State Parks, RCDs, Conservancies, Fire Safe Councils, Cities, Counties
  - CalVTP and current update efforts

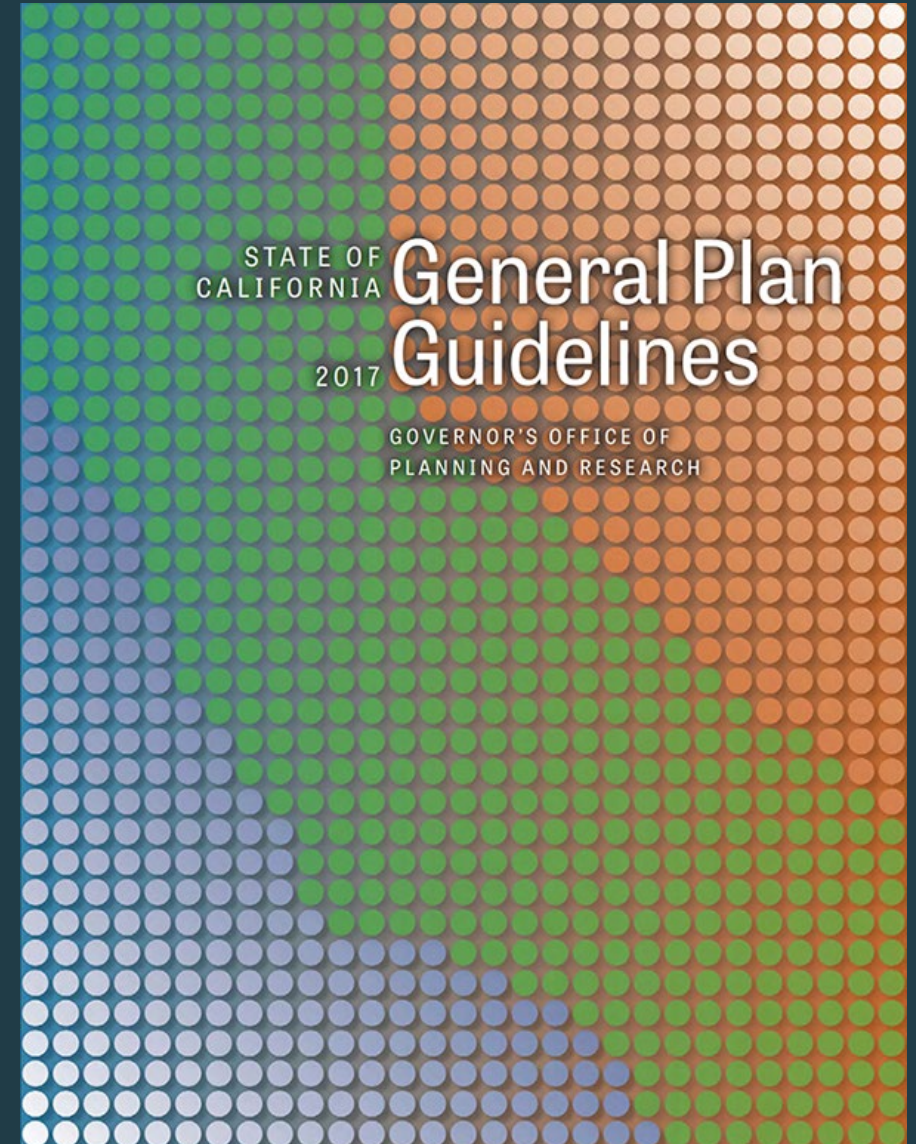


# Overview

- General Plans, Safety Elements, and Wildfire Requirements
- Fire Hazard Technical Advisory (TA) update overview (2019-2022)
- Lessons learned
- Evolution of wildfire resilience planning + considerations for future updates

# What is a General Plan?

- Foundational local land use planning document
  - Required for all CA cities and counties
  - All local plans, codes, and ordinances must be consistent with the general plan.
  - Several required elements (e.g., land use, housing, circulation, safety, open space)
- 2017 General Plan Guidelines
  - LCI update in progress



# Safety Element – Wildfire and Other Hazards



**Primary purpose:** address known hazards and reduce “unreasonable risks” to the community related to land use and development decisions.



**Wildfire-specific requirements** added to safety element via SB 1241 (2012) for all jurisdictions in the SRA or in the Very High FHSZ in the LRA.



**Safety Element Reviews:** Board of Forestry, via CAL FIRE’s Land Use Planning Program, reviews all safety element updates.



**Safety Element Updates:** All safety elements must be updated every 8 years upon the housing element update.



**TA Updates:** LCI is required to update the Fire Hazard TA every 8 years.

# Fire Hazard Planning Technical Advisory

GENERAL PLAN TECHNICAL ADVICE SERIES

2022 Update

Finalized – August 2022



## History of the TA

- Originally published in 2015 to support SB 1241 compliance
- Interagency working group formed to advise OPR's efforts.
  - CAL FIRE
  - CalOES
  - CA Dept of Insurance
  - CNRA
  - CPUC
  - DOJ
  - HCD
- TA update initiated in 2019, pursuant to SB 901 (Dodd, 2018) and AB 2911 (Friedman, 2018) to include "specific land use strategies to reduce fire risk to buildings, infrastructure, and communities" (Gov Code § 65040.21).

# 2022 TA Components

- **Overview of California's Fire Hazards and Risks** – What's the problem?
- **Regulatory and Policy Background** – What's required?
- **Planning Guidance** – What steps should a local agency take to assess and address wildfire hazards and risks in the safety element?
- **Policy Examples** – What specific policies or implementation programs can address known hazards and risks, for new or existing development?
- **Appendices**
  - Case Studies (later expanded by the WUI Best Practices Inventory)
  - Resources Matrix
  - General Plan Safety Element Assessment (BOF)
  - Etc.

# 2022 TA Highlights



## Community Engagement

- Engage early and often
- Reduce the duplication of efforts



## Hazard Identification

- Review the latest wildfire data
- Consider post-fire hazards



## Risk Assessment

- Consider alignment with environmental justice and climate vulnerability efforts



## Cost and Benefit Analysis

- Use a holistic planning approach
- Consider secondary impacts



## Land Use Alternatives Analysis

- Start upstream in the process
- Protect from unreasonable risks



## Policy Development

- Create alignment across elements
- Plan alignment is also encouraged

# Lessons Learned

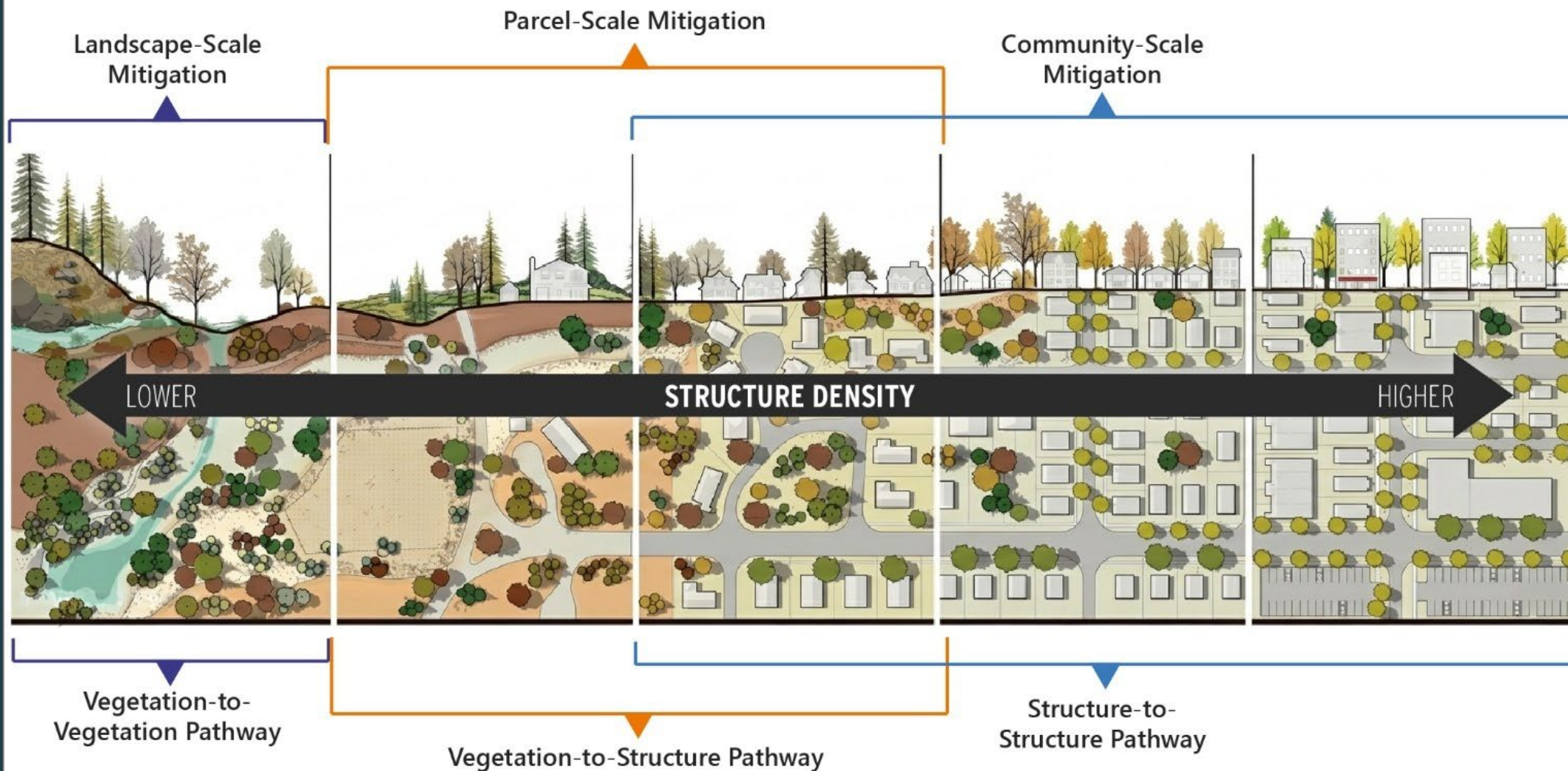
- **Where we build, and how we build, matters**

- Fire behavior, exposure, and susceptibility of people and buildings, need be understood at all scales: parcel → block/neighborhood → community → region. Similarly, risk reduction strategies should be context sensitive.
- Land use and growth management decisions play a role in reducing community risk, in addition to ensuring new development is fire-safe.
- Addressing existing vulnerabilities in already-built communities should be a priority (especially in higher-density WUI and urban settings).

- **Insurance crisis and growing financial risks to communities**

- Insurance availability and affordability challenges are directly tied to growing wildfire risk and other climate-related risks.
- Risk reduction and mitigation are now essential for maintaining insurability and financial solvency.

# SCALES OF MITIGATION

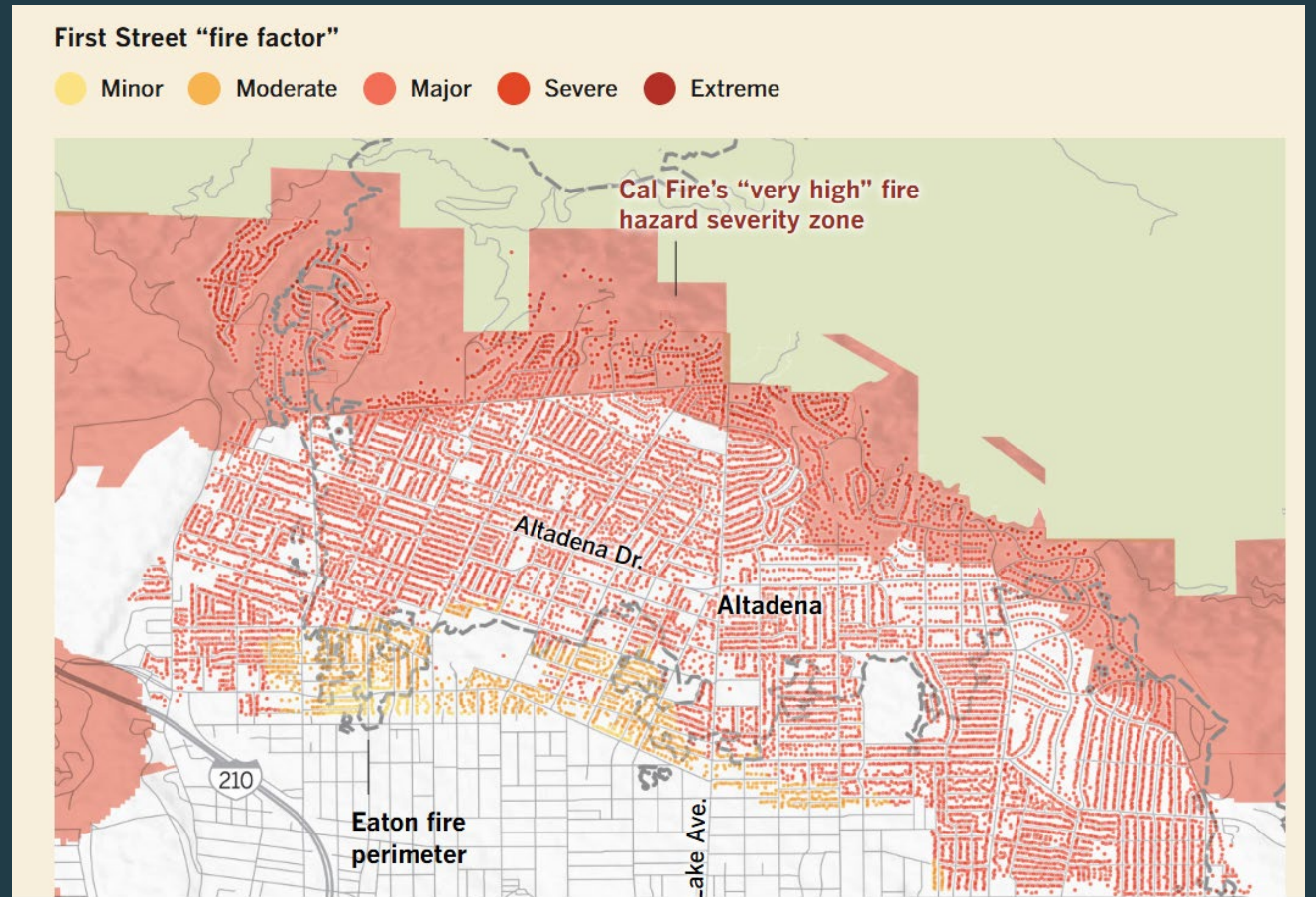


## WUI FIRE PATHWAYS

Source: Base graphic: CWPC and Design Workshop;  
adapted by Ascent

# Lessons Learned (continued)

- **Knowledge gaps and rapid evolution of data, maps, tools**
  - Fire hazard severity zones are still being misinterpreted as “risk maps.” Many at-risk areas are not in a FHSZ (e.g., Altadena, Coffey Park).
  - Emerging datasets, indices, and tools can help planners (e.g., structure exposure, suppression difficulty, conflagration risk, etc.)
- **Evacuation requirements**
  - SB 99, AB 747
  - LCI’s new Draft TA



Source: L.A. Times

# Lessons Learned (continued)

- **Real or perceived policy conflicts**

- Examples: State housing law, housing elements, economic development goals, conservation, open space management, other.
- Understanding tradeoffs and optimizing policy and decision-making is inherently political, takes time, outcomes vary.

- **Plan integration and alignment is key – but also challenging**

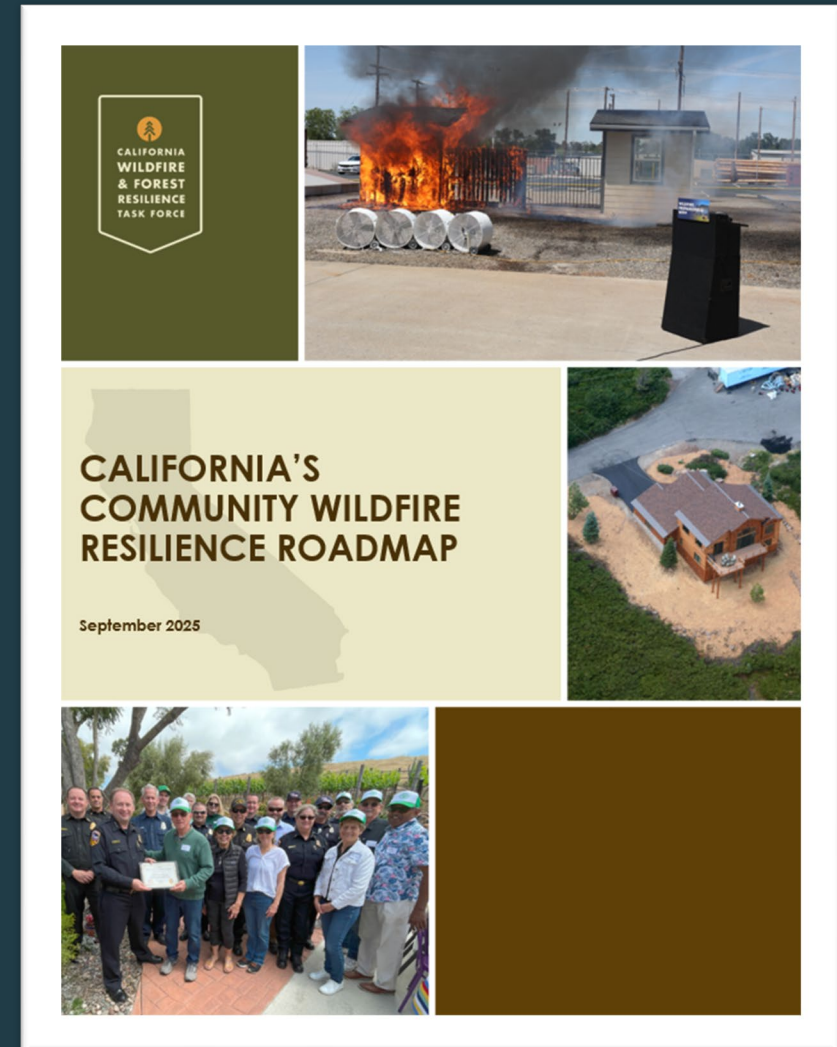
- Safety elements are inherently general and often less detailed than CWPPs or LHMPs, which can be integrated, incorporated into, or directly inform a safety element update.
- LCI's Plan Alignment Tools, CAL FIRE's CWPP Toolkit, and other resources can help to align and "cross-walk" plans.

- **Education and collaboration is crucial to successful planning**

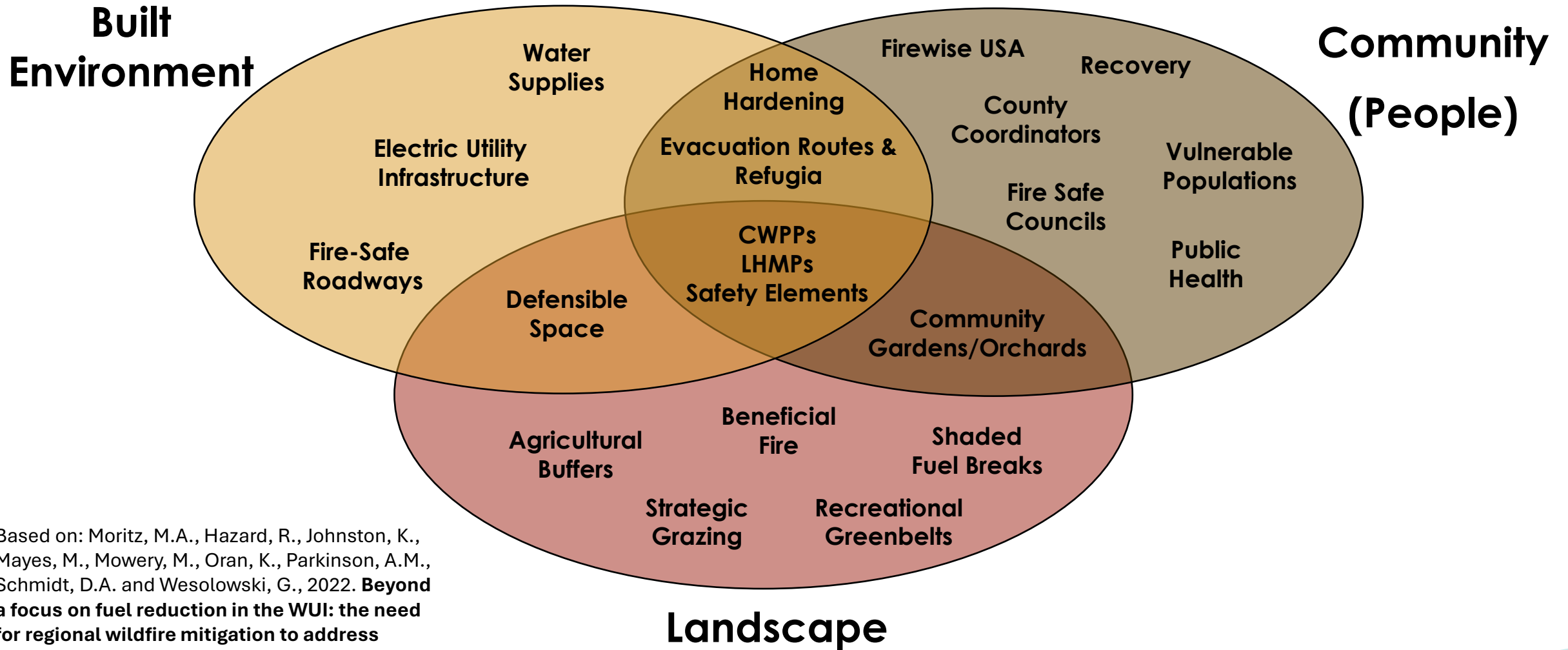
- Planners, building officials, fire professionals, and other actors that interact with land use planners on wildfire issues, may not be on the same page.
- Ongoing training (e.g., CAL FIRE Land Use Trainings) and cross-sector collaboration.

# CA Community Wildfire Resilience Roadmap

- Holistic statewide strategy for community wildfire resilience – prevention, mitigation, response, recovery.
- Informs forthcoming update to *California's Wildfire & Forest Resilience Action Plan* (expecting concurrent publication in 2026).
- A few highlights:
  - Multi-domain approach
  - Land use planning included
  - Data, Tools, Modeling Advancements
  - Workforce and Community Capacity-Building



# Holistic Wildfire Resilience – Three Domains



Based on: Moritz, M.A., Hazard, R., Johnston, K., Mayes, M., Mowery, M., Oran, K., Parkinson, A.M., Schmidt, D.A. and Wesolowski, G., 2022. **Beyond a focus on fuel reduction in the WUI: the need for regional wildfire mitigation to address multiple risks.** *Frontiers in Forests and Global Change*, 5, p.848254.

# State Wildfire Planning Resources

- [LCI Fire Hazard Planning Technical Advisory](#) – GP Safety Elements + Implementation
- [LCI WUI Planning Guide & Best Practices Inventory](#) – Policy + Project-Level Standards
- [LCI Fire and Flood-After-Fire Plan Alignment Guides](#) – How to align CWPPs, General Plans, LHMPs, other plans to reduce risk and strengthen community resilience
- [CAL FIRE California Community Wildfire Protection Plan \(CWPP\) Toolkit](#) – new guidance and best practices for preparing CWPPs
- [CAL FIRE Wildfire Data Explorer](#) – new geospatial wildfire datasets to inform risk analyses
- [CAL FIRE Wildfire Clearinghouse](#) – a big library of wildfire-related resources
- Many others...