

City of Cle Elum
119 West First Street
Cle Elum, WA 98922



Phone: (509) 674-2262
Fax: (509) 674-4097
www.cityofcleelum.com

**Cle Elum Comprehensive Plan
2022 Annual Amendment Process Request #1 “Firewise Amendments”
Public Review Draft
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Introduction

Western or “Upper” Kittitas County, including the City of Cle Elum, is experiencing an increasing threat of catastrophic wildfires as the annual fire season becomes longer and the weather more severe. These conditions, coupled with extensive residential development in the unincorporated areas, the planned growth within the city, the projected growth within Urban Growth Areas, the high and increasing levels of recreational activities within forested areas, and proximity to I-90, make it imperative that the City adopt and actively implement policies to minimize the risk of wildfires to the greatest extent possible. Recent experiences with large fires that had the potential to devastate the entire upper county, as well as the fire scare at the entrance to the city, serve to underscore the urgency of this threat and the very real need to more actively protect our community. The City of Cle Elum realizes that wildfires do not recognize boundary lines or jurisdictional boundaries and as a result, the City and its regional partners share the wildfire risk and the responsibility to mitigate those risks. The City understands the importance of taking proactive steps to reduce wildfire impacts within the city, as well as the surrounding areas and jurisdictions across the broader Upper Kittitas County region.

The City of Cle Elum Planning Commission is now considering the addition of the following Goals and Policies to the Cle Elum Comprehensive Plan:

Potential New Goal: Actively protect the city from the risk of wildfires.

To achieve this Goal, the City of Cle Elum adopts and shall actively implement the following policies:

Potential New Policy 1: The City will actively participate in and support the Kittitas County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) that has been developed and updated through the Kittitas Fire Adapted Communities Coalition and regional partners.

Potential New Policy 2: The Cle Elum Fire Department, in partnership with all other local wildfire fire suppression entities, will continue to support mutual rapid responses to ensure that timely suppression actions are employed.

Potential New Policy 3: *The City hereby adopts the “National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy” (<https://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/strategy/thestrategy.shtml>) to guide local efforts to address the challenges associated with:*

- a. The management of vegetation and fuels for wildfires.*
- b. The protection of lives and property.*
- c. Managing the potential for human-caused ignitions; and*
- d. Effectively and efficiently responding to fires.*

New Policy 4: *The City shall adopt the “2021 International Wildland-Urban Interface Code (IWUIC)” that is within the International Uniform Building Code and provide examples of fire-resistant construction (See <https://codes.iccsafe.org/content/IWUIC2021P1/arrangement-and-format-of-the-2021-iwuic>).*

Potential New Policy 5: *The City, in partnership with the Kittitas County Fire Districts, Kittitas County Departments, the City of Roslyn, and the Town of South Cle Elum (aka “Regional Partners”), will prepare, adopt, and implement consistent development standards focused on minimizing the risk of wildfires. Areas of special emphasis should include, but is not limited to:*

- a. Properties along the I-90 corridor.*
- b. Large parcels under common ownership within the City limits, the Cle Elum UGA, and nearby properties.*
- c. Forested properties.*
- d. Properties that contain environmentally sensitive areas, parks, open space, and required buffer areas.*
- e. Areas identified as high or extreme fire hazard including debris created as a part of land clearing or timber harvest.*

Potential New Policy 6 *The City will apply “firesafe” vegetation management principles to City-owned properties on an ongoing basis. This shall include such measures as:*

- a. Fuels reduction.*
- b. Fire resistive landscaping.*

- c. Vegetation maintenance.*
- d. Implement program to collect biomass from citizens to give a cost-effective way for citizens of the city to eliminate extra biomass.*

Potential New Policy 7: *The City will engage and encourage state and federal agencies, and non-profit organizations that own or manage tracts of forested land to recognize the increasing risk of wildfires and to prepare and implement land stewardship plans that include measures to reduce the risk of wildfires.*

Potential New Policy 8: *The City will require that the owners of forested property suitable for development prepare and implement a stewardship plan focusing on vegetation management that maintains fire resiliency to minimize wildland fire behavior. These plans should include primary and secondary egress, street standards that allow large emergency vehicle access, fire resistant vegetation, including landscaping, tree species selection and density, and greenbelt locations.*

Potential New Policy 9: *The City and its Regional Partners will establish uniform standards for ingress and egress, emergency vehicle access, and evacuation routes as well as shared protocols for timely evacuation notification, traffic control, responder access, and emergency shelter plans for current and future development. This shall include, but is not limited to:*

- a. A requirement that at least two means of effective ingress and egress for emergency vehicles in all seasons and weather conditions, as determined by local Fire Marshals, to include but not limited to load capacity, road grade and width, emergency vehicle turnaround, and street access shall be provided and maintained by Project Sponsors in areas where 30 or more residences exist or can be developed. If an access road is blocked or is otherwise unusable for any reason, there shall be an alternate route for emergency vehicles to access the site and safely return to their stations and for residents to escape. No new developments shall be approved that do not permit emergency vehicle access or the evacuation of residents under any circumstances.*

Potential New Policy 10: *The City, in consultation with its Regional Partners and the Washington State Department of Natural Resources, will develop and implement protocols to ensure that all development activities in and near forested areas are conducted in accordance with Industrial Fire Precaution Levels as determined by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR). This shall include, but is not limited to, compliance with the DNR Handbook on Forest Fire Protection published October 2018, and as may subsequently be amended.*

Potential New Policy 11: *The City in consultation with its Regional Partners, will continue to enforce fireworks bans and open burning rules and restrictions and seek a consistent approach to manage risks associated with those activities.*

Potential New Policy 12: *The City will adopt and implement standards for wildland fire suppression training and certification. First responders should have adequate training, personal protective equipment, and appropriate wildland firefighting equipment to safely engage in any suppression action.*

Potential New Policy 13: *Within one year of the adoption these wildfire policies, City Staff, in consultation with the Firewise Advisory Committee and the City Planning Commission, shall prepare and present for City Council approval:*

- a. Defensible space standards for new developments utilizing the three vegetation management zones of 0-5 feet, 5-30 feet, and 30- 100 feet or the property boundary, with management prescriptions for each zone.*
- b. A requirement that building permits and land use approvals include a condition of approval that property owners shall maintain vegetation in accordance with City standards and shall schedule an inspection by the City Fire Department at least once every five years.*
- c. A plan for the City Fire Department to conduct periodic wildfire risk assessments and to provide property owners with recommendations to maintain their property to be fire resistant along with and fire resistive construction and retrofits to help make the community safer.*