



Sleepy Hollow Fire Protection District Strategic Plan 2017



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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The Sleepy Hollow Fire Protection District (SHFPD) Board of Directors, with input from our Residents, has developed this Strategic Plan to guide the District over the next five years. The strategic planning process provides an opportunity for our Directors and Residents to clarify the District's mission, vision and expectations in order to improve fire safety and emergency preparedness in our District. The plan shall be reviewed and updated annually to assure currency and allow for adaptation to changing circumstances.

The Plan is supported by the analysis and recommendations contained in the 2017 Sleepy Hollow Wildfire Hazard and Wildland Urban Interface Area Assessment and Report. The Goals and Objectives of the Strategic Plan will be achieved over the next 3-5 years through the adoption of a series of work plans approved by the SHFPD Board after consideration of implementation priorities, costs and timelines.

The Sleepy Hollow Fire District has a proud history of ensuring that our community is provided with first rate fire emergency medical and emergency preparedness services delivered by a highly trained and professional staff of career and volunteer firefighters. We are particularly proud of the fact that we have achieved national certification as a Firewise Community. The District looks forward to continued future improvements and successful accomplishments as a result of this planning effort.

Richard Shortall
President

MISSION

The mission of the Sleepy Hollow Fire Protection District is to safeguard our community through the delivery of professional, efficient and effective services protecting life, property and the environment. These services include fire suppression, medical and transportation services, risk and hazard mitigation, disaster preparedness and public education programs. This mission can only be accomplished with support and partnerships with numerous other public and private agencies and entities

VISION

It is our vision to be the most successful California Fire District in providing high quality and cost effective prevention, education and emergency response services.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The following information about the Sleepy Hollow Fire Protection District is provided to help put the strategic plan into context.

Sleepy Hollow Fire Protection District

Area

1610 acres

Number of Occupied Structures

866

Population

2,094 (2010 census)

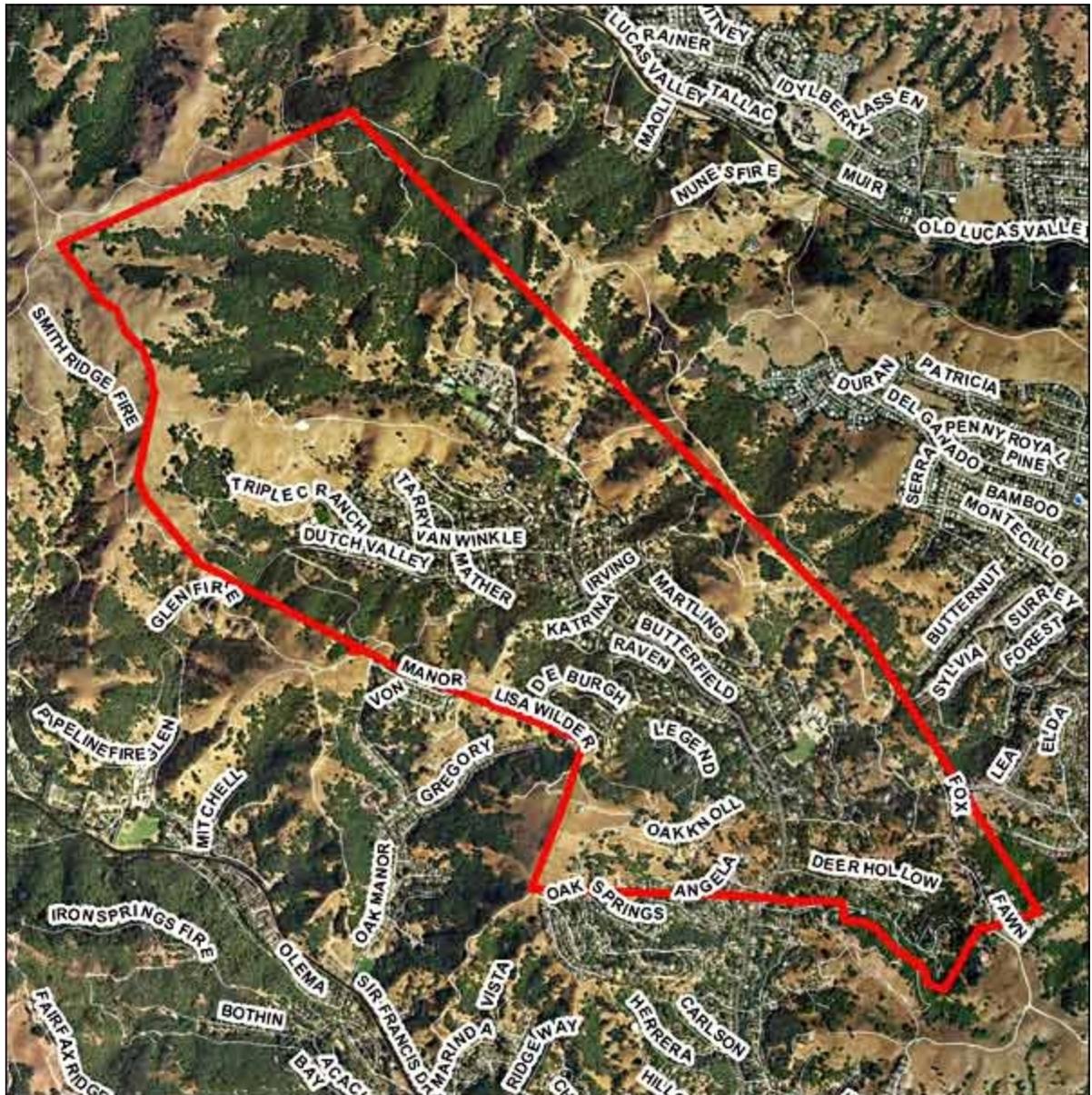
Assessed Value

\$ 1,138,180,834 (2014)

2017 Budget

\$ 1,282,596

Sleepy Hollow Map



STRATEGIC GOALS

On March 11, 2017, the District accepted the Sleepy Hollow Fire Protection District Wildfire Hazard and Wildland Urban Interface Area Assessment and Report. The analysis and recommendations contained in this report are the supporting documentation for the following 7 strategic goals:

1. Develop and implement vegetation management projects to reduce the fuel supply and the potential for conflagration in Sleepy Hollow.
2. Adopt best practices Codes, Standards and Local Ordinances to support our wildfire mitigation efforts.
3. Develop and implement a wildfire outreach and education program.
4. Develop and implement an all-hazards evacuation plan including annual functional exercises of the plan.
5. Develop and implement programs to reduce structural ignitability.
6. Support all-hazard citizen preparedness programs such as Alert Marin, Ready Marin and Citizens Emergency Response Teams.
7. Ensure the District's sustainability through prudent fiscal management, development of new revenue programs including grants, and maintenance of adequate budget reserves.

Strategic Initiative 1: Vegetation Management

Goal:

Develop vegetation management projects that reduce the fuel supply and potential for conflagration in Sleepy Hollow.

Description:

The community of Sleepy Hollow exists in a wildland-urban interface zone defined as the area where structures and other human development meet or intermingle with undeveloped wildland. The wildland-urban interface zone creates an environment in which fire can move readily between structural and vegetation fuels. Its expansion has increased the likelihood that wildfires will threaten structures and people.

Firesafe Marin, a non-profit organization dedicated to reducing wildland Fire hazard and improving Fire-safety awareness in Marin recommends creating a base around your home that will give firefighters a fighting chance against fire. It means clearing all dry grass, brush and dead leaves at least 30 feet from your home, at least 150 feet if you're on a hill and at least 200 feet for boundary properties. It is the goal of the Sleepy Hollow Fire Protection District to ensure that all homes in the district are in compliance with Firesafe Marin's recommendations for creating a fire safe environment and reducing the risk of conflagration.

The District, with the support of the Ross Valley Fire Department, intends to provide funding for Marin County Fire Department personnel to inspect each parcel in the District to identify fire hazards and provide information to assist homeowners in vegetation removal. The District will also work with the Marin County Open Space District and the owners of large parcels like San Domenico School and Triple C Ranch to create and/or maintain major ridge-top fire breaks. We will also work with Marin County Public Works and private property owners to maintain safe clearance on roadways for evacuation and emergency response.

The District plans to explore ideas to provide some financial assistance for homeowners who remove major hazards. We will also consider working with a few homeowners to create fire safe landscape demonstration projects. The District will continue to fund our annual Chipper Program.

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

OBJECTIVES

1. Maintain Firewise Community certification
2. Conduct hazard inspections of individual parcels
3. Conduct hazard inspections of roadways and common areas
4. Improve defensible space around all structures
5. Create and maintain fuel breaks (Open Space, Large Parcels)
6. Maintain roadway clearance
7. Conduct several community chipper days each year
8. Provide financial incentive for removal of specific hazard species
9. Provide financial incentive for hazard tree removal
10. Support demonstration projects showing appeal of fire safe landscaping

Strategic Initiative 2: Codes and Standards

Goal:

Adopt best practice Codes, Standards and Local Ordinances to support our wildfire mitigation efforts.

Description:

The Sleepy Hollow Fire District has adopted the most current codes and standards that address hazard mitigation and wildfire preparedness. The District will continue to work with the Ross Valley Fire Department to ensure that our codes are up to date.

In addition, the District will consider adoption of local ordinances that further enhance our safety. One example is the resale inspection ordinance that is utilized in other Ross Valley jurisdictions. Resale inspections are vegetation hazard inspections that occur whenever a property is sold. The sale cannot be finalized until the property is determined to be compliant with defensible space standards. Another ordinance to consider involves removing juniper bushes, a highly flammable ornamental shrub. 20-25% of Sleepy Hollow homes have juniper landscaping. After the death of a Marin firefighter in 2003 due to his proximity to juniper bushes during a fire, the City of San Rafael adopted an ordinance requiring juniper and bamboo (also highly flammable) to be removed or retained only under special provisions. The District would explore the creation of financial incentives for homeowners if such an ordinance was adopted.

CODES AND STANDARDS

OBJECTIVES

1. Maintain up to date codes and standards as recommended by RVFD
2. Adopt requirement for resale inspections
3. Consider adoption of local ordinances for removal of hazard species
4. Consider adoption of local ordinances encouraging fire resistant building materials

Strategic Initiative 3: Wildfire Outreach and Education

Goal:

Develop and implement a wildfire outreach and education program.

Description:

It has long been a goal of the District to provide information and education that helps prepare our residents for wildfire and other major hazards. We plan to continue to update and mail to each resident the “Living With Fire” booklet every two years. We also plan to distribute a pamphlet focusing on evacuation and all-hazard preparedness in the intervening years. Our website will be updated to include local Marin Firewise safety recommendations and we are planning to publish a regular newsletter. Last year we provided classroom training on identification of wildfire hazards and installation of fire-safe landscaping. We plan to continue and expand this type of training.

WILDFIRE OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

OBJECTIVES

1. Print and mail updated “Living With Fire” document in odd years
2. Print and mail Evacuation/All-Hazard Pamphlet in even years
3. Expand SHFPD website to include local Firewise Marin recommendations
4. Publish newsletter with recommendations and project updates
5. Provide classroom training related to fire safe landscaping and other fire safety curriculum

Strategic Initiative 4: Evacuation

Goal:

Develop and implement an all-hazards evacuation plan including annual functional exercises of the plan.

Description:

“One road in, one road out” is a reasonably accurate description of Sleepy Hollow. Fortunately for us, Butterfield and several major trunk roads such as Van Winkle are relatively wide roads by Ross Valley standards. Rapid and timely evacuation increases the safety of evacuees, reduces involvement of suppression personnel in evacuation efforts, and allows firefighting resources to get to the fire. Most residents will evacuate by vehicle, but in some instances sheltering in place rather than evacuating on car or foot is preferred.

The District will develop an evacuation plan and distribute a pamphlet to each resident every other year that includes evacuation guidance, identified safety zones and maps. The evacuation plan will also address large and small animal evacuation. The District intends to work with Marin County Public Works to place evacuation signs and identify and rectify roadway clearance issues. The District will aggressively promote the “Alert Marin” and “Ready, Set, Go!” programs. The District will consider installation of a modern Evacuation/Disaster Siren/Horn and will advocate for improved cellular communications. Perhaps most importantly, the District will conduct an annual Evacuation Drill targeting a different area in the District each year.

Many of our residents have raised concerns regarding the use of fire roads for evacuation. The Sleepy Hollow Wildfire Hazard and Wildland Urban Interface Area Assessment and Report includes a comprehensive analysis of our network of fire roads. Based on this analysis of fire road locations, modeling of potential flame lengths and the recommendations of the Ross Valley Fire Department, there are no likely wildfire scenarios where self evacuation by residents via unpaved fire roads would be safer than evacuation via paved surface roads to Butterfield Road and then on to Sir Francis Drake Blvd. It is an objective of the District to ensure that residents are properly informed about this issue.

EVACUATION

OBJECTIVES

1. Create evacuation pamphlet with guidelines and map (includes guidance for animal evacuation)
2. Post evacuation/escape route signage
3. Support designation of safe on-street parking areas
4. Designate safety/assembly zones
5. Conduct annual evacuation drill
6. Consider installation of evacuation/alert siren/horn
7. Sponsor Ready, Set, Go! Program
8. Promote “Alert Marin”
9. Advocate for improved cellular communications

Strategic Initiative 5: Reduce Structural Ignitability

Goal:

Develop and implement programs to reduce structural ignitability

Description:

Reducing structural ignition is the highest priority when considering mitigation strategies to reduce the likelihood of urban conflagration. During wildfires, home destruction results primarily from firebrand ignitions and building to building flame spread rather than direct contact with forest and shrubs. Fire resistant building materials are extremely effective at reducing these structural ignitions.

The California Building Code Chapter 7A addresses the wildland fire threat to structures by requiring fire resistant building materials and construction techniques in new construction. One of the biggest hazards in older construction is flammable roofing. Approximately 3-5% of homes in Sleepy Hollow still have combustible wood roofing. Another hazard is unscreened attic vents which can allow firebrand entry. It is the intention of the District to encourage use of fire resistant building materials both through code adoption and financial incentives. To assist in these efforts the District will create a parcel inspection data base that catalogs these hazards.

REDUCE STRUCTURAL IGNITABILITY

OBJECTIVES

1. Create parcel inspection data base
2. Encourage fire resistant materials and design standards
3. Provide financial incentive to replace wood shingle roofing
4. Provide financial incentive for compliance with sprinkler ordinance

Strategic Initiative 6: Citizen Preparedness

Goal:

Support all-hazard citizen preparedness programs such as Alert Marin, Ready Marin and Citizens Emergency Response Team

Description:

Although wildfire is our major risk, additional hazards exist with potential life-safety and infrastructure risks. These include: floods, earthquakes, weather related emergencies, sustained power outages, and public health emergencies. The District will support all-hazard community preparedness and training programs including classroom instruction.

The Get Ready Marin training will teach you what to do before, during and after a disaster and help you plan for an emergency with a family plan, evacuation checklist, and strategies to keep your family safe.

The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training is a national program to train citizens to help fill the gap between a disaster or emergency, and the arrival of professional services. After completing the course, CERTs will be able to provide immediate assistance to handle small fires, turn off utilities, give basic first aid, perform light search and rescue, and collect information to provide arriving professional first responders.

The American Red Cross Shelter Fundamentals class introduces guidelines and procedures for setting up, running and closing a shelter during a disaster.

CITIZEN PREPAREDNESS

OBJECTIVES

1. Conduct citizen preparedness all-hazard classroom training
2. Support Get Ready Marin program
3. Support formation of Citizen Emergency Response Team
4. Support Red Cross shelter training and similar programs

Strategic Initiative 7: Financial Stability

Goal:

Ensure the District's sustainability through prudent fiscal management, development of new revenue programs such as grants, and maintenance of adequate budget reserves.

Each year, the District is audited by an outside party and its financial status and fiscal management policies are reviewed and recommendations are made for improvements if needed. The District has always adopted these recommendations and will continue to do so.

As we have seen, financial problems at the State level as well as a depressed real estate market can have a negative impact on our income. Since it is not possible to accurately forecast all economic eventualities, it is important for the District to maintain a healthy reserve to ensure that it can meet its operational expenses, fund its strategic plan goals, and be prepared for potential liabilities related to pension obligations or unforeseen circumstances. The District is committed to prudently managing our revenues, reserves and timely investments to retain and recruit a professional and competent workforce and to maintain and upgrade District facilities and equipment.

The vast majority of the District's revenue comes from property taxes which are determined by agreements made subsequent to Proposition 13. The District receives 17% of the revenue collected through the annual property tax parcel assessment. This has proved to be a very stable revenue source which has grown on average in excess of 5% over many years. Over the last two years, the District has also applied for and received several vegetation management grants. The District is determined to aggressively pursue new grant funding sources, particularly a share of grants from the State Responsibility Area fee.

FINANCIAL STABILITY

OBJECTIVES

1. Continue to implement all recommendations in the annual audit for improving fiscal accountability and management.
2. Maintain a prudent fiscal reserves to fund operational expenses, strategic plan initiatives and potential pension or other liabilities.
3. Aggressively seek additional non tax revenues such as grants.
4. Ensure sufficient revenue and reserves to retain and recruit a professional and competent workforce.
5. Employ prudent fiscal management and timely investing to maintain and upgrade District facilities and equipment.