City of Phoenix
Heart of the Rogue Valley

Staff Report
to Planning Commission

Agenda Item Title: Wildfire Hazard Mitigation Code update

Meeting Date: November 9, 2026

From: Jeff Wilcox, Senior Planner

Action: Public Hearing

SUMMARY
The City is preparing an update to the Land Development Code aimed at addressing and mitigating Wildfire Hazards at time of site development/redevelopment.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION
In 2025, City of Phoenix requested help from Headwaters Economics to conduct a Wildfire Audit to evaluate the city's existing plans and regulations for their effectiveness in reducing wildfire risk, especially in light of the extensive damage from the 2020 Alameda Fire and the city's ongoing vulnerability to future wildfires. The audit serves to identify strengths, gaps, and opportunities within Phoenix's municipal codes, particularly regarding wildfire-resilient building materials, landscaping, subdivision standards, and protection of historic structures. Ultimately, the assessment had 3 core recommendations:

1. Establish a wildfire resistant landscaping ordinance that applies to all parcels in the city limits.
2. Amend land use regulations to reduce wildfire risk to structures, which would include adopting "structure-hardening" measures.
3. Adapt historic preservation standards to reduce wildfire risk to historic structures.

In Spring 2026, the Planning Commission heard from Headwaters Economics consultant Ryan Handy, Fire Chief Aaron Bustard, and City Building Official Cliff Pettigrew to further inform next steps, and reviewed sample 'Defensible Space' code from Fire Chief Hussey as well as Noxious Vegetation and Wildfire Land Development Standards from City of Ashland. During this time, the City also collected comment from the community regarding the general topic of Wildfire Hazard Mitigation during the Heart of Phoenix Community Development Fair.

In Summer 2026, the Planning Commission reviewed Draft Code established by City of Ashland as well as newer Model Defensible Space code recommended by Chief Hussey of Fire District #3. The Commission made recommended changes to Staff, including:

- Changing the scope at which these rules are applied to new development and
- Clarifying roles for inspection/implementation.

Because staff has received comment in support of the Model Defensible Space Code from Fire District and Consultants as well as a desire for defensible space code from the public. Staff has incorporated the Model Defensible Space Code into the redline Chapter 3.3 document shown in EXHIBIT B. The Planning Commission will be the recommending body to the City Council on this matter.

RECOMMENDATION
A Planning Commission motion to recommend to City Council approval of application # DC26-01 as presented by staff.

PROPOSED MOTION
I move to recommend approval of application number DC26-01 for a legislative text amendment

to the Phoenix Land Development Code, amending Section 3.2.3(B), Chapter 3.3 and Section 4.2.5(B) with provisions for Defensible Space as presented by staff.

ATTACHMENTS
EXHIBIT A – Proposed Final Order
EXHIBIT B – Proposed Draft Code
EXHIBIT C – Comments