Webinar

Wildfire Resilience: Best Practices in Real Estate and Land Use

Date: October 30, 2020

00:00:04 --> 00:00:08: Good morning and good afternoon everyone and welcome to today's
00:00:08 --> 00:00:13: Eulalie Wildfire resilience and real Estate Webinar will give folks
00:00:13 --> 00:00:16: a few minutes as we know that many people are coming
00:00:16 --> 00:00:20: from zoom meetings, but we're really excited about today's panel
00:00:20 --> 00:00:21: discussion.
00:00:31 --> 00:00:34: Alright, we'll go ahead and get started with some of the introductions.
00:00:34 --> 00:00:35: My name is Jose Bodipo member.
00:00:35 --> 00:00:39: I am the chair for you lies Sacramento,
00:00:39 --> 00:00:42: this District Council and the Director of Sustainable Communities for
00:00:42 --> 00:00:45: the Sacramento Municipal Utility District and happy to be the moderator for today's discussion.
00:00:47 --> 00:00:51: Really important discussion about wildfire resilience in real estate.
00:00:51 --> 00:00:52: We go to the next slide,
00:00:52 --> 00:00:52: please.
00:00:55 --> 00:00:57: Again, the format will be 60 minute.
00:00:57 --> 00:01:00: Conversation is presented by the Urban Land Institute and for those of you who are new to you,
00:01:00 --> 00:01:02: a lie in the Urban Institute programming again,
00:01:05 --> 00:01:07: our goal and mission is really to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and creating a sustained,
00:01:10 --> 00:01:14: thriving communities worldwide. And as we discussed this issue right now,
this very pertinent as release wildfires again,
you allies taking a lead role in that process.
Next slide, please.
Again, this is brought to you by utilizing resilience program.
Again, the Urban Resilience Program has been a leader in
brain great minds together in strategizing for buildings,
communities, cities. They sure, resiliency.
If you haven't had the opportunity to participate in some
of the formal recently programs and conferences,
please reach out at the resilience at uli.org.
Next slide, please.
And today a new report specifically related to the issue.
We're discussing firebreak wildfire resilience strategies for
real estate is
being published again.
This details implications of wildfires for real estate industry
and
explores best practices in building design and land use policy
that can reduce damage caused by wildfires and help set
communities to thrive in the long run.
This report feels includes information from real estate
developers,
planners, public leaders. And really,
folks who are aware of all the drivers that are
causing these increased wildfires and talk about the
consequences of
poor planning and some of the benefits of positive planning
as part of this effort.
So please take a look at this document at uli.org/wildfires.
Again, really excited that releases today as the need is
present.
Next slide, please.
And so now to the formal presentation.
We have a very esteemed group of experts to talk
about.
Wildfire resilience is really surreal.
State. Our first speaker will be Molly,
Mallory, executive director of the Community Wildfire
Planning Center.
Molly has served in that role is a nonprofit organization
dedicated to helping communities prepare for an app to recover
from wildfire events.

Molly is headquartered in Colorado, but is doing work all throughout the United States, so we’re really lucky to have Molly today.

Our second panelists will be Justice Jones. Justice is the wildfire mitigation officer for the Austin Fire Department,

so Justice has two bachelors degrees from University of Texas and Environmental Resource Management and Cultural Anthropology and Justice.

Again is at the front lines of this conversation serving as a wildfire mitigation officer and leading efforts to enhance the city of Austin's resiliency to impacts of wildfire.

In our last presenter today will be Larry Florence, the CEO, Burbank Housing. Larry brings over 30 years of expertise and experience in real estate and community economic development.

Larry is headquartered in California and has served as the Director of Housing Intergovernmental Affairs for Napa County and is a developer who's really in the throes of of the current wildfire issues facing the state of California, particularly North Bay or really lucky to have Larry and his expertise as a part of today's panel.

So we go to the next slide please, just to kind of set the tone for our conversation today.

You know, as most of you know we are in the throes of a recent wildfire epidemic here, and some of the stats on the screen can show, you know, from 2010 till present. Increase in acreage is impacted by awhile.

Wildfires is been significant as a native of Sacramento and growing up in that area. I've been personally impacted in directly, indirectly and directly affected by these wildfires.

The air quality effects as well as property effects his hit my family members directly.

So as was more crisis is we were able to
actually thrive through these through smart planning, preventative work, and we have some experts here. Who can help better lay the framework for this conversation? And so without further ado, I'd like to start off with our first panelist, Miss Molly Mallory, Executive director for the Meanwhile, for playing center and and she will provide some context about wildfire resilience in the best practices that she's experienced in there.

In her role there. Thank you, Molly. Thanks so much Jose, can you hear me can hear you great great well good afternoon everyone it is such a pleasure to be here. I really appreciate the opportunity that you all I created with this webinar to highlight what is obviously such a timely and important topic and also excellent job on the Resilience report which I had a sneak peak of earlier this week and highly recommend all of you to check out.

So with so many overwhelming headlines on wildfires devastation, I think it can be easy to. Lose sight of some of the progress that is actually being made, especially when it comes to land use planning and other related activities. And when I’m referring to land use planning in this context, I'm referring more to the strategic and intentional application of strategies that make development more resilient to wildfire, and this can take many forms, regulations, policies, voluntary programs. So I wanted to give you just a snapshot of what some of these efforts look like around the country, and I know the other speakers will. Also share some examples during their presentations. So next slide please.
So one of the most effective strategies that we see in terms of effective land use planning is really when the state takes a leadership role in developing frameworks for their statewide codes. Excuse me in other planning requirements.

So for example, we do a lot of work in California and all the cities and counties in California are required by state law to adopt a general plan which has a requirement to address hazards including wildfire. And this isn't simply adding policies that you acknowledge Fire is a challenge, but these are really robust requirements to assess the hazard and its potential impacts on community safety.

Avoiding or minimizing wildfire hazards associated with new uses of land, locating essential public facilities outside of high fire risk areas, and other policies that really ensure that communities are strategically thinking about this.

The state also has a minimum set of land use planning regulations, which are called the Fire Safe Regulations and those have been in effect since 1991.

These apply to residential, commercial and industrial building construction in designated areas across the state. They address road widths, grades, water supply, vegetation management and to support all of this, the state has instituted a land use planning program within the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection to provide that additional capacity and support across the state.

Other states, Oregon and Montana, for example, offer model. We are building codes where we meeting Wildland urban interface or building codes that can be adopted at the local level.

Those are not currently required to the degree they are
We also see other states such as Washington or Florida have requirements to address hazards in their comprehensive plans. And yes, Florida does have wildfires, so this is not just a Western issue.

Justice will speak to that during his presentation, so there’s a lot more complexities that I can’t get into today, just in terms of the time. But I think the key point here is that state requirements or guidance really sets up that consistent baseline for local jurisdictions to follow.

Next slide, please.

So Speaking of the local level, we also see successful outcomes when communities either take state or model codes and then beef them up at the local level, or adopt new measures on their own. So one example of how a community might go above and beyond is with fencing an often this is an unregulated part of the code for wildfire purposes, but it is a significant vulnerability to a home during a wildfire event, particularly with wooden fences that are attached to a home which can act as a Wick carrying fire from a yard to the house. Although it’s not just wooden fences that can burn like the example on the left, here’s an example on the right from a different property with vinyl fence that melted in the Woolsey Fire in Southern California.

So communities can adopt A host of these measures, such as other measures, in addition to just fencing. But implementing noncombustible zones around a structure having extra requirements for decks or creating allowable plant species or prohibited
plant

species, and many of these strategies are meant to address areas, particularly where embers can land, so these measures often are adopted in a development code or a zoning code or subdivision regulations. Sometimes we even see these in a nuisance. 

Portion of the code, depending on what the provisions are, a few great examples of you know codes local codes that have gone above and beyond the Ashland OR and Summit County, Colorado, and I know I think justice will highlight in his example what Austin is doing. 

Next. Slide please.

So we also know that there are definitely aspects of the built environment that are more difficult to address through regulation in terms of what has already been developed. Or maybe it's not appropriate to regulate that. To address existing development that may have been built prior to a code, many local, state or local or state governments or other national organizations have begun developing programs that incentivize voluntary actions ideally too. Retrofit a property and and strengthen its resilience to wildfire. 

So I just wanted to highlight a voluntary property assessment program called Real Fire, which began in Colorado several years ago, is a collaboration between Eagle County, the Veil Board of Realtors, and our organization that Community welfare planning center and real fire is a voluntary program that provides parcel level property assessments to homeowners so the counties mitigation specialists in this case it's. Eric Lovegreen feature here. In these photos, Eric will go out and conduct these assessments with the homeowner on site and then that assessment gets emailed back to a homeowner in the form of
a customized mitigation report. And this information is tracked to see what kind of mitigation activities a homeowner performs and ultimately a home can receive a certificate if they successfully achieve all of their mitigation. So this program started because the Realtors available Realtors wanted to become more engaged.

In outreach efforts, and we’re particularly interested in the voluntary aspect of this program, and you know, we’ve started to see successes both in Eagle County and in a similar program in Boulder County called Wildfire Partners, where homeowners have achieved their mitigation, they’ve earned their certificates, and they’ve voluntarily shared these certificates with insurers to either receive discounts in their premiums or continued coverage.

So there really leveraging the hard work that they’re doing and.

So I just add, it’s a very comprehensive approach to mitigation.

It's not you know. It also goes above and beyond the next slide please.

So the big picture question that I always get especially from reporters is well is it enough are we are, we doing enough and what else could be done and I think for the question isn't enough.

The answer is always well.

Yes, and no this is Molly is very crude and unscientific chart of trends that I wanted to just quickly share.

I think it helps express my my thoughts on this so development has been occurring for centuries. And we've been expanding into fire prone areas relatively unchecked for many many decades.

And fire suppression has been trying to keep pace with development,
especially as the need increases. But fire suppression activities have also been reshaping our landscapes. I think it was the fire historian Stephen Pyne who said something to the effect of fire put out today is essentially just a fire postponed tomorrow. So we're trying our best. But we still have these. You know parallel tracks that are going up and then we also know now that the climate is changing it even faster than what scientists had predicted. And this is, I suppose, what alarms me the most is when I hear a scientist being interview and they say yeah, our trends are what's happening now is actually surpassing what their predictions were for 2020. This picture, by the way, is from the East troublesome fire that I took outside my office window. It was burning here in Colorado last week after an extreme drought and unseasonably warm temperatures extending into late October. And it. Now to me, just really encapsulates the these trends. So along the way, you know very scattered there's a little tiny star around the 1920s when there was a significant fire in the LA area, and there were some, but there's some small outcomes that came from that in terms of reshaping our relationship to the built environment, at least very local. Again in the 1950s and 60s. Really interesting research that came out from the National Fire Protection Association again in LA County. Looking at, you know what some of the ways were to better design. Communities, but I would, I would argue or I would suggest that you know we really haven't gotten serious about land use, planning tools and related activities until the past few decades.
And Meanwhile we've had decades and decades of development occurring.
And now we're trying to catch up.
And that's ultimately the conundrum is this, you know, planning takes time.
A comprehensive approach is required to get ourselves out of this.
But the question is, you know, do we have the luxury of time, which opens up a different set of questions on how we simultaneously mitigate the existing threat plan for the future and adapt to both of these situations.
So I'll leave that discussion for our next speakers and I'm happy to share some additional resources in the chat and answer any questions.
Thank you so much, Molly again to all the attendees.
If you have questions for Molly, please put them in the chat.
Again, we'll do our best to feel this many audience questions as possible.
I do have one follow up just to get us started by before we go to our next presenter.
Again. Given the context of Kobe 19, the Kobe 19 pandemic, how has that impacted some of the planning trends and impacts on land used as it relates to wildfire?
And as approaches change at all, yeah, that's an intriguing question, Jose. We've actually been starting to do a little research on that, or trying to do some research on it for an upcoming report that will be publishing, but so far we're finding conflicting research, you know, and I don't even know if we call it research yet, but it's more some educated opinion pieces and various, you know, newspaper journals or other other communications where we've been able to see some.
Maybe very localized short term trends.
I think there's been some anecdotal information about.
You know people fleeing the very urban areas and moving
to the hillsides of Montana for example.
But we haven't even been through winter yet,
so you know, we've seen here in Colorado,
you know, there's always a desire to move somewhere when
it's sunny and warm,
and but during the hard winters people might also get
a reality check.
So I think once we we have to go through
a full cycle of.
Where we really, you know,
a full year I should say to really see if
some of these trends are sticking and then what the
longer term implications are.
You know I'm personally intrigued as a as a land
use planner.
I'm intrigued with, for example,
and we just.
Have we just facilitated a faster approach to where we
would have gotten in the next 10 years with changing
commuter habits?
For example. So definitely the jury still out,
but it's a great question that I think will want
to track in terms of its implication for can,
potential sprawl and potential wildland urban interface
expansion.
Really, again anxiously awaiting some of the additional
research,
but I appreciate that feedback I see in the comments
or some feedback about what's happening in Texas.
And actually it's a great segue to our next presenter,
Justice Jones, who is coming to us live from Austin,
Texas. So justice love to hear about the strategy you're
employing in Austin.
Yeah, thank you. I'm very excited to be here and
Molly is a tough act to follow that is really
great information.
So thank you for sharing that.
Just echo mollies, encourage everybody to read the
wonderful report

that UL I generated a lot of great comprehensive information
to share with your peers and read about yourself.

So thank you for all the great work you're doing,
including us in this effort.

Thought I'd start with a little bit of history and
background on the Austin area an our efforts.

In the event you may not be familiar with our
community,
the City of Boston proper has a population hovering right
around 1,000,000 and in Travis County were situated.

We're looking at about overall population of 2 million
residents
within the city.

We have about 400,000 single family residence.

I'm in about 120 folks moving to Austin Area Day,
so we're experiencing some. You high velocity change and
growth
in our community.

During 2011, Texas experienced its worst historic wildfire in
the
states history and the worst of those fires occur just
a stones throw away from Austin.

The Bastrop Complex fire, which you can see in the
background of this photo.

Where I'm destroyed over 1600 homes in a very short
period of time really was the wake up call for
the City of Austin and Texas as a whole to
the reality of emerging threat of wildfire.

Following that fire, the city took heed and worked with
fire Department leadership to establish a wildfire division
dedicated to
enhancing the resiliency of Austin to the impacts of wildfire.

And one of our first steps in that effort was
to bring our peers and stakeholders together and develop a
plan that was modeled after the national cohesive Wildfire
strategy,
which we'll talk about a little bit more in depth.

Later on, that plan is called Community Wildfire Protection
Plan,
and it was the springboard for all of our future
mitigation actions moving forward in the City of Austin that
include efforts like adopting that CWP at the city County level and 2014.
Passing a council resolution in 2016 that call for all city departments to be engaged in reducing the threat of wildfire.
And also at that point we reached out to some of our partners in the wildfire community.
Wildfire planning an headwaters economics that helped us to develop a community planning assistance for wildfire reports that laid out of their road map or addressing wildfire from a land use regulatory standpoint and will talk about each of those 2018.
We developed the first city County wildfire evacuation plan in the state and the reason we put such a priority on that is. You know, based on research, that it's during that evacuation phase that most of wildland fire fatalities occur,
so it's also for planning for wildfire evacuations when you have the greatest opportunity to save lives in Walker event and as a fire Department.
That's always our first priority,
so we wanted to put that at the forefront and add urgency.
Our efforts with that wildfire evacuation plan and then most recently in 2019.
City Council unanimously adopted or changes to the Land Development Code and most importantly.
The International Code Council is, while an urban interface code.
With amendments and I'll speak to those in detail shortly.
But if you switch the next slide, I'd like to talk about what is driving and austins risk and why is it so important that we take wildfire seriously and we do it now?
Austin, in its existing form, has over 61% of its population located in the Wildland Urban Interface in those homes.
So we have over 250,000 homes across Austin at risk from wildfire.

Recent report released Foam Core Logic indicated Texas was the fifth highest probability for major structural losses and associated economic impacts.

To the tune of over 22 billion dollars.

So we have a lot to lose in Austin and we want to make sure that we're proactive and get ahead of the curve when it comes to the way we design build our communities and climate change is certainly a factor.

One of the first things we did is the wild Card division was engaged with our Office of Sustainability who manages our climate protection programs. And look into the future.

What are climate prediction could be what we got back was alarming.

2012 and 2011. Our best case scenario moving into the future and most probably will exceed those years and their severity 2011 alone.

We had over 90 days of temperatures exceeding 100 degrees.

So that's going to mean longer extended periods of drought for us more sporadic rainfall, actual longer growing seasons, 'cause we're going to have less freezes.

And so effectively will have bursts of vegetation growth followed by severe drought, which is really a recipe for wildfire when you couple that with the exponential population growth we're seeing in Austin and Central Texas.

And it really starts to culminate in in the recipe for wildfire disaster.

And what we have control over is the way we build and design our built environment and how we utilized
that land because the topography, the fuels and the weather.

We won't be able to eliminate wildfire risk in Austin. What we can do is eliminate the probability that structures will be vulnerable during those events.

So we can go to next slide please.

So how do we approach this? We wanted to align with the national crisis strategy. Is Molly mentioned at the federal, the state and the local level?

So our plan is reflective of national strategies and it's three tiered.

We want to ensure that our communities or adapted to fire, meaning they can experience a fire in the area without significant losses of life or property.

And their landscapes and retired after ecosystems are resilient to the catastrophic impacts of wildfire.

Austins very fortunate. And like the rest of the state, which is 97% private land.

About 30% of the County is held in conservation easements, so we have a permanent wildland urban interface.

We're also fortunate we have some of the nicest greenbelts and parks in Austin, so we want to protect those as well.

And we all know the majority of fires are started by individuals, so our landscapes are very much.

Rap and the economic impacts and values associated with those and as the fire Department.

Our first priority is life safety.

As I mentioned, so we worked really diligently to ensure that the Department has appropriate training.

PPE Pre incident response plans.

Situational awareness to be able to effectively respond to those qualifiers.

But we know those response are contingent on the public's reaction during a wildfire situation,
so our plans are only as effective as.

We communicate those plans and get clients with the public.

So that effective responses is really a much broader effort than when we just traditionally think about suppression.

Associated approaches to wildfire preparedness.

Please.

So as I mentioned, our Community Wildfire protection plan is based on that national cohesive strategy.

We wanted to create that continuity and that Matt right out of the gate we had to engage a very broad group of stakeholders.

Austin is a very complex and planning environment.

We have over 28 threatened or endangered species to work with highly sensitive environmental features across the landscape.

Most of our reserves are preserved for a reason.

Because of the sensitivity of the environmental.

The quality is on that landscape and we had to balance all the values that people hold dear or not.

Austin to make sure that we reflected how wildfire risk and impact them. And so if you live in a high rise in downtown Austin but you like going to the Greenbelt for your morning runs, then you have a stake in the fight against wall.

Or whether you're actually at risk in this.

So we want to make sure that wildfire was everyone's life and work to enhance our local capacity.

To address this risk, not just within the fire Department, but within other departments and agencies across the city and County.

We've seen an exponential expansion in the number of people who are dedicated to wildland urban interface's primary duty and so working to expand that capacity to include our partners and Co. Operators because we want everyone to understand what their role while fire is.

Know how to effectively engage and to implement what's appropriate in their Mail.
You one of the ways that we have done that is by putting wildfire risk in the geography of our audience. So one example of that is our City Council is very proactive when it comes to wildfire. They wanted to know what the risk was to their constituents specifically, so we broke our wildfire risk assessments out into Council districts where each Council member can see the number of constituents were at risk from wildfire, the number of structures in their district, the degree of that risk so they could have good situational awareness to make sound policy decisions moving forward. So communicating the story of wildfire. And getting by and based on people's values is going really ascential strategy for us. One of the other things that we worked really hard to do as we move through defining what are best practices were and how to mitigate wildfire to codify those best practices. And I mentioned we've done that in a couple of ways. Most recently is the adoption of the Wildland Urban Interface code. According to International Code Council Austin's largest municipality outside of California to have adopted echoed. But we just didn't stop with the model code. We expanded that to compass. What we know is one of our greatest threats from wildfire which is embers intruding well into the community. Based on our fire history, in our modeling, we can receive viable members up to a mile and a half within structures within proximity to large wildland areas. So we extended the Amber protection in the code well into communities. Anything within a mile and a half of a Louis area is required to have invert resistant ignition components built into the structure.
So it's not just the homes that are adjacent to Wildlands, then we want to provide protection for is the homes in the Wildland urban interface as a whole. Because we know these fires quickly transitioned from wildland fires to urban conflagrations. And that's our biggest concern in Austin that we're working to address. As I mentioned, it's key to have a balanced approach to wildfire mitigation, and so one of the things that we use a tool in Austin to. Awareness of our fire adapted ecosystems, but also to mitigate that threat is to use prescribed fire judiciously. But as broadly as we possibly can, and when people see smoke in the hair, so reminder that we live in an ecosystem that will burn. It's a matter of if and when we want to make sure it does burn. It's in our terms and we have some measure of control out how fire effects our communities or ecosystems. So finding that balance of communicating wildfire risk and the benefits of reintegrating fiery. The system is also been a key strategy to our overall success, and then I mentioned integrated planning and one of our goals was to make our plan others plans and vice versa. So if you look at the planning efforts in Austin, you'll see Wildfire embedded in our Urban forestry plan or watershed protection efforts, or water quality protection lands or Homeland Security Emergency Management are planning and development. So across the city of Austin, we've worked in bed Wildfire in community. Planning efforts all the way up to the city's comprehensive planning level.
So I was really excited that opportunity to share our story with you.
There's a lot of other great stories out there encouraging and motivating how people are taking this threat.
Head on. So excited to be apart of ability to share that story with you today and welcome any questions that we can field as we move forward in the presentations. Thank you.
Thank you Justice and definitely have questions coming in for you.
Just want to follow up with one quick question.
It's really impressive to see the local emphasis and focus at Austin is done at the Council level.
I'm wondering in particular we started talking about issues of equity and income equity and what have you have. Those factors been making account in terms of the wildfire risk assessments?
Or are there thoughts about that?
Yeah, thank you so much for mentioning that one important step in our wildfire risk analysis.
Is to evaluate the vulnerability of our populations in relation to their ability to effectively recover from the impacts of wildfire.
So we worked with Headwaters Economics to develop one of the first Wildfire vulnerability viewers in the nation that allowed us to look at while far from a social justice lens who has the least ability to take meaningful action based on the challenges that they face.
How do we ensure that our distribution mitigation efforts or? Equitable and we're reaching all audiences.
I'm in an effective manner,
so that was one of the efforts that was at the center of defining our values in wildfire.
Mitigation is to ensure that we do it away, then bodies, social justice and equity.
Thanks for the question. Thank you justice and we're gonna go next speaker,
but there's definitely some more questions from the audience coming
And with that, I want to introduce Larry Floor. And again, Larry is going to be able to provide a very on the ground perspective. As someone who is building homes with Burbank housing as their CEO Larry I looking forward to hearing your experiences again with the recent fire issues that you've been facing which the most recent fires there happening so frequently. Now that we just actually become part of life, I want to first acknowledge the report that's out today. Lisbeth and her team put together firebreak and congratulate you had a chance. As Molly did last night to skim it, and it's got a lot of information, um I'm also I'm not by any means and I don't want to misrepresent myself, an expert and in the areas. Speaking of Molly, a justice absolutely are, but I can add to the conversation, though is sort of a real world case study and the impacts of what happens when a wildfire hits your community. So with that I'm going to. Move through my presentation. As Jose mentioned, I'm the CEO and President of Burbank Housing. We are a nonprofit, affordable housing development company based in Santa Rosa, CA. And we were formed by this Noma County government in 1980, but have been independent of the County since 1995. Just to give you a context of our organization we built, we built over 5000 homes all in and or a apps most relevantly for this conversation. We have 80 different properties that are located throughout Sonoma County. Any well within the fire zones to next slide please.
Actually, I was told recently where the largest landlord in Sonoma County.

So this is just be a context of Sonoma, which is where we want to have conversation.

We have over 500,000 people, nine incorporated cities, so it's a pretty well established urban environment in check house and 17 away back probably 200 fires ago.

At this point, count 'em all up.

There was the Tubbs fire, or we eventually the complex became the North Bay fires. Here we're calling the Sonoma County fires. It was the most at the time.

In 2017 it was most destructive fire in US history.

6000 homes in Sonoma County a total of over 9000 homes were destroyed, 44 deaths as a result of the fires.

Since then, as you all know, it's going to clips by the campfires and the fires this year, but at the time it was a big wake up call.

I think for a lot of folks.

Well was really unique. I think about the Tubbs Fire in particular was how it directly impacted the urban environment.

Santa Rosa, which was the really the focal point of the fire, is a city of over 150,000 people.

And so when it hit the city it was.

As you can imagine, the destruction that came in its wake.

Next slide, please.

So one of the sites that was destroyed was a 60 year old mobile Home Park.

Otherwise it was called at the time journeys an mobile Home Park, badly named for a senior mobile Home Park, wooden. We're planning to change the name, but anyway, that's one of the the impact of the
A Bloomberg report at the time of the journeys in mobile home parks. We had some devastating virus throughout California over the years, but I never expected a fire to Co through Santa Rosa. With the tenacious destruction that it did, that was surprising to me. I've been to fires all over the state and I've seen destruction. I mean, have I seen this level now because this was the most destructive wildfire in the state, right? But you don't you never think is going to happen to you. Here we are generalists later, and you're not closer to having a resolution to their homes when they were day after the fire. Underground wasn't grandpas, and that's not right. In October 2017, devastating wildfires broke out in California and burned across the state. The Tubbs fire grew to become the most destructive wildfire in California's history, ripping through the northern city of Santa Rosa. Yeah, so we're actually standing on top of the parking garage of Kaiser Permanente, and if you look back behind me, you can see what's left of the journeys in mobile Home Park. Journeys End was a low income community for seniors and of its 160 mobile homes. All but 44 burned down. So I lived there approximately 3 years and almost coming on four and I still own it. It still is mine, but I can't live there so it's hard. When you get older, you kind of tend to. Be drawn towards your own and that's why there was a real strong senior park.
A neighbor proud of that many residents are struggling to collect insurance that only worsens the financial situation. For those also facing homelessness and serious health issues Thursday of that week.

That Monday I had a biopsy. The next week I was told there was cancer. So yeah, I was dealing with cancer even then, even though I didn't know.

And so then it all became clear.

My supposed to live. How am I supposed to do this?

The Tubbs fire started just after 9:45 PM on October 8th, 2017. The burn rate of this fire was a football field am in it. It moved at a rapid speed and burned thirty 6807 acres, destroyed 5636 structures and killed 22 people. Life isn't the same.

And then it's extremely scary and it is extremely deadly.

Two of our residents. Inside every street but mine.

Who's gone?

It wasn't just a spark everywhere you look, there were flames, and so we're still trying to figure out a way to help these people.

Man, it's like there's nobody wants to get involved, only wants to do anything so you see all these homes always money.

Their possessions are still in there, the furniture still in there.

They've been bounced from hotel room, hotel room to hotel room.

Now they have places to stay but don't know what to do for the guy that's help save their homes.

Again, I've never notified in my life to ever regret saving somebody's house, but right about now, like.

I did something wrong.

I was immediately tasked to respond over to Kaiser Hospital an report back and find out what was needed there
and enroute.

I was told to also give an update on Journeys End Mobile Home Park.

As I came over the overpass, I notice that the park was was in dire shape. I reported the Fire Chief to consider journeys, End mobile Home Park a total loss.

As I came over the overpass, I notice that the park was was in dire shape. I reported the Fire Chief to consider journeys, End mobile Home Park a total loss.

I ran into a gentleman named Priest. He told me that he was in the park working on making sure that everyone was.

Out net last row and that he was a previous firefighter and so he was very helpful with helping that first kruelie hoses and and set up a plan.

I went down to met the firemen were almost fell in the water together and I ran back up here and I kick these out so I could take the fire hose over the radio.

Evacuate Kaiser Kaiser and they look at me and they go like no.

So there's about another 3 or 4 minutes of that.

I think we're going to put the link in there, but I think you get the I think you get the gist of the situation.

It's definitely. Wanted to share that just to show you some real world on the ground or what a wildfire can do.

A community. So I'm going back to the my slides.

I just had a couple of pictures in there which I think may put some context, but to some of the conversation will keep going down.

So the.

Choose me next. Next, slide the coffee park.

This is a picture. Believe of Coffee Park which was a subdivision which had over 1000 homes destroyed in just a matter of minutes.

The extent of the speed at which it went with unbelievable.

This is the aerial of journeys and the mobile Home Park that we would just that we were just describing.

Just gives you a sense of the destructions.
So we're not sort of a glass half empty, more of a glass, half full kind of organization.

And since we are a community development organization, we definitely jumped in. I the Tuesday after the fires, they really were subsiding. On Monday went on a tour with one of the County supervisor who represents this area and it was just shocking.

We were all speechless when we saw the scope in the scale of the description. The heat had just melted everything into solid metal. To see it witnessed it up front, first hand right as the ground was still smoking, was was quite so great and we said, really frankly, what can we do to be helpful as the local community development organization? And so we've been working now for almost three years since the fires on redeveloping the site and we're making huge progress,

but we really wanted to show the world will recovery Anne.

Frankly, resiliency looks like. In the form of a real project that could come up in early rise from the Ashes here so can we go to the next slide. Burbank, working with related of California is re envisioning this site and re envisioning it,

one that will meet the needs of the community. The 162 folks who lost their homes.

They were seniors on fixed income, although it wasn't deed restricted affordable housing, it was naturally acquired, curling, affordable housing and so we feel a real obligation and are committed to providing replacement senior affordable housing for the properties for the units that were lost.

In the front closest share. So the bottom of the screen is 162 units of senior affordable housing, sort of wrapped around. It will be 300 units of market rate housing and.

That we hope to be able to break ground actually
plan where we actually go to the Santa Rosa Planning Commission in three weeks for our approvals from them and then the Santa Rosa City Council.

And then our plan is to be in the ground with the first phase of the affordable project.

94 units in by the end of 2021.

So you might ask, why are we building on a site that was destroyed in the fire?

First of all, this is in the middle of Santa Rosa, so it's really an urban infill site of classically open infill site.

But we've also been designing this with some of the best practices in mind that we've been able to call from the literature of.

For starters, this site is actually adjacent to a major freeway Hwy 101, which is just on the top of the screen, so the evacuation is a lot cleaner coming out of this site than many of the other sites that were destroyed in the fires we have speaking evacuation, we have been required and we are pretty.

We did put together an emergency evacuation plan for the property so.

And we're also using all forms of Brazilian types of the types of materials that will withstand fires, so we're also replacing the mobile home parks with three and four story units that would better stand up wildfire.

And of course, landscaping that will not provide a firebreak.

Finally, for this property. So anyway, when I can stop there and just answer any questions, or the people may have thank you.

Thank you. Larry Anne at like to actually bring this question for all of our panelists of get Molly injustice to also participate.

Again definitely there's some lessons learned there being demonstrated in how we're approaching the wildfire issues at easier levels. But it's it's really clear that the the risk appears to be increasing so I'd love to hear from from
all of you?

How much of this increased risk is attributed to development trends and climate change.

Force management, what is triggering this increase and

what can we do to intelligently reduce that risk?

Maybe starting with Larry and minimally injustice?

Well, I think the reality in California, especially, I will speak to the other states,

is that we have to build where there's land and unfortunately the Layon sometimes interfaces with what has historically been without a zones.

So we as we call them we don't really have a choice.

We've got such huge population in our housing is such a critical need.

We just have to be more creative about how we build it and also cognizant of where we're building in regards to it.

But I don't know that we have a choice really in California.

But to start to develop new ways of building housing that speaks to the concerns.

But it also speaks to the need for housing in our communities.

Thank you Larry Marley is it?

Is it the development trends?

Is it more climate change?

What? What's triggering this? This is increased from your perspective.

Well, it's all of the above and I think that was the goal of trying to provide my really crude assessment of trends as that you know, these trends have been in place for decades, but now you're pouring, or you're adding climate change to the mix.

It's accelerating the situation that we're in, and so we have to look at it comprehensively.

You know, just a spoke about this.

It's not just you, know someone like me with a
background in land use, planning or someone with a background in fire suppression or forestry, you know when. When we do work, we're sitting around tables virtually or physically working with, you know, a multidisciplinary team representing all of these different interests. And that's really the only way we can move the conversation forward is to bring these different areas of expertise to the table to problem solve. Because it's not just you know, one skill set or one type of interest that can solve this challenge. Great feedback adjust is I'm going to definitely answer that question. I want also A tag on a specific question. I was asked to you from the audience. They stated in California were encountering resistance from public agencies that manage conservation areas to spend money in regards to fire they strongly resist removing eucalyptus, creating fuel breaks removing highly flammable brush managing fires is a part of the charter obligations do you have any tips in this area and I think? Relates to the question as to is in the conditions that are exacerbating. Would love your thoughts on that. That's great if I could start with the first question, I'll work into the follow up. So I think that my anthropology background. I think wildfire issues or largely result of cultural challenges. Both humans are a cultural species and so our physical environment is a reflection of our imaginations and creativity in the way that we want to. Make the world a representation of those ideas and so we have to be able to change people's hearts and
minds to understand the environment that we're living in.

We wouldn't just buy somebody a car and give it to them,

not teach him how to drive it.

And so we have most of our population moving into environments that they don't know how to interact and live compatibale with.

And so I think our first step is to help people understand this issue and change hearts and minds.

And then we'll see downstream impacts of people taking their.

Procreate measures and steps you know related to their role in wildfire.

It certainly was speaking to the second question is certainly was one of our first challenges in the City of Austin because the fire Department aren't land managers,

but we got tasked with the responsibility of reducing wildfire risk and that man through mean since we didn't have rules that met through collaboration,

coersion communication. When we proposed our first fuels mitigation project in the city.

We invited all the regulatory entities that would be required to sign off on that project occurring in each of them had a specific concern in a vacuum about that project that would prohibit it moving forward.

And so we had to come to the realization that were dead in the water and less we can figure out how to move forward together and so we backed up, and develop strategies that we could all agree on roles and responsibilities and equally as important we helped advocate for resources that those other departments needed to be able to. How much those goals?

So one recent addition to our parks and Rec was a Land Management in fire management position.

'cause we asked why aren't you doing this?

It needs to be done and they said we don't have the past year of wooden so I'm helping others build the capacity and understanding how well far relates to their values has been our most effective approach.
Now we're able to implement kills projects across the city with environmental compliance and buy in from our partners that we didn't have early on and so building that trust is. Really been key for us, really great feedback. Another question from the audience and this may be more specific is what can be done about Beale infants infestation that has been caused best. Cosme treason. Diane created more of a wildfire hazard. Any thoughts for my Palace? Over this question comes up a lot. I would just say though, you know it's I'm not trying to deflect it, but. We I work very closely with another director who may be on the web and are, but he's a Fort registered professional Forester, and again I guess it speaks to how important it is to have a team focused on these questions. It's outside my my scope, but we, you know, we look at the landscape, but we're also interested in what we know. How's the built environment in relation to the landscape? So that's where we lean on the expertise of a professional Forester with direct experience in fire behavior. Thanks Molly, we have a question specifically for Larry Larry. There's a question about the viability of rebuilding paradise. Paradise, CA that was devastated by fires recently giving this location in the continued wildfire. Threats it from your perspective as a builder. Is it viable to rebuild and what steps would need to be taken? I don't really see it as Mike. Also, frankly, we've been able to lend a lot of extra help having been a year earlier than the campfires in Paradise and you County to sort of a preview of what happens a year out and did get a chance to go up there for a day long planning exercise with the officials into County in paradise. They've already made a decision to rebuild,
so that's the local jurisdictions determination, and we respect that it's, you know, it's as builders of anybody does. But how do you do it? I think is the key. And I know they've been trying to tap into some of the best practices and planning to ensure the fact that. Really, it's an access issue to make sure that they can get off the Ridge. Really frankly, in paradise, if there is another fast fire, let there was this year again, they are rebuilding. They're trying to incorporate the best practices, but I'm going back to the earlier comment. You know, it's sort of flipping, but it's not. I mean, where are these people going live? It's not like we've got all this extra land in California that you can develop, so we've got to be smart about how we develop. Absolutely, and we've got to use best practices. But I understand the rationale for why they're rebuilding there. Thank you, Larry. A question for the group. Have you seen some successful efforts on a national scale and to implement land use planning programs for wildfire here or outside the US that we could potentially apply beyond what you're doing right now? Yeah, actually I am excited. Will have to wait a few years but I'm excited. about what Canada has been doing at a national scale. They are in the process of updating their national building code which is published by Natural Research Council Canada and this is a modern modernization of the code to address climate change stressors on structures. So it will include provision specifically to address wildfire. The code also will incorporate it. Guidance chapter on land use strategies and evacuation and other
considerations so that you know communities can use this.

It's not. It's a model code, so it doesn’t have legal status until it's adopted by a province or local jurisdiction, and this update will occur in their 2025 adoption cycle.

But you know, from the engagement that I've had with it, it's really exciting and impressive an I think it's. It's where we need to go I I would love to see something like that here as guidance you know that far reaching and really that comprehensive in terms of the future incorporation of climate change stressors.

So yeah.

Great feedback and definitely I'm sure we can share some of that information in the chat as well.

There is another question.

Is the California specific question by thinking it would apply across the board the question asked in California P.

Jeannie has been in real neighborhoods cutting down trees near power lines to reduce fire risk,

and they feel that this is leaving neighborhoods more exposed to heat and drying out vegetation.

Is this the most intelligent way for communities to reduce fire wildfire risk?

Are there other recommendations from your experience that you might suggest?

Yeah, that's an interesting, and it's also a complicated question because the way you mitigate wildfire risk in relation to vegetation differs based on the geography and environment.

What we do in Austin probably isn’t appropriate for other places in the country where we strive to keep our canopy closed.

An are understory free from grass that can spread very quickly and easily during a wildfire and remove that understory.

So one of the things we did is work with
our cities utility.
The energy to prioritize their vegetation treatment areas to incorporate those best fuel practices of what we call a shaded fuel break. Where we keep the canopy as intact as possible to reduce the grass growth program to plant the right trees in the right place.
Under these power lines and even use some hormonal stimulates to regulate the growth of those trees and so they don't become a future problem. So getting ahead of that curve is going to be much more effective than. Retroactively trying to fix those those issues with vegetation management, and we've also worked with them very closely to leverage their outreach net, which is much more vast in the fire Department to engage residents adjacent to those utility lines and critical infrastructure.
In addition to doing some analysis on the vulnerability of our infrastructure, our utility recently got a budget amendment of over doubling their vegetation management funds as a result of that risk analysis. So having those conversations with the utility company can be some of the best ways to guide the conversation, 'cause they still are humans and dialogue goes along way. So I suggest having that conversation if you haven't, see if you can come to a way to meet multiple values. Thank you justice and we're getting close to the end. There's lots of questions here and again, it just emphasizes why this is such an important topic right now.
But as we are at the confluence of a number of issues in wildfire season with Koben, 19 with with a lot of civil unrest, all of these things are coming together, creating a feeling of nervousness and also changing the way...
in which we react to these situations.

I would like to ask again,

what have we learned? From the past in our final question,

and how is that changing how we plan for the future from your perspective,

particularly given the COVID-19 layer,

social distancing and different levels of sensitivity.

If we could just start with Molly,

go to Larry and Fish with justice,

that would be great. Sure,

I know this sounds like a simple answer,

but not to wait. We've been waiting so long to try and you know,

I think we just have to make tough decisions and start moving forward.

Um? Collaboration is great. We love collaboration,

but there's always going to be tradeoffs,

and I think we have to look at the real hard issues around public safety and and not preparing for the future.

What costs there are going to be that we'd have to contend with,

so you know, I'll leave it at that.

Being pro as proactive as possible and and strong in our choices.

Thank you, Molly Larry. I think but.

We learning and we're learning from other communities where anything

from other developments.

So for now our projects for the first time have emergency evacuation plans,

sort of speak to the reality that this is not something that's going away,

and so we just have to build understanding that there has been an I *****.

What happens not when not if but when there's a wildfire and we also need to build with materials that are hopefully give us a better shot at being able to survive wildfire.

Really valuable information Larry and justice.
You get the last word,

yeah, but I'd like to add to.

That is during the wildfire evacuations or the most risking component of that and what we're effectively doing is forcing more people to be in their homes.

During those times, those wildfires were likely to occur, so will have potentially greater residential populations in harm's way.

So we owe it to our communities to make sure we're not putting them in a tender box that, if they're going to be sheltered in numerous ways in their home, in our. Now then we do it in a way that protects them, and especially from the threat of something like wildfire and so more and more people are going to be in harm's way based on that because of Publix or certainly going to have to put it the way we do.

Everything I think in in general, but specifically in the way we protect peoples last during this event from wildfire.

Thank you Justice and thank you.
Panel is for your great information for sharing best practices.

Again, I encourage everyone on the call today to take a look at the firebreak document.

It is extremely valuable. Lots of best practice information there and again you seem the chat information shared by our great panelists on what they're doing to advance their communities that they serve. Again, thank you a lot for the opportunity to start this conversation.

My name is Jose with member on behalf of Eli Sacramento. Annually national. We like to thank you for participating today's event.

Take care.
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