



COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

CITY COUNCIL of SALT LAKE CITY
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TO: City Council Members

FROM: Michael Sanders
Budget & Policy Analyst

DATE: October 21, 2025

RE: [WILDLAND URBAN INTERFACE FIRE CODE TEXT AMENDMENT](#)

ISSUE AT-A-GLANCE

During the 2025 legislative session, the Utah State Legislature passed [House Bill 48](#). As part of this bill, municipalities are required to “adopt and enforce the wildland urban interface building standards.”¹ Previously, this requirement was optional for cities.² If a municipality fails to comply, they risk the State choosing not to pay reimbursement costs associated with fighting wildfire.³

The standards which the City is required to adopt are the 2006 edition of the [Utah Wildland Urban Interface Code](#), issued by the International Code Council, with the alternatives or amendments approved by the Utah Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands.

This building code would only apply to the parcels identified in Salt Lake City Wildland Urban Interface Map (Attachment A of the draft ordinance.⁴) It is not a citywide application.

The map being considered in this ordinance should not be confused with the State map which is being developed which will access fees to certain high risk WUI properties. This difference is addressed on page two of this report.

Goal of the briefing: Prepare to consider the ordinance at the November 25th 2025 Formal Meeting. A Public Hearing will be held regarding this proposal on November 18th.

POLICY QUESTIONS

1. The Council may wish to ask the Administration what engagement it has had or will have with legislators to help address resident concerns with possible future State legislation updates on WUI code compliance such as county fees and insurance cancelation.

¹ H.B. 48 lines 430-433

² It was not uncommon for cities along the Wasatch Front to adopt WUI code standards prior to the State mandate. Sandy, Draper, and Park City have managed WUI codes previously to the State mandate.

³ H.B. 48 lines 498-505

⁴ Transmittal pages 11 – 15



ADDITIONAL & BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This ordinance does three main things.

1. Complies with H.B 48 which requires local governments with an Urban Wildland Interface to adopt the WUI Code
2. Imposes the WUI Code on certain properties in the City which are highlighted in yellow on the Salt Lake City Wildland Urban Interface Map
3. Establishes that in cases of conflict between the City Zoning Code and the WUI Code, the WUI Code takes precedence over the Zoning Code with the exceptions of historic designation and the provisions of the [Riparian Corridor Overlay](#) which would require Public Utilities and the Fire Official to find a solution that meets the intent of both codes

The intent is for the WUI Code to apply when a property owner seeks a building permit for a new principal structure, major addition, or roof replacement. The landscaping and vegetation requirements in the code may be enforced after adoption. This is commonly understood in the WUI Code as “defensible space” which limits the height and type of vegetation within certain distances of structures.

The Legislature is expected to make further modifications to the state-adopted WUI Code in the coming years. The proposed amendment is drafted to self-update to whatever WUI regulations are adopted at the State level in Utah Code [15A-2-103\(2\)](#), so no additional City Code amendments will be required to stay current with the State WUI Code. In the event that new properties need to be added to the map, the standard map amendment and public hearing process would apply.

The Salt Lake City Wildland Urban Interface Map was created in coordination with the State Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands. The map went through several iterations as the Fire Department and other City representatives met with property owners and community organizations. The Fire Department went parcel by parcel to identify fire risk, fuel types, and defensible space needs. The goal of the Salt Lake City Wildland Urban Interface Map is to develop city resiliency and defensible positions in the event of a wildfire.

The Fire Department presented at 11 Community Council meetings and the Greater Avenues Fair. For more information on the public process and comments, please see pages 16 – 17 of the [Planning Division Staff Report](#).

Other Provisions of H.B 48 which the City is not involved

During the [Planning Commission Hearing](#) on September 24, 2025, many residents expressed concern at aspects of H.B. 48 which are not in control by the City. The bill sections that address those issues are summarized below

H.B 48 lines 119 – 154 - Wildland Urban Interface Evaluation and Fees

Properties in identified high-risk wildland urban interface areas will be evaluated each year by either the State or the County. The evaluation is focused on fire risk factors and uses a triage scale. Beginning in 2026, the State requires **counties** to assess an annual fee on these properties. The amount has not yet been set, but it will be determined by the Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands. The City does not control the fee level. Property owners will be informed of their property’s classification and provided with information on steps and resources to help lower their risk rating which may lower the fee in future years.

H.B. 48 lines 156 – 222 - Insuring Wildland Urban Interface Property

Insurance companies that provide property or casualty coverage in Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) areas must use the official wildfire risk boundary established by the Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands to determine whether a property is considered “high risk.” The “wildfire risk boundary” **is not** the Salt Lake City Wildland Urban Interface Map but may have some overlap.

Insurers may use additional fire hazard data for rate setting or underwriting only if it aligns with that state-defined boundary and complies with insurance laws and rules. Property owners may file complaints with the

Utah Insurance Department if they believe insurers are not following these rules; the department has authority to investigate and enforce compliance.

If an insurer cancels, non-renews, or raises premiums on WUI properties due to wildfire risk, the insurer must provide specific reasons for the decision either in the notice or upon request.

Property Assessment

The Fire Department is currently offering free property assessments focused on providing tips on defending properties from wildfire. These assessments can help to prepare property owners for potential formal inspections.

Update on Assessment of City Properties

During the public engagement process, many residents commented that they live near City property in the WUI which is unmaintained. In late July of 2025, the Mayor requested a [maintenance audit](#) of all city-owned property.

The Administration has reported that a work group has been established comprising of SLCFD (EM), Public Lands (Trails and Natural Lands/Urban Forestry), Public Services (Facilities), Community and Neighborhoods (Real Estate), and Public Utilities (Watershed). This group is currently working on the following action items:

- Compiling a list of all city properties and prioritizing the wildfire risk
- Tracking these risks in a city owned software (Cartegraph)
- Implementing the Defensible Space Assessment starting with the highest priorities
- Determination of mitigation projects based on the Defensible Space Assessments

These action items are in addition to the mitigation projects already occurring at a department level from Public Lands and Public Utilities.

This project, while in-line with the WUI code and following the same standards, is not directly tied to any WUI zone mapping.

ATTACHMENTS

1. 2006 Edition of the Utah Wildland Urban Interface Code, issued by the International Code Council, with the alternatives or amendments approved by the Utah Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands.
2. House Bill 48 (2025 Utah State Legislative Session)