



City Council

March 4, 2025
Packet Addendum #1

From: [Lisa Hughes](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Subject: Changes to home hardening ordinance
Date: Friday, February 28, 2025 7:40:13 PM

Council,

I am unable to make the March 4 meeting on the amendments to the code so please see my comments below:

A home hardening ordinance was passed last November 2024 by Council after much engagement with residents, especially those impacted by the Marshall Fire, as well as City staff. This ordinance has barely had time to take effect and now the planning dept wants to amend it to allow Class B fencing and decking materials due to affordability and availability concerns. Director Zuccaro mentioned they were concerned about residents of existing homes being able to afford retrofits when the time comes. Other residents have provided information indicating that the cost upgrade between class b and class A is not significant, when going from a flammable substance like cedar to something like metal fence. What is significant is the cost between flammable and non combustible which is already accounted for in the original code.

I do support the need for affordability and the hope as the Director mentioned in an earlier email to me that it will encourage more people to pull a permit for this type of work.

I agree with the letter submitted by Chief Wilson, that all **new** construction should still require Class A materials, and that the 5 feet of the fence touching the house should also be class A for *everyone*. Many houses in my neighborhood have cedar but the parts touching the house are metal or other non combustible material.

Both the Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety-(IBHS) and the current Colorado Draft WUI code both recommend non combustible fencing of at least 5 feet or more next to a house. It has been shown in multiple studies since the Marshall fire that wood fences contributed significantly to ember spread and to loss of homes.

While it pains me, I am ok with class b materials for existing homes for **decking**, but **not** for the 5ft of fencing next to the house- also called the wings. That should continue to be class A.

I do want to remind the council though of the home insurance affordability and accessibility currently happening here in Colorado and nationwide. Insurers are looking more and more to not only parcel wide mitigation efforts, but COMMUNITY or neighborhood wide mitigation in order to keep insuring in an area. I would urge the council to keep this in mind while voting. While attainable and affordable materials are important, the reality is that people won't be able to get a mortgage or keep their house if they can't get homeowners insurance. Additionally, insurers are more likely to give discounts for mitigation when more than one property in a neighborhood has done the work.

If Council wants to vote for the amendments as presented then I would ask that a time limit be set on the amendment- perhaps 18 months and then revert back to the current code as materials become more available and the state WUI code goes into effect. This seems like a reasonable compromise to help alleviate the issues, while still protecting our homes and helping firefighters to save them through use of non flammable materials. If that isn't possible, then the City should incentivize residents to choose class A by offsetting the cost difference with grants or rebates. Keeping a strong code in place will help Louisville be prepared for the next disaster when it happens.

Thank you,
Lisa Hughes
Louisville resident

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From: [Ann](#)
To: [Christopher Leh](#); [City Council](#)
Cc: [Rob Zuccaro](#); [John Willson](#)
Subject: proposed changes to hardening code
Date: Saturday, March 1, 2025 12:57:08 PM

Dear Mayor Leh and Councilmembers--

I appreciate the goals of affordability, availability, and code compliance for fencing and decking, but I oppose the changes to the hardening code as presented by staff for the March 4 Council meeting. I instead support the compromise position of the Louisville Fire Protection District, as outlined in the letter from Chief Willson. My reasoning:

1. Fire-fighting experts have agreed that the Marshall Fire would have penetrated much further into Louisville, including downtown, if the wind had not died. Our wonderful open space weaves throughout town, and a wildfire could start in any of those areas. We cannot assume older or eastern parts of Louisville are exempt from wildfire.
2. The draft report and maps from the State Wildfire Resiliency Code Board exclude the City of Louisville and other municipalities entirely. The analysis does not appear to address the potential fire intensity of burnable development and urban vegetation fuels, despite the evidence of the Marshall Fire, Lahaina, and LA. That leaves municipalities like Louisville on our own for protecting ourselves.
3. Research from IBHS and others have demonstrated the vulnerability of decks and fences to wind-blown, ember-driven fires. Our houses in Louisville are so close together, we should keep these areas as resilient as possible.
4. New houses being built in Louisville are typically large and expensive--often setback-to-setback, endangering neighbors around them. The extra cost of Class A materials is small compared to the cost of these large houses and the risk they may bring to the community. It seems fair that we expect the highest level of risk management from them.
5. Strong hardening codes may help preserve the insurability and long-term affordability of our homes.

Thank you for your consideration.

Ann Brennan

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From: [Tawnya Somauroo](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Subject: Consent agenda: WILDFIRE MITIGATION CAMPAIGN DEVELOPMENT CONTRACT WITH FORS MARSH
Date: Saturday, March 1, 2025 8:13:12 PM
Attachments: [Screenshot 2025-03-01 at 7.54.55 PM.png](#)

Dear Council,

I have previously explained in person and via email that the 2023 [wildfire risk assessment](#) (2023 WRA) that the city previously performed was **ridiculously under scoped**. The city asked the consultant to advice on protecting **only city property on calm weather days**, with a few peripheral home included in a minimal WUI zone.

Now staff is asking Council to approve a \$60K contract for a wildfire mitigation campaign based on the recommendations of that 2023 WRA.

But see the special meeting packet on Wed March 5, LFPD is currently working on its own wildfire risk assessment (LFPD WRA):

➤ **Louisville FPD:**

- Expand the city Wildfire Risk Assessment (WRA) to include entire city
- Promoting resident action-home hardening, community planning
- Offering the Wildfire Partners Home Assessment program to homeowners in Louisville

So, why on earth would Louisville move forward with this work, purportedly to protect homes from wildfire based on a 2023 WRA **that doesn't advise on protecting neighborhoods** when the LFPD WRA will? Doesn't it make sense to just wait for the LFPD's WRA?

Please don't waste \$60K of good public money to fund a campaign based on a 2023 WRA that isn't fit for purpose. Put this contract away and wait for our fire district to come back with their recommendations before moving forward. Not only will using the LFPD WRA make these efforts be more effective, it is what Louisville needs to do if it is serious about treating our fire district like a partner in this effort.

I'm going to take this a step further: this is really bad planning. Is the goal to just print some flyers and tick a box on a CWPP checklist, or to do something impactful?

Please pause this and all new programs from the Recovery and Resilience Dept until the new city manager gets the opportunity to reevaluate with fresh eyes.

Best regards,
Tawnya

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From: [Tawnya Somauroo](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Subject: home hardening code - more fence cost data for the record
Date: Monday, March 3, 2025 11:45:56 PM
Attachments: [invoice.pdf](#)

Dear Council,

A modification to the home hardening code is up for discussion tomorrow. The proposal is to allow class B fence wings and decking throughout Louisville. Please vote no.

Fencing

Chief Wilson recommends keeping the fence wings class A. For that reason alone, we should leave the code as-is.

The only justification provided to expand allowable materials for fence wings to class B appears to be aesthetics. Staff suggest in the packet that a composite option is needed because there aren't private class A or non-combustable options. Not true. When pressed in a meeting with residents, Director Zuccaro *would not confirm* that he had actually received any actual complaints about the new fencing code from residents. Director Zuccaro told us that he was recommending a change to the fence code because he *anticipated* there would be future complaints. We should not be changing our fence code based on complaints that have not been received.

The price and availability of class A fencing does not appear to be an issue. In the attachment, you may observe that the steel coated Colormax fence, the private metal fence that has been adopted in many parts of Cornerstone and is now appearing in other parts of Louisville, is 10% *cheaper* than cedar. Many other residents have adopted other types of metal fence wings.

With regards to aesthetics, there was once a day when cities and HOAs tried to ban solar panels on rooftops because they were considered to be ugly. Aesthetics change, the policy behind the code is important and we need to support it.

Decking

The price difference between Class A and Class B decking is quite minimal. When Council passed this code, it was agreed that there was a non-zero cost to comply. Our understanding of the costs has not changed, why are we revisiting this?

With regards to availability, in a meeting with residents Director Zuccaro suggested that deck materials needed to be *in stock* at a local hardware store to be "available" because DIY people could not be expected to utilize online orders or drive further afield to specialty deck shops. That is ridiculous, any person rebuilding their own deck frame is definitely a sophisticated party. No one goes to home depot when they are building a 300 sf deck and expects all the materials they need to be in stock. No, it is understood that you need to ORDER supplies ahead of time so you can be sure to have what they need before you start work. And usually for a big project like a deck, people get their materials *delivered* to their properties. Home Depot does this for free. I have yet to see anyone pushing a cart with 300sf worth of deck boards out of home depot.

The arguments do not stack up, please say no to the proposed code changes.

Best regards,
Tawnya Somauroo

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