WILDLAND-URBAN INTERFACE (WUI) WILDFIRE RISK STRATEGY

Project Background

The City of Edmonton is creating a plan to manage risks of wildfire in areas where urban developments meet undeveloped vegetation areas - the **wildland-urban interface (WUI)**.

The WUI is expanding as Canadian municipalities continue to grow. This expansion increases the risk and potential damage caused by wildfire in urban areas. The City of Edmonton is known for its large urban parkland and is facing additional wildfire risks due to climate change, which is causing longer drought conditions and rising temperatures. While there are already detailed emergency response plans in place to respond to a wildfire event, these factors, along with increased fuel loads from suppressed wildfires, require a proactive Wildland-Urban Interface Wildfire Risk Strategy to mitigate risk.

The WUI Wildfire Risk Strategy will address the increasing threat of wildfires by leveraging guidance documents from FireSmart Canada and Natural Resources Canada, which emphasize the need for regular hazard assessments, vegetation management, wildfire resilient land use planning and development standards, strong emergency planning, interagency cooperation, and public outreach.

This long-term strategy will prioritize reducing the potential of physical and economic losses from wildfires, protecting people, property and the environment. It will also incorporate jurisdictional scans, industry best practices, engagement with residents and Indigenous communities, and the adoption of the seven key disciplines of Canada's FireSmart program. By aligning with the FireSmart framework and addressing the increasing wildfire risks caused by climate change, **the WUI Wildfire Risk Strategy will ensure that Edmonton is proactively prepared to minimize wildfire risk, safeguarding people while protecting the natural and built environments.**

Project Objectives

Edmonton's WUI Wildfire Risk Strategy aims to enhance the city's resilience to wildfires in changing climate conditions through the development and implementation of a centralized strategy aimed at improving wildfire prevention, mitigation, and response. The Strategy will promote whole-of-society collaboration to address both immediate and long-term wildfire risks, ensuring sustainable development for the future. Project objectives include:

1. Performing a jurisdictional scan of wildfire strategies in other urban municipalities to understand better the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) wildfire risk.
2. Evaluating neighborhood-level wildfire risk assessment data and developing prioritization criteria for mitigation plans.
3. Engaging with Indigenous communities to incorporate traditional knowledge of managing wildfire risk.
4. Implementing a public engagement strategy to gauge public perception of wildfire risk in Edmonton and educate partners on the upcoming WUI Wildfire Risk Strategy.
5. Developing a comprehensive Wildland-Urban Interface Wildfire Risk Strategy that integrates the seven FireSmart disciplines and outlines both short-term and long-term action plans with implementation strategies to effectively mitigate wildfire risk.

Engagement Overview

Public and targeted engagement will happen in two phases:

Phase 1, Summer 2025: We will gather public perception of wildfire risk, awareness of wildfire preparedness, preferences for mitigation activities, and targeted feedback from partners and subject matter experts. This will help us to develop the draft WUI Wildfire Risk Strategy.

Phase 2, Late 2025: We will gather targeted feedback on the draft strategy to help refine it and show how public input was used. This will help us to finalize the WUI Wildfire Risk Strategy.

Indigenous engagement will be ongoing throughout the project, involving community partners, Indigenous peoples, City Memorandum partners, and Indigenous governments. It will be coordinated with the Climate Resilience Planning and Development Action Plan and the Climate Strategies Action Plan Renewal.

Timeline and Contact Information

A final draft of the WUI Wildfire Risk Strategy is anticipated in January 2026 with presentation to the Emergency Advisory Committee in March 2026. The project team can be reached by email at wildfirestrategy@edmonton.ca. More information is available at edmonton.ca/wildfirestrategy.

Published: June 2025