

Wildfire mitigation ideas for Boulder County

Engaged community. How to begin.

Boulder County is ready to take on wildfire mitigation and preparedness (see [survey](#) and [ballot measures](#)). By tapping the expertise of the county's departments, [fire districts](#), [forest service](#), residents and nonprofits, the county commissioners can develop a comprehensive plan for wildfire preparedness in which every entity and individual can participate. We can all become wildfire mitigators.

Program needs:

1. **Vision** – release a vision statement for this major undertaking
2. **Process** – establish a process for developing, coordinating, executing and communicating the county's preparedness plan. ([example of wildfire council](#))
3. **Leadership** – assign a leader who will guide, oversee, and give voice to this program.
4. **Funding** – with a focus on the revenue generated through the new tax and generous grant funding available, establish a transparent budget and path forward.

Flammable vegetation management

Our dry and windy climate creates extreme fire conditions several times a year. CO has had [162 Red Flag Warnings in 2022](#); Boulder, more than 20. Dried grasses and ditches fueled the Marshall Fire through open space and into our residential areas. The creation of mitigation plans are required for our grasslands and ditches. Forest health programs are already in place and should be extended.

Program needs:

1. **Grassland mitigation**: plans for WUI, open space, and throughout the flatlands of Boulder Cty
2. **Ditch study & management** – maintaining the dried debris and vegetation in Boulder's [150 ditches](#) requires a fresh approach. Century-old methods need to be reexamined.
3. **Forests**. Continue [forest action plan](#).

Rethinking landscaping

Junipers, mulch and connected wooden fencing are identified as culprits in the [Marshall Fire report](#). With help from our county's experts, property owners can be educated and incentivized to better protect their homes and their neighborhoods by switching to fire-resistant materials and landscapes.

Program needs:

1. **Consumer-friendly communications***: website, flyers, expos, webinars, HOA guides can be easily accessed to educate the owners of Boulder's 150,000 homes and structures.
2. **Landscape templates**: a series of ready-made templates provided online can make fire-resistant landscaping accessible. (E.g. [Sonoma County](#)).
3. **Wildfire Partners**: expand this landscape-focused program from the foothills to the flatlands. Create a scalable program, including neighborhood/HOA programs, ambassador training.

Fire-resistant building

As witnessed in the [Marshall Fire report](#), 50% of the fire spread was structure to structure. Many are [rebuilding high performance homes](#) at nominal cost and there are opportunities to reinforce existing structures as well. [Adopting minimum regulations in wildfire-prone areas](#) has been proven to help.

Program needs:

1. **Consumer-friendly communications***: website, expos, webinars, and written materials made available to all property owners.
2. **Establish working group** (including cross section of residents) to study and develop recommendations on county-wide building codes.
3. **Incentivize upgrades**: develop a plan to motivate *all* property owners. Consider insurance & tax discounts, grants.

Emergency response and preparedness

The [After-Action Report](#) and [FLA](#) highlighted areas for improvement for our county's response teams. More efficient processes for our first responders are within reach. Additionally, ensuring every resident is informed on evacuation routes, alert systems and pre-disaster preparations will go a long way to saving lives and property.

Program needs:

1. **Collaboration**. Bring all stakeholders to the table, including fire districts and emergency response teams, to examine our current decentralized status and provide unencumbered recommendations with public safety as paramount.
2. **Consumer-friendly communications***: website, webinars, materials to inform on alerts, checklists, and safety precautions to prevent and react to wildfire at home and in the outdoors.
3. **Followup on reports**. Prepare prioritized response to every area identified in post-fire reports and continually update the public on steps taken and current status.

Note on 'consumer-friendly communications:' this can be attained via one well-done public website where residents can go to access all things pertaining to wildfire mitigation and preparedness. The state is developing a site that will be a clearinghouse for public safety professionals. A site developed for Boulder County residents would cover local preparedness guidelines and include building/landscaping how-to information, as well as a vehicle to keep the entire community up-to-date on wildfire mitigation progress.