



Community Wildfire Protection Plan

Municipality of Anchorage



Appendix E: Community Engagement

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Community Engagement

Community engagement is a critical component of any Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). The primary goals of these efforts were to educate, inform, and solicit feedback from community members.

Public Awareness & Engagement

To support public awareness and engagement around the CWPP, a dedicated webpage was created on the Municipality of Anchorage website: wildfire.muni.org/cwpp. This page was periodically updated throughout the project to provide key information, updates, and resources related to the CWPP. It also serves as the repository for the final CWPP documents, which are available for public access.

Social Media

Social media played a vital role in outreach. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube were used to share updates on the CWPP's progress, promote the community engagement survey, announce the public comment period, and encourage residents to review the draft plan and provide feedback. The Anchorage Fire Department (AFD) also uses these channels to share ongoing educational content on wildfire and structure fire safety. Interagency partners frequently amplify messages, through liking and sharing. Paid advertising campaigns were conducted to extend reach and emphasize critical information.



Figure 1: One of many social media posts made during the CWPP process

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As part of the outreach strategy, AFD launched a weekly YouTube series, *Wildfire Wednesdays*, which provides practical tips and insights on wildfire preparedness and risk reduction.



Figure 2: Image of one Wildfire Wednesday episode that focused on the CWPP

Community members were encouraged to sign up for email updates through the Municipality’s website, ensuring they received periodic alerts and announcements about the project.

Postcard Campaigns

Postcard campaigns further expanded awareness:

- Spring Campaign: Promoted the *Ready, Set, Go!* public evacuation preparedness program, Smart 911 sign-ups, Firewise participation, ways to contribute to the CWPP, and the spring town hall. This campaign reached 19,019 addresses.
- Fall Campaign: Promoted the fall town hall, CWPP public comment period, and provided teasers for the 2026 season. This campaign reached 23,688 addresses.

These combined efforts ensured that Anchorage residents were informed, engaged, and provided with multiple avenues to participate in shaping wildfire preparedness in their community.

Community Meetings

To complement online and mail campaigns, the Wildfire Division emphasized in-person engagement, attending more than 125 community meetings and events. The Division partnered with community groups to amplify messaging. It also hosted three events specifically focused on engaging the public in the CWPP process.

One key partner in outreach is the Wildland Urban Interface Community Action Team (WUI-CAT), a community member-led group with a five-faceted purpose statement, including advocating for mitigation funding, promoting fire education, and participating in the development and updates of Anchorage’s CWPP¹. The Wildfire Division attends the monthly WUI-CAT meetings to provide updates to be distributed to the community members the group represents and to gather feedback on priorities identified by the group. The CWPP contractor attended two WUI-CAT meetings through the course of the project to present the CWPP process, answer questions, and obtain direct feedback after the draft was released.

¹Wildland Urban Interface Community Action Team website: <https://sites.google.com/view/wuicat/about>

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The three CWPP-focused meetings were:

1. Spring Town Hall: Held May 19, 2025, at 6:30 PM at the ZJ Loussac Library and live streamed on YouTube (a recording remains available). Promotion included a postcard campaign reaching over 19,000 addresses and a Facebook ad campaign generating more than 131,000 impressions. Presentation slides were also posted online.
2. Fall Northern Communities Wildfire Open House: Held October 28, 6:00-8:00 PM at the Chugiak Volunteer Fire & Rescue Department Station 35. This event was organized in response to community feedback requesting engagement in Chugiak, Eagle River, Eklutna and surrounding neighborhoods.
3. Fall Town Hall: Held November 12, 2025, at 6:00 PM at the Z.J. Loussac Library. Promotion included an October postcard and comprehensive multimedia campaign with paid advertisements on Facebook, Instagram, Google, Hulu, Spotify, as well as a targeted email distribution. The event was live-streamed and remains available for post-event viewing on YouTube.

Community Response

Community events were well attended and positively received, reflecting a strong public interest in wildfire preparedness and resilience. Residents consistently demonstrated a desire for more education on, and engagement opportunities related to wildfire risk reduction.

In 2025, AFD performed more than 180 free Firewise property assessments, an increase of 174 assessments compared to 2024. These assessments promote community wildfire resilience at the property level, and firefighters used each visit as an opportunity to discuss the CWPP and answer resident questions.

During the Spring Town Hall, a community member asked the expert panel what steps could be taken to ensure that the Wildfire Division becomes a permanent fixture within the Municipality's public safety framework. In response, an Anchorage Assembly member, Mayor, and AFD Fire Chief all emphasized the critical importance of maintaining and supporting a permanent Wildfire Division.

Throughout the CWPP process, the Division was recognized for prioritizing accessibility by attending meetings scheduled after normal business hours. Staff also honored every community request for meetings, presentations, or one-on-one discussions, reflecting the Division's commitment to the community.

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Education about large-scale hazard fuel mitigation projects was provided at numerous community meetings, and more the seven Community Councils and user groups signed resolutions of support for the three major mitigation projects completed in 2025.

Several community members and organizations took advantage of the Division’s “open door policy,” meeting individually with staff to gain a deeper understanding of ongoing efforts and future priorities.

Public Comment Period

The CWPP drafts were made available on November 11, commencing the public comment period which ran through November 30. Large-scale promotion of the public comment period initiated in September and included:

- Region-specific flyers distributed to all Community Councils, the Federation of Community Councils, and other community leadership groups, such as HOAs
- Fall postcard campaign and multiple social media announcements, including reminders near the end of the comment period
- Press releases converted into media appearances
- Announcement through the municipality’s public notice process
- Reminders through AFD presentations at community council meetings
- Messaging amplification through the project team’s networks, to include information distribution by Chugach Electric in a fall billing statement



Figure 3: Social media post announcing public comment period

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Community Survey



Figure 4: Paid Facebook advertisement linking community members to community survey

An online community survey on wildfire was conducted from March 7 through September 30, 2025. Promotion was extensive and included paid and organic social media campaigns, postcards mailed to residents in the wildland–urban interface throughout the Municipality of Anchorage, a wildfire town hall in May, multiple media engagements, placement on the Wildfire Division’s webpage, references in printed materials, and announcements

at more than 100 community events attended by the Division.

This analysis presents all survey questions and responses. Free-text responses were summarized, with representative quotes included where appropriate. For questions offering an “other” option, written responses were reviewed and recurring themes were integrated into the analysis. Most questions also provided educational information and links for respondents seeking additional context.

Demographics

A total of 379 responses were received. Of these, 99% of respondents identified the Municipality as a place they live or both live and work. Responses represented 16 different ZIP codes, with most participants reporting residency within the WUI.

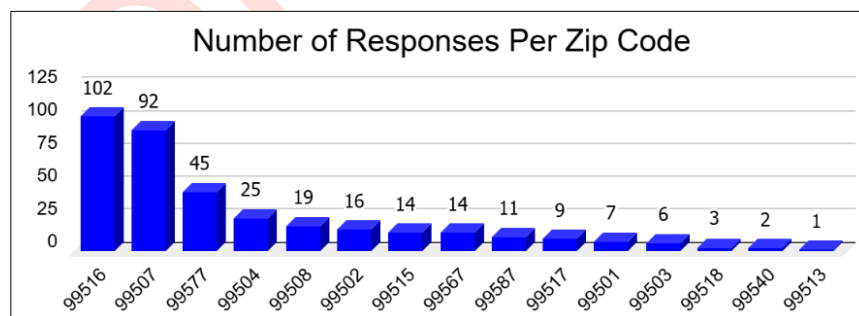


Figure 5: Number of survey responses by zip code

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Communication & Outreach

Nine survey questions addressed communication and outreach, including preferred information channels, community group participation, and familiarity with wildfire programs. These questions were designed to capture communication preferences, assess current awareness levels, and identify potential partners for engagement—findings that inform the development of a more effective outreach strategy.

Respondents were able to select all communication methods they prefer and indicate the one they consider most effective. For wildfire preparedness and active incident information, 35.4% of respondents identified text alerts as the most beneficial communication method. For general community outreach from the department and its partners, preferences were nearly evenly distributed; however, 30% of respondents selected social media posts as the most beneficial method.

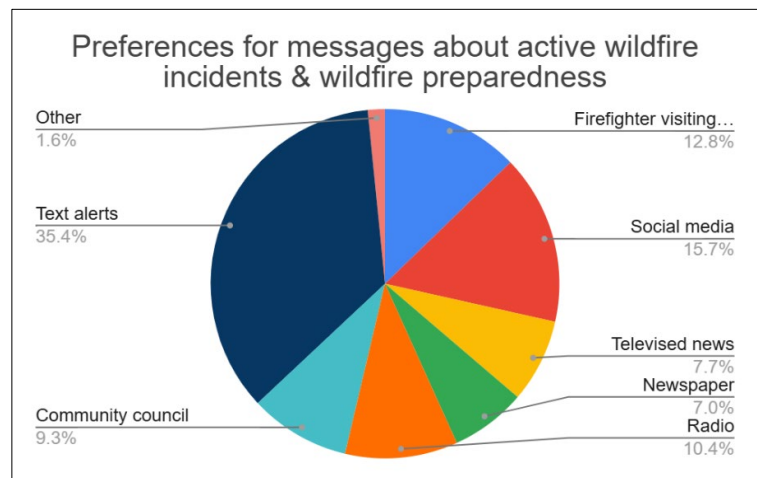


Figure 6: Communication preferences: active incidents & wildfire preparedness

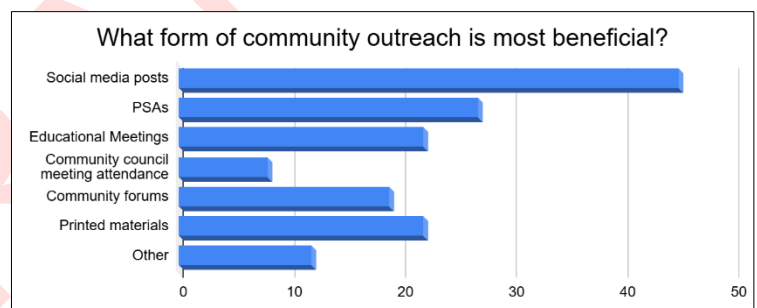


Figure 7: Communication preferences: community outreach

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To assess the effectiveness of the survey’s promotion, respondents were asked how they first learned about the survey. The most common response was social media, followed by email and postcards or flyers, which tied as the second most frequently cited sources.

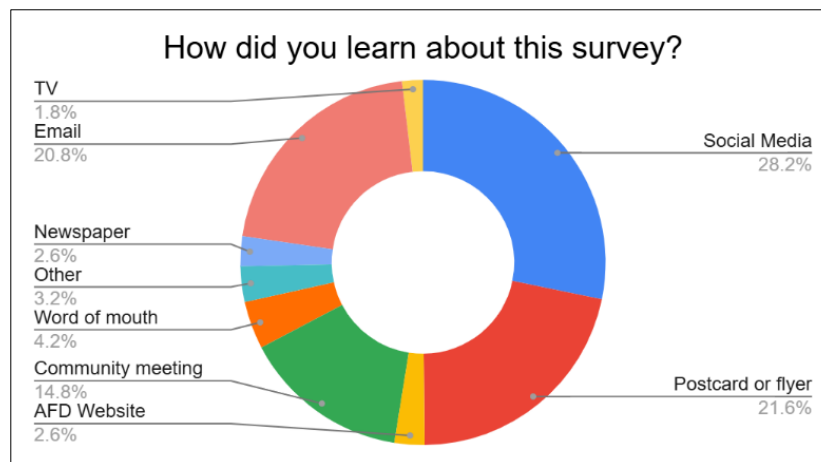


Figure 8: Assessment of survey promotion effectiveness

To identify opportunities for future community engagement, respondents were asked which community groups they currently participate in. The most frequently cited affiliations were Community Councils (26%) and recreation groups (25%).

To assess current community awareness of wildfire programs, two related questions were included in the survey. Respondents’ understanding of Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP) was most commonly rated at 3 out of 5. Among the 141 respondents who answered the question on wildfire preparedness programs, 121 indicated familiarity with Firewise Alaska and 90 indicated familiarity with Ready, Set, Go!

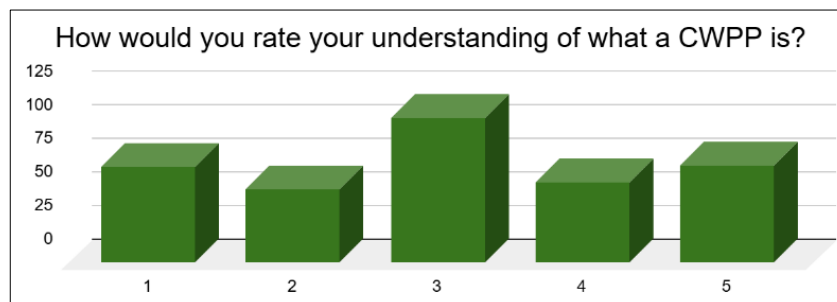


Figure 9: Community members rated their understanding of what a CWPP is as a 3 out of 5

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Specific questions were included to assess awareness and implementation of the Firewise program. Participants were asked whether their property meets Firewise standards and, if not, what barriers prevent them from achieving them. Creation of defensible space is widely recognized as one of the most effective ways individual property owners can contribute to community wildfire resilience and preparedness. Only 14% of respondents indicated that their property is Firewise. Among those who reported their property as not Firewise, the three most common barriers were lack of knowledge about required actions, financial limitations, and lack of time.

Free-text responses also highlighted two recurring themes: some participants cited homeowners' association (HOA) restrictions that limit landscape modifications, while others expressed doubt that individual efforts would be meaningful without broader neighborhood participation.

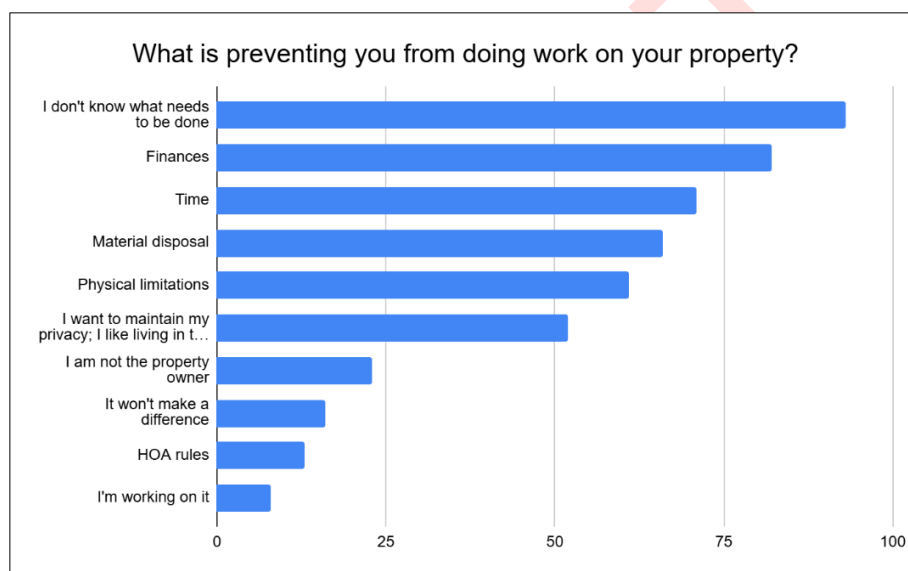


Figure 10: Community members reported that a lack of knowledge about what actions to take and financial limitations were the primary reasons their property is not Firewise

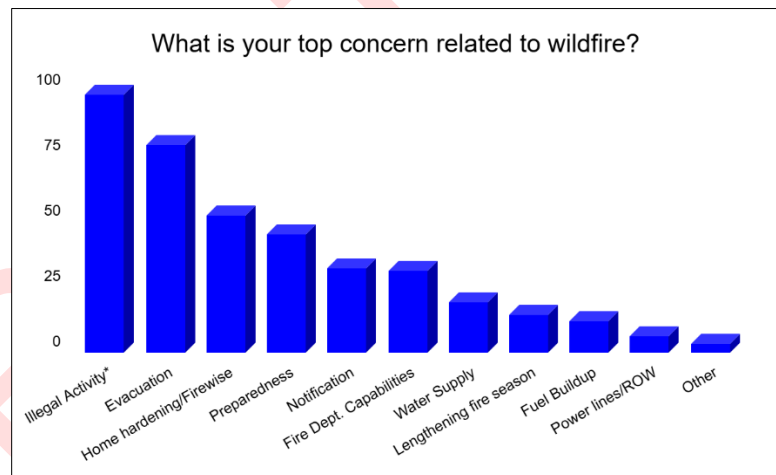
Community Perception

A large portion of the survey focused on community perceptions of overall preparedness, residents' concerns, and recommendations for addressing those concerns. In addition to highlighting challenges and opportunities, respondents shared positive perceptions of local fire management and community engagement. The following narrative summarizes the free-text feedback received, complemented by charts and graphs depicting responses to questions with predefined answer options. Percentages reflect the share of respondents who provided feedback in each category. Because many respondents shared multiple types of feedback, total percentages may exceed 100%.

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Top Concerns Related to Wildfire

1. Wildfire ignition and spread (20%): Many respondents cited the risk of wildfire starting from natural causes, human activities, or illegal fires, particularly in areas with high numbers of homeless encampments or recreational fires. Approximately 60% of these respondents specifically identified homeless encampments and illegal fires as a concern. One participant commented, *“Illegal camps in wooded areas need to be outlawed. Between fireworks and homeless, the city has a disaster waiting to happen.”*
2. High fuel loads and beetle kill (24%): Dead and dying spruce trees, combined with dense vegetation, were mentioned as critical risk factors. For example, one resident noted, *“We need more firebreaks and more property owners removing brush and fire hazards. There is so much dead or sick trees in the area, and the likelihood of a fire getting out of control is high.”*
3. Limited evacuation and emergency access (30%): Respondents expressed concern about neighborhoods with single access routes, especially in hillside and outlying areas. One resident stated, *“We are one road in/out. What are strategies planned in case evacuation is needed?”*
4. Inadequate water supply and firefighting infrastructure (10%): Participants noted the need for additional hydrants, water storage, and equipment to support rapid wildfire response. *“AFD needs adequate water supply on the hillside in the form of temporary standing water tanks,”* one participant explained.
5. Community awareness and participation (35%): Many respondents indicated that residents are not fully aware of the risks or the actions they can take to mitigate fire threats. *“The people of Anchorage seem to be remarkably indifferent and unaware,”* a respondent wrote.



11: Community concerns. *A wildfire started due to unauthorized or illegal activities within our parks

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Suggested Mitigation Projects and Actions

Respondents shared a variety of ideas for mitigating wildfire risk, ranging from personal property actions to larger-scale municipal and interagency projects:

1. Defensible space and vegetation management (45%): The most frequently cited actions included creating defensible space on private properties, clearing deadfall, thinning overgrown areas, and establishing fire breaks. *“Thinning, removing dead trees, and vegetation reduction”* was a common theme across responses.

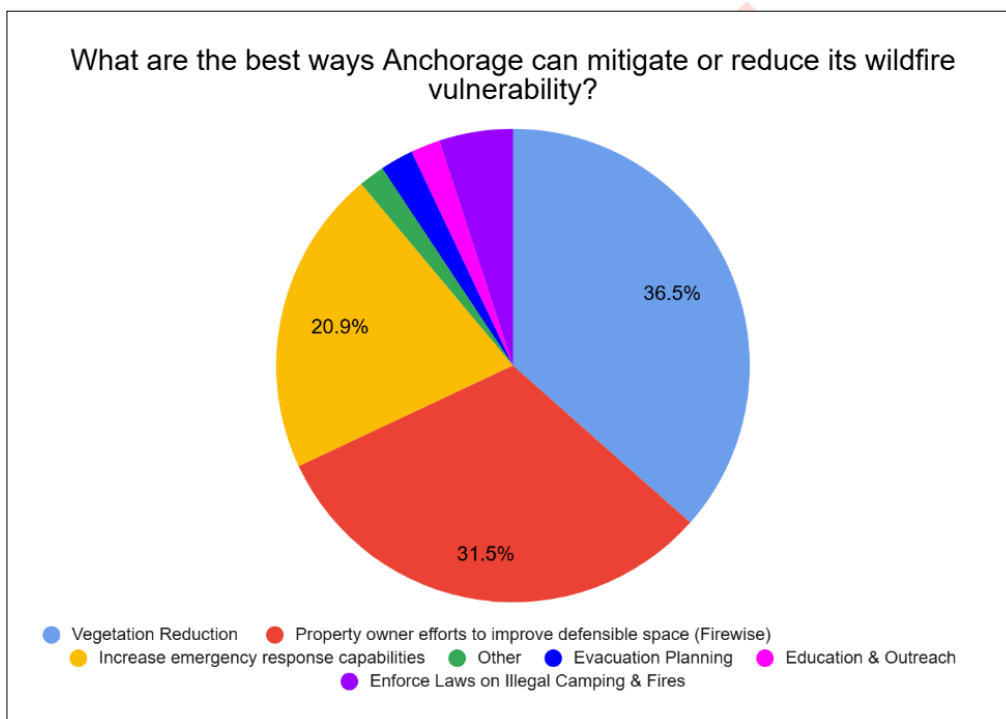


Figure 12: Community members believe that vegetation reduction and creating defensible space on private properties are the best ways to mitigate or reduce community wildfire vulnerability

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2. Critical infrastructure protection (23%): Residents identified areas that should be prioritized for wildfire mitigation, including electrical lines, water systems, and key municipal facilities. Suggestions included *“Undergrounding electric lines, adding water storage, and keeping illegal camping out”*.

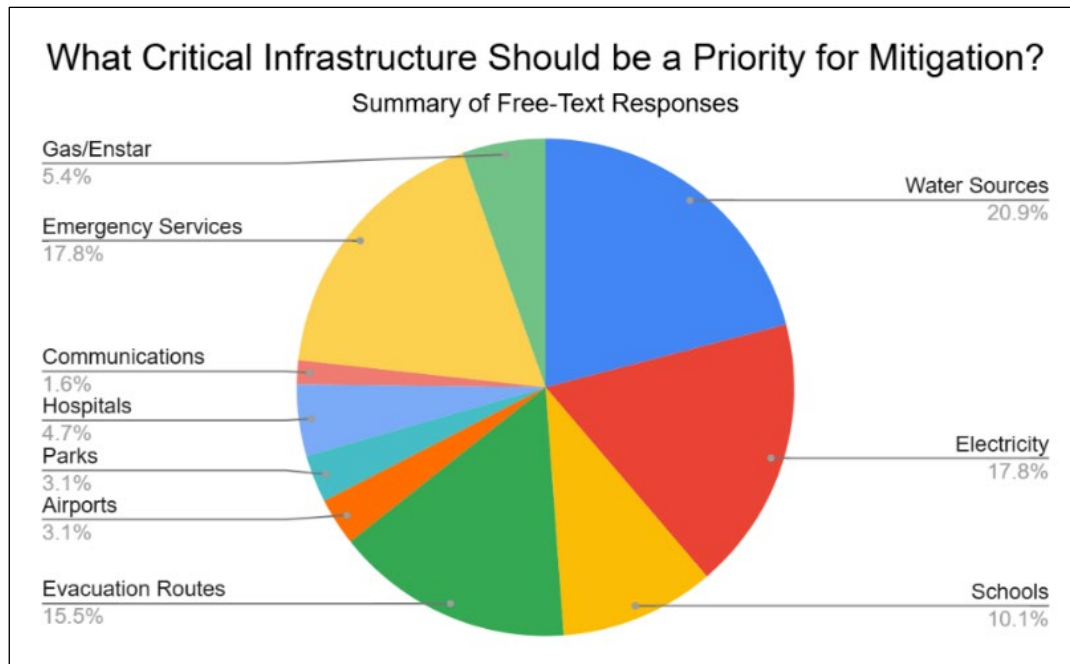


Figure 13: Important critical infrastructure types – some respondents listed names or locations of specific infrastructure falling within these categories

3. Community engagement and education (30%): Respondents recommended expanding public outreach through schools, workshops, and direct door-to-door communication. Several emphasized engaging youth: *“Talk to the elementary and high school students. They’ll take the info home to their parents.”*
4. Law enforcement and enforcement of fire restrictions (25%): Some respondents noted the importance of stricter enforcement against illegal fires and homeless campfires. *“All the homeless encampments in the woods around the city. Fires have been happening and we have been lucky they haven’t spread to neighborhoods.”*

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Perceptions About Wildfire Preparedness

Responses indicate mixed perceptions of how prepared Anchorage is for a wildfire incident:

1. Confidence in local fire personnel (12%): Residents expressed trust in the expertise and professionalism of the Anchorage Fire Department and affiliated agencies. *“Our firefighters and wildfire fighters seem to do a pretty good job,”* and *“The best preparation is prevention, so I can’t rate any higher because the rate of fires that are caused by preventable causes is too high.”*

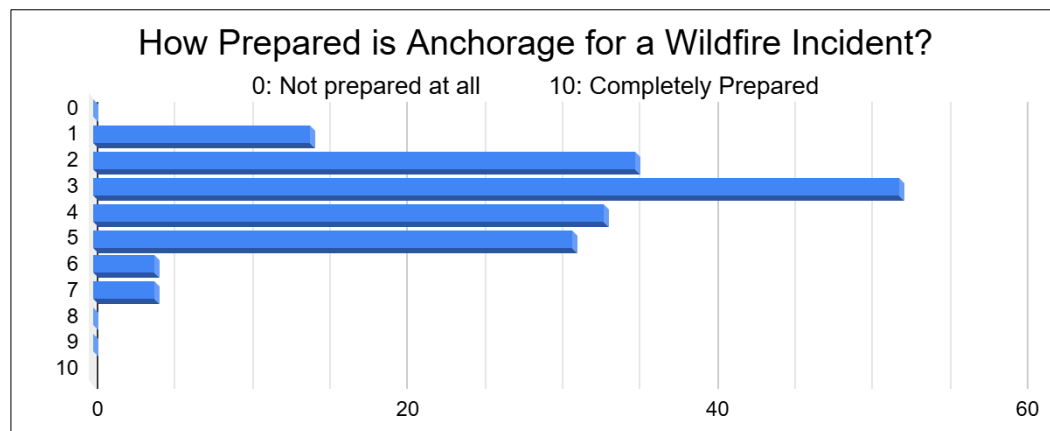


Figure 14: Respondents rated Anchorage's overall wildfire preparedness as 3 out of 10

2. Concerns about capacity and resources (23%): While local agencies are trusted, concerns about staffing, equipment, and water access were expressed, particularly for large-scale events or wind-driven fires. *“A large wildfire driven by winds on the hillside is beyond AFD capability.”*

Positive Feedback and Recognition

Despite the concerns, respondents also provided positive feedback on efforts being made to reduce wildfire risk.

1. Recognition of fire personnel (40%): Respondents highlighted confidence in local fire teams and their capability to manage wildfire events. *“I have family members retired AFD; the department is great”* and *“I know AFD, GFD, and SOA Forestry do a great job.”*
2. Support for education and CWPP updates (29%): Improvements in public outreach and communication was acknowledged. *“The CWPP will be a huge step forward in preparing Anchorage”* and *“We appreciate the updates from AFD at the ERVCC meetings!”*

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3. Visible mitigation efforts (23%): Respondents noted that vegetation management, firebreak creation, and debris removal are being observed and appreciated in their neighborhoods. *“Dead tree removal in parks has been huge and now there’s enough buzz about it that property owners might be doing more.”*
4. General encouragement and gratitude (27%): Respondents shared appreciation for the work being done. *“Thank you for all your time and effort!”* and *“Your work matters and is appreciated!”*

Summary and Implications for CWPP Implementation

The qualitative feedback illustrates that Anchorage residents are aware of wildfire risks, recognize progress, but also remain concerned about capacity, funding, and community awareness. These insights complement quantitative survey findings, offering rich context for prioritizing projects, outreach strategies, and policy actions. Key implications include:

1. Focus on vegetation management and defensible space for both private properties and public lands.
2. Prioritize critical infrastructure protection, especially in neighborhoods with limited access and high wildfire vulnerability.
3. Increase public education and engagement, leveraging schools, community councils, and targeted outreach to non-English speakers.
4. Enhance enforcement and prevention measures, particularly regarding illegal fires and homeless campfires.
5. Expand funding and technical support, including homeowner assistance programs and agency resource augmentation.
6. Establish a permanent Wildfire Division.

Collectively, this feedback reinforces the importance of multi-layered wildfire mitigation strategies that combine community involvement, agency coordination, and proactive planning to enhance resilience across Anchorage. See the recommendations section in the *Main Document* and *Appendix D: Mitigation Recommendations* for strategies developed in response to these implications.

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Conclusion

The extensive community engagement efforts described in this appendix—including online and mail campaigns, social media outreach, community meetings, targeted events, and the survey analysis—provided Anchorage residents multiple opportunities to learn about, participate in, and provide feedback on the CWPP process. Input collected through these efforts directly informed the identification of wildfire risks, priorities, and recommended mitigation strategies included in the plan.

The Anchorage Fire Department and project partners greatly appreciate the time, insights, and collaboration of community members, community councils, and organizations such as WUI-CAT. Their contributions ensured that the CWPP reflects the needs, concerns, and priorities of the community it is designed to serve.

Overall, this appendix demonstrates that Anchorage’s CWPP was developed through a transparent, inclusive, and data-informed process, providing a strong foundation for implementing wildfire preparedness, mitigation, and resilience actions throughout the municipality.