



CITY OF ORANGE

Office of Mayor

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August 12, 2026

The Honorable Sheila F. Hanson
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701

**Re: Response to the 2025-2026 Orange County Grand Jury Report
“Wildfires Hit Home”**

Dear Honorable Judge Hanson:

The following is the City of Orange’s response to the findings and recommendations contained in the Orange County Grand Jury Report, “Wildfires Hit Home.” The City of Orange is required to respond to Findings F-1 through F-6 and Recommendations R-2 through R-4.

FINDINGS:

F-1. More frequent and severe wildfires driven by increasingly hotter, drier, and windier conditions in the Orange County wildland-urban interface are escalating impacts on financial and non-financial resources. Among the financial costs are dramatic increases in homeowners’ insurance premiums, non-renewals, and inability to obtain insurance.

City's Response: The City agrees with the finding. The City of Orange maintains a proactive, long-standing commitment to wildfire mitigation. For more than 35 years, the City has established and rigorously maintained extensive fuel modification zones beginning with City designated High Fire Hazard Zones and now in the Local Responsibility Area Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones. In addition, the City of Orange Fire Department enforces bi-annual inspections on 350 parcels for brush vegetation and vegetation clearance in multiple areas not designated by state maps. The majority of these areas have been identified over the years of concern due to proximity to high fire hazard areas in the east-end of the city.

As wildfire risks continue to impact both the state economy and the financial well-being of residents in the City of Orange, the City actively collaborates with residents, HOAs, and landscaping companies to mitigate these hazards. These ongoing efforts are designed to reduce local wildfire risk, enhance community resilience, and support the continued insurability of local homes.

F-2. Actions that address conditions in the home ignition zone to significantly reduce ignition potential can prevent a community wildland-urban interface fire disaster or suburban conflagration.

City's Response: The City agrees with the finding. The City of Orange concurs that managing the Home Ignition Zone (HIZ) is one of the most critical and effective actions homeowners can take to mitigate wildfire risk. Evidence-based research and evaluation have demonstrated that proper HIZ maintenance significantly reduces the risk of home ignition caused by ember cast during a wildfire event. To embed this critical practice within the community, the City conducts public outreach campaigns. These targeted engagements have included Orange Park Acres (HOA) and were specifically designed to elevate awareness of the Home Ignition Zone as a primary focus for local wildfire resilience and risk reduction.

F-3. Expanded engagement with the community to raise awareness and provide support regarding home hardening and defensible space will increase effectiveness of wildfire risk mitigation and insurance risk reduction efforts.

City's Response: The City agrees with the finding. Community engagement is critical to empowering residents with the knowledge required to systematically reduce structural and vegetative vulnerability ahead of a wildfire event. To move beyond generalized mapping, the City of Orange is in the process of evaluating Xyloplan modeling technology. This technology could be used to analyze local fire pathways and evaluate specific risk exposure down to the individual parcel level. The City is investigating leveraging data-driven insights from this localized analysis to educate individual homeowners on high-impact, property-specific risk reduction strategies.

F-4. Achievement of community-level and property-level wildfire risk mitigation designations (such as Firewise USA Site, Fire Risk Reduction Community or Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety certification) lessens wildfire risk and helps reduce insurance premium costs.

City's Response: The City agrees with the finding. The City of Orange is investigating a possible Firewise for specific high and very high fire zones. The City recognizes that establishing a community-led structure necessary for successful implementation.

F-5. All county residents should be made aware that Safer from Wildfire regulation requires insurers to provide discounts to homeowners and communities that implement home hardening and defensible space measures regardless of whether a property is located within a Fire Hazard Severity Zone.

City's Response: The City agrees with the finding. The City of Orange actively promotes and disseminates information regarding the California Department of Insurance “Safer from Wildfires” regulatory framework. These resources are in our brochure Ready, Set, Go! Information includes wildfire recovery and readiness, how Safer can help with insurance, and how the California FAIR Plan is a critical insurance option for residents and businesses.

F-6. AB888, California Safe Homes Grant Program, provides financial assistance to eligible homeowners, cities, counties, and special districts for home hardening and defensible space measures. Applying for and using these grant funds will reduce wildfire losses and improve insurability and resilience of vulnerable communities.

City's Response: The City agrees with the finding. The City of Orange recognizes that external grant funding is an essential tool to expand community-wide resilience and assist homeowners who face financial constraints when implementing critical wildfire mitigation measures. Securing and utilizing available grant funds can enhance localized hazard reduction efforts. The City will continue to evaluate available grant opportunities, including the California Safe Homes Grant Program.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

R-2. By December 31, 2026, cities and fire service agencies, including Orange County Fire Authority should commit to participation in a county-wide annual wildfire prevention fair planned by the Orange County Board of Supervisors to showcase wildfire prevention outreach programs.

City's Response: The recommendation requires further analysis. The City will evaluate participation in a county-wide annual wildfire prevention fair based on the scope of the event, available resources, and the City's existing wildfire prevention and public outreach programs. The City will complete its analysis within six months of publication of the Grand Jury report.

R-3. By December 31, 2026, cities, unincorporated areas, special districts, and fire service agencies in High and Very-High Fire Hazard Severity Zones should initiate planning activities to achieve community-level wildfire risk mitigation designations and/or establish a local Fire Safe Council within one year.

City's Response: The recommendation requires further analysis. The City will evaluate the feasibility and resource requirements associated with pursuing an appropriate community-level wildfire risk mitigation designation and/or establishment of a local Fire Safe Council. The City will complete its analysis within six months of publication of the Grand Jury report.

R-4. By December 31, 2026, to ensure city residents are engaged and aware of wildfire risk reduction resources, OCFA member and non-member cities should provide information, develop their own outreach program, and establish a direct contact person(s) for their residents. This is in addition to whatever referrals or references made to OCFA outreach programs.

City's Response: The recommendation has been implemented. The City of Orange and the Orange City Fire Department have established a comprehensive public outreach program, hosting multiple educational events annually. Furthermore, a dedicated Public Education staff member is formally assigned as the direct point of contact for residents regarding these wildfire safety initiatives.

Thank you for your service and efforts on behalf of the City of Orange. We hope this response will be helpful.

Sincerely,

Daniel R. Slater
Mayor, City of Orange

Cc: The Orange County Grand Jury
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Bcc: Jarad L. Hildenbrand, City Manager
Nathalie Adourian, City Attorney