

ORDINANCE NO. 627-25

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL, ADOPTING THE 2025 CALIFORNIA WILDLAND-URBAN INTERFACE CODE, BASED ON THE 2024 INTERNATIONAL WILDLAND-URBAN INTERFACE CODE INCLUDING LOCAL AMENDMENTS AND ADDITIONS

Summary: This ordinance will adopt the 2025 California Wildland-Urban Interface Code including local amendments and an exemption from CEQA.

WHEREAS, every three years the State of California adopts a new California Building Standards Code (BSC) which includes a new California Wildland-Urban Interface Code; and,

WHEREAS, the State of California has adopted the 2025 California Wildland-Urban Code based on the 2024 International Wildland-Urban Interface Code published by the International Code Council, hereinafter referred to collectively as the California Wildland-Urban Interface Code; and,

WHEREAS, Health & Safety Code Section 17958 permits the City of Murrieta to make such changes or modifications to the California Wildland-Urban Interface Code as are reasonably necessary because of local conditions; and,

WHEREAS, Health & Safety Code Section 17958.7 requires that the City of Murrieta, before making any changes or modifications to the California Wildland-Urban Interface Code, make express findings that such changes or modifications are needed due to local climatic, geological, or topographical conditions; and,

WHEREAS, the City Council finds that the City has certain climatic, geological, and topographical features that can have a deleterious effect on emergency services such as fire protection and emergency medical services; and,

WHEREAS, the City Council finds that the modifications and changes to the California Wildland-Urban Interface Code are reasonably necessary because of the local climatic, geological, and topographical conditions set forth herein as identified below; and,

WHEREAS, Sections 50022.1 through 50022.10, inclusive of the Government Code and Section 17922 of the Health & Safety Code, provide authority for the adoption by reference of codes, or portion of such codes.

WHEREAS, The 2025 Edition of the California Wildland-Urban Interface Code (CWUI) is based on the 2024 International Wildland-Urban Interface Code. The CWUI published by the BSC in Title 24, Part 7 of the California Code of Regulations must be in effect by January 1, 2026. To include local amendments and enhance life safety, and property protection, the city must complete its adoption process thirty (30) days prior to implementation. The adoption of the 2025 CWUI into the City of Murrieta Municipal Code provides an orderly administration of the 2025 CWUI by the City's Building Official and Fire Code Official.

**NOW, THEREFORE, THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF
MURRIETA, CALIFORNIA DOES HEREBY ORDAIN AS FOLLOWS:**

SECTION 1. MUNICIPAL CODE ADDITION

Chapter 15.30 of the Murrieta Municipal Code is hereby added as found in Exhibit A attached hereto and incorporated herein as if set forth in full.

SECTION 2. LOCAL AMENDMENT FINDINGS

The City Council of the City of Murrieta finds that the modifications and changes to the CWUI Code are reasonably necessary because of the local climatic, geological, and topographical conditions set forth herein.

A. Climate Considerations

1. The City of Murrieta located in Riverside County is located in Southern California and covers a vast and varied geographic area. The base climate in western Riverside County consists of semi-arid Mediterranean weather patterns. Eastern Riverside County is a desert area with Mohave Desert temperatures and weather patterns. Those two primary areas are divided by the San Bernardino Mountain Range. Both areas outside of the mountain terrain annually experience extended periods of high temperatures with little or no precipitation. Hot, dry winds, which may reach speeds of 70 m.p.h. or greater, are common to the area. Examples are: Santa Ana/Foehn winds, afternoon surface-heating generated winds, and prevailing desert winds.

These climatic conditions cause extreme drying of vegetation and common building materials. Frequent periods of drought and low humidity add to the fire danger. This predisposes the area to large destructive fires (conflagration) which necessitates rapid identification, locating and extinguishment of all fires in the smallest stage possible. In addition to directly damaging or destroying buildings, these fires are also prone to disrupt utility services throughout the County. Obstacles generated by a strong wind, such as fallen trees, streetlights and utility poles, will greatly impact the response time to reach an incident scene. During these winds, the inability to use aerial type firefighting apparatus would further decrease our ability to stop fires in large buildings and place rescue personnel at increased risk of injury.

2. Although Riverside County and the City of Murrieta occasionally experiences periods of significant drought, the County can also experience periods of substantial rainfall. Annual rainfall varying from three inches in Blythe to over 33 inches in Pine Cove. When Riverside County does experience heavy rain, or rain over a period of days or weeks, many areas of the County are subject to flooding. Runoff from rain drains either naturally into rivers, washes, and creeks or into flood control facilities. Flash flooding is also a common problem, especially in the Coachella Valley and the easterly portions of the County. Flash flooding is typically associated with short duration, high intensity precipitation events often associated with summer thunderstorms. Such events can occur even during a drought.

3. Water demand in densely populated Southern California far exceeds the quantity supplied by natural precipitation; and although the population continues to grow, the already-taxed water supply does not. California is projected to increase in population by nearly 10 million over the next quarter of a century with 50 percent of that growth centered in Southern California. Due to storage capacities and consumption, and a limited amount of rainfall, future water allocation is not fully dependable. This necessitates the need for additional and on-site fire protection features. It would also leave tall buildings vulnerable to uncontrolled fires due to a lack of available water and an inability to pump sufficient quantities of available water to floors in a fire.

4. These dry climatic conditions and winds contribute to the rapid spread of even small fires originating in high-density housing or vegetation. These fires spread very quickly and create a need for increased levels of fire protection. The added protection of fire sprinkler systems and other fire protection features such as identification and notification will supplement normal fire department response by providing immediate protection for the building occupants and by containing and controlling the fire spread to the area of origin. Fire sprinkler systems will also reduce the use of water for firefighting by as much as 50 to 75 percent.

B. Topographic Considerations

1. Natural. The topographical conditions of Riverside County vary from 300 feet below sea-level, flat desert communities, to mountains over 10,000 feet in Alpine-like areas of the San Bernardino Mountain Range. In between these areas, developable slopes of 25 percent and greater generally occur throughout the foothills. Riverside County extends from Orange County to the State of Arizona and is mixed with congested urban areas, rural lands and wild lands. A large number of sensitive habitats for various animal species and vegetation consist within large open space areas between major urban centers that impact building and structure location, which impedes emergency access and response. This variety in regions contributes to an increased emergency response time, which necessitates cooperation between local agencies.

2. Traffic and circulation congestion is an artificially created, obstructive topographical condition, which is common throughout Riverside County and within the City of Murrieta.

3. These topographical conditions combine to create a situation, which places fire department response time to fire occurrences at risk, and makes it necessary to provide automatic on-site fire-extinguishing systems and other protection measures to protect occupants and property.

C. Geographic Considerations

1. Located within Riverside County and in the City of Murrieta are several

known active and potentially active earthquake faults, including the San Andreas, San Jacinto, and Elsinore Fault. In the event of an earthquake, the location of the epicenter as well as the time of day and season of the year would have a profound effect on the number of deaths and casualties, as well as property damage.

2. The major form of direct damage from most earthquakes is damage to construction. Bridges are particularly vulnerable to collapse, and dam failure may generate major downstream flooding. Buildings vary in susceptibility, dependent upon construction and the types of soils on which they are built. Earthquakes destroy power and telephone lines; gas, sewer, or water mains; which, in turn, may set off fires and/or hinder firefighting or rescue efforts. The hazard of earthquakes varies from place to place, dependent upon the regional and local geology. Ground shaking may occur in areas 65 miles or more from the epicenter (the point on the ground surface above the focus). Ground shaking can change the mechanical properties of some fine grained, saturated soils, where upon they liquefy and act as a fluid (liquefaction).

3. Previous earthquakes in southern California have been accompanied by disruption of traffic flow and fires. A severe seismic event has the potential to negatively impact any rescue or fire suppression activities because it is likely to create obstacles similar to those indicated under the high wind section above. With the probability of strong aftershocks there exists a need to provide increased protection for anyone on upper floors of buildings.

4. Road circulation features located throughout the County and the City of Murrieta also make amendments reasonably necessary. Located through the County and the City of Murrieta are major roadways, highways and flood control channels that create barriers and slow response times. Hills, slopes, street and storm drain design, accompanied with occasional heavy rainfall, causes roadway flooding and landslides and at times may make an emergency access route impassable. There are areas in Murrieta that naturally have extended emergency response times that exceed the five-minute goal.

The table below details amendments to specific Sections of the 2025 California Wildland-Urban Interface Code and the applicable Finding for each.

Amendment	Finding	Amendment	Finding
Definitions 202	Administrative	604.6	A1, A2, A3, A4
602.4	A1, A2, A3, A4		

SECTION 3. CALIFORNIA WILDLAND-URBAN INTERFACE CODE ADOPTION

The City Council hereby adopts the California Wildland-Urban Interface Code for the City of Murrieta. The 2025 California Wildland-Urban Interface Code of Title 24, Part 7. In addition, the following provisions that are excluded in the 2025 California Wildland-Urban Interface Code are hereby adopted - Chapter 1, 1.12, Division II, 402 and Appendices A are adopted together with the City's amendments as set forth in this ordinance.

This California Wildland-Urban Interface Code is adopted for the protection of public health and safety. The provisions of this code shall apply to the construction, alteration, movement, enlargement, replacement, repair, equipment, use and occupancy, location, maintenance, removal, and demolition of every building or structure, or any appurtenance connected or attached thereto, within the City of Murrieta. These provisions further apply to building materials, systems, and assemblies used in the exterior design and construction of new buildings located within a wildland–urban interface area, establishing minimum requirements intended to mitigate conditions that could cause a fire originating in a structure to ignite vegetation, or allow a wildfire burning in vegetation fuels to transmit fire to structures, thereby threatening life safety, exceeding fire suppression capabilities, or resulting in significant property loss.

SECTION 4. CEQA

This ordinance is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”) under Section 15061(b)(3) of the CEQA Guidelines, which provides that CEQA only applies to projects that have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where, as here, it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question would have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA.

SECTION 5. SEVERABILITY

If any section, subsection, sentence, clause, or phrase of this ordinance is for any reason held to be invalid or unconstitutional by a decision of any court of any competent jurisdiction, such decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this ordinance. The City Council hereby declares that it would have passed this ordinance, and each and every section, subsection sentence, clause and phrase thereof not declared invalid or unconstitutional without regard to whether any portion of the ordinance would be subsequently declared invalid or unconstitutional.

SECTION 6. NOTICE OF ADOPTION

The City Clerk shall certify to the adoption of this ordinance and shall publish a summary of this Ordinance and post a certified copy of the full ordinance in the office of the City Clerk at least five (5) days prior to the adoption of the proposed ordinance; and within fifteen (15) days after adoption of the ordinance, the City Clerk shall publish a summary of the ordinance with the names of the council members voting for and against the ordinance.

SECTION 7. EFFECTIVE DATE

This Ordinance shall become effective on January 1, 2026.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this ___th day of _____, 2025.

Cindy Warren, Mayor

ATTEST:

Cristal McDonald, City Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Tiffany Israel, City Attorney

STATE OF CALIFORNIA)
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE)§
CITY OF MURRIETA)

I, Cristal McDonald, City Clerk of the City of Murrieta, California, do hereby certify that the foregoing Ordinance No. 627-25 was duly passed and adopted by the City Council of the City of Murrieta at the regular meeting thereof, held on the ___th day of _____, 2025, and was signed by the Mayor of the said City, and that the same was passed and adopted by the following vote:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTAIN:

Cristal McDonald, City Clerk

I, Cristal McDonald, City Clerk of the City of Murrieta, California further certify that Ordinance No. 627-25 was duly published according to law and the order of the City Council of said City and the same was so published in *Press Enterprise*, a newspaper of general circulation on the following date(s):

Adopted Ordinance: _____, 2025.

Cristal McDonald, City Clerk

EXHIBIT “A”

15.30.010 Adoption of the California Wildland-Urban Interface Code. The City of Murrieta adopts as the California Wildland-Urban Interface Code for the City of Murrieta Fire & Rescue the following: the 2025 California Wildland-Urban Interface based on the 2024 International California Wildland-Urban Interface. In addition, the following provisions that are excluded in the 2025 California Wildland-Urban Interface are hereby adopted - Chapter 1, Division II, Section 402, and Appendix A in its entirety except sections A-102.3 – A102.3.2.2 are adopted together with the City's amendments as set forth in this ordinance. The California Wildland-Urban Interface and its appendix chapters will be on file for public examination in the offices of the Fire Marshal, Building Official, and the City Clerk’s office.

15.30.020 Section 101.1 Amended– Title. These regulations shall be known as the California Wildland-Urban Interface Code of the City of Murrieta, hereinafter referred to as the California Wildland-Urban Interface Code (CWUI).

15.30.130 Section 102.9 Added – Repeal of Conflicting Ordinances, Resolutions, or Motions. All former ordinances, resolutions, or motions or parts thereof, conflicting or inconsistent with the provisions of this chapter are repealed.

15.30.040 Section 103.1 Amended – Creation of an Agency. The City of Murrieta is hereby created and the official in charge therefore shall be known as the fire code official. The function of the agency shall be the implementation, administration, and enforcement of the provisions of this code.

15.30.050 Section 202 Added – Definitions

FUEL MODIFICATION PLAN. An approved plan which identifies specific fuel modification zones within a property are subject to fuel modification. Fuel modification plans show the area and location of all hardscape/soft scape improvements and fuel modifications necessary to achieve the minimum acceptable level of risk to structures from fires in the combustible vegetation.

FUEL MODIFICATION ZONE. A specific area where vegetation has been removed, planted, or modified in conjunction with an approved fuel modification plan that increases the likelihood that a structure will survive a wildfire, improve the defensible space around the structure for firefighting activities, and prevents direct flame contact with the structures. Vegetation includes native ornamental plants, non-native naturalized annual grasses, and other invasive or naturalized species. Fuel modification activities can include removal, partial or total replacement of existing plants with adequately space drought-tolerant and fire-resistant species and thinning of existing native or ornamental species.

UNENCLOSED COVERED STRUCTURE. Includes covered structures with a solid or open roof and no more than one side closed.

15.30.060 Section 602.4 ADDED- Fuel Modification Plan. A fuel modification plan shall be

submitted to and approved by the fire code official prior to the issuance of a grading permit. The plan shall be developed in accordance with city-code , adopted guidelines, nationally recognized standards, and shall include provisions for ongoing maintenance.

15.30.070 Section 604.6 ADDED- Maintenance of Fuel Modification Zone. Fuel Modification Zones, not in compliance with the City of Murrieta Municipal Code, respective guidelines and recognized standards shall constitute a fire hazard.

15.30.080 APPENDIX A GENERAL REQUIREMENTS – Section A102.3 - DELETED- Sections A102.3 through A102.3.2.2 of Appendix A are deleted without replacement.