



The Corporation of the District of Central Saanich

REGULAR COUNCIL REPORT

For the Regular Council meeting on Monday, October 21, 2024

Re: Community Resiliency Investment Program - FireSmart Community Funding & Supports

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the application to the Community Resiliency Investment Program - FireSmart Community Funding be supported by way of a Council resolution

PURPOSE:

To request Council Resolution in support of a Community Resiliency Investment Program - FireSmart Community Funding Grant.

BACKGROUND:

The FireSmart Community Funding grant aims to sustain the FireSmart Coordinator position and FireSmart activities. This will allow the continued growth of the District of Central Saanich's FireSmart BC Program and offering resources to achieve goals outlined in the Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan (CWRP). Once approved, this two-year funding will continue to support efforts to enhance community engagement, education, and cooperation with District departments and collaboration with regional partners to reduce wildfire risk. A resolution of support from the Council is needed for the funding application.

The Community Resiliency Investment (CRI) Program offers various funding opportunities aimed at reducing wildfire risks and minimizing their effects on BC communities. Funded by the Province of BC and managed by the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM), this report focuses on applying for the "FireSmart Community Funding & Supports" stream. This stream provides local governments and First Nations with financial support to enhance community resilience through FireSmart planning and activities that lower wildfire risks.

FireSmart is a nationally recognized program designed to help local governments and First Nations implement strategies to reduce wildfire threats. Backed by extensive research and modelling, FireSmart principles have proven effective in protecting lives and property even under extreme wildfire conditions.

The District's 2024 Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan (CWRP), prepared by B.A. Blackwell and Associates Ltd, along with the Provincial Wildland Urban Interface Risk Classification, ranks Central Saanich in the moderate risk category. Both emphasize the importance of developing mitigation strategies based on FireSmart principles for wildland urban interface fires.

In 2022 and 2023, Central Saanich used UBCM funding to hire a temporary FireSmart Coordinator to further develop the FireSmart Program, prioritizing community engagement and public education. This

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approach included education, community outreach, interagency collaboration, emergency planning, training, and projects targeting critical infrastructure and residential areas, ultimately improving wildfire resilience in at-risk communities.

DISCUSSION:

This funding allocation is intended to continue supporting the FireSmart Coordinator role, which is responsible for further developing and expanding the FireSmart BC Program in Central Saanich. It will also allow us to address the recommendations in the latest Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan (CWRP).

Through the remainder of 2024 and into 2025 and 2026, the FireSmart Coordinator will work to promote the FireSmart BC Program to Central Saanich residents. This will include incorporating wildfire prevention and preparedness education into community events, school presentations, and local park clean-ups. Special efforts will be made to reach high-risk neighborhoods through public information sessions, yard waste chipping days, and home assessments. The Coordinator will also collaborate with internal District departments, such as Parks and Planning, to apply FireSmart principles to green spaces and ensure wildfire hazard considerations are included in development permits.

In addition, the FireSmart Coordinator will continue to actively participate in the Greater Victoria Community FireSmart Resiliency Committee, fostering collaboration with neighboring communities and sharing best practices and resources to strengthen wildfire mitigation efforts across the region.

Overall, the FireSmart BC Program aims to raise awareness and improve community resilience against wildfire threats. Continued support and investment will allow for ongoing wildfire mitigation education for Central Saanich residents.

IMPLICATIONS:

Financial/ Resource

The two-year application requests that the \$400,000 would support a staff position, activities, and materials for the period of November 2024 through October 2026. No extra funding will be needed from the District of Central Saanich.

First Nations

First Nations are encouraged to apply for their own FireSmart Community Funding. The District has been discussing the potential for offering services to WJOLELP (Tsartlip), BOKEĆEN (Pauquachin), SÁUTW (Tsawout) through the review of services within the Fire Services Agreement. If requested, the First Nation Council would have to provide a resolution to the District to be shared with UBCM, and the District would need to update the CWP.

OPTIONS:

Option 1 (recommended):

That the application to the Community Resiliency Investment Program - FireSmart Community Funding be supported by way of a Council resolution

Option 2:

THAT Council provides other direction.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, the application for the Community Resiliency Investment Program - FireSmart Community Funding & Supports represents a significant opportunity for the District of Central Saanich to enhance its wildfire mitigation efforts and strengthen community resilience against fire threats. By supporting the FireSmart Coordinator position, the District will be well-equipped to implement critical educational programs, foster community engagement, and collaborate with regional partners to reduce wildfire risks effectively. The proposed initiatives are not only aligned with the goals of the Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan but also underscore the District's commitment to public safety and environmental stewardship. Therefore, we recommend that Council approve the application to ensure the successful continuation of these essential activities and support the well-being of our community.

Report written and submitted by:	Lisa Banfield, Emergency Program Manager
Concurrence by:	Kenn Mount, Fire Chief
Concurrence by:	Troy Ziegler, Director of Finance and Information Technology
Concurrence by:	Christine Culham, Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENTS:

Appendix A: Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan