

Draft Design
Guidelines
principle conflicts
with California WUI
& CalFire
Defensible Space
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CARMEL DESIGN GUIDELINES & FIRE RESILIENCE

CONTEXT



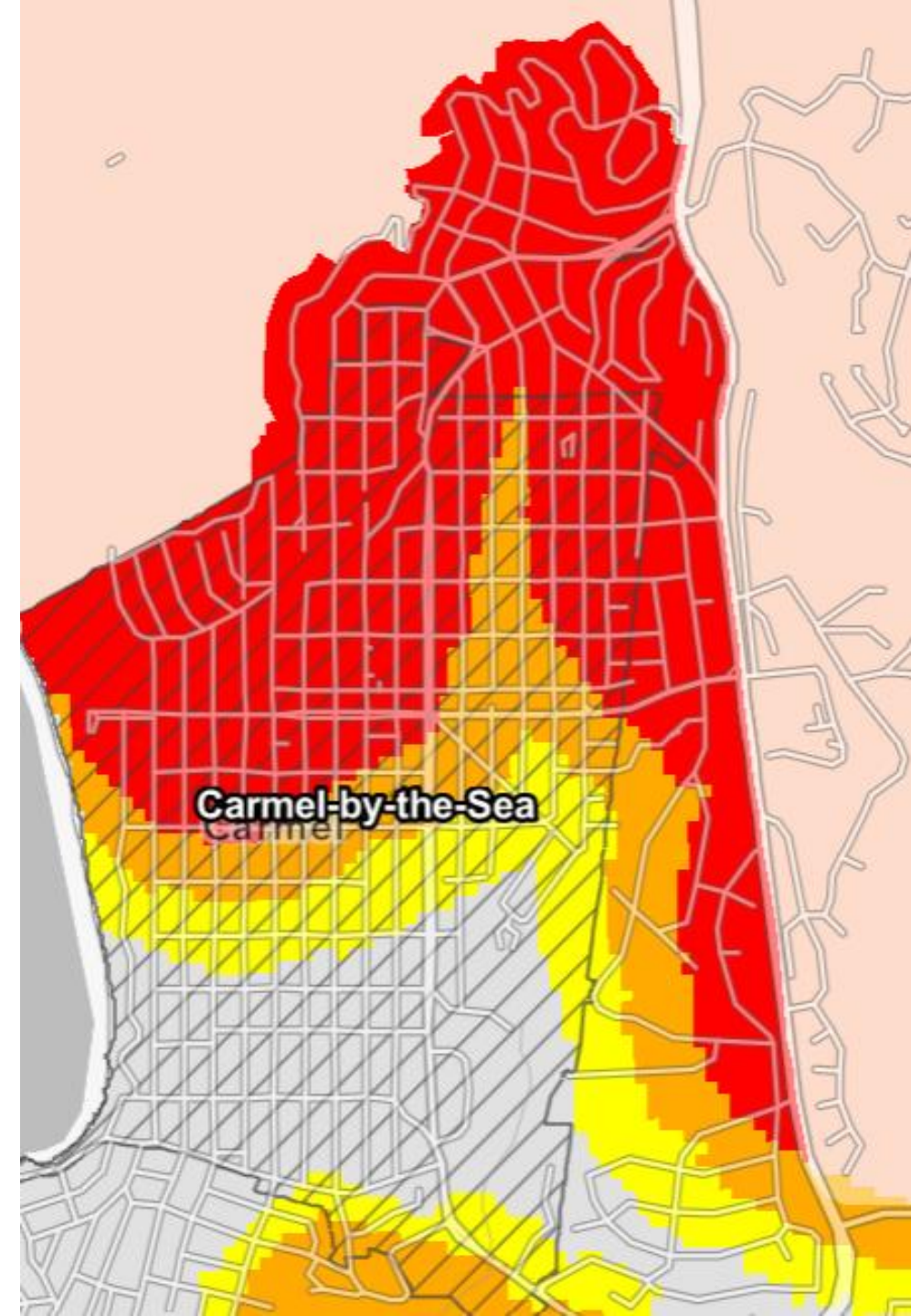
Much of Carmel by the Sea is located in the very high fire hazard severity zone (FHSZ)



Draft guidelines emphasize heritage, modesty, and forest preservation



Guidelines are missing explicit wildfire resilience measures



CORE PRINCIPLES OF CARMEL DESIGN GUIDELINES

Enhance	Enhance: Preserve forest and natural landscape
Subordinate	Subordinate: Buildings defer to site and forest character
Fit	Fit: Integrate with neighborhood context
Retain	Retain: Architectural heritage
Design	Design: Modesty and restraint
Detail	Detail: Authenticity and consistency

SUSTAINABILITY STRENGTHS

Environmental: native
plants, LID stormwater,
canopy preservation



Cultural: heritage continuity,
authentic materials



Social: privacy, views,
modest scale



Material: natural,
recyclable, biodegradable

FIRE SAFETY BLIND SPOTS

No explicit wildfire resilience principle

Wood shingles, siding, fences encouraged (combustible)

Landscaping lacks defensible space zones (0–100 ft)

No ember-resistant vent or roof detailing

No inspection/compliance linkage to CalFire standards

CALIFORNIA WUI CODE REQUIREMENTS

Materials: Ignition-resistant/noncombustible siding, Class A roofs

Openings: Ember-resistant vents, spark arrestors

Attachments: Noncombustible decks/fences in Zone 0

Inspection: Vegetation compliance required before permit final

CALFIRE DEFENSIBLE SPACE ZONES



Zone 0 (0–5 ft): Ember-resistant area, no combustible materials



Zone 1 (0–30 ft): Lean, clean, green; spacing between trees/shrubs



Zone 2 (30–100 ft): Fuel reduction, clearance around woodpiles,



propane tanks, outbuildings

COMPARISON TABLE

Topic	Carmel Draft	WUI/CalFire	Alignment
Wood materials	Encouraged	Restricted	Conflict
Landscaping	Heritage-driven	Zone 0–2 defensible space	Missing
Vents/openings	Aesthetic only	Ember-resistant required	Missing
Fences/decks	Wood preferred	Noncombustible near homes	Conflict
Inspections	Design review	Vegetation compliance	Missing

PROPOSED CORE PRINCIPLE AMENDMENT

- Add **7th Principle: Protect**
- Codify defensible space zones in landscape guidelines
- Require CBC 7A-compliant materials checklist
- Tie design approval to vegetation compliance before final inspection

PATH FORWARD

- Policy memo: integrate Protect principle
- Design review rubric: ember-resistance criteria
- Public guidance: “Designing for Fire Resilience in Carmel” supplement
- Harmonize heritage aesthetics with WUI standards

CLOSING

- Carmel's sustainability ethos is strong but incomplete
- Fire resilience is essential for long-term viability
- Integrating WUI + CalFire standards ensures both
heritage preservation and **community safety**