

2024



Community Wildfire Protection Plan

CITY OF SAN MARCOS



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Preface

What is a community wildfire protection plan?

Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP) are *blueprints* for preparedness at the neighborhood level. They organize a community's efforts to protect itself against wildfire, and empower citizens to move in a cohesive, common direction.

Among the key goals of San Marcos' CWPP, which was developed collaboratively by citizens, and federal, state, and local management agencies, are to:

- Align with the San Diego region's cohesive pre-fire strategy, which includes educating homeowners and building an understanding of wildland fire, ensuring defensible space clearing and structure hardening, safeguarding communities through fuels treatment, and protecting evacuation corridors.
- *Identify and prioritize areas for hazardous fuel reduction treatment.*
- Recommend the types and methods of treatment that will protect the community.
- Recommend measures to reduce the ignitability of structures throughout the area addressed by the plan.



Note: The CWPP is not to be construed as indicative of project "activity" as defined under the "Community Guide to the California Environmental Quality Act, Chapter Three, Projects Subject to CEQA." Any actual project activities undertaken that meet this definition of project activity and are undertaken by the CWPP participants or agencies listed shall meet with local, state, and federal environmental compliance requirements.

The Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego County produced this report in partnership with the San Diego County Fire Safe Council which is comprised of a 15-member Board of Directors consisting of leading representatives from federal, state & local agencies and stakeholders throughout San Diego County. In accordance with the federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.

01

Snapshot of the Community

Each community in San Diego County has a unique history and identity. Below is a description of what sets this area apart, including its landscape, preparedness, and firefighting resources.

I. OVERVIEW

SAN MARCOS

San Marcos is a well-rounded, vibrant, thriving community that offers a place where residents can

live, work and play. Located in the beautiful foothills of northern San Diego County, San Marcos is a vibrant community of residents who enjoy a fantastic quality of life.

The San Marcos Fire Department (SMFD) is an all-risk department responsive to the City of San Marcos and the San Marcos Fire Protection District, which covers an area of 33 square miles and a population of approximately 95,000 residents.

The SMFD response area is bordered on the north by Vista Fire Protection District and Deer Springs Fire Protection District, on the east by the city of Escondido, on the south by unincorporated San Diego County, and on the west by the cities of

Carlsbad and Vista. Primary access to the district is via I-15, Highway 78 and Deer Springs Road.

The Department protects an extremely diverse community consisting of large areas of residential development, commercial/retail centers, office buildings, industrial parks, and educational centers such as California State University San Marcos and Palomar Community College. In addition, the San Marcos Fire Department protects and manages several thousand acres of wildland and wildland-urban interface lands.

With an ISO Rating 1, the San Marcos Fire Department delivers a range of exceptional first responder services to the community, including:

- Fire suppression
- Rescue
- Emergency medical services
- Fire prevention services
- Vegetation management
- Public Education
- Emergency preparedness
- Trauma support

Population: 94,926



II. LANDSCAPE

Topography

San Marcos is a city located in the northern part of San Diego County, California. The city features a diverse topography that ranges from rolling hills to flat areas. The elevation within the city ranges from sea level to 1,591 feet (485 meters) at Double Peak, which is the highest point in San Marcos.

The western part of the city is characterized by a coastal plain that extends to the Pacific Ocean. This area is relatively flat and is home to many residential neighborhoods, commercial areas, and the popular Lake San Marcos.

To the east of the city, the terrain becomes more rugged and hilly. The eastern part of San Marcos is dominated by the hills of the peninsular ranges, which provide scenic views of the surrounding areas. The hills in this area are covered with chaparral vegetation, which includes shrubs, bushes, and small trees that are adapted to the dry climate.

Overall, the topography of San Marcos is varied and interesting, offering a mix of coastal plains, rolling hills, and scenic vistas.

Fire History

The San Marcos Fire Department responds to an average of 20 wildland fires annually in San Marcos and its surrounding areas.

One of the most notable fires in the area occurred in 2014 when the Cocos Fire burned over 2,000 acres of land and destroyed over 30 homes. Cocos Fire, originally known as the Twin Oaks Fire, was a wildfire that ignited on May 14, 2014, in San Marcos, California, in the hills south of California State University, San Marcos (CSUSM). Property damage from the fire is estimated at more than \$5.7 million.

The Harmony Grove Fire is another significant fire event in San Marcos' history. It ravaged Elfin Forest

and subsequently impacted San Marcos, Carlsbad, and Encinitas. It resulted in the loss of nearly 100 homes, consumed 8,600 acres, and tragically claimed one life. The fire ignited shortly before 2 p.m. on October 21, 1996, near the west side of Harmony Grove Road, approximately one mile north of Questhaven Road. The wind-fueled inferno persisted for three days, causing an estimated \$52 million in damages.

Key Infrastructure

- The transportation system in San Marcos is well-developed, with several major roads and highways passing through the city. The main highways are State Route 78 and Interstate 15, which make commuting easy for people living in San Marcos. In addition, the city has a good public transportation system with a network of buses that connect to other cities in San Diego County.
- San Marcos has several parks and recreational centers that offer residents a chance to engage in outdoor activities. The most notable parks include Hollandia Park, Jack's Pond Park Nature Center, Bradley Park and Double Peak Park which features a large amphitheater, playgrounds, and picnic areas, hiking trails, a skate park, a bike park and a panoramic view of the city.
- The city also has a well-developed healthcare system, with several hospitals and medical centers located within its boundaries. The Palomar Medical Center and Kaiser Hospital in San Marcos offer a wide range of medical services to residents.
- As North County's educational hub, San Marcos is home to an award-winning K-12 school district, the University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences, Pima Medical Institute, Palomar College, and California State University San Marcos.

- A vibrant high-rise residential district is currently being constructed in North City to accommodate housing for CSUSM. This district also provides a unique experience for younger families who favor a downtown feel.

Maps

The following maps are visual aids from which the San Marcos Community and its members can assess and make recommendations. (See Appendix A)

1. Area Communities Map
2. Fire Hazard Severity Map
3. Fire History Map
4. Evacuation Map

III. FIREFIGHTING RESOURCES

The San Marcos Fire Department is all-risk and provides emergency response to all fires (including vegetation fires), rescues, medical emergencies, and other associated emergencies within the SMFD response area. The Fire Department currently has four fire stations, with a new station under development and a regional emergency services training facility.

The SMFD response area is comprised of the 24 square miles within the City of San Marcos and 9 square miles within the San Marcos Fire District for a total area of 33 square miles served. The SMFD has primary responsibility for vegetation fire suppression on all Local Responsibility Areas (LRA), while the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) is responsible for fire protection in the State Responsibility Area (SRA) located within the District.

All fire agencies in the region can support each other with structural fire protection, emergency medical services, and wildland firefighting through Master Mutual Aid agreements.

• Regional training facility



[184 Santar Place](#)
[San Marcos, CA 92069](#)

SMFD Brush Rig



02

Collaboration

Strong working relationships are critical in ensuring that our communities are well-prepared. This section describes those key partners and their roles in developing this CWPP.

I. KEY PARTNERS

The San Marcos Community led the development of this Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP), with guidance and support from several partners. The development team included representatives from the agencies described in the table below.

ORGANIZATION	ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES
San Marcos Fire Department (SMFD)	Local information and expertise, including community risk and value assessment, development of community protection priorities, and establishment of fuels treatment project areas and methods.
County of San Diego, Office of Emergency Services	Input and expertise on planning and hazard mitigation.
Fire Safe Council of San Diego County/Resource Conservation District (FSCSDC)	Provides educational outreach and support for pre-wildfire disaster planning, defensible space and fuel reduction and hazard assessment. Facilitates planning, support, and approval of the CWPP process.
CAL FIRE/San Diego County Fire	Input and expertise on forestry, fire and fuels, and Firewise concepts. Review of final document.
San Marcos Residents	Local information and neighborhood concerns.
Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)	CERT program educates volunteers on disaster preparedness for disasters that may impact their community and trains them in basic disaster response skills such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization and disaster medical operations.

San Diego County Sheriff	The City of San Marcos contracts with the San Diego County Sheriff's Department for law enforcement services. San Marcos historically has had one of the largest sheriff's contracts in the county.
Support Volunteers	Volunteers are an essential component of the SMFD's operations. Volunteers provide day-to-day administrative services, as well as emergency incident support.
Vista Fire Department	Local information and expertise, including community risk and value assessment.
Carlsbad Fire Department	Local information and expertise, including community risk and value assessment.
Rancho Santa Fe Fire District	Local information and expertise, including community risk and value assessment.
Escondido Fire Department	Local information and expertise, including community risk and value assessment.
California State University San Marcos	Participate in regular fire brush management and other WUI projects as they involve the college.
Home Owners Associations (HOAs)- San Elijo Hills Community Association Old Creek Varadero Rancho Dorado Stone Canyon San Marcos Highlands Skylark	HOAs participate in regular fire brush management and other WUI projects as they involve the HOA community. HOAs work closely with SMFD to keep residents safe and informed. This relationship provides an opportunity for necessary public communication, including defensible spaces, home hardening, WUI projects, and evacuation preparedness.



03

Community Engagement & Education

Understanding wildfire risk is a key building block in preventing the loss of property and life. This section discusses efforts to build awareness, starting with the individual.

I. PRIORITIES

Knowing what to do and how to stay safe in the event of an emergency is the responsibility of individuals, families, and businesses alike. The San Marcos Fire Department offers resources on what you need to do to be prepared and how you can be involved in your community preparedness efforts.

II. COMPLETED & ONGOING PROJECTS

- Wildfire Preparedness Fair -MAY
- SMFD Open House -OCTOBER
- Smoke detector installations- ALL YEAR
- Senior presentations- ALL YEAR
- Door hangers for fire hazard severity zones- PRE-FIRE SEASON
- Social media- ALL YEAR
- CPR/Sidewalk CPR- ALL YEAR
- Community Emergency Response Team-CERT- ALL YEAR

III. FUTURE PROJECTS

- Community PACE (Primary, Alternate, Contingent, Emergency) meetings



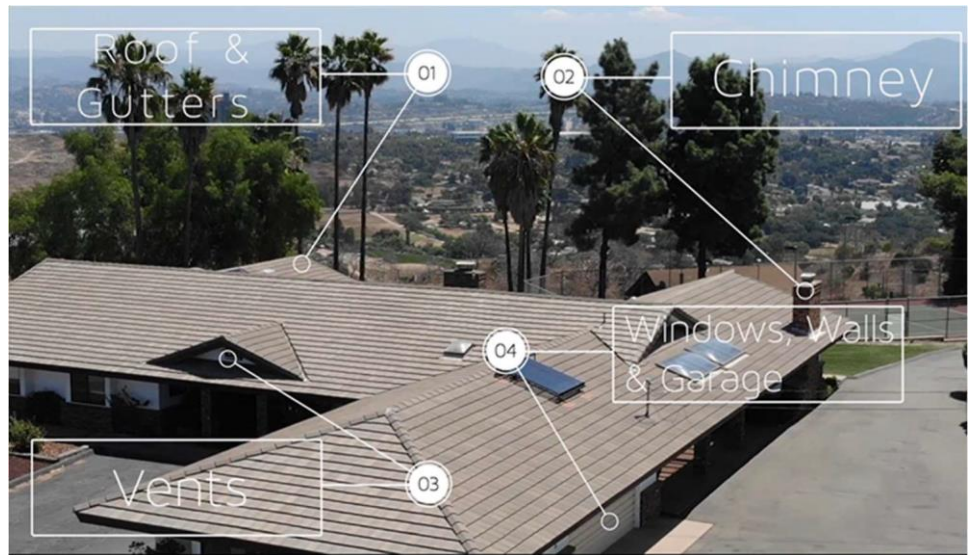
04

Structural Hardening

Long before a wildfire sparks, there are numerous steps that residents can take to protect their homes and other structures. This section describes some of those efforts.

I. PRIORITIES

One of the goals of the San Marcos Fire Department is to educate the local community on the importance and effectiveness of home hardening. By implementing proper methods and practices, residents can significantly reduce the risk of their homes being damaged or destroyed in the event of a fire. Through education and awareness, the San Marcos Fire Department aims to empower residents to take proactive measures to safeguard their homes and loved ones from the threat of wildfires.



II. COMPLETED & ONGOING PROJECTS

- San Marcos Fire conducts annual individual home assessments of residential structures in areas that have been identified as high risk to wildfire.
- Prior to the above-mentioned inspections, we distribute flyers to residents that thoroughly cover home hardening.
- At our Open House and Wildfire Preparedness Fair vendors promote 7A materials for new construction and home improvement. 7A construction is based on Chapter 7A of the California Building Code that establishes minimum standards to protect life and property for a building located in a Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Area by increasing its ability to resist the

intrusion of flames or burning embers.

- San Marcos Fire Department inspectors enforce 7A standards of requiring the exterior of a structure to be flame-resistant and ember-resistant in new construction.
- Social media- educational videos

III. FUTURE PROJECTS

- Mailers and door hangers
- We will also continue to perform our annual residential inspections.
- Community Meetings
- Educational Campaigns

05

Defensible Space

Creating a buffer between buildings and the grass, trees, shrubs, and other wildland areas surrounding it is essential to improving survivability. This section looks at efforts to build this key layer of protection.

I. PRIORITIES

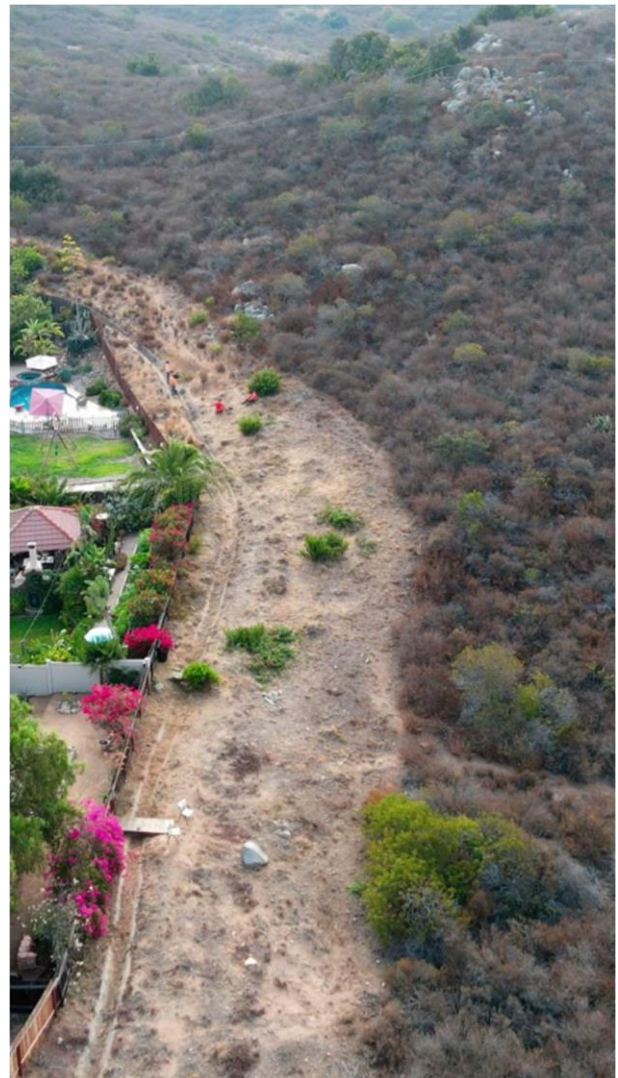
When it comes to Defensible Space preparedness, the San Marcos Fire Department prioritizes its annual inspections for all residents, especially those to be considered at high risk of wildfire.

II. COMPLETED & ONGOING PROJECTS

- Annual Defensible Space Inspections- include individual home assessments of residential structures in areas that have been identified as high-risk to wildfire. Specifically, we are looking for defensible space, vegetation conditions, fire susceptibility of each home and addressing and access for emergency vehicles.
- Prior to the above-mentioned inspections, we distribute flyers to residents that cover defensible space clearing standards for residential homes and businesses.
- AB38 defensible space inspections a California law enacted in 2019 that requires specific inspections and disclosures for homes in high-risk wildfire areas performed as required.
- Defensible space walk thru with HOAs

III. FUTURE PROJECTS

- Develop software to perform, track, proactive defensible space inspections within the jurisdictions high fire hazard severity zones.



06

Fuels Treatment

Fuels are combustible materials such as grasses, leaves, plants, shrubs, and trees that feed flames. This section describes efforts to treat and manage these materials in the community.

I. COMPLETED & ONGOING PROJECTS

- Annual assessment of all City maintained properties
- Grant collaboration with Rancho Santa Fe Fire Protection District and Urban Corps
- Roadside clearance around the community

II. PRIORITIES

- Maintain City responsible areas and inspect and ensure compliance of planned fuel breaks in planned master communities according to their Fire Protection Plans.
- Partnerships and collaborations with other departments and stakeholders.
- Streamline processes and communication with contractors.

III. FUTURE PROJECTS

- GIS mapping, including private fuel treatments such as HOA and conservation agencies.
- 136,467 sq. ft. of brush abatement within City's storm channel and ditch network.
- Seek opportunities for further Grant funding for fuel treatments.



07

Evacuation Planning

Identifying key corridors in and out of a community – as well as temporary refuge areas – is essential to being prepared for evacuation. This section provides an overview of the PACE system (primary, alternate, contingency, and emergency) used to plan ahead.

Evacuation planning is a dynamic process subject to the nuances of each community. Below is an overview of the City of San Marcos' key ingress and egress, as well as designated evacuation corridors, Temporary Refuge Areas, completed projects, priorities, and future projects.

I. OVERVIEW OF INGRESS AND EGRESS

The major ingress and egress points in San Marcos:

1. Highways:

- Interstate 15 (I-15): This major north-south interstate highway borders San Marcos, providing a direct route to other cities in San Diego County and beyond.
- State Route 78 (SR-78): SR-78 runs east-west and is a major route connecting San Marcos to neighboring cities like Escondido and Oceanside.

2. Major Roads:

- Twin Oaks Valley Road: This road travels across San Marcos from north to south, providing access to residential areas, schools, and commercial districts.
- San Marcos Boulevard: Another major road running east-west, San Marcos Boulevard intersects with several other streets and provides access to various

amenities and neighborhoods within the city.

- Rancho Santa Fe Road: This road runs north-south and serves as a connection point for commuters and residents traveling to and from different parts of San Marcos.

3. Local Streets and Avenues:

- Via Vera Cruz
- Discovery Street
- Barham Drive
- Bent Avenue
- Mission Road
- Palomar Airport Road

4. Public Transportation:

- North County Transit District (NCTD) operates bus routes within San Marcos, providing public transportation options for residents and visitors.
- Sprinter: This light rail system connects San Marcos to neighboring cities, running from Escondido to Oceanside.

5. Bike Lanes and Trails:

- San Marcos features bike lanes and trails that provide alternative modes of transportation and recreational opportunities for cyclists and pedestrians.

Overall, San Marcos has a well-connected transportation infrastructure with multiple ingress and egress points, including highways, major roads, local streets, public transportation options, and biking routes.

II. DESIGNATED EVACUATION CORRIDORS

San Marcos Community

PRIMARY	15 & 78 Freeways
ALTERNATE	Twin Oaks Valley Rd, San Marcos Blvd., Rancho Santa Fe Rd, away from danger
CONTINGENCY	Via Vera Cruz, Discovery St, Barham Dr, Bent Ave, Mission Rd, Palomar Airport Rd away from danger
EMERGENCY	Will be identified (incident specific)

III. TEMPORARY REFUGE AREAS

Elementary Schools nearest priority evacuation locations.

- Discovery Elementary School
- Paloma Elementary School
- Richland Elementary School
- Double Peak Elementary School
- San Elijo Elementary School

IV. PRIORITIES

Highest fire risk priority communities include:

- North Twin Oaks
- Rockhoff
- Coronado Hills
- Double Peak
- San Elijo Hills

V. COMPLETED & ONGOING PROJECTS

- Genasys Protect App – City Emergency Management Program
 - Real-time emergency information.
 - Location-based alerts: Get notified if a threat impacts your current location.
 - Safe return notifications: Receive real-time updates on when it is safe to return home.
 - Evacuation directions and information.
 - Road Closures
 - Temporary evacuation points and shelters.
 - Public safety instructions

VI. FUTURE PROJECTS

- Educate citizens about proper escape routes and evacuation centers to use in the event of an evacuation using the Genasys App.

08

Other Mitigation & Preparedness

There are countless ways that communities can act to protect themselves ahead of wildfires. This section details additional past, current and future efforts underway that were not previously mentioned.

I. PRIORITIES

San Marcos is a city that takes mitigation and preparedness seriously. The City has a comprehensive disaster plan that outlines how to respond to different types of emergencies. The plan includes a list of emergency contacts, evacuation routes, and designated emergency shelters. In addition to having a disaster plan, San Marcos also takes measures to mitigate the impact of potential disasters.



II. COMPLETED AND/OR ONGOING PROJECTS

- Regular public education campaigns to encourage residents to prepare for emergencies by having emergency kits, creating evacuation plans, and staying informed about local emergency alerts and weather.
- EOC -Emergency Operations Center

III. FUTURE PROJECTS

- Becoming a Fire Risk Reduction Community in 2026
- Continuing public outreach
- Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP)- A Hazard Mitigation Plan is a community's blueprint for reducing or eliminating risks from natural and human-made hazards. It identifies potential hazards (like floods, wildfires, or earthquakes), assesses vulnerabilities, and outlines strategies to mitigate the impact of those hazards. Developing an HMP helps communities prioritize risk-reduction projects, improve public safety, and qualify for federal grants to implement the mitigation measures. It is updated periodically to reflect changes in risks and development.



09

Signatures

This plan must be approved by the following key parties: the local author (examples include Fire Safe Council President, Firewise Community, Tribal National, HOA, etc.), the chief of the primary responding fire agency, the CAL FIRE Unit Chief, and chair of the CWPP review committee. This section includes these signoffs.

*The Community Wildfire Protection Plan, as developed for the **City of San Marcos**:*

- Was collaboratively developed and meets the intent of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA) in emphasizing the need for agencies to work collaboratively with communities in developing hazardous fuel reduction projects, and places priority on treatment areas identified by communities themselves in a CWPP. Interested parties and federal land management agencies in the vicinity of this CWPP have been consulted.
- Identifies and prioritizes areas for hazardous fuel reduction treatments and recommends the types and methods of treatment that will protect areas within this CWPP.
- Recommends measures to reduce the ignitability of structures throughout the area addressed by the plan.
- Is intended for use as a planning and assessment tool only, utilizing a compilation of community issues/goals and projected fire mitigation strategies. The CWPP is not to be construed as indicative of project “activity” as defined under the “Community Guide to the California Environmental Quality Act, Chapter Three, Projects Subject to CEQA.” Per the Community Guide, Section 3.1.1, “CEQA only applies to public agency decisions to approve, or actions to carry out a discretionary project.” Any actual project activities meeting this definition of project activity and undertaken by the CWPP participants or agencies listed shall meet local, state, and federal environmental compliance requirements.
- Assists and encourages compliance with current county and state fire code standards.

DocuSigned by:
X **Daniel Barron**
B002EECA7BB43F...

Fire Chief – Daniel Barron

San Marcos Fire Department

DocuSigned by:
X **Jason Nailon**
Z9FBB180931940A...

Fire Marshal - Jason Nailon

San Marcos Fire Department

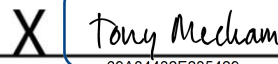
San Diego County Community Wildfire Prevention Plans Review Committee:

This CWPP was reviewed and recommended for approval by the San Diego Community Wildfire Protection Plan Review Committee as demonstrated by the signature below.

Signed by:

05EBDCB2A3B6403...
 Don Butz, President
 Fire Safe Council of San Diego County

The CAL FIRE Unit Chief has final signing authority on CWPPs in San Diego County. The signature below attests that the standards listed in the section above and the content of this Community Wildfire Protection Plan are proposed to be met and mutually accepted.

DocuSigned by:

69A84432E235429...
 Tony Mecham, Unit Chief
 CAL FIRE San Diego Unit

10

Appendices

This section includes important additional information that complements other portions of the plan.

I. APPENDIX A. - MAPS

- **Figure 1 Area Communities Map**
- **Figure 2 Fire Hazard Severity Map**
- **Figure 3 Fire History 2000-2024**
- **Figure 4 Evacuation Map**

APPENDIX A.
MAPS

Figure 1 Area Communities Map

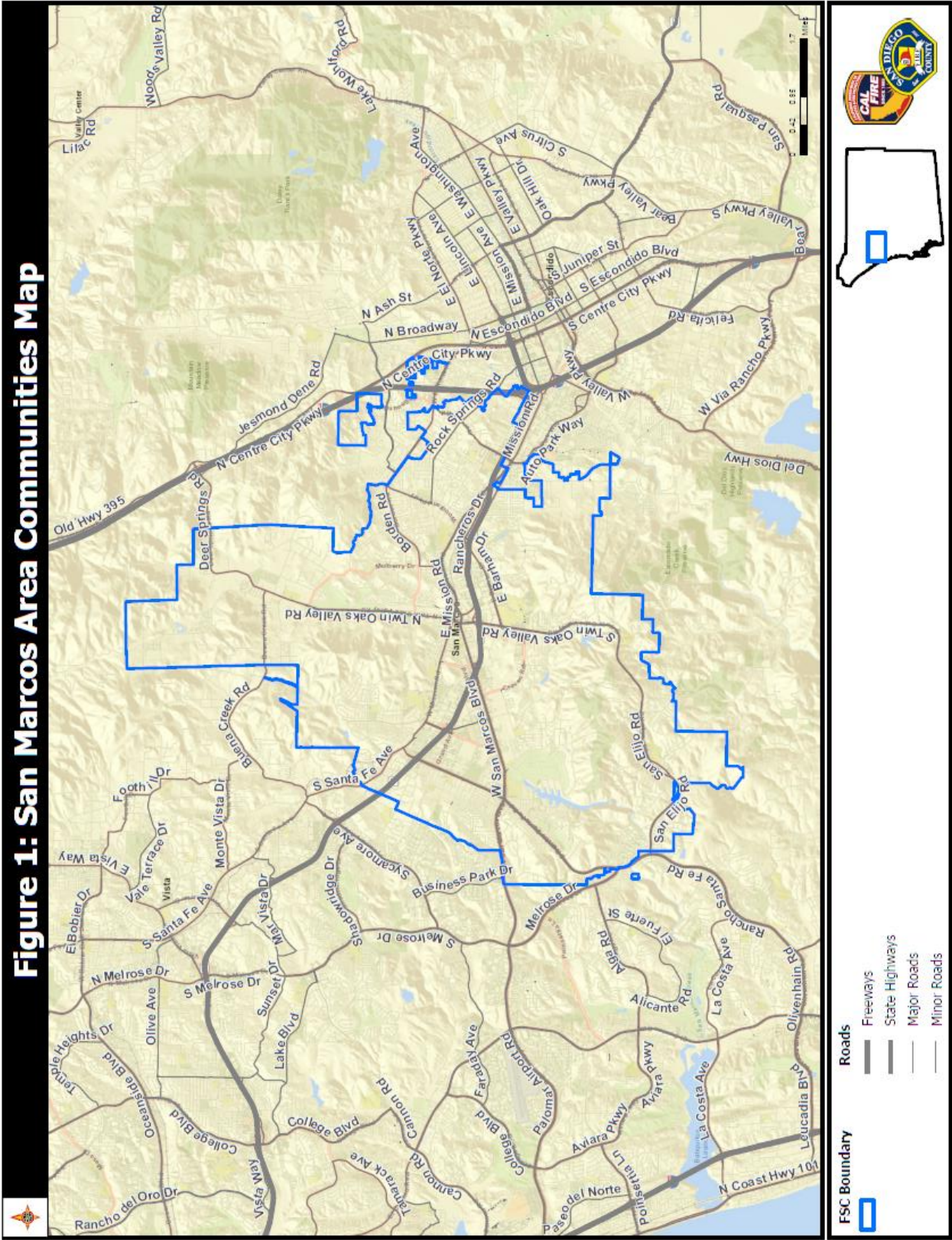


Figure 2 Fire Hazard Severity Map

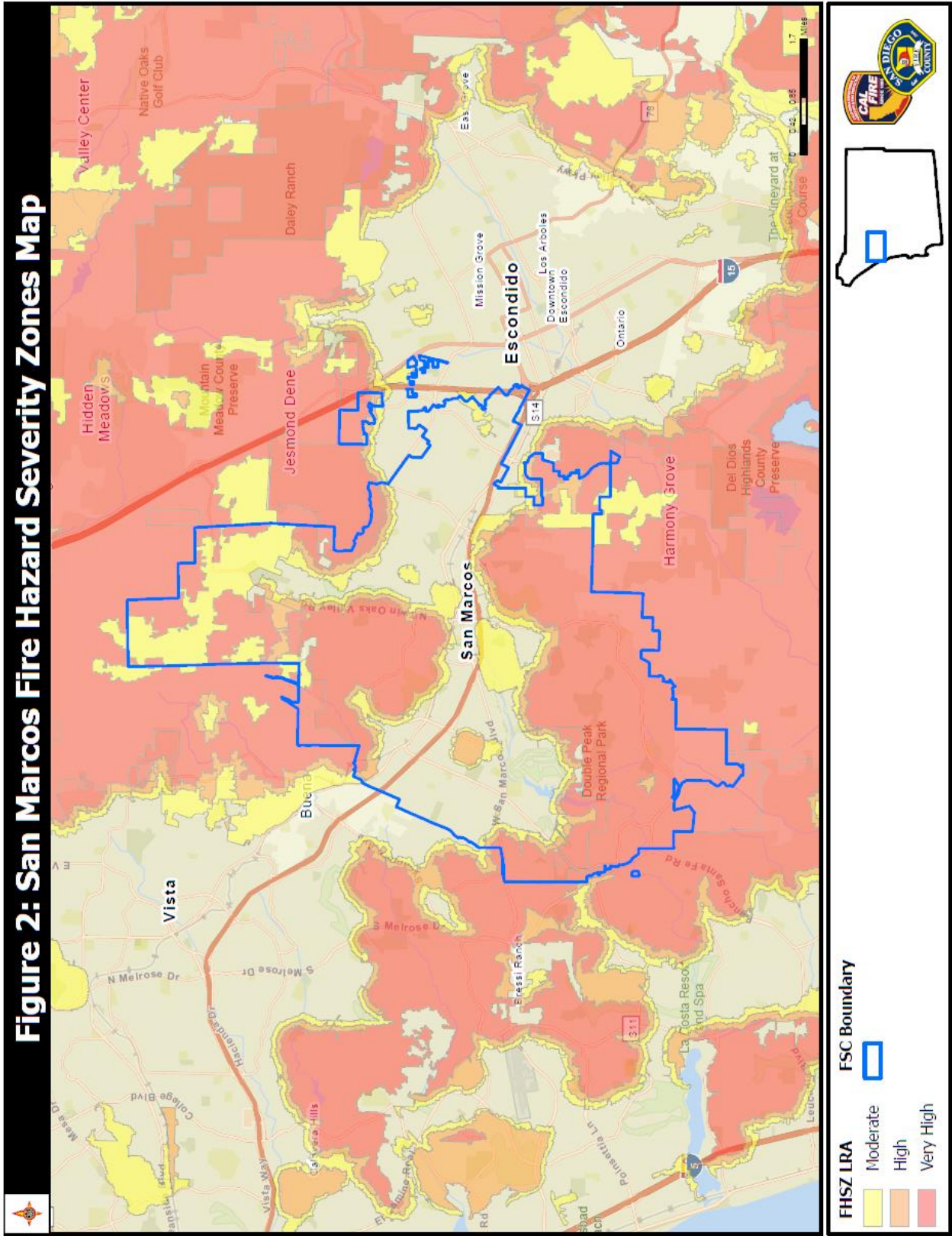


Figure 3 Fire History 2000-2024

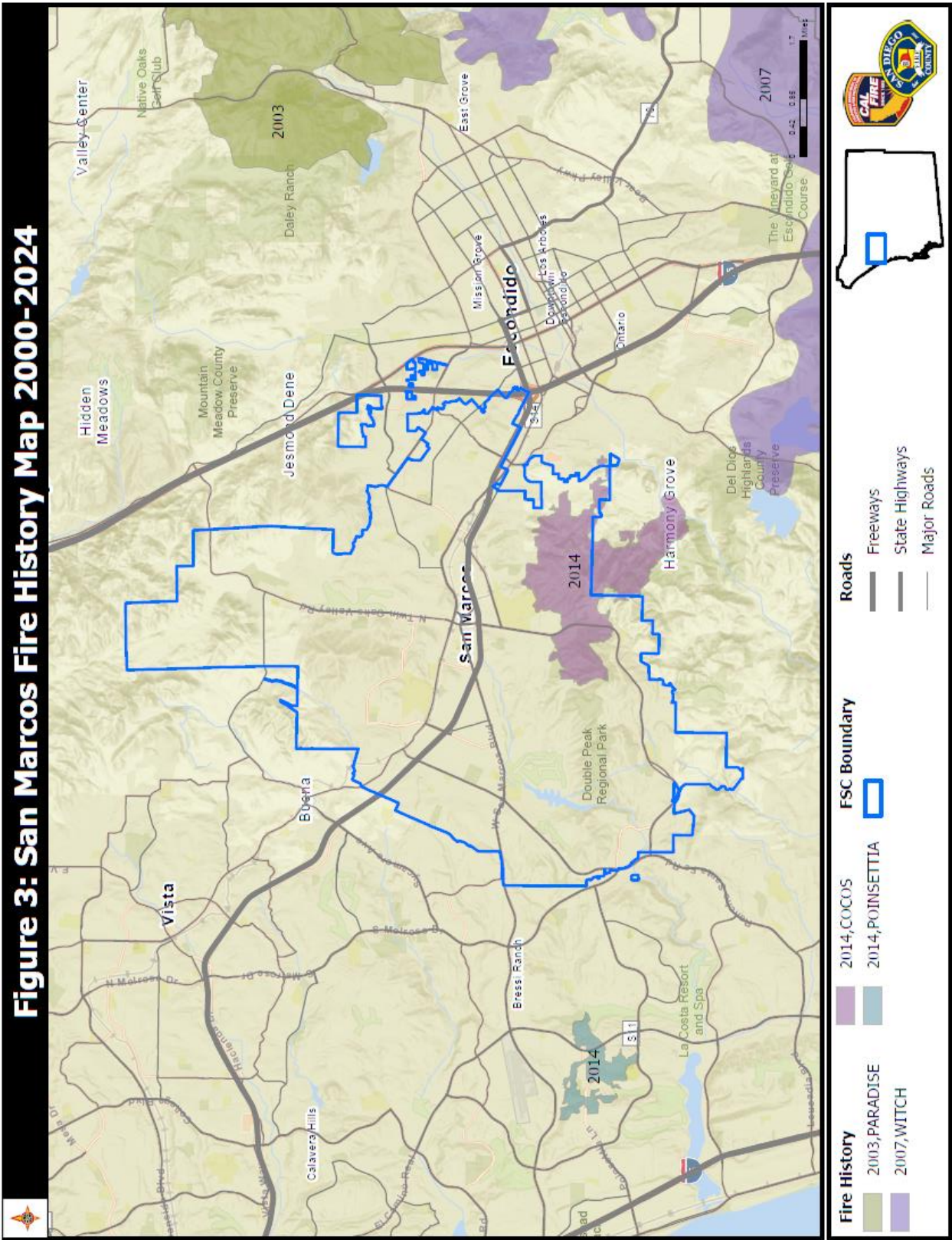


Figure 4 Evacuation Map

