WRCC | CRFFC

Edmonton

Building Wildfire-Ready Cities

Wildfire Resilience Consortium of Canada and City of Edmonton

Lessons from Edmonton's approach to urban wildfire resilience

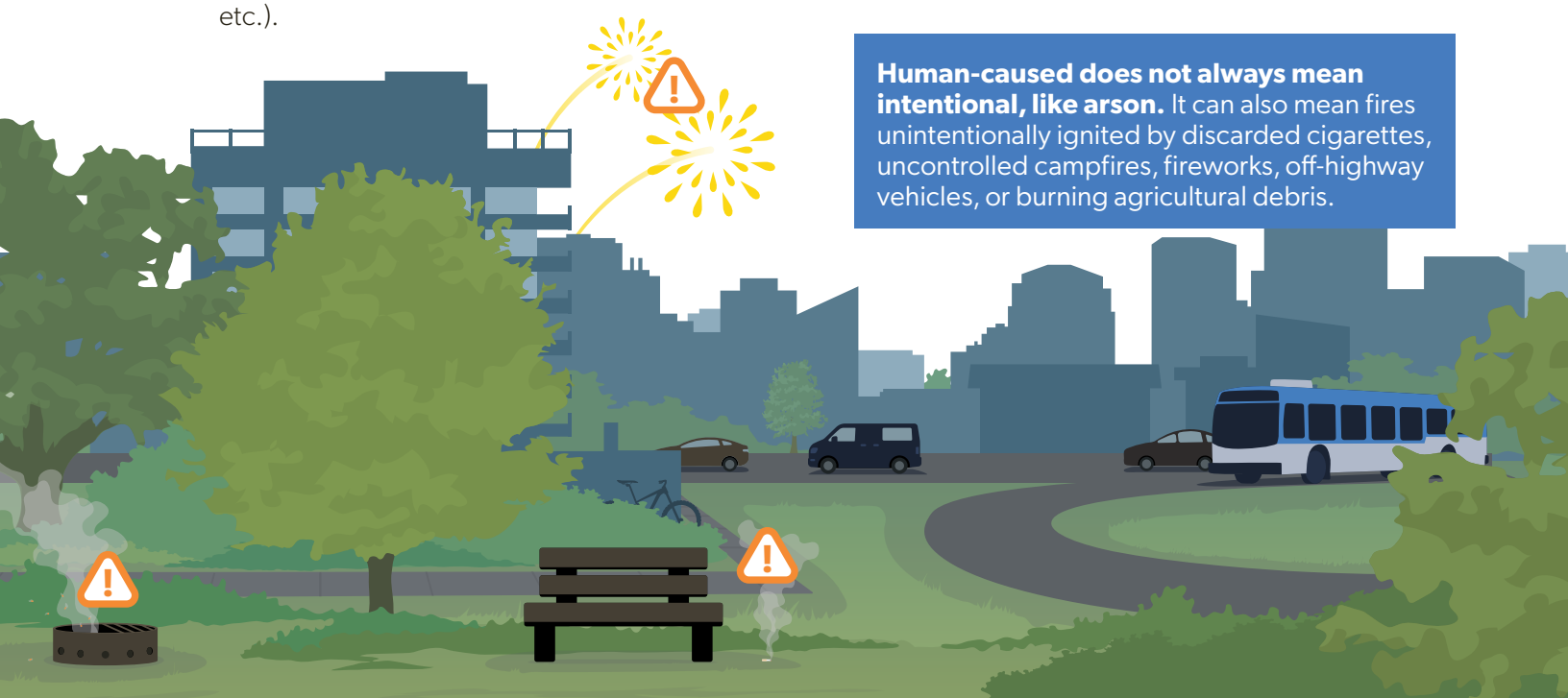
Wildfire resilience isn't just about managing forests, it's about how we build and design our cities. Urban planning and design shape how effectively communities prevent, mitigate, and recover from wildfire. Edmonton's Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Wildfire Risk Strategy offers one of Canada's first examples of how a major city can take a proactive, long-term approach to wildfire resilience. While every municipality is different, Edmonton's experience provides practical lessons others can adapt to their own communities.

Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI): Where human development meets undeveloped landscapes.

Why large urban municipalities may need a wildfire strategy

- **Climate change** is increasing wildfire risk through longer fire seasons, changing precipitation, and more extreme weather.
- **WUI fires are complex.** Fires can spread from urban forests, parks, and surrounding grasslands into community, or start in community and spread to wildland areas. Well-integrated structural and wildland fire response is critical.
- **Urban growth means growing risk.** Nearly half of wildfire starts in Canada are human-caused. More people means more potential ignitions.
- **Large urban municipalities have unique needs.** Varying perspectives and experience with wildfire demands tailored public education and support (e.g. vulnerable populations, language barriers, renters, etc.).

Human-caused does not always mean intentional, like arson. It can also mean fires unintentionally ignited by discarded cigarettes, uncontrolled campfires, fireworks, off-highway vehicles, or burning agricultural debris.



Waiting until wildfires become a problem is too late. Planning ahead reduces future risk and builds resilience.

Steps for building an effective strategy:

Review Wildfire Mitigation Strategies of Other Jurisdictions

- Examine regulatory and policy frameworks, learn from proven practices, and identify the mitigation measures best suited to your community.

Inventory Existing Wildfire Mitigation Efforts

- Build cross-departmental buy-in early by bringing stakeholders together to map existing wildfire mitigation initiatives. This process reduces duplication, aligns priorities, and identifies the most important gaps and opportunities your strategy should address.

Establish a Team

- Build a diverse, cross-departmental team of subject matter experts to plan and deliver the strategy.

Conduct Robust Public Engagement

- Engage the public, Indigenous partners, key external partners, and/or interested parties early to ensure solutions reflect community needs. Feedback from the Edmonton engagement highlighted a strong preference for **prevention over response**, and the need for support for vulnerable populations, meaningful Indigenous collaboration, and community education and incentive programs.

Complete Wildfire Exposure Mapping

- Identify where people, infrastructure, vegetation, geography, and weather intersect to focus targeted mitigation and investment.

Key takeaway: Connectivity is key, both locally and regionally. Build and leverage your network to advise on and shape your strategy. You are not alone.

Developing the Strategy Framework

Edmonton's Strategic Pillars to Build Wildfire Resilience

Reduce
Reduce the likelihood of wildfire ignition and spread through vegetation management, planning policies and development standards.

Coordinate
Neighbouring municipalities, Indigenous communities, provincial agencies, and emergency partners collaborate to address wildfire as a regional challenge.

Educate
Help residents understand wildfire risk and provide actions they can take.

Respond
Strengthen emergency preparedness, training and coordination across municipal departments.

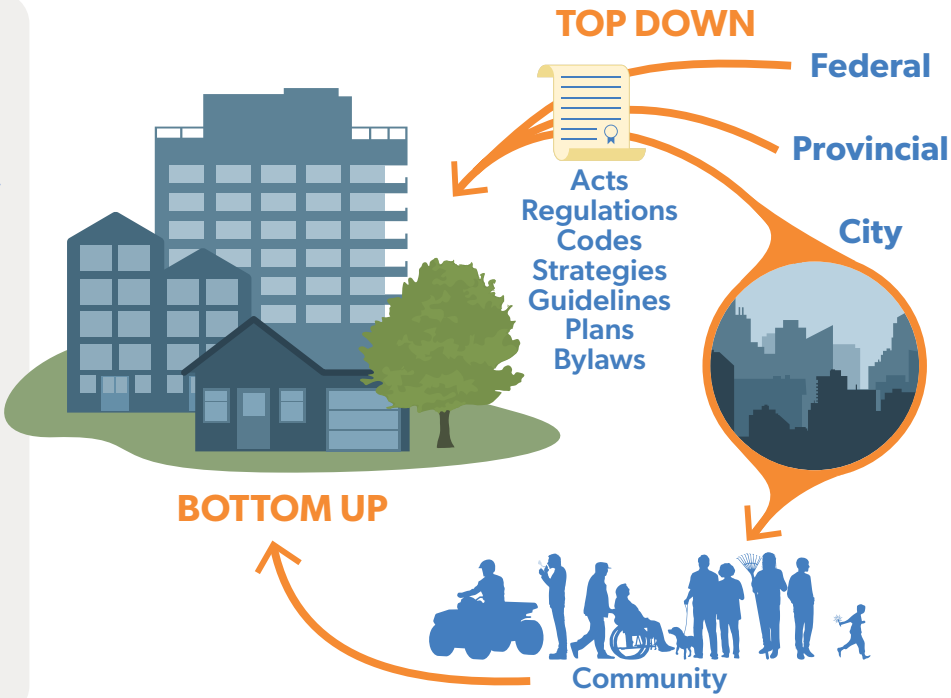
Wildfire Mitigation Requires Whole-of-Society Participation

Top-down

Wildfire preparedness requires buy-in from every level. It only works when it is integrated into everything (acts, regulations, codes, strategies, guidelines, plans and bylaws).

Bottom-up

Community ownership turns wildfire resilience into lasting action. Empowering homeowners and community organizations to take action on wildfire preparedness builds shared responsibility, scales effort, and reduces collective risk.



Learning to Live WITH Fire

Wildfire resilience is a continuous process that requires proactive action. Edmonton has shown that large urban municipalities can take meaningful action before disaster strikes. Your community can too.

Ready to get started?

This WRCC infographic was written and developed in collaboration with the City of Edmonton. For more information and resources:

- Explore Edmonton's strategy and What We Heard and Did Report.
- Learn about FireSmart resources.
- Discover the Wildfire Resilience Toolkit for small municipalities from the Green Municipalities Fund.
- Connect with the Wildfire Resilience Consortium of Canada to learn more.