

## Living With Wildfire in Park County, Colorado

Wildfire is of particular concern for communities in the wildland urban interface (WUI) around Bailey, Colorado. In 2021 a comprehensive assessment of wildfire risk was made by the nonprofit organization, the WiRē Center, in collaboration with Platte Canyon Fire Protection District (PCFPD) and Fire Adapted Bailey (FAB), to specifically assess this threat.

Wildfire risk data was collected on 1,322 private residential properties throughout the Burland Ranchettes area and surveys were taken detailing residents' actual knowledge and experiences as well as their perceptions about wildfire risk. Key findings include:

- **Wildfire Risk:** 82% of properties face high (60%), very high (10%), or extreme (12%) risk of wildfire. However, only 31% of residents estimated their risk to be that high, indicating a gap between rapid assessment and self-assessment.
- **Defensible Space:** Many residents overestimate their defensible space. 48% of survey respondents reported having more than 100 feet of defensible space, while only 17% of properties fell into that category based on rapid assessment.
- **Combustibles:** 57% of properties had combustibles within 10 feet of the home, compared to only 12% of survey respondents who reported the same.
- **Evacuation Concerns:** Limited roads for egress and access in the community pose evacuation challenges. Nearly half of the properties have only one road in/out, and most driveways are narrow, affecting the movement of fire suppression vehicles.
- **Emergency Preparedness:** While many residents reported taking actions to reduce wildfire risk and having evacuation plans, fewer have opted into the CodeRED emergency reverse-911 system, which is crucial for preparedness.
- **Perceptions:** Most residents recognize their wildfire risk and understand local firefighters' resource constraints but believe more evacuation information is needed.

The data from this eye-opening report continue to be of great relevance today: The evidence of perceived and actual wildfire risk in our communities, and the disconnect between them, is helping PCFPD and FAB focus their programs and outreach to more effectively promote increased mitigation and reduce wildfire risk in Park County. For more information on these findings, please refer to the accompanying report.