



100 Civic Center Drive
Lake Forest, CA 92630

Mayor
Robert Pequeño

Mayor Pro Tem
Doug Cirbo

Council Members
Mark Tettemer
Scott Voigts
Benjamin Yu

July 29, 2026

Sheila F. Hanson, Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701

SUBJECT: City of Lake Forest Responses to Grand Jury Findings

Dear Judge Hanson,

This letter is written on behalf of Mayor Robert Pequeño and the Lake Forest City Council. The City of Lake Forest is in receipt of your request to provide a response to each of the findings in the 2025-26 Orange County Grand Jury report, "Wildfires Hit Home". The City Council reviewed and approved the following response at its July 21, 2026 meeting.

Note: The original Grand Jury findings are repeated below in italics. The City's responses are in bold, with additional explanation and commentary in regular typeface. References to the "City" refer to the City of Lake Forest.

F1: More frequent and severe wildfires driven by increasingly hotter, drier, and windier conditions in the Orange County wildland-urban interface are escalating impacts on financial and non-financial resources. Among the financial costs are dramatic increases in homeowners' insurance premiums, nonrenewals, and inability to obtain insurance

The respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding, in which case the response shall state the specific the portion of the finding that is disputed and shall include an explanation of the reasons.

The City agrees that severe wildfires have impacted a number of different resources in Orange County in recent years, however the City lacks sufficient

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knowledge and expertise of the private insurance market to agree with the entire finding.

F2: Actions that address conditions in the home ignition zone to significantly reduce ignition potential can prevent a community wildland-urban interface fire disaster or suburban conflagration.

The respondent agrees with the finding.

The City agrees that addressing conditions in the home ignition zone to reduce ignition potential is one of many potential ways to reduce the likelihood of a fire disaster.

F3 : Expanded engagement with the community to raise awareness and provide support regarding home hardening and defensible space will increase effectiveness of wildfire risk mitigation and insurance risk reduction efforts.

The respondent agrees with the finding

The City agrees that community engagement to raise awareness of different wildfire risk mitigation strategies can be a useful tool in assisting with wildfire risk and insurance risk. The City works in conjunction with the Orange County Fire Authority to ensure comprehensive educational resources are available to residents.

F4: Achievement of community-level and property-level wildfire risk mitigation designations (such as Firewise USA Site, Fire Risk Reduction Community or Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety certification) lessens wildfire risk and helps reduce insurance premium costs.

The respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding, in which case the response shall state the specific the portion of the finding that is disputed and shall include an explanation of the reasons.

The agrees that community-level designations can help lessen localized wildfire risk. As part of this effort, the City has received the designation of a Fire Risk Reduction Community, effective July 1, 2026. This designation helps with overall efforts towards wildfire mitigation. However, the City lacks sufficient information and expertise related to the private insurance market to agree with the entire finding.

F5: All county residents should be made aware that Safer from Wildfire regulation requires insurers to provide discounts to homeowners to homeowners and communities that implement home hardening and defensible space measures regardless of whether a property is located within a Fire Hazard Severity Zone.

The respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding, in which case the response shall state the specific the portion of the finding that is disputed and shall include an explanation of the reasons.

While the City agrees that home hardening and defensible space can significantly help with wildfire risk mitigation, the City lacks sufficient information and knowledge of the private insurance market to agree with the entire finding.

F6: AB888, California Safe Homes Grant Program, provides financial assistance to eligible homeowners, cities, counties, and special districts for home hardening and defensible space measures. Applying for and using these grant funds will reduce wildfire losses and improve insurability and resilience of vulnerable communities.

The respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding, in which case the response shall state the specific the portion of the finding that is disputed and shall include an explanation of the reasons.

While the City agrees that the California Safe Homes Grant Program could be useful in efforts for home hardening and defensible space measures, the City lacks sufficient knowledge and information to know for certain if this will reduce wildfire losses and improve insurability and resilience of vulnerable communities.

Response to Recommendations

R2: By December 31, 2026, cities and fire service agencies, including Orange County Fire Authority should commit to participation in a county-wide annual wildfire prevention fair planned by the Orange County Board of Supervisors to showcase wildfire prevention outreach programs. (F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, F6)

The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.

If the County elects to move forward with R1 and R2, the City is open to participating in a county-wide annual wildfire prevention fair to showcase wildfire outreach prevention programs. The City is willing to commit to participation pending actions to organize by the County of Orange.

R3: By December 31, 2026, cities, unincorporated areas, special districts, and fire service agencies in High and Very-High Fire Hazard Severity Zones should initiate planning activities to achieve community-level wildfire risk mitigation designations and/or establish a local Fire Safe Council within one year. (F4, F5, F6)

The recommendation has been implemented.

The City of Lake Forest is included on the State of California Board and Fire Protection's 2026 Fire Risk Reduction Community List designation. This list includes agencies in a state responsibility areas or very high fire hazard severity zone that meet best practices for local fire planning. Designation is effective July 1, 2026.

R4: By December 31, 2026, to ensure city residents are engaged and aware of wildfire risk reduction resources, OCFA member and non-member cities should provide information, develop their own outreach program, and establish a direct contact person(s) for their residents. This is in addition to whatever referrals or references made to OCFA outreach programs (F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, F6).

The recommendation has been implemented.

The City conducts various types of outreach to ensure residents are aware of wildfire risk reduction resources. On an annual basis, OCFA provides resources to residents related to wildfire risk mitigation. The City conducts outreach through both City staff as well as its Community Emergency Response (CERT) team. Outreach is provided at citywide events such as National Night Out and other public engagement events related to public safety such as Neighborhood Watch meetings and HOA meetings. Information distributed includes physical flyers as well as information on the City's website and social media pages. All information distributed includes contact information for City staff and/or OCFA staff should residents wish to learn more about wildfire risk reduction resources.

Should you have any questions, please contact Sean McGovern, Deputy City Manager, at smcgovern@lakeforestca.gov or 949-461-3419.

Sincerely,



Debra D. Rose
City Manager

cc: Orange County Grand Jury, 700 Civic Center Drive West, Santa Ana, CA 92701