



By Laura Bliss, Bloomberg CityLab, August 25, 2020

One resident “isn’t planning on coming back. Instead, she’s selling her property so it can be part of a wildfire buffer zone. The Paradise Recreation and Park District is in the early phases of acquiring swaths of land along the town’s perimeter, in the hopes of connecting them into a dual-purpose greenbelt fully encircling the 18-square-mile community. If the nascent plan is fully realized, a moat of green acreage could provide space for respite and play. It would also serve as a fuel break, an unofficial urban growth boundary, and an access point for crews to manage the area with landscaping, prescribed burning, and fire containment for when the next blaze comes.

“ ‘Whereas other places are looking only at defensible space for buildings, we’re looking at the scale of the entire community,’ said Dan Efseaff, the PRPD district manager.

“Property owners nationwide have proven to be willing to risk fire, flooding, and other threats to stay in their communities, and in some places few legal tools exist to prevent them; meanwhile, many residents lack the resources to relocate. ‘The real question is, what are the out-of-the box solutions that we can engineer to live in places where fire is inevitable?’ said Crystal Kolden, a professor of fire science at the University of California, Merced.

“The way the town carved itself out of the wilderness, with a number of narrow two-lane roads and dead-ending streets, proved fatal as residents fled. So did the dense growth that shrouded many sprawling properties. Improvements to parks and walking paths were included on a list of [40 projects in Paradise’s long-term recovery plan](#), which was crafted with public input in 2019. Also on the list was a stronger fuel management plan, and better transportation access for residents and firefighters.

“Like any fuel break, a greenbelt would simply reduce the speed and intensity of a fire by knocking it down from the forest canopy to the ground, where suppression crews could have a better chance at putting it out.”

Read the full article [here](#).

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