

The City of Redding is not our friend. In fact, the City's behavior with regards to protecting its citizens and employees has been particularly egregious. Here's why.

In 2014, the City of Redding produced a document titled the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, required by FEMA in order for the City to be eligible for certain FEMA grants. The study behind this Plan identified Wildland Fire as a major risk and projected a possible fire scenario in which 17 percent of all structures in the City could be affected with \$135,300,000 in damage. Given the potential for a wildfire's "immense toll on families, individuals, and businesses," the Plan included mitigation measures to be performed by the City to "ensure that defensible space is being provided for all new and existing homes."

The City adopted this Plan in its entirety fully four years before the Carr Fire. In the plan, the City also agreed to provide defensible space within one year or less. The problem was given the highest priority, assigned Priority One, and the language makes mitigation mandatory, not discretionary. It didn't say the City would try; it said the City would do. You can read for yourself the Wildland Fire portion of the Plan and the City Resolution adopting it online at [www.carrfiresuit.com](http://www.carrfiresuit.com).

In spite of knowing the danger, I know that the City did absolutely nothing to create defensible space in open space areas around the Stanford Hills or Land Park subdivisions, identified in their own plan as being a "Very high fire hazard severity area." And given the Carr Fire, I am at a loss to understand why the City did not immediately move to create defensible space from Placer Road south past the White Hawk and Country Heights subdivisions on down to Hwy 273. This area has the same fire risk assessment as northwest Redding. What about Mary Lake, River Ridge, Lake Redding? There are places all over Redding that present the real risk of a wildfire getting out of control. What does it take for the City of Redding to move, to provide whatever protection it can against an identified threat that has demonstrated what will happen when the City does nothing?

Everyone is aware of devastating fires that have occurred around northern California, and no one blames the City for the fact that the Carr Fire happened. Nor is anyone critical of the fire personnel, law enforcement, utility workers, maintenance crews and other first responders whose outstanding efforts were truly inspiring. We are grateful to them beyond words. But the City's failure to perform mitigation measures it committed to do four years before the Carr Fire, at whatever level that failure occurred, when it knew of the danger, put responders' lives at risk too. Job one for the City is protecting its citizens and employees. Blatantly ignoring identified hazards must stop.

A recent article describing the trauma our community has experienced and warning of possible, seemingly unrelated, consequences was a reminder that not just those who lost their homes have been hurt. People whose homes were damaged, renters, homeowners with insufficient insurance, small businesses providing residential services - as the article says, few people escaped. The sadness that I feel watching friends and neighbors deal with the Carr Fire's aftermath has given way to frustration and a determination to do all that I can to make sure this doesn't happen again. I have met with the local law firm of Barr and Mudford to form what we hope becomes a class action suit to compensate those citizens who suffered damages from the fire. If, after reviewing the above, you feel you have a claim, please consider contacting them. There is no upfront cost to you, but it might be the beginning of a new Redding that puts the safety and well-being of its citizens and employees first. Priority One, as their study says.

Jaxon Baker  
Redding