

**ROSS VALLEY FIRE DEPARTMENT  
STAFF REPORT**

For the meeting of August 11, 2021

To: Ross Valley Fire Department Board of Directors

From: Scott D. Alber, Battalion Chief/Fire Marshal

Subject: Receive Fire Prevention Report on Ross Valley Fire Department's Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Zone.

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends that the Board receives the Fire Prevention Report on Ross Valley Fire Department's Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Zone.

**DISCUSSION / BACKGROUND:**

The Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) are areas that contain structures with a structure density of at least 1 structure per 40-acres (The Federal definition), or 1 structure per 20-acres (Cal Fire/FRAP's definition) adjacent to wildland areas. In the late 1990s, Marin County Fire Department (MCFD), as part of their Unit Fire Plan (submitted to Cal Fire annually as part of the California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection Fire Plan) designated and mapped portions of the County as within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). In MCFD's mapping of these areas a structure density of 1 structure per 20-acres to approximately 0.25-acres was used. An ember broadcast zone of approximately 500-meters was also incorporated.

Subsequent to the 2003 Southern California Fire Siege, a "Blue-Ribbon" Commission was formed to formulate recommendations aimed at mitigating, if not preventing a repeat of the devastation that resulted from these disastrous fires. Among the Commission's recommendations were that Cal Fire develop a map of the state delineating levels of potential fire risk; i.e., "Fire Hazard Severity Zones" (FHSZ). The resulting maps would then be used to determine where new building code requirements for ignition resistant construction would apply. These maps were published and adopted in 2007.

The 2010 code adoption cycle included the addition of Chapter 7A to the California Building Code (CBC). CBC Chapter 7A requires ignition resistant construction (to new construction, only) in any FHSZ (Moderate, High, and Very-High) if the home is to be built in State Responsibility Area (SRA; most of unincorporated Marin is SRA). However, for the Local Responsibility Area (LRA, which includes incorporated towns and cities), the Chapter 7A requirements apply only in Very-High FHSZs and in "locally designated" WUI areas.

Moreover, note that FHSZs and the WUI are not the same. As previously mentioned, the WUI areas are solely based on a structure density range (and ember broadcast) in communities adjacent to wildland areas. On the other hand, the FHSZs designations (Very-High, High, Moderate, Urban/Non-FHSZ) are based on several factors, including slope, aspect, frequency of critical fire weather (Red Flag Days), fire history, and fuel models/vegetation.

In the wake of (and in the case of Novato Fire District and MCFD, prior to) the addition of Chapter 7A to the CBC, many fire jurisdictions adopted the WUI map promulgated by MCFD to apply Chapter 7A to new construction in their respective WUI areas. Some fire jurisdictions have, based on local knowledge, modified the WUI zones in their jurisdictions. As of this writing, most if not all fire jurisdictions, including RVFD, have adopted a WUI ordinance (or integrated the provisions of a WUI ordinance in their Fire Codes), which incorporates the Chapter 7A provisions previously discussed, as well as enhanced requirements for fire access, vegetation management/defensible space, and fire suppression water supplies.

These WUI ordinances also require that the standards also apply to substantially remodeled homes, in addition to new construction. Furthermore, ignition resistance construction standards also apply to modifications/alterations and remodels of exterior elements of structures in the WUI.

#### **NEXT STEPS:**

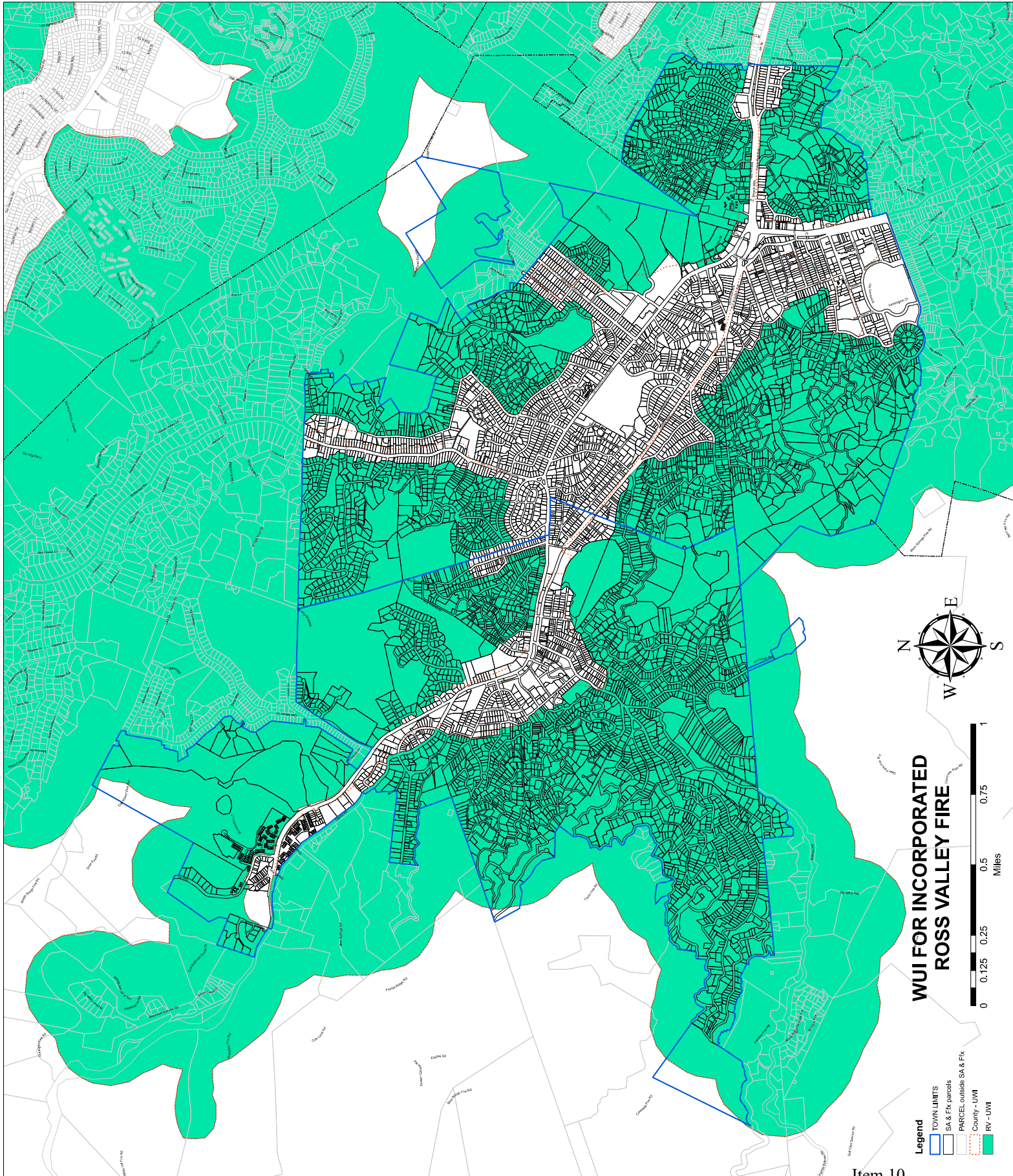
As previously mentioned, the towns and Sleepy Hollow have adopted WUI Zones. However, they do not match the WUI Zone published on Marin Map. We recommend that the modifications to MCFD WUI map be made to the Marin Map WUI layer such that they are consistent.

During the next code adoption cycle (2022), consideration should be made to adjusting the WUI Zone. Currently, most of each town is in a designated WUI Zone, with the exception of the downtown areas. These areas were intentionally left out of the WUI because of the structure density of these areas. While some adjustments to the map may be warranted to areas outside the downtowns, we recommend that the downtowns remain outside the WUI areas.

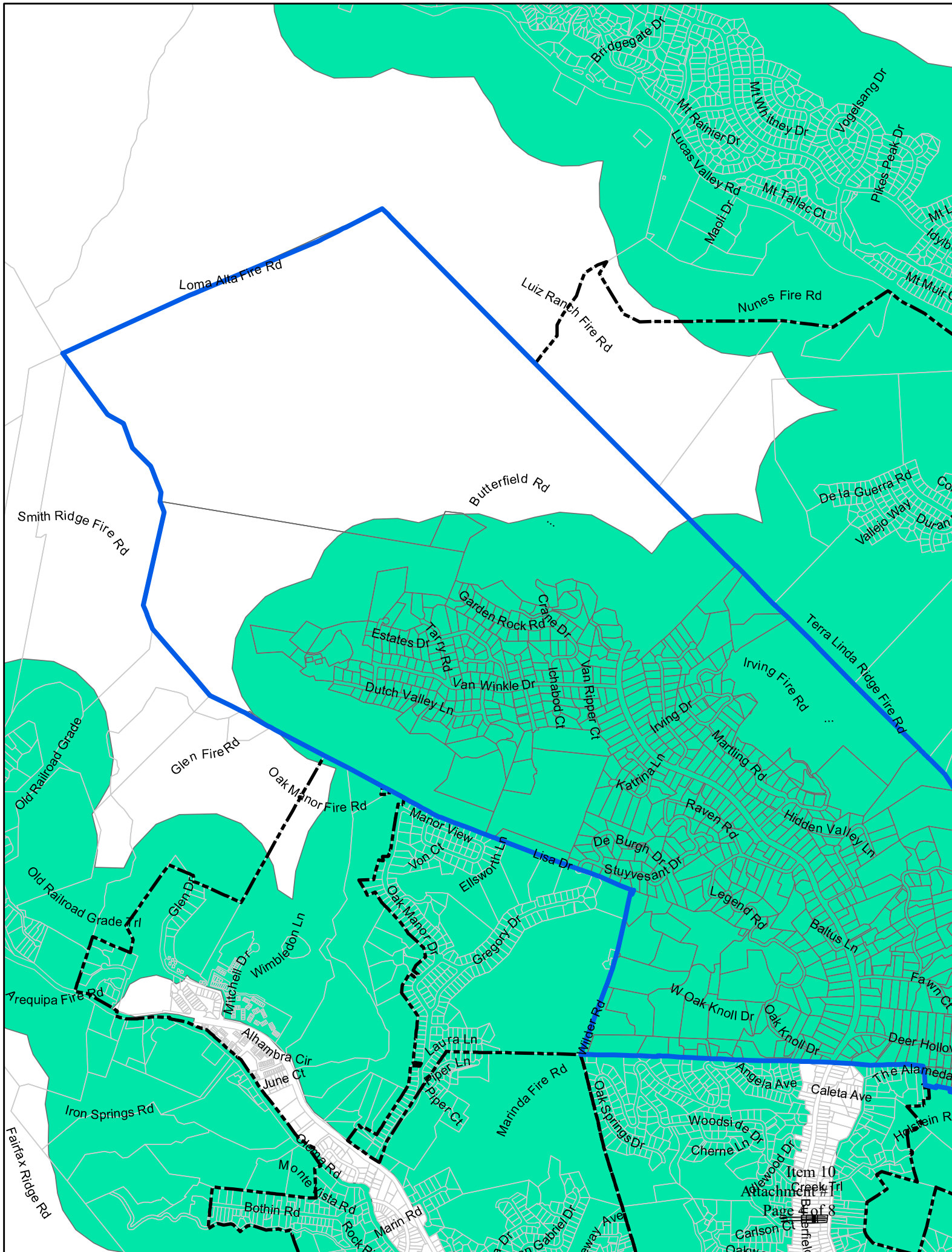
#### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

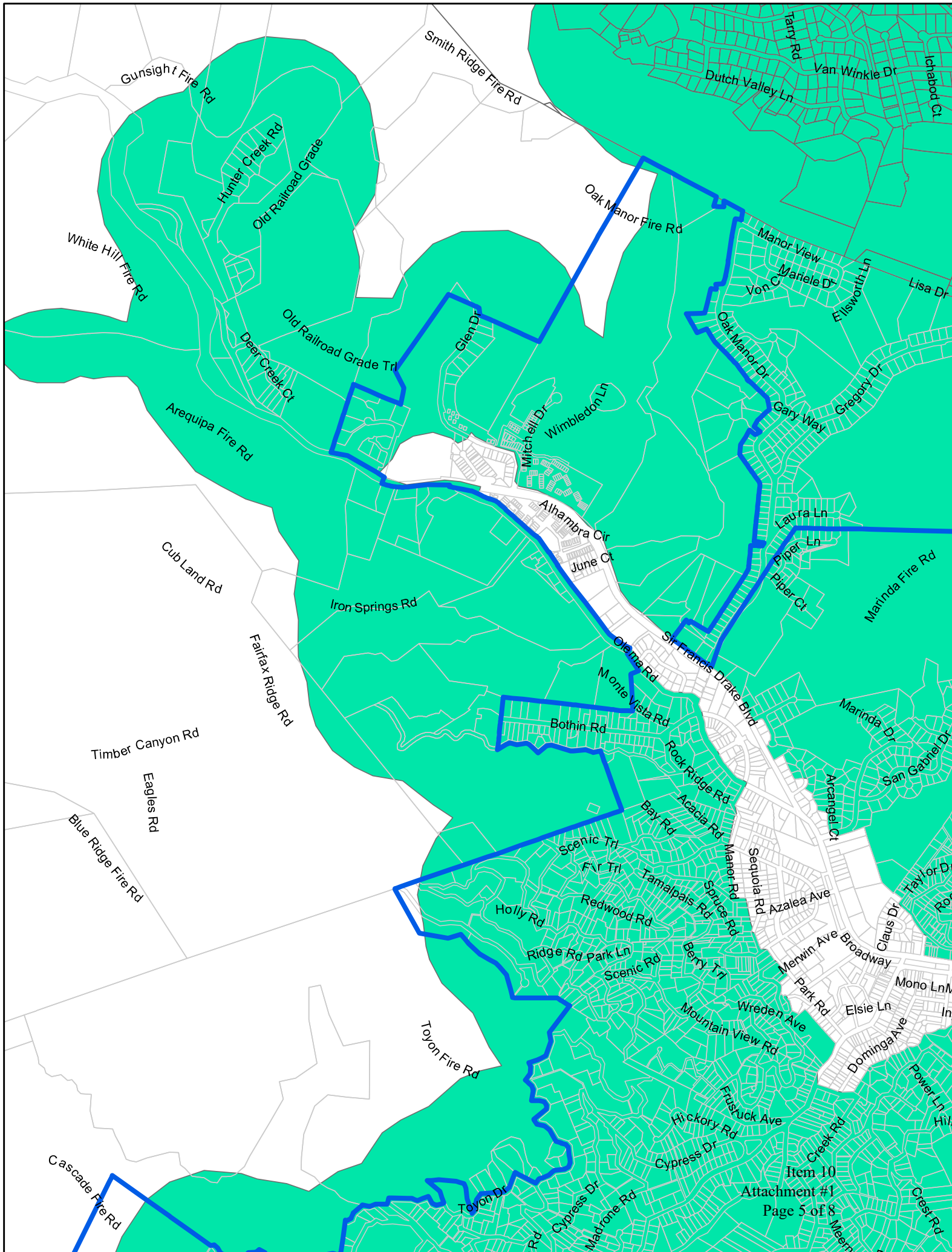
There is no fiscal impact associated with this item.

**Attachments:** RVFD WUI Map –Attachment #1  
RVFD FHSZ Map –Attachment #2  
Marin Map WUI Layer –Attachment #3



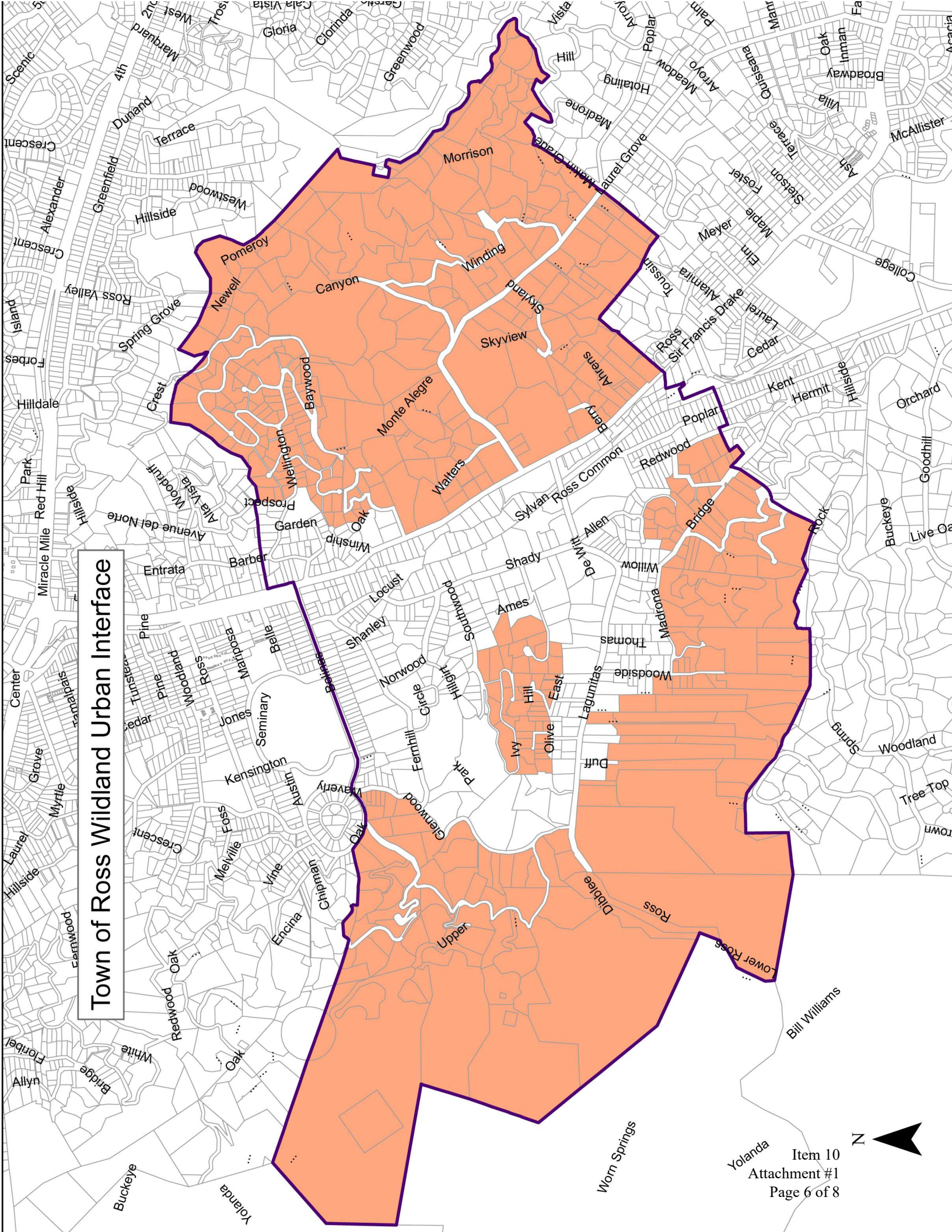






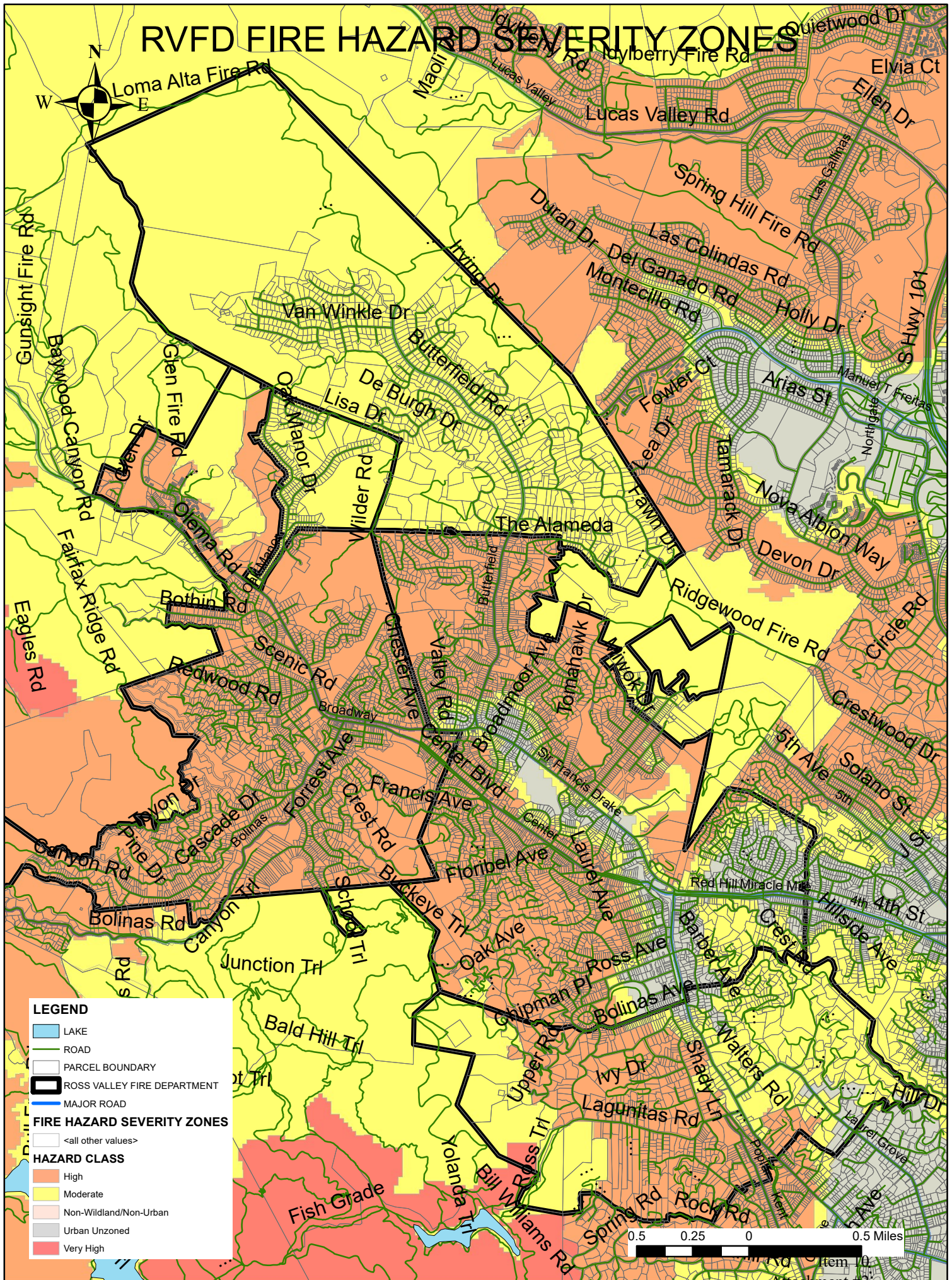


Town of Ross Wildland Urban Interface





## RVFD FIRE HAZARD SEVERITY ZONES





# RVFD WILDLAND URBAN INTERFACE

