

Proposed reboot of “Residential Hazardous Plant Removal” Grant Program of the KFPD

We propose a reboot, a refashioning, and an increased investment in this program.

House hardening has become a major focus of emergency preparedness in California. An article in the February 17, 2022 edition of the *Marin I-J* described that county-wide effort to motivate homeowners to modify their vegetation to improve public safety. This has also become an issue of home insurance, which should be a major focus of Kensington’s Fire Protection District, as the Kensington Property Owners Association and other civic groups have pointed out. The *Marin I-J* reported:

“Twelve insurance companies representing 40% of the insurance market offer discounts to homeowners taking hardening measures. Three years ago, only 7% of the market was offered such discounts,” [said State Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara.]

For further details see <https://www.marinij.com/2022/02/17/marin-fire-officials-applaud-new-state-standards/>

A massive public information campaign is under way in Marin County to improve safety, lower homeowner insurance costs, and avoid insurance cancellations. Kensington, rated the most dangerous zip code in the Bay Area for fire risk, needs to get ahead of potential future trends of increased fire danger and insurance cancellations. This can be encouraged by incentives to homeowners to harden their residences in various ways. One approach is education about structural renovations. Another is providing some subsidy for removal of dangerous vegetation, which is the objective of this program.

The traditional “replanting” grant program allotted \$3000 a year for all of Kensington. With 2200 households, this program is inadequate (at less than \$1.50 per household) and does not lead the community in encouraging removal of hazardous plants. The program, if only for reasons of raising public awareness, needs to be more fully funded and publicized. Criteria for awarding these grants, their matching funds, and their reporting back, need to be updated and clarified.

We propose the following guidelines for a rebooted program:

1. The amount in the fund should be raised immediately to \$25,000, with the indication that more can be allotted if demand and success meet expectations.
2. These will be matching grants, at the rate of up to 50%, depending on the project (see criteria below), and awarded after the project is completed.
3. Priority will be given to projects that (a) remove especially hazardous plants in concentrated areas, (b) affect several properties, (c) have significant matching funds from homeowners, (d)

affect roadways, sidewalks, and other evacuation routes, (e) benefit homeowners of limited resources.

4. The Emergency Preparedness Committee will evaluate grant proposals and report to the Board the final decisions.

We propose a major public education and solicitation effort.

Attached is a draft grant proposal.



Kensington Fire Protection District

Application For Subsidy To Remove Hazardous Plants In Kensington

Property Owner's Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Address of Property under renovation
(if different from above): _____

PLEASE READ BEFORE ANSWERING:

There are three types of vegetational hazards: (Type 1) surface plants, mulch, etc., with low probability of spreading fire; (Type 2) ground plants, such as bushes and taller herbs, that can contribute to fuel ladders spreading to crown fires; and (Type 3) large flammable trees, which can be removed but also whose flammability can be reduced by removal of fuel around their bases and (e.g., eucalyptus) by removal of low-hanging peeled bark. Please be specific about the types of vegetational hazards that you are asking us to subsidize the removal thereof.

Funding will be prioritized for projects that (a) remove especially hazardous plants in concentrated areas, (b) affect several properties, (c) affect roadways, sidewalks, and other evacuation routes. If you are making requests in collaboration with neighboring homeowners, please explain as part of your application.

Priority for removal will be given to hazardous plants, viz.: juniper, eucalyptus (especially surrounding surface fuels and peeling bark), and bamboo (especially dried or drying), and any other desiccated shrubbery or ground plants, as well as dead trees and shrubs, and other accumulated fuel loads.

1. These are the plants I have removed (please describe and attach photos):

Type 1 vegetation: _____

Type 2 vegetation: _____

Type 3 vegetation: _____

Request Form (Continued)

2. Here are the neighboring properties (provide addresses) that would have been threatened by my (our) plants if they ignited (provide details):

3. This is the cost for removing those plants (please provide receipts):

4. Here is what I contributed and what my neighbors contributed:

5. Amount requested as a subsidy from the Kensington Fire Protection District:

6. Here is why our project deserves priority of funding (see criteria above):

7. Dates when you started and finished this project:

8. Name(s) of person(s) who will receive the subsidy, if granted:

9. Telephone and email of recipient:

*PLEASE PROVIDE "BEFORE" AND "AFTER" PHOTOS OF THE REMOVED VEGETATION.
THANKS!*

Submit all applications by email to
Kensington Fire Protection District
General Manager Bill Hansell
bhansell@kensingtonfire.org