

Proposed reboot of “Residential Hazardous Plant Removal” Grant Program of the KFPD, v2

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.¹ 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 could better lead the community in encouraging removal of hazardous plants. The program, if only for reasons of raising public awareness, should be more fully funded and publicized. Criteria for awarding these grants, their matching funds, and their reporting back, should 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 could be considered if demand and success meet expectations. External funds may also be sought.

¹ AB 3074, passed and signed into law in 2021, requires fuel-reduction measures for all structures between 5-30 feet around it, and an ember-resistant zone within 5 feet. The law takes effect in 2023.

2. These will be matching grants, at the rate of up to 50%, and up to \$2000 per project, depending on the project (see criteria below), and awarded after the project is completed.
3. The program will begin annually on April 1 and continue until funds are exhausted, or until October 1, whichever comes first. Projects will be considered on a rolling basis (i.e., as they are received). Decisions will normally be made within 30 days of receipt of application.
4. Priority will be given to projects that (a) remove especially hazardous plants and debris 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.
5. Funds will be designated to remove materials that are hazardous to the community, in line with the mission of the Fire District. No funds for replanting will be provided, and no “beautification” proposals will be considered.
6. The EC-K Fire Marshal or designee will evaluate grant proposals and report the recommendations for funding to the General Manager. The GM will first receive the proposals and make sure that they are complete before forwarding to the Fire Marshal. The Fire Marshal can recommend an amount, a percentage, or a range of either, or simply evaluate the merits of the proposal. The GM will make final decisions based on available funding. Proposals will be considered on a rolling basis.
7. Awarded funds will be transmitted once the work is completed and receipts submitted to the District office (photos sent to fire@kensingtonfire.org). Before and after photos are welcome!

We propose a major public education and solicitation effort through the EPC and EP Coordinator.

Attached is a draft grant proposal.

Request Form for subsidy to remove hazardous plants and debris in Kensington

Property Owner's Name and Address:

Email and 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. Priority will be given to Types 2 and 3 and to accumulated flammable debris. Please be specific about the types of vegetational hazards that you are removing.

*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. **Funding cannot be considered for projects that are already completed.***

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/debris I will remove (please describe and attach photos):

Type 2 vegetation:

Type 3 vegetation:

Other flammable debris:

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

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

4. Here is how my neighbors and I plan to share the costs (if applicable):

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 will start and finish this project (approximate):
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, IF POSSIBLE. THANKS!

Submit all applications to **fire@kensingtonfire.org**.