

Neighborhood Mitigation Plan: Daniel's Ridge

The Daniel's Ridge Neighborhood Mitigation Plan (NMP) is a cooperative effort between the Daniel's Ridge Homeowners' Association (DRHOA) and South Metro Fire Rescue (SMFR). This NMP assesses the hazards and vulnerabilities of this community and identifies a path for the community to follow by prioritizing projects to reduce risk from wildfires. It also will document previous accomplishments. The Board of Directors will review and update this plan as needed and share it with residents and other interested stakeholders.

Community Description

Daniel's Ridge is a neighborhood of 34 single-family homes and seven tracts of open space within the City of Castle Pines, Colorado. The neighborhood is north of Castle Pines Parkway and east of Buffalo Trail. Each of the homes is addressed and accessed from Vista Lodge Loop. The ranch-style homes with walk-out basements, which were constructed in the early 2000s, are on lots measuring between two and four tenths of an acre.

The 34 homes are the greatest economic values at risk in this neighborhood. There are no outbuildings and no livestock. There are no utilities at risk from surface activities.

The DRHOA manages seven tracts of open space surrounding and within the neighborhood.

First-due firefighting resources are from SMFR Station 36, which is located at the corner of Debbie Lane and Castle Pines Parkway.

In a 2018 survey, residents said they enjoy living in Daniel's Ridge because of its views, access to the interstate, helpful neighbors and privacy. They like the "natural" appearance of their open space and its appeal to wildlife. Proper mitigation should enhance, and at the very least not detract from, these values.

Fire History

Although no fires have occurred in the DRHOA open space, the neighborhood is at-risk for wildfires because of the Gambel oak ecosystem surrounding its homes. Additionally, the neighborhood was threatened by the Cherokee Ranch Fire in October 2003. That wildfire began to the west of the neighborhood when high winds toppled a tree onto utility lines. The 1,000-acre wildfire burned eastward toward what is now the City of

Castle Pines but stopped when a cold front brought lower temperatures and higher relative humidity overnight, which helped firefighters contain the blaze.

Community Risk Assessment

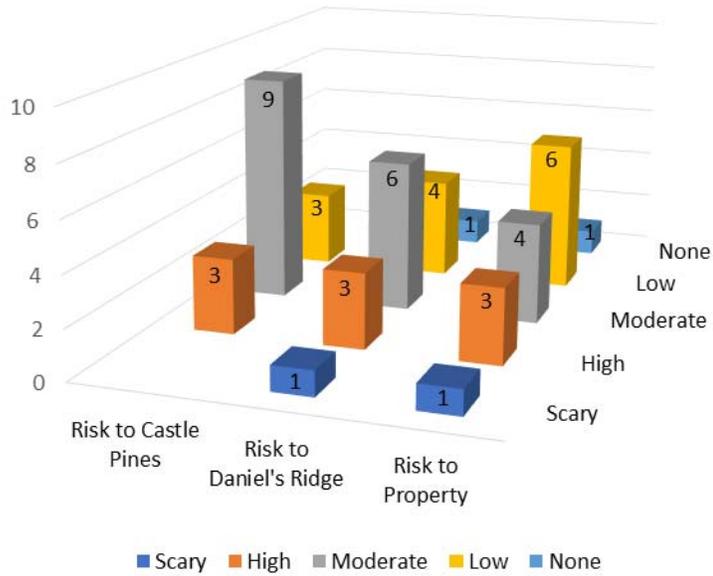
Daniel's Ridge is at-risk for wildfires because of several factors that it shares with other interface neighborhoods in the City of Castle Pines.

- **Topography:** As its name implies, Daniel's Ridge is on a ridge above a golf course to the east and south, high-density homes to the north and low-density homes to the west. The slopes could influence wildfire behavior.
- **Native Vegetation:** Vegetation in the open space is either native grasses or mature, dense stands of Gambel oak. The potential for rapid fire spread and large flame lengths is present.
- **Home Construction:** Homes are constructed of fire resistant materials.
- **Landscaping:** All homes have maintained lawns, but some yards feature flammable vegetation such as junipers near primary structures.
- **Access:** Access into the neighborhood is limited to the gated entry of Vista Lodge Loop where it connects with Buffalo Trail. Buffalo Trail can be followed north to Monarch Parkway or south to Castle Pines Parkway. The gate has a Knox Box control that is keyed for SMFR use.
- **Families:** All residences are single-family homes. Most have at least two residents.

In June 2018, SMFR asked residents (through an email disseminated by the HOA) to participate in an online survey to gauge their attitudes toward wildfire risk and preparedness. Fifteen residents participated.

When asked to rate the risk of wildfire in the City of Castle Pines, their neighborhood and their own property residents didn't follow trends identified in social science research in which residents deem the community risk higher than the risk in their own neighborhood, and that risk higher than the risk on their own properties.

Residents' Wildfire Risk Perception



Only six of the respondents followed the trend, while others assessed the risk equally between community, neighborhood and property or considered their property at a higher risk:

Respondent	City	Neighborhood	Property
1	Moderate	Moderate	Low
2	Moderate	High	High
3	High	Moderate	Moderate
4	Low	Low	Low
5	Moderate	Moderate	Low
6	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
7	Moderate	High	High
8	High	High	High
9	High	Scary	Scary
10	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
11	Moderate	Low	Low
12	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
13	Low	None	None
14	Low	Low	Low
15	Moderate	Low	Low

Interestingly one resident claimed that there is no wildfire risk to the neighborhood or private property. Consistent educational messages empowering residents to protect their families may address these discrepancies.

Risk Reduction Priorities

Community risk reduction takes a village; it requires individual actions and collective action to be effective over a longer term. Board members, serving in the role of a wildfire mitigation committee, and residents identified several strategies for reducing the impact of wildfire for Daniel's Ridge that could be implemented at the local level.

- Education – The DRHOA will share opportunities to educate residents about wildfire risk utilizing resources and personnel from South Metro Fire Rescue, Colorado State Forest Service, Douglas County and other entities as requested. Those subject matter experts will attend meetings and community events, contribute to newsletters and websites, and conduct property risk assessments when requested by residents.
- Ready, Set, Goat! – DRHOA joined this project in 2018. A herd of goats owned by Goat Green LLC treated approximately five acres of Gambel oak, noxious weeds and grasses in the open space north of the neighborhood. The DRHOA plans to have goats treat that open space again in 2019.
- Private Property Mitigation – Most homeowners and property owners can improve their safety by modifying growing and built fuels on their properties. Aging homes and mature vegetation provide many opportunities for wildfires to expand.
- Shared Property Mitigation – DRHOA owns and maintains seven tracts of open space in the neighborhood (See Appendix A). SMFR's recommendations for each tract follow:
 - Open Space A: Goats treated the northern end of this tract in 2018. They were excluded from shorter oak growing on the hill west of homes because that oak is stabilizing an area prone to erosion. SMFR recommends continued goat treatment to the north to address oak density and ladder fuels and monitoring oak growth on the hill. When those individuals mature, goats will be effective against ladder fuels.
 - Open Space B: This narrow tract could provide emergency-vehicle access to the open space. Keep it mowed and accessible.
 - Open Space C: Goats treated this tract in 2018. SMFR recommends continued goat treatment to the north to address oak density and ladder fuels.
 - Open Space D: This tract serves as the welcome mat to Daniel's Ridge and receives significant maintenance attention. Neither its mowed and watered grass nor the handful of trees poses a threat to the neighborhood. Therefore, SMFR recommends continued maintenance.
 - Open Space E: This tract features a handful of trees and maintained grass. SMFR recommends continued maintenance.

- Open Space F: This tract also features trees and maintained grass, but this open space is adjacent to backyard fences. Thus, its maintenance is more important to prevent dead needles or leaves from accumulating along the fence.
- Open Space G: This tract features a handful of trees and maintained grass. SMFR recommends continued maintenance.

Zone of Influence

Additionally, there is an area surrounding Daniel’s Ridge within which are characteristics that could influence a wildfire’s growth and its threat to residents and property.

Mitigation within this “zone of influence” relies on partnerships and collaboration with other stakeholders to create mutually beneficial solutions to shared challenges.

- West: The neighborhood of Whisper Canyon and open space managed by Denver Mountain Parks are west of Daniel’s Ridge. The horizontal continuity or fuels in this zone – including growing and built fuels – could lead a fire directly toward Daniel’s Ridge.
- North: The Tapestry Hills neighborhood is to the north. While there are tracts of open space surrounding dense housing, the open space is largely maintained grass. While wildfires probably won’t start here, a structure fire or urban conflagration here could produce significant embers capable of threatening Daniel’s Ridge.
- East and South: The golf course in these zones of influence creates an ideal fuel break between Daniel’s Ridge and other neighborhoods to the east.

Communications with the Community

Meetings of homeowners and utilizing the Nextdoor social media platform are the best means for communicating with Daniel’s Ridge homeowners.