

# Weed Abatement Program


**Fire Department**  
**Jenn Panko**  
**Acting Deputy Chief**

February 25, 2025

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## AGENDA

- Brief History of the Program with County
- City Council's Questions 2-20-2024
- City's Program Improvements for 2025
- Avenues for Assistance
- Recommended Action



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The Measure of a Better Future

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## **Weed Abatement Program Summary**

- Since 1976, the City of Santa Clara has partnered with County of Santa Clara to abate weeds within the City of Santa Clara’s jurisdiction
- Through systematic vegetation and debris management, the program reduces fire hazards, promotes a healthier environment, enhances the overall visual appeal of neighborhoods and business districts, and contributes to a higher quality of life for residents and businesses.
- The Weed Abatement Program is a critical initiative to enhance community safety, business environments, and neighborhood aesthetics by mitigating the risk of fires.
- The City’s Code Enforcement Division responds to complaints for overgrown vegetation. Code Enforcement inspectors visit the properties and if determined not to be compliant, property owners are given a 30-day warning notice. Upon reinspection, if properties are still non-compliant, the owner is cited and referred to the County Weed Abatement Program.



## **City’s 2025 Weed Abatement Program**

- Following the concerns raised during the February 20, 2024, City Council meeting, the Fire Department engaged with the Santa Clara County Consumer and Environmental Protection Agency who manages the County Weed Abatement Program to evaluate ways to improve the Weed Abatement Program within the City of Santa Clara.
- The Fire Département had several meetings over the past year to collaborate on what programmatic changes could be made to address residents concerns and achieve the City Councils Pillar to Deliver and Enhance High Quality Efficient Service.



## **City Council Questions (Themes)** **2-20-2024 Meeting**

- What are the County Fees & Schedule?
- What is the notification and appeal process—Is there a warning period?
- Can we change the inspection start date to later than March 1st?
- How many vegetation fires do we have in the City each year?
- What cities are not in the County Program—How do they manage weeds?

## **Improvements to City's 2025 Weed Abatement Program**

- New inspection start date in Santa Clara of April 15<sup>th</sup> to align closer to City Clean-Up Campaign
- Increased Communications: City website, social media, "santaclaraweeds" email
- A letter from the Fire Department sent to all properties in Santa Clara that were added to the 2025 County Commencement List with contact information to answer questions or address concerns about the program.
- Increased the "warning period" by the addition of a City inspection of new properties on the List between the end of the inspection period for the season and before the public hearing to confirm non-compliance or compliance.
- A report will be provided to the Council before the public hearing with recommendations for a property's continuation or removal from the list.

## Avenues for Assistance

- Property owners may reach out to the County of Santa Clara Weed Abatement Program at: Phone: (408) 282-3145, Email: [scc.weedabatement@cep.sccgov.org](mailto:scc.weedabatement@cep.sccgov.org)

And/or the Santa Clara Fire Department Administration Division at: Phone: (408) 615-4900, Email: [santaclaraweeds@santaclaraca.gov](mailto:santaclaraweeds@santaclaraca.gov)

- Overgrown vegetation complaints may be filed directly with the County Program: <https://weedabatement.santaclaracounty.gov/report-overgrown-vegetation-fire-hazard>

Or the City of Santa Clara: <https://www.santaclaraca.gov/services/make-a-service-request/submit-a-request-online>

- Senior Assist Program in the City of Santa Clara: <https://www.santaclarafirefighters.org/in-your-community/our-programs/senior-assist>



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## Senior Assist Program in Santa Clara

The [Senior Assist Program](#) is a volunteer program that provides service to elderly members of the community. The focus is primarily on safety concerns around the home including accessibility issues and fire hazards resulting from overgrown vegetation. For qualifying individuals, a team of workers, meet at the affected property and spend two to three hours clearing and removing vegetation, at no cost to the homeowner. To qualify for this free service, the candidate will have a need for assistance and lack the physical and financial ability to handle the work on their own.



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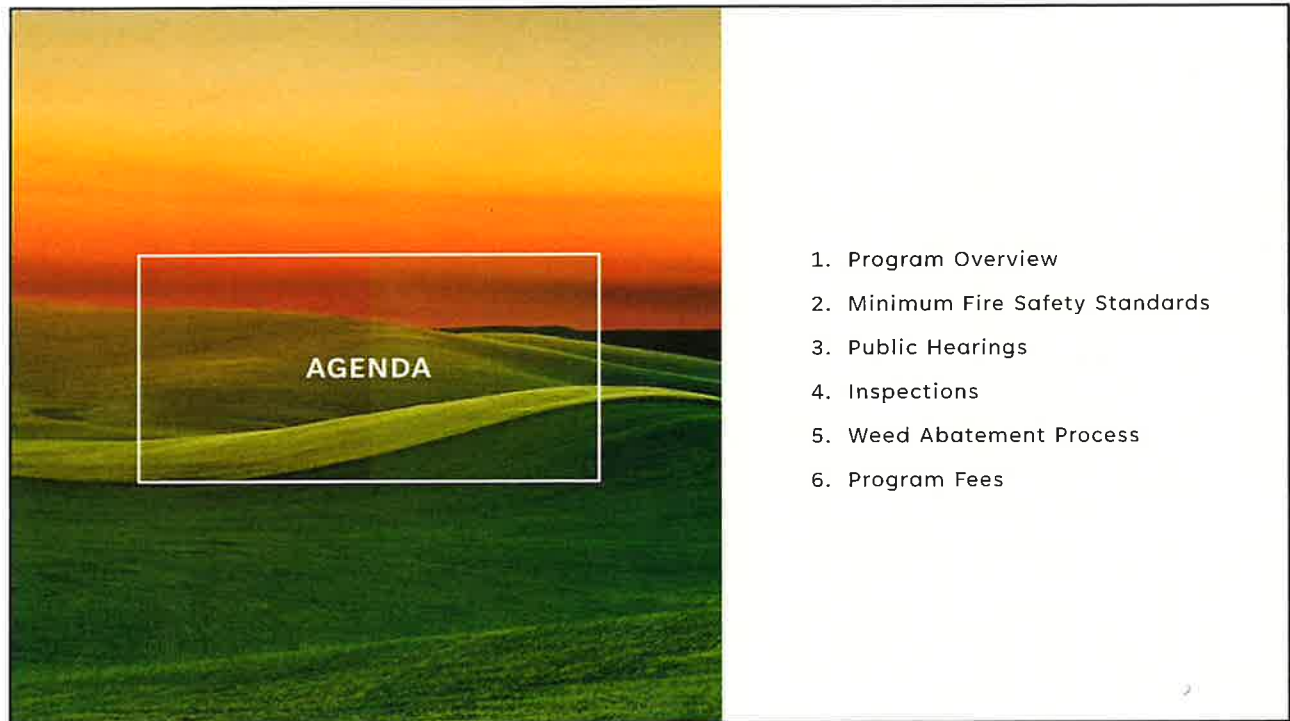
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## Recommended Action

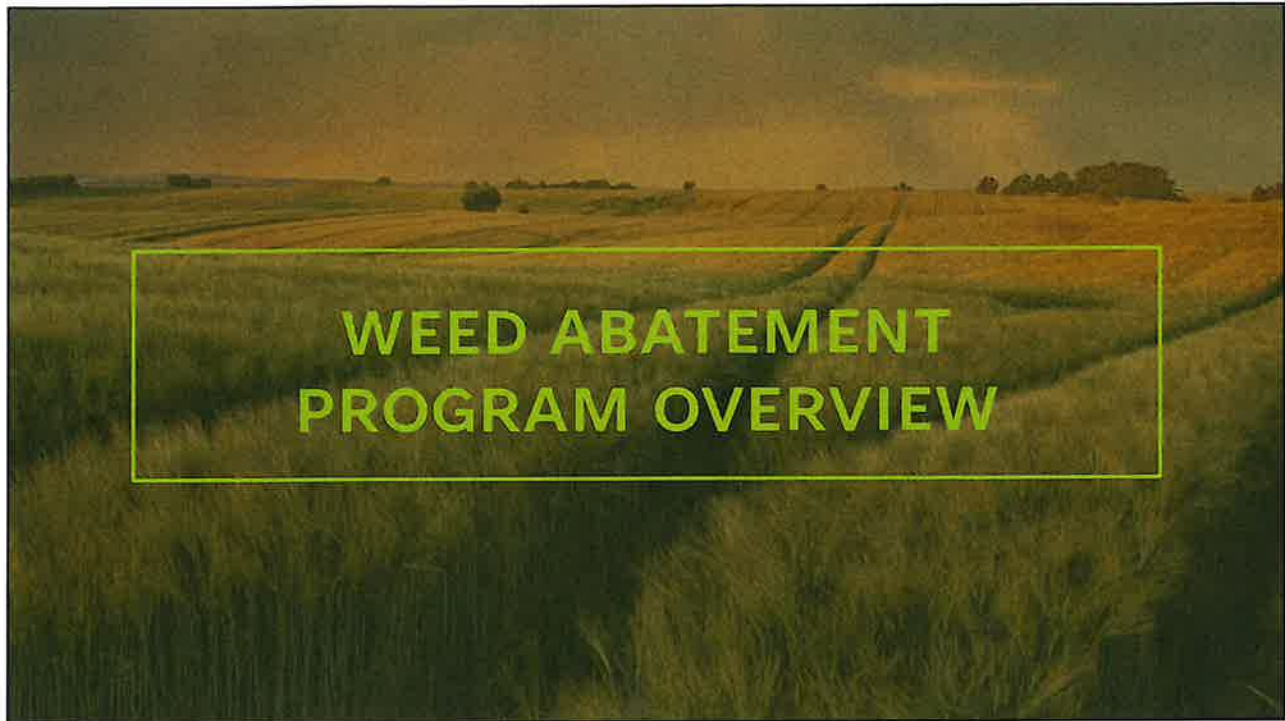
- Note and file the informational update regarding the County Weed Abatement Program and the changes the Fire Department and Code Enforcement have made to the program;
- Determine the proposed actions are exempt from CEQA pursuant to Section 15308 (Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment) of Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations.
- Adopt a Resolution declaring weeds to be a public nuisance and setting a hearing date for the City Council to consider public input regarding the proposed destruction and removal of weeds for properties on the 2025 County Commencement List; and
- Set March 25, 2025, as the date for the required Public Hearing.



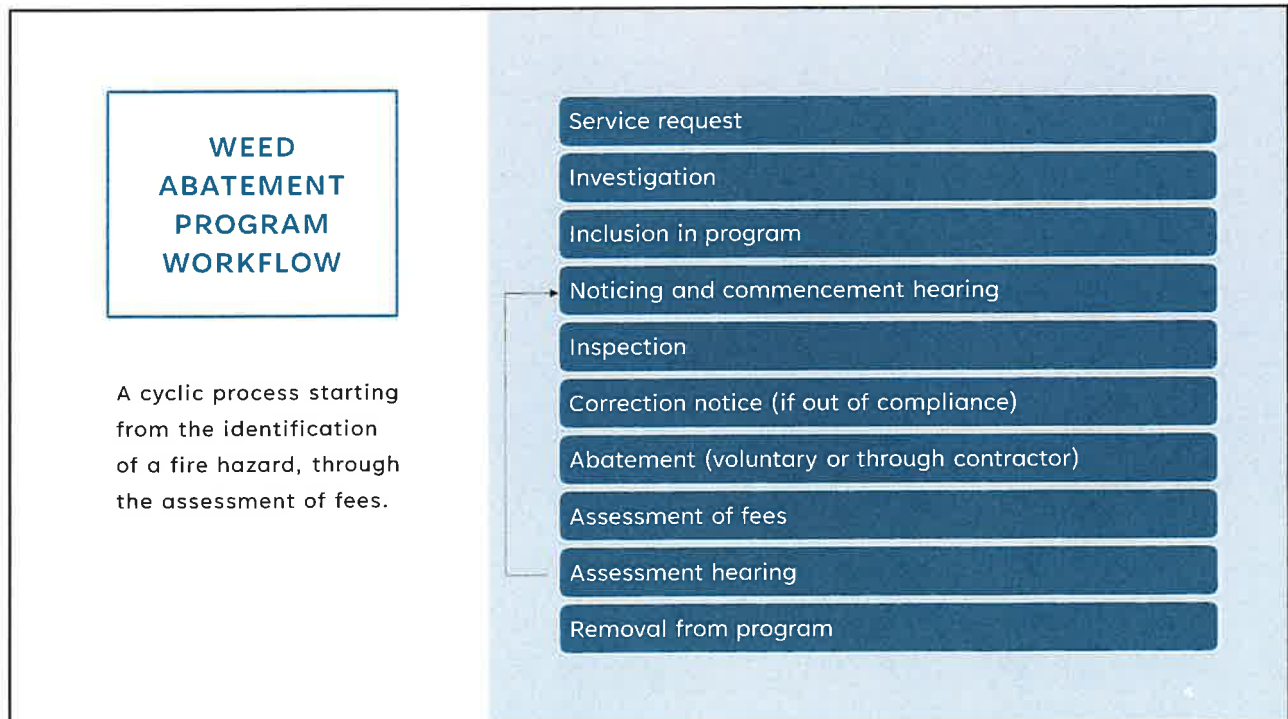
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## PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF WILDFIRES THROUGH COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT

1. Inspecting properties for compliance with Minimum Fire Safety Standards
2. Providing property owners an opportunity to come into compliance voluntarily
3. Working with a contractor who will bring the property into compliance if the property owner fails to abate the violation on their own property
4. Assessing fees to recover costs of running the program



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## MINIMUM FIRE SAFETY STANDARDS

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**SAFETY STANDARDS  
WE INSPECT ALL  
PROPERTIES FOR**

1. *Hazardous vegetation must not exceed 6 inches in height any time after the compliance deadline.*
2. Maintain grasses and weeds below 6 inches for 10 feet horizontally on both sides of all roadways, including driveways and access routes. Roads and driveways must maintain a clearance of 10' W by 13'6" H for all vegetation.
3. Clear flammable vegetation a minimum of 30 feet around any structure, occupied or not. Ornamental vegetation should be kept clear of dead material. Some conditions, such as slopes, may require up to a 100-foot clearance.
4. Parcels one acre or less shall be completely abated. Parcels over one acre up to five acres require 30-foot clearance around structures and perimeter property lines. Additional 30-foot cross fuel breaks may also be required.

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**SAFETY STANDARDS  
WE INSPECT ALL  
PROPERTIES FOR  
(CONT.)**

5. Parcels larger than five acres require 30-foot clearance around structures and perimeter property lines in addition to 30-foot cross fuel breaks as needed to separate the remaining vegetation into sections no larger than five acres.
6. Keep property clear of accumulation of combustible debris, such as trash, wood, and dead vegetation. Stacked firewood and neatly piled yard waste is not considered to be combustible debris.
7. Keep vegetation cleared from under the eaves of houses.
8. Trim tree branches to at least 10 feet away from chimneys. Trim tree branches up from the ground to provide at least 6 feet of vertical clearance.
9. Clear leaves, pine needles and debris from roof and gutters.

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<p><b>TWO OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROPERTY OWNERS TO CHALLENGE THEIR STANDING IN OUR PROGRAM</b></p>	<p>It is each jurisdiction's responsibility to pass a resolution and to schedule and hold public hearings.</p> <p>Our staff will represent the County during the hearings and answer questions or respond to owners.</p> <p>The jurisdiction's board or council will make the final decision on all challenges based on the hearing.</p>
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<p><b>FIRST OPPORTUNITY TO BE HEARD</b></p>	<p>Commencement hearings in each jurisdiction take place in the beginning of each calendar year after a resolution is passed declaring weeds, brush, and debris a public nuisance on certain properties.</p> <p>Owners can challenge their inclusion in the program. They cannot challenge fees during this hearing.</p>
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<p><b>SECOND OPPORTUNITY TO BE HEARD</b></p>	<hr/> <p>Assessment hearings in each jurisdiction take place in the later summer months of each year.</p> <hr/> <p>Owners can challenge the fees being assessed on their property tax bill. They cannot challenge their inclusion in the program during this hearing.</p>
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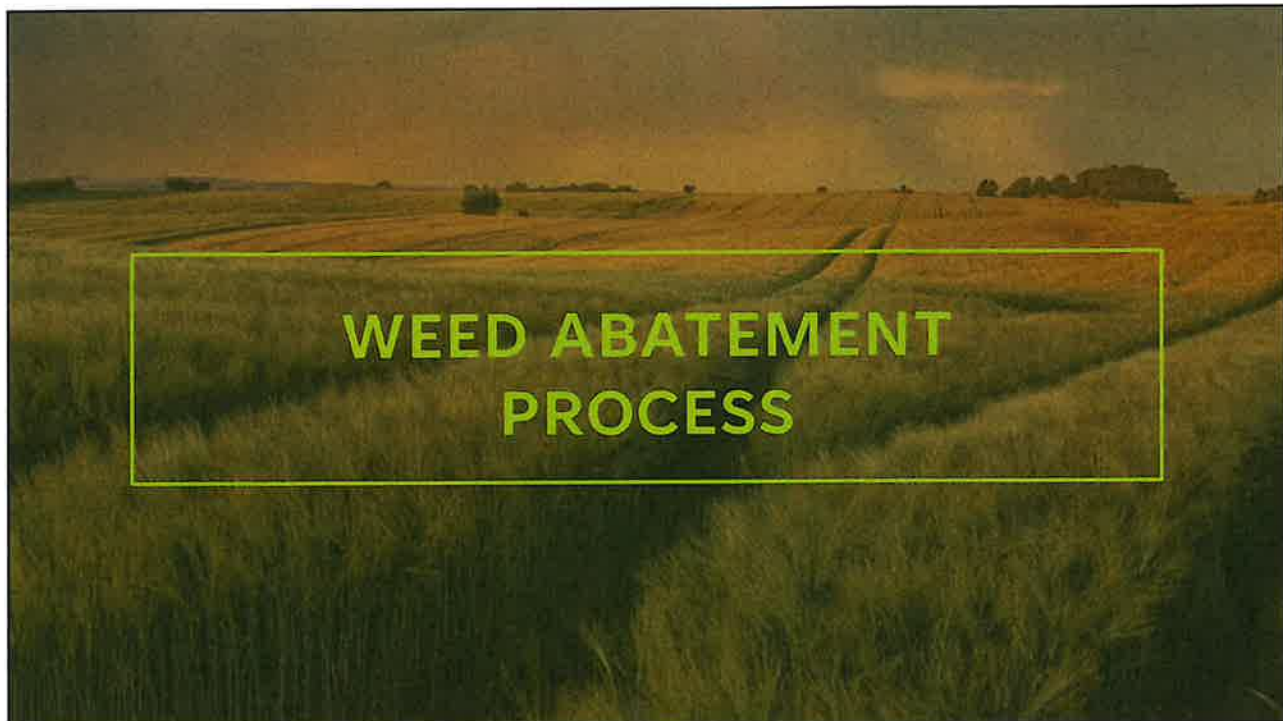
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<p><b>TIMING AND METHOD OF INSPECTIONS</b></p>	<p>Inspections begin after the compliance deadline in each jurisdiction (ranging from March 1 to May 15)</p> <p>Inspections typically will conclude on October 31 at the latest, unless fire season is extended.</p> <p>Inspections are done from a public right of way. Photos are taken of the property from the roadway or a public place. We do not enter private property without consent for our inspections.</p>
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<p><b>REMOVAL FROM THE PROGRAM</b></p>	<p>Properties will remain on the program until they demonstrate three consecutive years of voluntary compliance (compliant at the time of the initial annual inspection)</p> <p>Properties where building and/or landscape is sufficient to remove the risk of fire will be removed from the program. Properties with sufficient building and landscape will not be charged an inspection fee.</p>
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**CORRECTING VIOLATIONS THROUGH VOLUNTARY COMPLIANCE OR WITH A CONTRACTOR**

Properties that fail inspection are sent a notice stating that they are out of compliance.

The property has 15 days to comply. After 15 days the County may have the contractor complete the abatement work on the property.

A consent form is sent to developed parcels to request consent for the contractor to abate the violation on the property.

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**CONSENT AND WARRANTS**

If consent is given on developed properties, the contractor will abate the violations on the property.

If consent is not given, the County will seek a warrant to abate the violation with the contractor. A warrant fee will be assessed.

If the contractor arrives at a property which has already been abated by the owner, they will not do any work on the property.

A work order fee will still be assessed for the property if a work order was generated.

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**THE CONTRACTOR IS REQUIRED TO TAKE BEFORE AND AFTER PHOTOS OF THE PROPERTY TO PROVE THAT WORK WAS NEEDED AND PERFORMED.**



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**2025  
WEED ABATEMENT FEES**

Fees are determined each year based on overall program costs and the number of properties in the program. We are a 100% cost recovery program.

Fee description	Fee dollar amount
Inspection	\$105
Work Order Processing	\$597
Administrative Fee (only applies when contractor abates the property)	\$961
Contractors Costs	TBD
Warrant Fee	\$1,323

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**FEES MAY BE  
CONTESTED BY  
PROPERTY OWNERS**

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Fees are added as a special assessment on the property tax bill, if approved by the jurisdiction's board or council.

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The assessment hearing is an opportunity for the property owner to contest any fees they are being assessed.

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<p><b>CONTACT</b></p>	
<p>Garik Iosilevsky <b>Weed Abatement Manager</b> 408-282-3186 Garik.Iosilevsky@cep.sccgov.org weedabatement.santaclaracounty.gov</p>	