



MEMORANDUM

June 25, 2020

TO: Laurel Prevetti, Town Manager / Los Gatos

FROM: Tony Bowden, Fire Chief

SUBJECT: Alpine Avenue

BACKGROUND

At a recent Town Council Meeting, a Los Gatos resident raised concerns regarding the street width, parking, and the impacts to ingress/egress on Alpine Avenue should a wildfire and/or emergency occur. The Santa Clara County Fire Department was contacted by the Assistant Town Manager to assess the concerns raised by the Town resident and to provide a recommendation should the Fire Department determine that a potentially hazardous condition exists.

Staff was able to confirm the following: Alpine Avenue has an approximate average width of 25 feet from curb to curb. On June 22, 2020 at 11:00, the Santa Clara County Fire Department staff, including: the Fire Chief, the Assistant Fire Chief, Fire Prevention Deputy Fire Marshals, Battalion 83, Engine 77, and the Town of Los Gatos staff, met at Alpine Avenue. This is a two-way street and parking is currently allowed on both sides of the street. Multiple cars were present on both sides of Alpine Avenue on June 22nd. The current width of emergency fire response vehicles in Los Gatos is 100 inches, not including the mirrors. With small to average vehicles parked on both sides of the street, the fire engine had approximately 12-18 inches of clearance on either side when driving on Alpine Avenue. (*See Attachment A*) A parked full-size vehicle or truck would significantly reduce this clearance.

The current requirement for road width, in new residential developments, is a minimum road width of 36 feet to allow parking on both sides of the road, between 28 feet and 35 feet to allow parking on one side of the road, and roads that are less than 28 feet in width are not allowed to have on-street parking. It is well understood that codes and ordinances have evolved over time and there are many streets/roads throughout the county of Santa Clara that do not meet this current standard. However, in areas with limited ingress/egress, or in high-hazard fire severity zones, it is important that local jurisdictions assess these situations on a case-by-case basis as there are many factors to consider such as the fire severity zone, emergency vehicle response routes, alternate access routes, and traffic flow, to name a few.

ATTACHMENT 2

BACKGROUND (cont'd)

Alpine Avenue serves as the most direct means of ingress for emergency response vehicles and the most direct means of egress for residents of the Alpine Avenue, Foster Road, Tourney Road, and the Sund Avenue neighborhoods. Alpine Avenue is in a Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) area and a very high-hazard severity zone, according to the California State Fire Marshal. *(See Attachment B)* Johnson Avenue and Loma Alta Avenue serve as secondary means of egress for the above mentioned as they are not the most direct route of egress. This is further complicated by a very narrow section of road connecting Foster Road to Johnson Avenue and by a section of one-way roadway on Johnson Avenue.

IMPACT

Understanding the current road width, parking conditions, wildland fire risk and emergency response vehicle width, a fire engine responding to an emergency response via Alpine Avenue would be directly impeded, should it encounter a vehicle driving in the opposite direction, with vehicles parked on both sides of the street. In this scenario, the direct impacts would be: a delayed response to the emergency (fire, medical, etc.); reduced ability/inability of residents to evacuate; and the reduced ability/inability for emergency response vehicles to get to the emergency during an evacuation.

The impact of restricted ingress/egress can be better understood by examining past wildland fires in communities with similar access issues, such as the Oakland Hills, Tunnel Fire of 1991 and the Camp Fire in the city of Paradise in 2018. During both of these fires, the ability for citizens to evacuate, and the ability for first responders to access the fires, was impacted due to narrow and blocked roads.

RECOMMENDATION

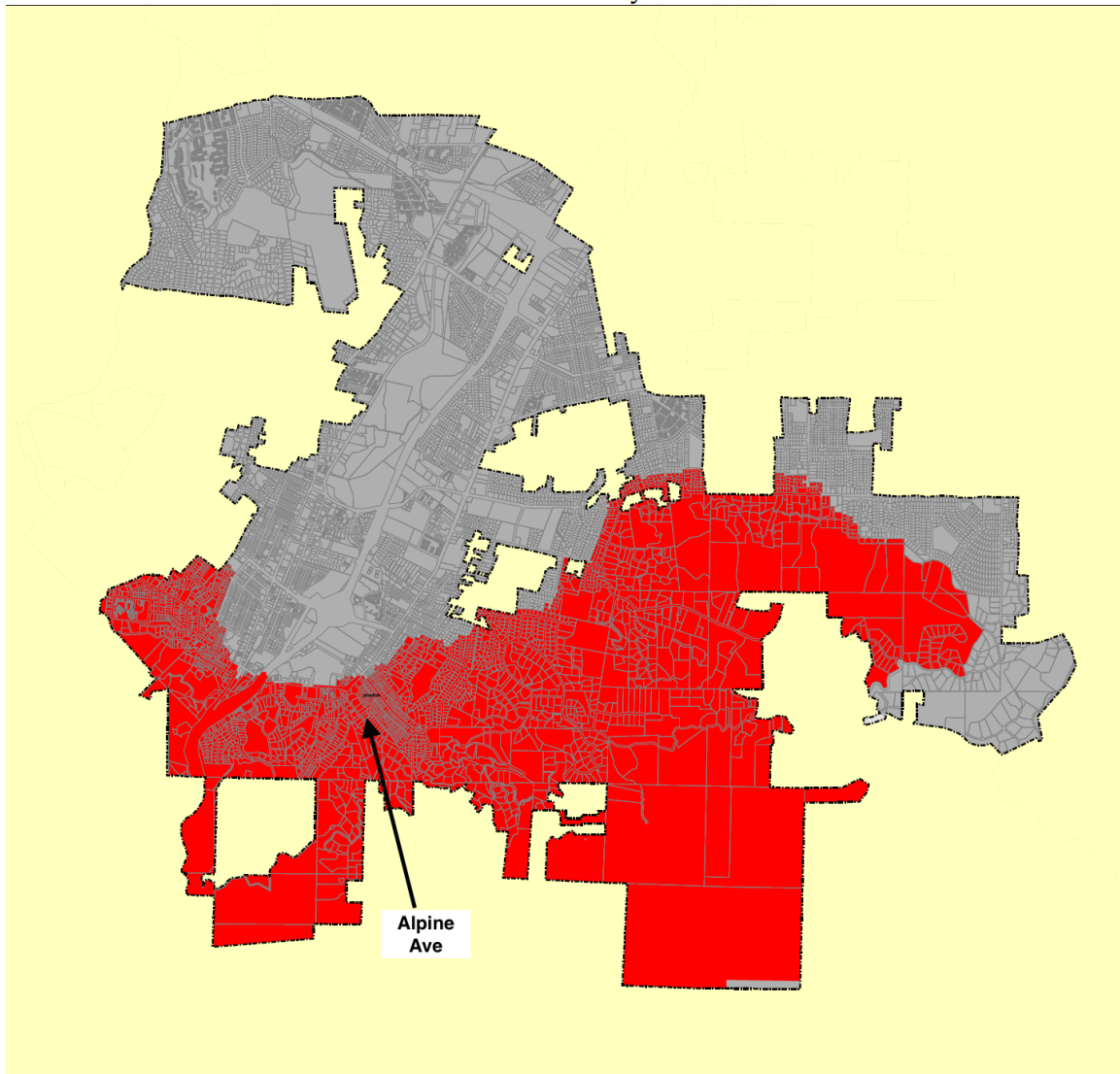
Santa Clara County Fire Department staff recommend that the Town of Los Gatos restrict parking on Alpine Avenue to one side of the street at all times. We recommend that parking be allowed on the North side of the street only, which would place parked vehicles in a position to quickly evacuate in the direction of egress, should a fire occur. If vehicles were allowed to park on the South side of Alpine Avenue, it would require vehicles to make a multipoint turn in the middle of the street during an evacuation. This action would directly impede emergency response vehicles responding to the emergency and slow the evacuation of other citizens.

Attachment A



Attachment B

Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones in LRA
As Recommended by CAL FIRE



Document Code 0117588, State of California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) is hereby
released from all liability for any and all damages, including reasonable attorneys' fees, that may be incurred by or for any person as a result of the use of the information contained herein.

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