RECOVERY LESSONS: 2017 TUBBS FIRE & 2018 CAMP FIRE

KEVIN PHILLIPS, TOWN MANAGER, TOWN OF PARADISE.
SEAN MCGLYNN, FORMER CITY MANAGER, CITY OF SANTA ROSA
COLETTE CURTIS, RECOVERY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR, TOWN OF PARADISE

CITY OF SANTA ROSA

- Incorporated in 1867
- Population of 178,127
- Located 50 miles north of San Francisco, CA
- 42 square miles of land
- Median age of 36.7
- Median household income $80,472 (CA average $78,672)
2017 TUBBS FIRE

Started at 9:45 p.m. on October 8, 2017 near Highway 128 and Bennett Lane in Calistoga, CA (SRA)

Daytime temperatures in the mid 80's
  - Moderate east winds

Nighttime temperatures did not predictably recover
  - Sustained winds increased to 45 mph
  - Gusts estimated at 75 to 90 mph on windward slopes

Fire travelled 12 nautical miles to the Santa Rosa City limits in 3+ hours
Fire did not spread linearly, rather it spread in multiple directions simultaneously impacting several City neighborhoods

2017 TUBBS FIRE

- 36,087 Acres Burned
- Within the City Limits:
  - Fatalities - 9
  - Buildings Destroyed - 3,098
    - Single Family Homes - 2,668
    - Multifamily Homes - 209
    - Mobile Homes - 190
    - Commercial Buildings - 31
  - 5% of housing stock lost
  - 25% of hotel inventory lost
TOWN OF PARADISE

- Incorporated in 1979
- Population of 26,500
- Located 85 miles north of Sacramento, CA
- 18.3 square miles of land
- Median age of 50.2
- Median household income $48,032 (CA average $78,672)

2018 CAMP FIRE

- November 8, 2018 at 6:45 am
- Town of Pulga
  - 8 Miles north of the Town of Paradise
- Broken Powerline by PG&E
- Red Flag Warning
- Extremely dry conditions
2018 CAMP FIRE
9:00 am
2018 CAMP FIRE
10:30 am
DESTROYED STRUCTURES

- Red Dots = Destroyed Structures (14,352)
- Green Dots = Standing Structures (~3,500)
2018 CAMP FIRE

- Most destructive wildfire in California history
- Globe’s most expensive disaster of 2018
- At least 85 fatalities
- 153,336 acres burned and 18,000 structures destroyed, most of which occurring in the first 12 hours
- Paradise lost 90-95% of all structures
- 2018 population reduced from 27,000 to about 4,000 overnight

“The Camp Fire spread as fast as 80 football fields per minute.” – After Action Report
LEANING INTO RECOVERY EARLY

Look Ahead
  • Planning for recovery while still in emergency response mode

Asking Essential Questions
  • What is the nature of the recovery

Organizational Structure
  • City Manager designated recovery lead
  • Internal staff take on recovery roles
  • Supplemented with outside assistance from consultants
COUNCIL SUPPORT

Urgency Ordinances adopted by City Council to expedite rebuilding process

- Expedites review for hillside development & design review
- Waives fees for discretionary planning, demolition and temporary housing permits
- Allows residents to live in temporary housing, (RVs, tiny homes, etc.) on their property while rebuilding
- Incentivizes construction of new ADUs; allows residents to build detached ADUs to live in while rebuilding main residence

Resilient City Permit Center

- Council approved expedited contract for outside firm to operate separate permit center exclusively for fire survivors rebuilding homes and/or businesses
- Permit center opened November 28, 2017

COUNCIL SUPPORT

Established Rebuild/Build Council Ad Hoc Committee

- Appointed members meet weekly with City recovery staff

Weekly Fire Recovery & Rebuilding Updates

- Added as standing item on City Council weekly meeting agenda
BENCHMARK PROGRESS

Utilizing available technology, developed tools to track recovery efforts
- Tools are public facing
- Easily accessible to all staff, citizens, and members of the media

REBUILD DATA TRACKER

Permit Review in Process: 251
Permit Issued, Construction Pending: 167
In Construction: 1219
Construction Complete: 395
EMPLOYEE RECOVERY TIME KEEPING DASHBOARD

STREAMLINED PERMITTING PROCESS

Santa Rosa reaches out to property owners
COMMUNITY OUTREACH

- Over 250 Rebuild & Recovery meetings
- Welcome Home Package

CARING FOR YOUR OWN
EARLY DETECTION

- Camera Network System:
  - alertwildfire.org/northbay
- Remote Automated Weather Stations

ALERT/WARNING/PREPARATION

- Change in philosophy
- Pre-positioning of resources
- Controlled burns

Alerting tools:
- City access to IPAWS (WEA/EAS/NOAA)
- SoCoAlert
- Hi-Lo Sirens
- (Nixle and Social Media)
- www.srcity.org/emergency

- Early evacuations
- Pre-designated Evacuation Zones
  - www.srcity.org/evacuation-zones
Immediately following the fire, infrastructure damage was concerning.

Town of Paradise the municipal corporation had just lost nearly all population and associated revenues for at least two decades.

Financial solvency was a top concern.
WHERE DID EVERYONE GO?

- Following the Camp Fire, the Town of Paradise’s population of 26,400 experienced an 82.6% loss.
- Chico gained 18.9% which is a decade of population growth in just a few weeks, Oroville gained 20.4%.
- Overall our County lost over 11,153 residents and estimates say it’ll take until 2024 to restore pre-fire County population number.
- Survivors can be found in all 50 states across the US.

RECOVERY TIMELINE – 15-20 YEAR RECOVERY OUTLOOK
FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY

THE TOWN WAS ABLE TO SECURE $219 MILLION FROM THE PG&E SETTLEMENT FUND.

FEDERAL AND STATE ASSISTANCE

- Water System Repair
- Debris Removal
- Hazard Tree Removal
- Road Repairs
QUICK PLANNING, FORWARD THINKING.

- Safer
- Better
- Stronger
- Welcoming
- Greener

Drafting the Plan started in January 2019

Extensive Community Outreach

Adopted by the Town Council in June 25, 2019

18 Town-Led Projects and 22 Partner-Led Projects across all aspects of the Town’s Recovery
BUILDING RESILIENCY CENTER

REBUILDING PARADISE

- The Town of Paradise is the fastest growing community in California
- 2,488 building permit applications received*
- 2,281 building permits issued*
- 1,535 homes rebuilt*

*as of August 2022
LESSONS LEARNED

- Employee Care
- Plan for the Worst
- Stress Test Insurance
- Communication
- Regional Partnerships

EMPLOYEE CARE

- All Town Staff impacted
- Most lost homes
- Logistical/Housing issues
- Trauma
PLAN FOR THE WORST

- The Camp Fire far surpassed our “worst case scenario”
- Plan for what you think is the worst that could happen, then multiply it by 10

STRESS TEST YOUR INSURANCE

- Challenges with insurance
- Revenue Replacement
- Property Coverage
COMMUNICATION

- Most important non-first responder function in an emergency
- Accurate and timely
- Hard to get it right
- Frequent, reliable, vetted
- Listening to each story

REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

- 50,000 people evacuated within 6 hours on Nov. 8, 2018
- Challenges with inter-jurisdictional evacuations
- Surrounding counties received thousands of evacuees
SO MUCH HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED

- 3.6 million tons of debris removed by Nov 2021
- First Rebuild permit issued March 2019
- Building Resiliency Center opened Jan 2020
- Hundreds of thousands of hazard trees removed
- $93 Million received from FEMA and FHWA for road repair
- Transportation Master Plan Completed
- Rebrand of Town Seal and Marketing

AND THERE’S SO MUCH LEFT TO DO!

- Sewer connection to City of Chico
- $800 million in unfunded road projects
  - Connecting dead end roads
  - Improving Evacuation Routes
  - Early Warning System Construction and implementation/education
  - Roadway reconstruction of 30 miles per year
  - Economic Recovery and Development Strategy

- Home Hardening Program
- Defensible Space Code Enforcement
- Category 4 Hazard Tree Removal
- Affordable Housing and Insurance
- Continue supporting residents rebuilding!
WE DIDN’T DO IT ALONE AND WE STILL AREN’T ALONE

THANK YOU!