

2017 Firewise Renewal Document

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Prepared by

Sun City Texas Firewise Group



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Description of Sun City Texas

Sun City Texas Community Association is located within the city of Georgetown, Texas, 5.5 miles from Interstate 35 on Williams Drive. Sun City Texas is an urban community with wildland vegetation (a hardwood, juniper, and native grass type) in the open spaces and adjacent properties. Sun City will have approximately 10,000 houses on about 5,200 acres at build out.

As of November 1, 2017, there are 7,635 homes with a population of 14,125 residents. Sun City Texas is presently the largest Home Owners Association recognized as a Firewise Community in Texas Sun City Texas is divided into 68 Neighborhoods each with their own local organization.

The Sun City Texas Community Association (CA) is responsible for the management of all non-residential property. CA documents define a set of four maintenance levels for management. Included in these levels are federally defined protection areas for karst formations (including underground caves) for endangered species. The CA also owns and maintains three golf courses.

Berry Creek and its tributaries, Cowan and Rocky Hollow, originally had hardwood trees with an Ashe juniper (cedar) tree understory in the flood plain. The presence of Ashe juniper (cedar) trees, an invasive native, posed a fire hazard as a ladder fuel and acted as debris accumulation points during periods of creek floods. Additionally, Ashe juniper along with other invasive species create a fire hazard in many of the common areas. Shaded fuel breaks have been established in two heavy concentrations that posed a significant wildfire threat. Since the 2010 flooding event approximately 8.5 miles of flood plain have been cleared of Ashe juniper. An additional 450 acres of common area have been cleared for wildfire concerns.

Sun City Texas has 708 Landscaped Maintained Homes (LMH) managed by the CA. The lawns, beds, and trees are maintained under a vendor contract with the CA. The CA Staff and the Landscaped Maintained Homes Committee apply the Firewise Home Ignition Zone principles to LMH properties.

All other residential properties are the responsibility of the individual property owners for the implementation of the Home Ignition Zone principles. Homeowner education, provided by the Firewise Group, is the key to providing information to community residents concerning the dangers from wildfires and to encourage the management of the space around their residence. In 2017, 86 HIZ requests were received and completed.

The Sun City Texas Firewise Group is a subcommittee of the Sun City Texas Emergency Management Committee.

The Firewise Group assigns specific tasks to the following program groups:

Education Work Group

Home Ignition Zone Evaluator Work Group

Community Wildfire Protection and Renewal Process Program Work Group

Firewise Clearing Crew

The Firewise Group hosts 2 events each year. The events are a Wildfire Preparedness Day in May and a community-wide Firewise Town Hall in October. An informational display is used at the Town Hall and at quarterly New Residents Orientation Town Halls. Presentations are also made at community events such as

special town halls, Neighborhood events, and club meetings. Since Sun City Texas is divided into Neighborhoods. Participation in Neighborhood meetings provides the Firewise Group opportunities for face-to-face contact with the residents. The monthly CA magazine *Sun Rays*, weekly CA Communicator e-mails, and special e-mails are used to communicate additional information about Firewise and about high fire danger situations when they occur.

The Firewise Group maintains a trained core team of about 35 volunteer Home Ignition Zone Evaluators to conduct Home Ignition Zone evaluations as requested by residents. They also are Neighborhood sources for Firewise information.

The Firewise Group works with the CA Staff, the Property and Grounds Committee, the Wildlife Management Committee, the Modifications Committee, and the Golf Committee to reduce the potential for wildfires in the CA-owned common areas.

The volunteer Firewise Clearing Crew meets weekly (weather and Staff availability permitting). Working with the CA Landscaping staff, the Firewise Clearing Crew removes small Ashe junipers and vines in common areas that could become ladder fuels in a wildfire.

Partner Groups

Firewise USA

Information on applying Firewise concepts to urban/suburban areas has been shared with Megan Fitzgerald-McGowan, Associate Project Manager.

USAA Insurance

Rob Galbraith, Director of Property Underwriting, presented 'Is Firewise Really Mitigating Hazards? An Insurance Perspective' explaining why USAA offers a premium discount to its members at the Town Hall

Texas A&M Forest Service

This has been an excellent year working with the Texas A&M Forest Service (TFS). Kari Hines, WUI Specialist, presented 'History and Future of Firewise in Texas' at the Town Hall.

Georgetown Fire Department

The Firewise Group partnered with the Chief John Sullivan, Georgetown Fire Department (GFD) presented 'More than just Fire Fighting and Medical Services' at the Town Hall.

The Firewise Group partnered with the Georgetown Emergency Management Coordinator to assist with developing an assessment procedure to use with subdivisions and neighborhoods to promote becoming Firewise.

Williamson County Office of Emergency Management

The Firewise Group is part of the Williamson County CWPP Core Committee to develop the county wide plan. Two Firewise volunteers have attended three meeting in the process.

Sun City Texas Community Association Advisory Committees

Property and Grounds Committee (P&G) The Firewise Group continues to work with P&G. The Firewise Group provides an annual review of progress and proposed clearing activities and provide advice on the management of common areas. P&G provides a liaison to the Firewise Group.

Wildlife Management Committee (WMC) The Firewise Group continues to work with WMC to improve wildlife habitat while meeting the goal of reducing the wildfire potential. Removing the Ashe juniper has changed the habits of the deer and turkey populations. WMC provides a liaison to the Firewise Group.

Sun City Texas Staff

The Firewise Group also works with the CA Common Area Staff by advising on the clearing and maintenance of all native common areas. Meetings with interested residents, staff, and Firewise may be held in a work area to provide the rationale for the work.

2017 Accomplishments

Table 1 contains the volunteer time and Community Association contributions for the calendar year.

Projects were identified by Firewise leaders who have many years of experience in land management and the fire service. During the first half of the year, the Firewise Volunteer Clearing Crew, supported by the CA staff, assembled weekly weather permitting to remove small Ashe junipers and ladder fuel in the common areas. To date, the Firewise Volunteer Clearing Crew and CA Staff and equipment have reduced the fire threat on approximately 30 acres.

Sun City Texas Firewise, Texas A&M Forest Service, and Firewise USA publications continue to be distributed in the Welcome Packets given to each new resident. The publications are also available at all Firewise presentations and events. Firewise information is also presented in the Sun City Texas Resource Guide (directory) which is distributed to all residents.

Sixteen groups, staff, or notices mentioned Firewise in articles published in the monthly *Sun Rays* resident magazine plus one vendor identifying as a 'Firewise trained'. Additional information items about Firewise and fire dangers were produced for the weekly CA Communicator e-mails.

Wildfire Preparedness Day

Wildfire Preparedness Day was held on May 5 with 36 volunteers and 8 Staff members. An 8 acre common area that had Ashe juniper removed 6 years earlier was targeted. The volunteers, using hand tools only, cleared the area. The CA Staff prepared brats and hot dogs, chips, and drinks for lunch. Additional funding was received from Bartlett Tree Experts and Valley Crest Landscaping. Bartlett Tree Experts also provided 100 tree seedlings for residents as part of their nation-wide program. The support of the vendors is greatly appreciated.

Publications

Two new publications were developed. *Being Firewise Around Your Home* and *What is Firewise?* For use with residents.

Table 1. The 2017 hours and costs contributed by volunteers, homeowners, and CA.

Sun City Texas Data				
	Rooftops	7,635	rooftops	
	Residents	141,215	residents	
<u>item</u>	<u>number</u>	<u>units</u>	<u>value</u>	<u>total</u>
Volunteers				
	Firewise volunteers	1,350	hours	32,589
	Home Ignition Zone Evaluations	172	hours	4,152
	Volunteer Clearing Crew	493	hours	11,889
	Subtotal-Volunteer Contribution	2,165	hours	\$52,251
	Landscape Maintained Homes (704 houses) ¹			\$165,683
Sun City Texas Community Association				
	Creek Clearing Crew ¹		300,000	
	Subtotal-Community Association Contribution			\$300,000
Resident Contribution (prorated) for House and Yard Maintenance				
	Paid to vendor		1,677,155	
	Own care		3,747,614	
	Subtotal-Resident Contribution			\$5,242,769
	Total contribution			\$5,942,704

¹ Values represent amount spent for Firewise remediation only.

The Firewise Trumpet newsletter is published monthly. It is distributed to community leaders, Firewise volunteers, Neighborhoods, and others. The Trumpet is available online.

Firewise Town Hall

The Annual Firewise Town Hall was held October 4 with USAA Insurance, Texas A&M Forest Service, Georgetown Fire Department and Sun City Texas Firewise Group participating. Presentations updated the residents on current topics. Attendance was about 60 people plus the TV live audience over local Channel 18 in Sun City Texas. The video of the Town Hall can be viewed on the Sun City Firewise web site.

Assisting Firewise USA

Worked with Firewise USA to develop new materials and concepts for urban type communities.

New Residents Orientation Town Hall

The Sun City Texas Community Association conducts a quarterly New Residents Orientation to acquaint the newcomers to the many activities offered in Sun City Texas. The Firewise Group participates in activities providing information about Firewise and how a resident can reduce the potential for their home. Residents are given information about using appropriate landscape plants and landscape maintenance to reduce the hazards. They are also given the opportunity to request a free Home Ignition Zone Evaluation on their home and consider volunteering for Firewise Group functions. In 2017, 16 HIZ requests were obtained at the events.

Training Program

Home Ignition Zone Evaluation

The Firewise Group held two training sessions. The May 18 session included evaluators for continuing education. The October 19 session included 1 new evaluator and 9 evaluators for continuing education. These sessions are available to outside groups and agencies.

Landscape Companies Training

The Firewise Group held the annual landscape training session on January 27. The session included 8 companies with 14 individuals plus 8 Community Association Landscape Staff. Companies are required to have continuing education every three years. Currently there are 19 companies who have met the requirements and are listed in the Vendor Notebooks for residents and on the Firewise web site.

Media Coverage

The following article was published about the Sun City Firewise Group:

- The City Week included an article entitled “City program underscores wildfire dangers” in the November 1, 2017 edition.

The CA Communications Department publishes a monthly magazine *Sun Rays* distributed to all residents. Information about the Sun City Texas Firewise program was included in 7 editions this year. The items that included the Firewise Group included:

April 2017

- Wildfire Preparedness Day page 12
- HIZ announcement page 7
- April Tips for a beautiful Waterwise landscape page 87

May 2017

- HIZ announcement page 7
- Wildfire Preparedness Day page 11
- EMC Responsibilities to Sun City Residents page 12
- May Tips for a beautiful Waterwise landscape page 51

June 2017

- Let's Communicate Sun City Texas How Safe Are We? with Jim Romine, Executive Director page 7

July 2017

- Meet a Committee: Property & Grounds page 12
- Presentation at Garden Club page 90

August 2017

- Let's Communicate CA Budget Process Explained with Jim Romine, Executive Director page 7

September 2017

- A few questions with the Emergency Management Committee page 12
- Firewise Town Hall page 17

October 2017

- Board Member Views by Sandy Goodman, Secretary page 8
- Firewise Town Hall: Is Your Home Safe? page 10
- October Tips for a beautiful Waterwise landscape page 54

The Communications Department also updated a 4x6 inch information card given to residents to encourage participation in the Home Ignition Zone Evaluation program.

The Neighborhood Representatives Organization (NRO) supported Firewise through their NRO Bulletin (twice monthly) with the following example:

May 17, 2017 - Reporting on the Wildfire Preparedness Day

2018 Plans

- Conduct a landscape company training event on January 26.
- Distribute Firewise information to residents at quarterly New Residents Orientation.
- Hold a Wildfire Community Preparedness Day, May 4.
- Conduct the Firewise Town Hall on October 9.
- Continue training for the Home Ignition Zone Evaluation Program on October 17.
- Continue conducting Home Ignition Zone Evaluations when requested.
- Continue the Firewise Volunteer Clearing Crew Program.
- Provide Firewise information at Neighborhood, club, and community-wide gatherings as requested.
- Continue working with the CA Property and Grounds, Wildlife Management, Golf, and Modifications Committees integrating Firewise practices into the community.
- Promote National Fire Prevention Week with Georgetown Fire Department.
- Compile renewal materials for 2018.