

# 2018 Firewise Renewal Narrative

**November 16, 2018**

**Prepared by**

**Sun City Texas Firewise Group**



## Table of Contents

Community Description . . . . .	1
The Sun City Texas Firewise Group	
Organization	
Education and Training Work Group	
Home Ignition Zone Evaluator Work Group	
Community Wildfire Protection and Renewal Work Group	
Firewise Volunteer Clearing Crew	
Sun City Texas Community Association Advisory Committees	
Property and Grounds Committee	
Wildlife Management Committee	
Sun City Texas Staff	
Partner Groups	
Texas A&M Forest Service	
Firewise USA	
USAA	
Georgetown Fire Department	
Williamson County Office of Emergency Management	
2018 Accomplishments . . . . .	4
Wildfire Preparedness Day	
Publications	
Firewise Town Hall	
New Residents Orientation Town Hall	
Training Program	
Home Ignition Zone Evaluation	
Landscape Vendor Companies Training	
Firewise Volunteer Clearing Crew	
Media Coverage	
2019 Plans . . . . .	7

## **Sun City Texas Community Association**

### **Community Description**

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, 2018, there are 7,949 homes with an estimated population of 14,308 residents. Sun City Texas is presently the largest Firewise Community Home Owners Association in Texas. Sun City Texas currently has 67 individual neighborhoods each with their own 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 creates 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 8.75 miles of flood plain have been cleared of Ashe juniper and willow baccharis. An additional 500 acres of common area have been cleared for wildfire concerns.

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.

### **The Sun City Texas Firewise Group**

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

The Sun City Texas Firewise Group is completing 10 years expanding the Firewise concepts within the Sun City community. It was started on January 29, 2009 during a meeting with Jan Fulkerson, Texas Forest Service and Sun City residents, Staff, and Georgetown Fire Department.

### **Organization**

The Firewise Group has evolved over 10 years. Within Sun City, 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.

It has evolved into an informal organizational structure with four Work Groups. Each group is assigned specific tasks as follows:

#### Education and Training Work Group

The Education and Training Work Group organizes and 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. The group prepares and distributes publications to the residents. A monthly newsletter, Firewise Trumpet, is produced monthly and distributed to a mailing list within and outside Sun City.

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.

#### Home Ignition Zone Evaluator Work Group

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.

#### Community Wildfire Protection and Renewal Work Group

The Community Wildfire Protection and Renewal Work Group is responsible for the development and submission of the annual renewal material to maintain its 'In Good Standing' status. The Work Group uses a November 1 to October 31 calendar for data and information collection.

#### Firewise Volunteer Clearing Crew

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. The Firewise Volunteer Clearing Crew meets weekly (weather and Staff availability permitting). The Work Group notifies neighborhoods when working near them to allow resident participation.

### **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. Firewise provides a liaison to the WMC.

#### *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. The CA provides a liaison to the Firewise Group.

### **Partner Groups**

#### *Texas A&M Forest Service*

This has been an excellent year working with the Texas A&M Forest Service (TFS). Nick Harrison, Firewise Liaison, presented information on the community structure changes from Firewise USA at the October Town Hall. He also introduced Kelsey Davis, our new TFS Wildland Urban Interface Specialist.

#### *Firewise USA*

We regularly share information about how we apply Firewise concepts in our urban/suburban area. In addition, we provide suggestions through the Texas A&M Forest Service.

#### *USAA Insurance*

Greg Lamontagne from the Property Underwriting Group was present at the Town Hall to answer questions and discuss the way USAA has applied a premium reduction to policy holder fire insurance.

#### *Georgetown Fire Department*

Assistant Chief Clay Shell with Georgetown Fire Department (GFD) presented information on the new Fire Station 6 and introduced Newly appointed Emergency Management Coordinator, Office of Emergency Management – Homeland Security, City of Georgetown at the Town Hall.

The Firewise Group continues to work with Emergency Management Coordinator to promote the development of Firewise Communities within Georgetown.

#### *Williamson County Office of Emergency Management (WilCo OEM)*

The Firewise Group worked with the WilCo OEM to develop and apply an assessment tool for evaluation of the wildfire risks within the county. The assessment tool was used to develop risk data to complete the County Wildfire Protection Plan.

## 2018 Accomplishments

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

During 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 35 acres.

Sun City Texas Firewise Group, Texas A&M Forest Service, and Firewise USA publications continue to be distributed in to new residents. 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.

## Wildfire Preparedness Day

Wildfire Preparedness Day was to be held on May 4, 2018. After much planning, rain cancelled the event. Three local vendors supported the event which was greatly appreciated.

## Publications

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

Table 1. The 2018 hours and costs contributed by volunteers, homeowners, and CA.

Sun City Texas Data				
Rooftops	7,949			
Residents	14,308			
<u>item</u>	<u>number</u>	<u>units</u>	<u>value</u>	<u>total</u>
<b>Volunteers</b>				
Firewise volunteers	1,150	hours	\$27,761	
Home Ignition Zone Evaluations	236	hours	5,697	
Volunteer Clearing Crew	536	hours	12,927	
Subtotal-Volunteer Contribution	1,910	hours		\$46,385
<b>Sun\ City Texas Community Association</b>				
Creek Clearing Crew <sup>1</sup>			\$284,000	
Subtotal-Community Association Contribution				\$284,000
<b>Resident Contribution (prorated) for House and Yard Maintenance</b>				
Paid to vendor			\$1,746,130	
Own care			3,901,740	
Subtotal-Resident Contribution				\$5,647,870
Total contribution			\$	5,978,255

<sup>1</sup> Values represent amount spent for Firewise remediation only.

## **Firewise Town Hall**

The Annual Firewise Town Hall was held October 9 with Sun City Texas Firewise Group, Texas A&M Forest Service, and Georgetown Fire Department providing presentations. Attendance was about 50 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.

## **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 2018, 16 HIZ requests were obtained at the events.

## **Training Program**

### *Home Ignition Zone Evaluation*

The Firewise Group held one training session on October 18 session included 2 new evaluators and 14 evaluators for continuing education. These sessions are available to outside groups and agencies.

### *Landscape Vendor Companies Training*

The Firewise Group held the annual landscape training session on January 26 The session included 8 companies with 11 individuals. Companies are required to have continuing education every three years. Currently there are 17 companies who have met the requirements. A list is distributed to residents at events, is in the Vendor Notebooks at the Monitor Desks for residents, and on the Firewise web site.

## **Firewise Volunteer Clearing Crew**

The Firewise Volunteer Clearing Crew held 17 workdays during the year. Rain and other weather conditions cancelled some workdays. The Clearing Crew assisted with the Firewise Firewise Town Hall.

## **Media Coverage**

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

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

*The City Week* published an article entitled "Clearing Brush Helps Reduce Fire Dangers" in the February 8, 2018 edition.

*Sun Rays*

April 2018

- Wildfire Preparedness Day page 9

May 2018

- Wildfire Preparedness Day page 9

June 2018

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

July 2018

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

August 2018

- Let's Communicate 2019 Community Association Budget Process  
Jim Romine, Executive Director page 7

September 2018

- Board Member Views: 2017 Community Expenses: a Summary page 11
- Firewise Town Hall: Celebrating 10 Years of Firewise in Sun City page 17

October 2018

- Board Member Views: Are you ready for Fall Activities? page 8
- Firewise Town Hall: Celebrating 10 Years of Firewise in Sun City page 15
- October Tips for a Beautiful Water Wise Landscape page 85

NRO Bulletin included the following:

Each issue has a link to the Home Ignition Zone Evaluation request form on the website

February 21, 2018 - Firewise Volunteer Clearing Crew News Illegal Dumping of Yard Clippings

May 16, 2018 - Changes in Our Firewise Status

August 1, 2018 - Wildfire, Embers, and Houses - FREE Home Ignition Zone Evaluation

September 5, 2018 - Firewise Review: Doors, Windows, and Other Places

October 3, 2018 - Firewise Review: Vents and Other Openings



## 2019 Plans

- Distribute Firewise information to residents at the quarterly New Residents Orientation and other opportunities.
- Provide Firewise information at Neighborhood, club, and community-wide gatherings as requested.
- Education Events
  - Conduct a Landscape Vendor Training on January 24, 2019.
  - Hold a Wildfire Community Preparedness Day, May 3, 2019.
  - Conduct the Firewise Town Hall on October 8, 2019.
  - Continue training with the Home Ignition Zone Evaluation Work Group on October 24, 2019.
  - Plan education events for 2020.
- Begin development of 4-5 Firewise Communities within Sun City Texas by January 2, 2023.
- Outside support
  - Continue cooperating with the Georgetown Fire Department to develop Firewise Communities within Georgetown.