

2019 Firewise Renewal Narrative

November 16, 2019

Prepared by

Sun City Texas Firewise Group



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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, 2019, there are 8,168 homes with an estimated population of 15,111 residents. Sun City Texas is presently the largest Firewise Community Home Owners Association in Texas. Sun City Texas currently has 73 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 a major flooding event that occurred in 2010, 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 remediated for wildfire concerns.

All 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 11 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, and the Wildlife Management Committee to reduce the potential for wildfires, flooding, and improve habitat diversity in the CA-owned common areas.

It has evolved into an informal organizational structure with four Work Groups (Figure 1). 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 and distributed to a mailing list within and outside Sun City. It is available on the Firewise Group website.

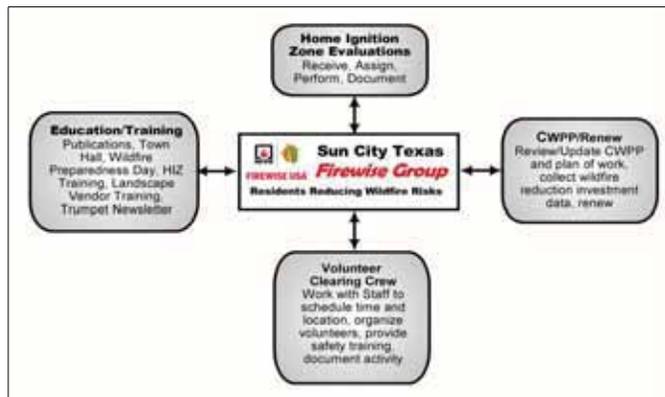


Figure 1. The organization chart for the Sun City Texas Firewise Group.

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 30-35 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 Volunteer Clearing Crew removes small Ashe junipers and vines in mowed fuel breaks along the 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 promote resident participation.

Sun City Texas Community Association

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). Megan Radke, Wildland Urban Interface Specialist, presented information on the community structure changes from Firewise USA at the October Town Hall. She also received a tour of the mitigation and maintenance being carried on by the residents and CA Staff.

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

We maintain communications with USAA Insurance to understand their fire insurance premium reduction.

Georgetown Fire Department

Lieutenant Lane Mills, Georgetown Fire & Life Safety, reviewed the NFPA "Plan and Practice Your Escape™!" program for Fire Prevention Week.

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

Williamson County Office of Emergency Management (WilCo OEM)

The Firewise Group maintains a relationship with WilCo OEM.

2019 Accomplishments

Table 1 contains the volunteer time, Community Association, and resident's 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.

Table 1. The 2019 wildfire risk reduction investment contributed by volunteers, homeowners, and Sun City Texas Community Association.

Sun City Texas Data				
	Rooftops	8,168		
	Residents	15,111		
item	number	units	value	total
Volunteers				
Firewise volunteers	1,015	hours	\$25,811	
Home Ignition Zone Evaluations	188	hours	4,781	
Volunteer Clearing Crew	1,045	hours	26,574	
Subtotal-Volunteer Contribution	2,128	hours		\$57,167
Sun\ City Texas Community Association				
Creek Clearing Crew ¹			\$292,520	
Subtotal-Community Association Contribution				\$292,520
Resident Contribution (prorated) for House and Yard Maintenance				
Paid to vendor			\$1,794,237	
Own care			4,223,482	
Subtotal-Resident Contribution				\$6,017,720
Total contribution			\$	6,367,406

¹ Values represent amount spent for Firewise remediation only.

Wildfire Preparedness Day

Wildfire Preparedness Day was held on May 3, 2019. After much planning, rain prevented outdoor work. A program on Firewise concepts and information was presented. 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 Firewise

Trumpet is available online.

Firewise Town Hall

The Annual Firewise Town Hall was held October 8 with Sun City Texas Firewise Group, Texas A&M Forest Service, and Georgetown Fire Department providing presentations. Attendance was about 80 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

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 providing information about Firewise and how a resident can reduce the ignition potential of 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.

Training Program

Home Ignition Zone Evaluation

The Firewise Group held one training session on October 24. It included 3 new evaluators, 9 evaluators for continuing education and 3 CA Staff members.

Landscape Vendor Companies Training

The Firewise Group held the annual landscape training session on January 24. The training included 7 companies with 9 individuals and 8 CA Staff personnel. Companies are required to have continuing education every three years. Currently there are 16 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 33 workdays during the year. Rain and other weather conditions cancelled some workdays. The Clearing Crew assisted with the Community Wildfire Preparedness Day and Firewise Town Hall.

Media Coverage

Eleven 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 and NRO (Neighborhood Representatives Organization) Bulletin e-mails. The NRO Bulletin has a link to the Firewise web page and includes articles when requested.

The following were published about the Sun City Firewise Group:

Williamson County Sun (newspaper)

Article about Sun City Firewise Group work in a special Georgetown Guide

Sun Rays

10 mentions in articles

April 2019

- Wildfire Community Preparedness Day announcement on page 8

May 2018

- Wildfire Community Preparedness Day announcement on page 15

-Article by Jim Romine, Executive Director - The Benefits of Being a Firewise Community on page 7

June 2019

-Photos from the Wildfire Community Preparedness Day on page 130

July 2018

- Meet a Committee: Property & Grounds page 12

- Presentation at Garden Club page 90

August 2019

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

September 2019

- Firewise Town Hall: Wildfires and Sun City Homes: Preceptions and Reality on page 9

October 2019

- Board Member Views: Sun City Texas Firewise (a wise program) on page 6

- Firewise Town Hall: Wildfires and Sun City Homes: Preceptions and Reality on page 8

- Home Ignition Zone Evaluator Training and Continuing Education on page 8

- Design Guidelines Shrunk on page 11

2020 Plans

- Distribute Firewise information to residents at the Wildfire Community Preparedness Day, Firewise Town Hall, quarterly New Residents Orientation and other opportunities including the Firewise web page.
- Provide Firewise information at Neighborhood, club, and community-wide gatherings as requested.
- Education Events
 - " Conduct a Landscape Vendor Training on January 31, 2020.
 - " Hold a Wildfire Community Preparedness Day, May 1, 2020.
 - " Conduct the Firewise Town Hall on October 6, 2020.
 - " Continue training with the Home Ignition Zone Evaluation Work Group on October 29, 2020.
 - " Plan education events for 2021.

- Continue development of 4 Firewise Communities within Sun City Texas by January 2, 2023.
- Outside support
 - " Continue cooperating with the Georgetown Fire Department to develop Firewise Communities within and near Georgetown.