

# 2020 Firewise Renewal Narrative

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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 October 31, 2020, there are 8,425 homes with an estimated population of 15,585 residents. Sun City Texas is presently the largest Firewise Community Home Owners Association in Texas. Sun City Texas currently has 70 individual neighborhoods each with their own organization.

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 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 protected areas for karst formations (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.

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

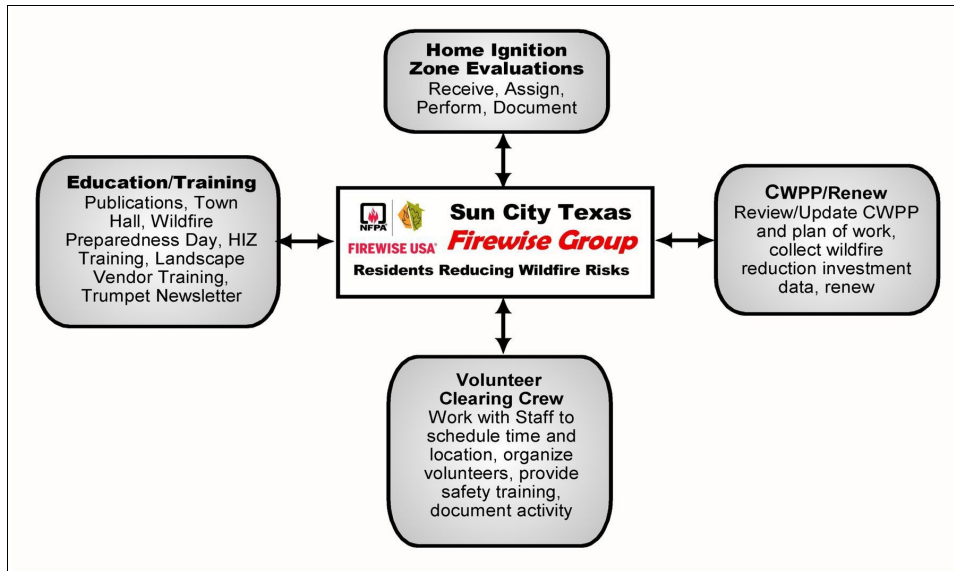
The Sun City Texas Firewise Group is a subcommittee of the Sun City Texas Emergency Management Committee.

The Sun City Texas Firewise Group 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 12 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.

An organizational structure has continued to evolve as four Work Groups (Figure



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

1). Each group has specific tasks as follows:

### Education and Training Work Group

#### Education

Education 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.

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.

An informational display is used at the Town Hall, quarterly New Residents Orientation Town Halls and other events. 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.

#### Training

Firewise Landscape Vendor Training is provided in January for landscape service providers who are interested in providing the services to meet Sun City Firewise guidelines.

Home Ignition Zone Evaluator Training is conducted in October for new volunteers and as continuing education for current Evaluators.

#### Home Ignition Zone Evaluator Work Group

The Firewise Group maintains a trained core 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

The Firewise Volunteer Clearing Crew works with the CA Landscaping staff to remove small Ashe junipers, vines, and other materials in mowed fuel breaks between the common areas and resident's property that could become ladder fuels in a wildfire. The Firewise Volunteer Clearing Crew works weekly (weather and Staff availability permitting). The Work Group notifies neighborhoods when working near them to promote resident participation.

### **Sun City Texas Community Association**

#### 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.

#### 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.

### **Partner Groups**

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

This has been an excellent year working with the Texas A&M Forest Service (TFS) Kari Hines, Wildland Urban Interface Specialist. We welcomed Alex Bregenzer, WUI Specialist with a tour of Sun City and what Firewise has accomplished.

#### *Firewise USA*

We regularly share information about how we apply Firewise concepts in our

urban/suburban area.

*USAA Insurance*

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

*Georgetown Fire Department*

The Firewise Group maintains a working relationship with GFD.

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.

**2020 Accomplishments**

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

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

Sun City Texas Data			
	Rooftops	8,425	
	Residents	15,585	
<u>item</u>	<u>number units</u>	<u>value</u>	<u>total</u>
Volunteers			
Firewise volunteers	635 hours	\$16,135	
Home Ignition Zone Evaluations	104 hours	\$2,645	
Volunteer Clearing Crew	985 hours	\$23,777	
Subtotal-Volunteer input	1,724		\$42,557
Sun City Texas Community Association			
Staff Clearing Crew	dollars	\$282,136	
Subtotal-Community Association			\$282,136 <sup>1</sup>
Resident contribution (prorated)			
Paid to vendor	1,404 paid	\$1,850,692	
Own care	171,308 hours	\$4,356,371	
Subtotal-Resident Contribution			\$6,207,063
Total Contribution			\$6,531,756

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

### **Georgetown Chamber of Commerce Award**

The Georgetown Chamber of Commerce recognized the Sun City Texas Firewise Group at their Cornerstone Luncheon on December 9, 2019 with the Public Safety Award. Sun City Texas Firewise Group was nominated by Chief John Sullivan of the Georgetown Fire Department. The four cornerstones for a Chamber of Excellence are Healthcare, Public Safety, Economic Development, and Education.

### **Firewise Group**

The Firewise Group met 3 times before the COVID-19 shut down occurred. Over the year the Group contributed the equivalent of 46 weeks maintaining the operational requirements of the group.

### **Home Ignition Zone Evaluation Work Group**

The Home Ignition Zone Evaluation Zone Work Group did not conduct evaluations due to the COVID-19 shut down until procedures were approved to allow them. HIZ contributed almost 3 weeks of work.

### **Community Wildfire Preparedness Day**

Community Wildfire Preparedness Day was not held in 2020 due to SCT being closed due to COVID-19. Plans are to hold one in 2021.

### **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.

Current publications were reviewed and updated as needed.

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

### **Firewise Town Hall**

The Annual Firewise Town Hall was not held in 2020 due to SCT being closed due to COVID-19. Plans are to hold one in 2021.

### **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 participated in one 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. Due to COVID-19, only one was held.

## **Training Program**

### *Landscape Vendor Companies Training*

The Firewise Group held the annual landscape training session on January 24. The training included 7 companies with 14 individuals. 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.

### *Home Ignition Zone Evaluation*

No training sessions were held due to SCT being closed due to COVID-19. Plans are to hold one in 2021.

## **Firewise Volunteer Clearing Crew**

The Firewise Volunteer Clearing Crew held 33 workdays during the year despite the COVID-19 closure. Their work was the equivalent to just over 23 weeks. They received approval of special working conditions approved by the CA BOD. Rain and other weather conditions cancelled some workdays.

## **Media Coverage**

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:

### *Sun Rays*

Firewise had an article or was mentioned 7 times.

### *NRO Bulletin*

A link to the Home Ignition Zone Evaluation form is included every issue. Firewise had an article or was mentioned 8 times.

## **2021 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/Training Events
  - Conduct a Landscape Vendor Training on January 29, 2021.



- Hold a Wildfire Community Preparedness Day, April 30, 2021.
- Conduct the Firewise Town Hall on October 5, 2021.
- Continue training the Home Ignition Zone Evaluator Training on October 29, 2021.
- Plan education events for 2022.
- Continue development of 4 Firewise Communities within Sun City Texas by January 2, 2023 to meet Firewise USA changes.
- Outside support
  - Continue cooperating with the Georgetown Fire Department to develop Firewise Communities within and near Georgetown.
  - Continue cooperating with Texas A&M Forest Service.
  - Continue contact with USAA Insurance to understand the Firewise discount.
  - Continue contact with Firewise USA for continued information.