The Firewise Community or Neighborhood

• How large should a Firewise Community be?
• Usually, the “smaller the better”, the size of the neighborhood will determine how successful you are!
• 4K Sq. Ft. Lot to a 2 acre home parcels makes a difference
• The larger the community the more time it will take to find collaboration and achieve mitigation effectiveness
Motivation for the new Firewise Community

- Was there a recent wildfire?
- Are Neighbors discussing and promoting mitigation?
- Is there Concern or Guidance from the Local Fire Agency Expert?
- Is there a lack of Risk Awareness and Education?
- Is there a request to apply for grant funds?
- Is there a CWPP in the place or planning?
- Is there a neighborhood leader with energy?
- Is there a lack of community feeling within the area?
Finding the Sparkplug

- A resident within the neighborhood
  1. Should have a good “skill set” to be a leader
  2. Should have the time for the commitment
  3. Should be a “High Energy” individual
  4. Should be a respected and well liked person within the neighborhood
  5. Should be a collaborator, facilitator and mediator
The Steps to Becoming a Nationally Recognized Community

1. Complete a Community Assessment with a WUI Specialist
2. Create a Firewise Board or Committee to create a plan from the Assessment
3. Hold a Firewise Day or Event
4. Invest at Least $2/Capita Firewise in Projects
5. Complete Application
Create a Firewise Board or Committee

- HOA Board Members
- Fire Agency or Department Members
- Home Owners
- Fire Safe Council Member
- Politicians
- Business Owners
Top Firewise Goals

• To change the character of a *home* ignition zone will reduce risk to personal property

• To modify a *neighborhoods* ignition zone, you have the opportunity to alter a wildfire’s path for an entire community

• To improve the safety of residents and emergency responders
The Firewise Community Assessment

- The community assessment may be the largest step in the process of achieving Firewise Communities/USA recognition status
- This important program component provides critical wildfire information to homeowners
- A specific format is not required, but a recommended format is provided in the “User Reference Guide” Assessment Template or taking the online course
- Your State Firewise Liaison, Fire Safe Councils and local Fire Agencies can assist in this first step
The assessment should provide residents with an easy-to-understand document that:

- Familiarizes them with the way ignitions are likely to occur---and how homes are more likely to be damaged or lost
- Explains and illustrates common strengths and vulnerabilities
- Shows all neighborhood exits, water sources, utilities and roads
The Assessment Begins With Some Basic Research Before the Community Visit

Maps:

- Water resources information from local water districts if possible
- Topographic maps, from the US Geological Service, or Google Earth
- A map that designates the community’s boundaries with Tax lots
- A map that shows the location of homes, schools etc.
- If possible maps showing fire history, vegetation, federal lands located close to the community, open space or green belts etc.

Research Data can be downloaded:

- Graphs about the precipitation levels, temperatures (citydata.com)
- Any research related to wildfires in the area of the community
- Any data relating to the forest health pests, diseases, invasive species etc.
- Contact your local Fire Agency Representative for assistance

*It is important to share this information with ALL collaborating parties.*
Examples of Maps

LACC Emergency Exit Routes
Courtesy of Candir
LOOK FOR GUIDANCE

- FireSafe Councils
- Workshops
- Fire Authority Laws
- City/District/County/State/Federal Codes & Ordinances
- Recommended Standards such as NFPA 1141 and 1144
- Covenants / Codes / Restrictions (CCR’s)
PREPARING THE ASSESSMENT

- Writing the assessment requires an understanding of the community
  - Likely small to severe-case wildland fire challenges
  - Geography / Slope / Aspect
  - Vegetation
  - Social considerations

Don’t hesitate to call a local representatives for help!
Completing the Survey

- Before walking through the community, the Firewise Board should (but not required) meet with interested homeowners, local fire staff, agency partners, community leaders to discuss assessment process.
For Your Tour

• Give a “Heads Up” to your local residents when your Firewise Committee will tour the neighborhood

• Try to include the Firewise Board and all interested jurisdictional fire staff, agency partners and community leaders
For Your Tour

• Field work can take up to a day depending on size and location.

You will need:

• Vehicle
• Road map and other maps including topographic maps
• Pad and pencil
• Camera
Site description Include:
• Size and age of community
• Bordering public lands, if any
• Vegetation types
• Topography
• Any other pertinent information
The Survey Process

• Look for common mitigation challenges the community faces with respect to ignition potential and fire spread - TAKE PHOTOS!
Data Gathering

- Make note of---and photograph---those things that individual homeowners and the community need to improve.
The HIZ Survey is specific to an individual lot, home and outbuildings

- A house burns because of its interrelationship with everything in its immediate surroundings (5-30-100 feet)

- What happens within this zone is critical to home survival, adjacent structures and the neighborhood

- Individual HIZ survey’s should be completed as part of the Firewise Plan not the Community Assessment!
More Data Gathering in The Field

- Make note of---and photograph---those things that individual homeowners and the community are doing right too!
Once You Have Gathered Your Data, Photographs, Maps and Input the Next Step is Writing the Document!

This does not have to be a 200 page book.

Often this document is 5-10 pages documenting the information you gathered from your Community Assessment.

Maps, pictures and other resources make great special exhibits within the Document, as they say “a picture is worth a 1,000 words”
SUGGESTED ASSESSMENT FORMAT

Assessment process

• Briefly describe the When’s, Where’s, Why’s and How’s of the data-gathering phase. This would include information about how the process started, who assisted in the assessment. Where data was obtained from. Where research and maps were obtained from.

Important Considerations

• Work together, make the necessary edits and create not only a partnership but a relationship
Once THE COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT Complete
Create the WORK PLAN or ACTION PLAN

• Bring it to the next Firewise Board or HOA Meeting

• Be sure members understand the home ignition zone and how it can overlap property lines, discuss the science

• Explain the assessment and its findings

• The Firewise Board now can create an action plan of workable, agreed-upon mitigation solutions and prioritize their project goals and plan a “Firewise Day”
The Firewise Day / Community Event

Examples

- Chipping Day
- Education Day
- Clean-up Event
- Fair Day
- Firewise BBQ or Chili Feed
- Firewise 5K Run or Walk
- Other Examples?
Finish by Completing the Firewise Application

Document your $2 Investment per Capita to demonstrate the financial obligation

- Use $23.07 Volunteer Hour
- Use Cash Donations
- Use Equipment Costs
- Use In-Kind Services
- Use Rental Costs

Send Application to State Firewise Liaison
Funding to Help with the Work:
FEMA, USFS, National Association of Counties, Dept. of Homeland Security, Water Conservation Districts

Grants

Where to go

- Limited Title III Funds (SRS Act) Secure Rural Schools
- FEMA Pre-Disaster Mitigation Project Grants & The Hazard Mitigation Grant Program
- Fire Prevention & Safety Grants are part of the AFG Program
- CWPP Process can assist where funding for mitigation projects will take place
Your Firewise Communities Recognition Packet and benefits – you will receive...

- Recognition signs, Hard Cover Firewise Book and award plaque
- Story on the Firewise website
- Media Kit
- Quarterly “How To” Newsletter
- Firewise Materials & Firewise Plant Lists
- Firewise toolkit
- Fire Break (monthly e-mail)
Take Action Now! Find a Neighborhood that is ready to become FIREWISE!

- Go to Firewise.org to research information and find YOUR State Firewise Liaison

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