CITY OF WEST LAKE HILLS, TEXAS
NOTICE OF CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP
Wednesday, December 3, 2025 at 12:00 PM

Notice is hereby given that the City Council of the City of West Lake Hills, Texas, will hold a Workshop on the 3rd day of December 2025 at 12:00 p.m., in the Council Chamber, Municipal Complex, 4010 Bee Cave Road, West Lake Hills, Texas, at which time the following items will be discussed, to-wit:

1. Call to Order

2. Citizen Communications The City Council welcomes public comments at this point on any issue. If the issue is listed on the agenda, the speaker may choose to comment during the Public Comment period or when the specific agenda item is taken up by the Council later in the meeting. The Council cannot respond to or discuss matters not listed on the agenda. The Council may provide factual information, refer the item to a staff member, or request the item be added to a future meeting agenda. Speakers shall limit their comments to five (5) minutes each.

3. Administration Receive an update/presentation from the Firewise Committee regarding top priorities, projects, and work ideas for the upcoming year.

4. Adjournment

Approved by: James Vaughan, Mayor

Certificate

I certify that the above Notice of the December 3, 2025 City Council Workshop was posted on the bulletin board at the Municipal Complex, 4010 Bee Cave Road, West Lake Hills, Texas on Tuesday, November 25, 2025 by 5:00 pm. and will remain posted continuously until said meeting is convened.

Signed by: Terry Blanchard, City Secretary

The City of West Lake Hills is committed to compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Reasonable accommodation and equal access to communications will be provided upon request.

All items on the agenda are for discussion and/or action. City Council reserves the right to adjourn into executive session at any time during the course of this meeting to discuss any of the matters listed above, as authorized by Texas Government Code Sections 551.071 (Consultation with Attorney), 551.072 (Deliberations about Real Property), 551.073 (Deliberations about Gifts and Donations), 551.074 (Personnel Matters), 551.076 (Deliberations about Security Devices), and 551.086 (Economic Development).

City *of* West Lake Hills
City Council

AGENDA REPORT

Meeting Date:	December 3, 2025	**Item Number:**	3
Department:	Administration		
Prepared By:	Trey Fletcher, City Administrator	**Cost / Budget:**	n/a
Exhibits:	Presentation Firewise Action Plan Firewise Risk Assessment	**Source of Funds:**	n/a

Subject

Receive an update/presentation from the Firewise Committee regarding top priorities, projects, and work ideas for the upcoming year.

Recommendation

Receive the report and provide direction as appropriate.

Discussion

The purpose of this agenda item is to receive a report on the actions and recommendations of the Firewise Committee.

The Firewise Committee was established to augment the city structure and establish grassroots efforts to involve the community within each of the evacuation zones.

The city of West Lake Hills has participated in the Firewise USA program since 2008 and remains in good standing. Validation of the program status is required annually through the submission of an annual report of its activities consistent with the adopted 3-year action plan based on the 5-year risk assessment conducted in conjunction with the Texas A&M Forestry Service.

The program benefits from the strong collaboration with the Westlake Fire Department (ESD 9) and Water District 10. Investing the equivalent of one volunteer hour (valued at $33.49), per residential dwelling unit within the site's (city's) boundary, in annual wildfire risk reduction actions is a requirement of the national recognition program's criteria for maintaining an "In Good Standing" status. For the reporting year, 19 new residential fire sprinkler systems were installed in new or renovated homes, and 26 defensible space evaluations were performed on behalf of residential property owners. As of this report, 408 people have signed up for Warn Central Texas. Fourteen (14) residents have signed up for the State of Texas Emergency Assistance Registry (STEAR) list. The STEAR program was developed by the state of Texas to assist local governments with

obtaining information on the needs of our citizens during an emergency event. The program provides detailed information on citizens who may have disabilities and require additional assistance during an event or who have transportation needs. The information can be used for preparedness and response activities.

The city's adopted budget for FY 2025-26 includes $351,700 to support fire safety efforts.

West Lake Hills

Firewise Risk Assessment

Travis County

April 2023

FIREWISE USA™
Residents reducing wildfire risks

TEXAS A&M FOREST SERVICE

Introduction

The Firewise USA® program is designed to provide an effective management approach for preserving wildland living aesthetics while preparing communities for wildland fire. The program can be tailored for adoption by any community or neighborhood association that is committed to ensuring its citizens maximum protection from wildland fire. The following community assessment is intended as a resource to be used by West Lake Hills leadership for creating a wildfire safety action plan. The plan developed from the information in this assessment should be implemented in a collaborative manner, and updated and modified as needed, no less than every three years.

The Firewise USA® program acknowledges that there are many reasons and values that lead a person to live in the wildland urban interface (WUI) and that there may be a desire for certain flammable components to exist on their property. It is important for homeowners to understand the implications of the choices they are making as they directly relate to the ignitability of their home ignition zones during a wildfire.

One of the main goals of the Firewise USA® program is for residents to focus on those items that they know they can control. Becoming aware of the threat wildland fire presents is the first and most important step any landowner can take. After that, making an effort to work on the items that the residents do have control over, whether big or small, will reduce the chance of home and structure loss in a wildland fire.

Assessment Process

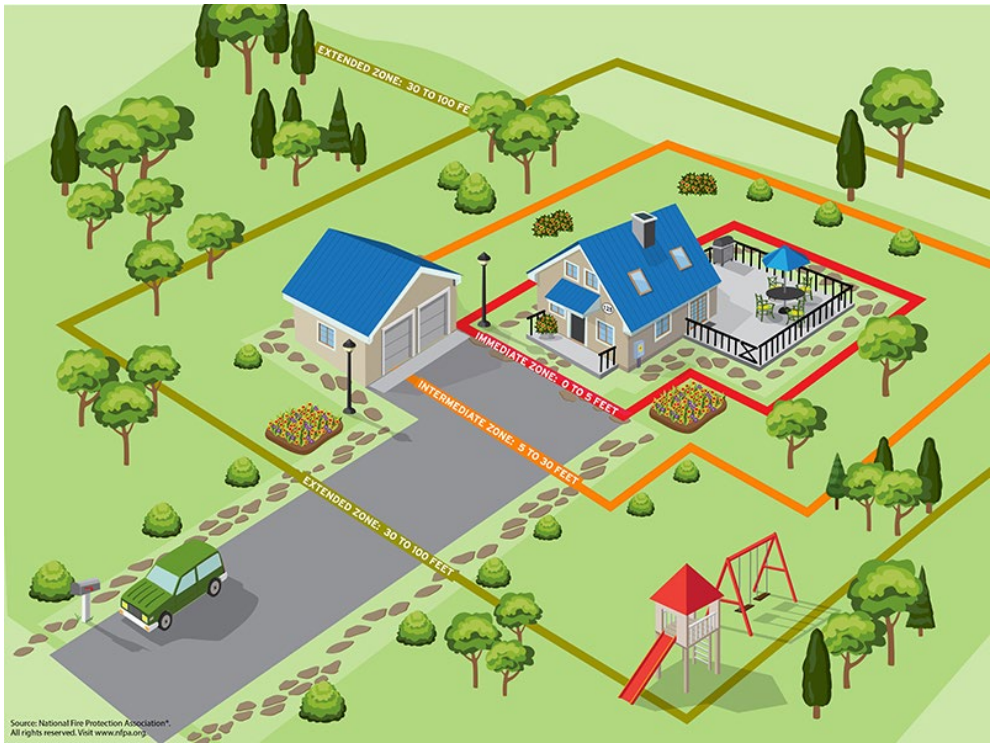
The site assessment was completed by Walter Flocke, Wildland Urban Interface Coordinator with the Texas A&M Forest Service on April 14th, 2023. Chief Michael Lacey of Westlake Fire Department and City of West Lake Hills City Administrator Trey Fletcher accompanied Walter. The site assessment included discussing local conditions, ongoing and future mitigation projects, and a drive through the city to assess structure vulnerability and broader ecological conditions.

Included in this written assessment are observations made while visiting West Lake Hills. The assessment examines the ease with which structure ignitions could occur under severe wildfire conditions and how these ignitions might be avoided within the home ignition zones of affected residences. The assessment does not focus on specific homes but examines the residential community in West Lake Hills as a whole.

West Lake Hills is in the wildland urban interface, defined as urbanized areas that abut directly with canyonlands of natural vegetation where ignitions could occur and threaten structures on those perimeters. Wildfires will happen--exclusion is not a choice. The variables in a wildfire scenario are when and where the fire will occur. The good news is that by addressing community vulnerabilities, residents will be able to substantially reduce their exposure to loss. Relatively small investments of time and effort can reap great rewards in wildfire safety.

Definition of the Home Ignition Zone

A structure burns because of its interrelationship with its immediate surroundings. To avoid a home ignition, a homeowner must prepare their structure to withstand ember attacks and minimize the likelihood of flames or surface fire touching the home or any attachments. The landscaping and construction choices made in the home ignition zone (HIZ) determines the potential for home ignition during a wildland fire. The HIZ includes a house and its immediate surroundings up to 100 to 200 feet from the foundation. The HIZ often includes other structures, highlighting the need for action to take place on a community scale, instead of through piecemeal actions.



Diverting fire's path through modification of material in the HIZ is an ongoing task that can result in avoiding home loss or damage. To accomplish this, flammable or vulnerable structural items must be modified or removed to prevent flames or embers from contacting or entering a structure. Reducing the volume of combustible material such as live and dead vegetation, and ladder fuels will affect the intensity of the wildfire as it enters the home ignition zone. The goal is to reduce the intensity of wildfire as it approaches our built environment.

Residents of West Lake Hills can reduce the risk of destruction during a wildfire by taking proactive actions within their home ignition zones. The Firewise USA® program offers risk reduction efforts of all complexity for homeowners to choose from when looking to reduce their chance of loss.

Description of Severe Case Wildland Fire Characteristics that Threaten the Area

Fire intensity and spread rate depend on the fuel type and condition (live or dead, moisture content, etc.), the weather conditions prior to and during ignition, and the topography. Generally, the following relationships hold between wildfire behavior and the fuel, weather and topography.

- Fine fuels, defined as fuel with a diameter less than 1/4in (ex. grasses, needles, twigs), ignite more easily and spread faster with higher intensities than coarser fuels, generally fuels greater than 1/4in in diameter (ex. large branches, logs, shrubs). For a given fuel, the more there is and the more continuous it is, the faster the fire spreads and the higher the intensities. Fine fuels take a shorter time to burn out than coarser fuels.
- The weather conditions affect the moisture content of the dead and live vegetative fuels. Dead fine fuel moisture content is highly dependent on the relative humidity and the degree of sun exposure. The lower the relative humidity and the greater the sun exposure, the lower will be the fuel moisture content. Lower fuel moisture produces higher spread rates and fire intensities.
- Wind speed significantly influences the rate of fire spread and fire intensity. The higher the wind speed, the greater the spread rate and intensity.
- Topography influences fire behavior principally by the steepness of the slope. However, the configuration of the terrain such as narrow draws, saddles and so forth can influence fire spread and intensity. In general, the steeper the slope, the higher the uphill fire spread and intensity.

Anticipated wildfires in the Hill Country region of Texas are expected to be driven by the combination of high wind speeds, low relative humidity, and long periods of time with elevated temperatures. The combination of these weather characteristics with dry fuels such as grasses, shrubs, and trees, especially those in close proximity to a house, can often lead to structure loss. Due to the rugged terrain common in this area, access for structural and wildland firefighters is often an issue. Fire in the hill country can be expected to move quickly uphill in vegetated canyons and will often have unpredictable movement due to shifting wind patterns manipulated by changing topography.

Embers are another characteristic of a wildfire that are not often considered by homeowners. Embers are small burning pieces of vegetation or wood that are carried by the wind ahead of a wildfire. An ember shower can be carried over a mile away from a wildfire and creates spot fires, which ignite vegetation on the roof, gutters, garden beds, and enter vents. Ember showers lead to structure loss even if the wildfire is not within the boundaries of the neighborhood. Wildfire researchers know that embers are the leading cause of home loss in a wildfire based on postfire assessments.

Site Description

The City of West Lake Hills, Texas is an incorporated community to the west of Downtown Austin in Central Travis County. The enclave city is surrounded by the jurisdictional limits of the city of Austin as well as the city of Rollingwood.

According to the 2020 U.S. Census, the population of West Lake Hills is 3,444 residents in 1,193 households. Development is primarily single-family residential and vary from modern architecture to mid-century ranch style homes. Most homes sit on lots between a half-acre, to up

to 5+ acres in size, with some setback from roadways and are populated with mature native trees and understory. Numerous creeks are present in the community with riparian areas of lower managed vegetation. Many lots have some form of modified landscaping in the immediate zones of the structure that gradually leads to more naturally kept spaces along property perimeters.

Vegetation is characteristic of the canyonlands of the Balcones Escarpment along the eastern edge of the Hill Country. Closed canopy oak-juniper woodlands are the predominant habitat with an intermix of riparian floodplains with deciduous hardwoods, as well as rocky uplands. There are low amounts of understory fuels in most closed canopy forests except for those that have dense patches of yaupon holly or fallen storm debris.

Roadways are all paved surfaced, clearly marked and accessible. Many driveways are too steep or too narrow for large fire truck access or turn around, and in the case of an evacuation, one-way in and out roadways have the potential to become overwhelmed by vehicles leaving at the same time as emergency vehicles are entering. The city is serviced with fire hydrants, owned and maintained by Water District 10 and the Westlake Fire Department covers the city and environs with a 24/7 staffed crew. The city is evaluating the adoption of parts of the International WUI building code which will lead to more fire resilient new construction.

Initial Observations and Recommendations

Fire resiliency of structures within West Lake Hills are dependent upon overall age and upkeep. Most new construction and remodels have fire resistant siding, rated non-combustible roofs, and fire-resistant landscaping of either turf, or native plants and xeriscapes. The extent of choosing how to landscape, and taking care of the home ignition zone is the responsibility of the individual homeowner's preferences, and consistent with the city's adopted codes.

Most of the structures observed are built with fire-resistant roofing materials, including metal, composite shingle, and clay tile. Most roofs do have mature tree canopy partially covering them. In Texas, leaves drop twice a year depending on the species. Live oaks drop leaves in the spring while deciduous trees drop leaves in the fall. This means for most areas that cleaning gutters and eaves should be done at least twice a year depending on the species around a home. Leaf cast accumulation in gutters, roofline valleys, and on porches are common ignition points for a embers, where enough fuel is available to potentially ignite a structure.

While there are buildings made partially out of non-fire-resistant materials on-site, that does not mean residents are powerless to decrease potential damage or loss to those structures from wildfires. Neither does the presence of fire-resistant construction exclude the possibility of fire impact if the home ignition zone is not managed.

There are also many characteristics of the site that residents are unable to change:

- Topographical features such as slopes, canyons, and chimneys that can increase rate of spread and flame length.
- Predominate vegetation characteristics across the city as a whole.
- Infrastructure such as roadways and utility line rights-of-way.

The Immediate Zone of the HIZ includes the structure itself and the area within 5 feet surrounding it. This is the most important area in which to take immediate action as it is the most vulnerable to embers and where even small flames can come into direct contact with the structure. Both research and firefighters' first-hand accounts tell us that a well-prepared Immediate Zone makes the biggest difference in home survivability and first responder safety.

Home ignition zones in West Lake Hills vary from native shade tolerant plants to turf grass lawns, or xeriscape landscaping. In the photo below, maintenance of overgrowth of vegetation has not been done for at least a few growing seasons and fuel has accumulated around the structure, creating a continuous pathway for surface fire from natural vegetation to the structure. A low-cost mitigation strategy to reduce risk of this home would be to remove all leaves of debris in the first 5 feet and prune up the yaupon into single stemmed trees in the 5–30-foot zone.

Many homes in West Lake hills have wooden porches or balconies. These areas are of high importance for maintenance. It is recommended to keep porches and the area below them clean of leaf debris that can harbor an ember fire. Firewood should be kept 30 feet from a structure when not actively being used, and potted vegetation should be kept live and healthy. Patio furniture and other appliances on porch areas should also be treated as a possible fuel in a wildfire. Store patio furniture pillows inside when not in use, and during times of high fire danger move flammable items such as gardening, and home improvement supplies to a garage. Remember that porches are a part of the structure, and the home ignition zone begins at the boundary of these attachments, not just the home.

It is important to pay attention to bushes planted around a structure's foundation. If these shrubs are not maintained by annual pruning to remove dead growth and keep growth from touching the structure, they can act as ladder fuel. It is recommended to have all shrubs or trees at least 5 feet from a structure to provide the best chance of structure survival. Ladder fuels function as a stepping on point where a low-intensity surface fire can climb vertically in a receptive fuel bed. The higher off the ground a fire is, the more risk to the structure and first responders. Ladder fuels include anything flammable growing or stored under another flammable objects. Spare

lumber and firewood often act as ladder fuels when stored under wooden porches or near sheds much like how shrubs and small trees do the same when under or near mature canopies and near eaves, wooden fences, etc. When choosing a new ornamental shrub consider something with less dense branching patterns. Keep shrubs healthy, pruned, and away from vulnerable spots in structures like windows and vents that could fail under high heat or allow embers into a structure.

“Limbing up” vegetative ladder fuel around a house is a great way to keep the yard attractive and also reduce the risk of a surface fire being able to climb into the canopy. Note in the photo to the right, the property owner has taken positive action by keeping mature native trees in place, but also maintained the understory to reduce ladder fuels. Keeping vegetation healthy, properly pruned, and removing dead vegetation and old leaves on or near a house, is a great way to keep your yard “lean, clean, and green.” Decreasing the competition for space and resources such as water and nutrients helps the remaining vegetation in the long run.

Most all residential structures observed have a mature shaded tree overstory. National recommendations for tree spacing require that no tree limbs are within 10-feet of a house, and while that is a great way of decreasing the potential for a crown fire to spread to the structure, this is usually not a desirable course of action for owners and is often not necessary with no flammable ladder materials to carry fire into the crown of trees in maintained yards. As mentioned above, flammable material under the mature crown should be reduced in height or removed, the debris the mature tree creates should be cleared from the roof and not allowed to gather around the base of the structure and it’s wooden attachments (especially during high fire

danger), and the crowns of mature trees should be isolated from other stands of mature trees. In the example to the right, the home is near multiple mature oak trees that are valuable additions, ecologically, to the landscape. From a wildfire perspective, the main risk presents itself in the debris dropped which gathers on the roofline or the landscaped beds along the structure. The potential for the crown to become involved if the vegetation below ignites is highly unlikely due to absence of ladder fuels.

For more information on ways residents in West Lake Hills can reduce risk of fires with proper tree care, visit the Austin Energy website: https://austinenergy.com/residential/residential-services/tree-trimming

Using non-combustible material around structures and access roads provides a buffer where a surface fire cannot continue horizontally. Substituting mulch with rock landscaping in the immediate zone reduces continuity of surface fuels and keeps embers from igniting fuels adjacent to a structure's foundation. The wooden fence shown here could carry fire from the natural surroundings toward structures, however it becomes a fire-resistant metal fence before reaching the structure, mitigating this risk.

The highest risk of WUI fire impacting the community lies along its boundary with the Wild Basin Preserve. Homes along this area should take highest priority for further assessment and for ensuring home hardening techniques to withstand the rare possibility of a wildfire moving from Wild Basin into West Lake Hills. While Firewise USA outlines actionable items to the individual homeowner, identifying collaborative efforts with outside neighboring properties is encouraged.

These examples are not intended to cover all potential considerations leadership should be aware of when moving forward with the Firewise USA™ program. The immediate zone, vegetation management, fire resistant landscaping, and evacuation routes are simply items that were noted during the onsite assessment.

Successful Wildfire Resilience Modifications

The Firewise USA™ program seeks to create a sustainable balance that will allow communities to live safely while maintaining environmental harmony in a WUI setting. Homeowners already balance their decisions about fire protection measures against their desire for certain flammable components on their properties. It is important for them to understand the implications of the choices they are making. These choices directly relate to the ignitability of the home ignition zones during a wildfire.

When adequately prepared, a house can likely withstand a wildfire without the intervention of the fire service. Further, a house and its surrounding community can be both wildfire resilient and compatible with the area's ecosystem. The Firewise USA® program is designed to enable communities to achieve a high level of protection against WUI fire loss even as a sustainable ecosystem balance is maintained.

Communities must focus attention on the home ignition zone and eliminate a step in the fire's potential relationship with the house. This can be accomplished by disconnecting the house from high and/or low-intensity fire that could occur around it. Combining fire-resistant construction with fire-resistant landscaping will increase the probability of surviving a wildfire. Solutions to "harden a home" from a wildfire include:

- Using noncombustible roofing, siding, fencing, and decking materials.
- Installing metal screens over vents and underneath decks to reduce the chance of embers entering the structure or finding receptive beds of material to slowly build up heat.
- Installing double-paned or tempered glass windows with metal frames when replacing older windows.
- Boxing in eaves with non-combustible material.
- Installing metal gutters and gutter guards to reduce the build-up of flammable material.

Next, residents should work to follow fire resistant landscaping principles. This means cleaning out plant beds near their homes, removing flammable materials such as mulch, dead leaves, and needles. In addition, plants within the immediate zone are recommended to be pruned back, especially beneath windows and other higher risk points, such as near wooden structures or when touching the house directly. Ladder fuels should be removed or trimmed so that fire cannot reach the crowns of trees. It is recommended that trees be pruned up six to ten feet from the ground; shorter trees should not exceed 1/3 of the overall tree height. Visit https://agrilife.org/treecarekit/planting-tree-maintenance/how-to-prune-a-tree/ for more details on tree pruning.

For more examples of proper principles, please visit Firewise.org.

Next Steps & Final Thoughts

For more information on the HIZ topic visit https://tfsweb.tamu.edu/ProtectYourHome/

For an interactive, virtual course, register at https://www.nfpa.org/wildfirepreparedness for "Reducing Wildfire Risk to Property: Protecting Your Home or Business" a free, 1-hour session.

After reviewing the contents of this assessment and its recommendations, the West Lake Hills Firewise Board will determine whether it wishes to continue seeking Firewise USA® recognition.

If the site assessment and recommendations are accepted and recognition will be sought, the West Lake Hills Firewise Board will continue to create agreed-upon, area-specific solutions to the recommendations and update their written action plan every three years.

Assuming the assessment area seeks to achieve national Firewise USA® recognition status, it will integrate the following standards into its continued plan of action:

1. Maintain a local Firewise board comprised of residents and other applicable stakeholders. This group will collaborate on developing the site's risk reduction priorities, develop a multi-year action plan based on the risk assessment, and oversee the completion of the annual renewal requirements needed to retain an "in good standing" status. Action plans are a prioritized list of risk reduction projects/investments for the participating site, along with suggested homeowner actions and education activities that participants will strive to complete annually or over a period of multiple years. Action plans are developed by the board and need updating at least every three years.

2. At a minimum, each site is required to invest the equivalent of one volunteer hour (currently $29.95) per dwelling unit in wildfire risk reduction actions annually (the rate is based on the 2023 annual National Hourly Volunteer Rate, which is updated every year in April when the new amount is published). Qualifying expenditures include contractor costs, rental equipment, volunteer hours, etc. Residents completing select home modifications, along with any qualifying work performed at their home and in the adjacent home ignition zones can contribute related hours and/or costs towards meeting the site's collective investment amount.

3. Each participating site is required to have a minimum of one wildfire risk reduction educational outreach event or related activity annually.

4. Every year participating sites must submit an annual renewal to maintain their "In Good Standing" status. The annual renewal application can be accessed through the Firewise USA™ online management portal (http://portal.firewise.org/).

FIREWISE USA®
RESIDENTS REDUCING WILDFIRE RISKS

Firewise 3-Year Action Plan

CITY OF WEST LAKE HILLS

The **City of West Lake Hills, Texas (approximately 1100 households)** is located within the wildland urban interface (WUI) in Travis County. The city is served by Travis County Emergency Services District No. 9 (Westlake Fire Department). This proposed Firewise USA™ Site Community Wildfire Action Plan is consistent with the goals and recommendations of the Firewise Risk Assessment performed in 2023 by the Texas A&M Forest Service. The goal of the Plan is to continue to outreach, educate, and implement efforts to make West Lake Hills more fire resilient.

Timeline	Program	Description/Mitigation
Year 1 (2025)	Education & Outreach	1. Continue to expand and update our contact list of neighbors and increase participation in mass notification system platform 2. Implement city's participation in the State of Texas Emergency Assistance Registry (STEAR) program 3. Leverage community newsletter for appropriate Firewise messaging 4. Identify or develop on-line training, videos, and other resources to educate our residents about home hardening and fire smart landscaping 5. Establish resident leadership for each evacuation area (Chair and Vice Chair) 6. Conduct an annual neighborhood walk to assess wildfire safety progress in one-two evacuation zones. 7. Encourage residents to attend annual public safety day with emphasis on Firewise education and resources
	Home Hardening	1. Taking a home outward approach, reinforce with residents to reduce wildfire hazards found in Zone 0, the first 5 ft. around the house – establish appropriate graphics and literature to communicate these efforts. Firewise Landscaping. Firewise Plant List. Firewise Landscaping in Texas. 2. Continue to provide site assessment utilizing fire department fire prevention resources 3. Update life safety codes to 2021 and review applicable zoning and site development codes
	Fuel Reduction	1. Align vegetative debris management communications to property owners to better consider seasonal issues and oak wilt season. 2. Promote the annual supplemental green waste curbside pickup by TDS to reduce flammable vegetation 3. Continue to maintain tree canopy of public streets and city owned properties
	Evacuation Planning & Wildfire Preparedness	1. Hold an evacuation drill or simulation led by the Westlake Fire Department. 2. Review and evaluate unopened streets for supplemental emergency evacuation routes, staging equipment, and fuel reduction.

Timeline	Program	Description/Mitigation
Year 2 (2026)	Education & Outreach	1. Continue to expand and update our contact list of neighbors and increase participation in mass notification system platform 2. Maintain city's participation in the State of Texas Emergency Assistance Registry (STEAR) program 3. Convene identified community leadership in each evacuation area at least 1 meeting per year 4. Continue to leverage community newsletter for appropriate Firewise messaging 5. Update on-line training, videos, and other resources to educate our residents about home hardening and fire smart landscaping as needed 6. Conduct an annual neighborhood walk to assess wildfire safety progress in one-two evacuation zones. 7. Encourage residents to attend annual public safety day with emphasis on Firewise education and resources
	Home Hardening	1. Taking a home outward approach, reinforce with residents to reduce wildfire hazards found in Zone 0, the first 5 ft. around the house. 2. Continue to provide site assessment utilizing fire department fire prevention resources
	Fuel Reduction	1. Continue to hold and promote the annual supplemental green waste curbside pickup in our neighborhood to reduce flammable vegetation 2. Continue to maintain tree canopy of public streets and city owned properties
	Evacuation Planning & Wildfire Preparedness	1. Hold an evacuation drill or simulation led by the Westlake Fire Department. 2. Implement recommendations regarding unopened streets.

Timeline	Program	Description/Mitigation
Year 3 (2027)	Education & Outreach	1. Expand and update our contact list of neighbors and increase participation at least 2. Establish resident leadership for each evacuation area (Chair and Vice Chair) 3. Identify or develop on-line training, videos, and other resources to educate our residents about home hardening and fire smart landscaping 4. Conduct an annual neighborhood walk to assess wildfire safety progress in one-two evacuation zones. 5. Encourage residents to attend annual public safety day with emphasis on Firewise education and resources
	Home Hardening	1. Taking a home outward approach, work with residents to reduce wildfire hazards found in Zone 0, the first 5 ft. around the house – establish appropriate graphics and literature to communicate these efforts. 2. Continue to provide site assessment utilizing fire department fire prevention resources
	Fuel Reduction	1. Continue to hold and promote the annual supplemental green waste curbside pickup in our neighborhood to reduce flammable vegetation 2. Continue to maintain tree canopy of public streets and city owned properties
	Evacuation Planning & Wildfire Preparedness	1. Hold an evacuation drill or simulation led by the Westlake Fire Department. 2. Continue implementation of recommendations regarding unopened streets as needed.

Firewise Committee 2025

Achievements to date and recommendations going forward.

The 2025 Firewise Committee

- Approximately 20 WLH volunteers formed this committee in early 2025.
- Four of the five zones in WLH are represented.

NW zone:

Chic Bain

Juli Hennings

Tom Keller

Julie Minnis

Joe Swider

CENTRAL zone:

Barry Aidman

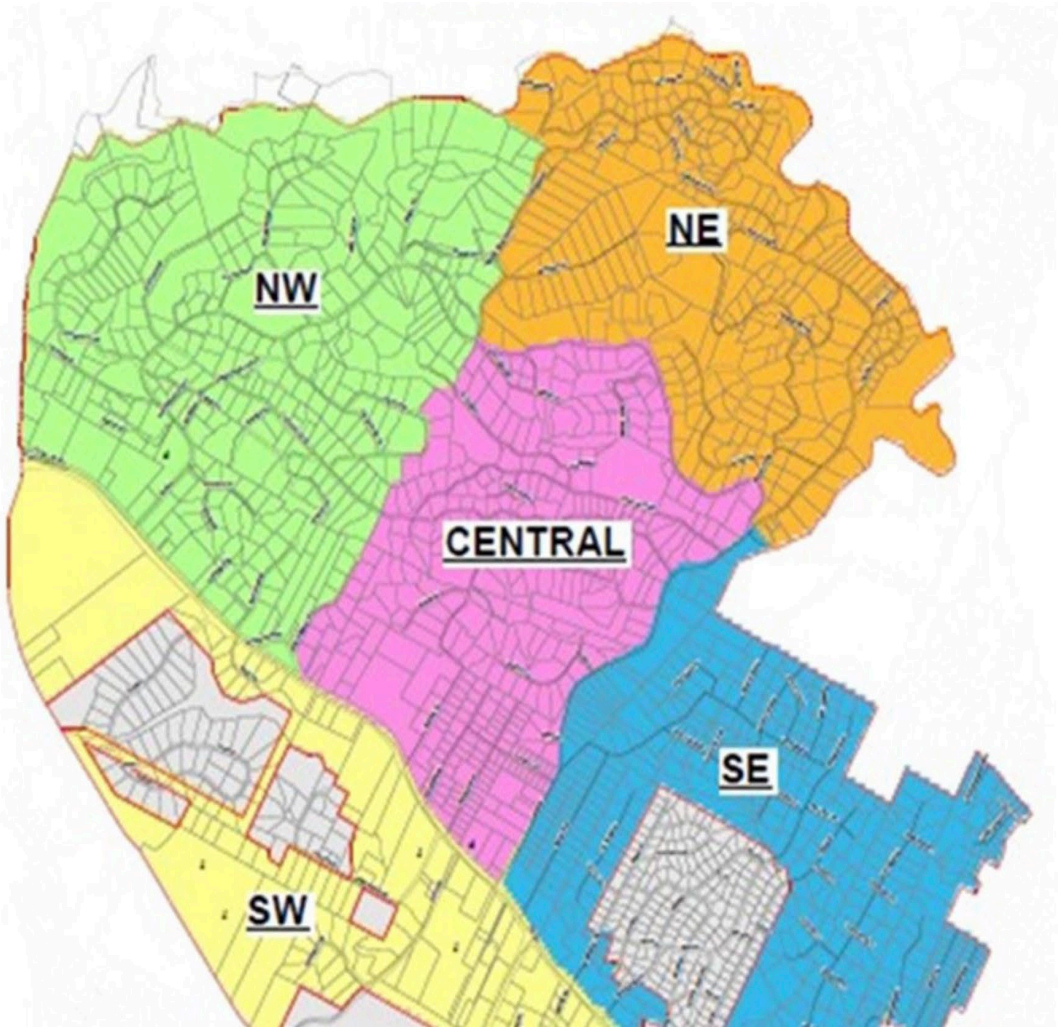
Suzanne Broussard

Suzanne Meade

Riley Ingebritson

Don Sembera

SW zone:



NE zone:

Gordon Novak

Janet Balser

Dan Smith

SE zone:

Tina Shaheen

Sarah Swanson

Alice London

The 2025 Committee Addressed:

- Community outreach and education.
- Evacuation logistics
- Ways to mitigate and slow fire damage.
- Aligning and enforcing ordinances.

Community Outreach and Education

A yard sign/flyer campaign was launched to:

- Get more residents signed up for fire danger alerts.
- Encourage evacuation preparation with “Go Bags.”
- Recommending homeowners schedule free Fire Department risk assessments.

Neighbor-to-Neighbor networks have been initiated.

Community Outreach: Recommendations

- Assess the effectiveness of existing efforts by authorizing the Committee to review Warn Central Texas data to see if awareness increased sign-ups.
- Devise more education/outreach campaigns and materials. Support neighbor to neighbor initiatives.
- Create new yard signs for homeowners who have adopted Firewise practices.
- City Council provides highly visible recognition for groups that undertake exemplary Firewise fixes, like those at St. John Neumann’s.

Is an Evacuation Plan Really Urgent?

Not until you need it....

Committee Report by Gordon Novak:

"The Oakland Hills fire of 1991 went from zero to one square mile in 45 minutes. Wildfire can advance faster than a person can run. The distance from Loop 360 to Lake Austin across West Lake Hills is 2.5 miles. At an advance rate of 15mph, fire would over-run West Lake in 10 minutes. At an advance rate of 3 mph, walking speed, the city would be over-run in 50 minutes."

The Evacuation Problem:

- Evacuation of the whole City would involve some 1500 cars. If it takes 6 seconds for a car to go through a choke point, that is 10 cars per minute.
- At 10 cars per minute, and it would take **2.5 hours** for 1500 cars to evacuate.
- At 4 seconds per car, it would take **1 hour and 40 minutes**.

Limited Number of Major Evacuation Streets

- Westlake Drive
- Redbud Trail
- Terrace Mountain Drive
- Yaupon Valley Drive

These are narrow, two-lane roads with limited ingress for firefighters and egress for residents with substantial vegetation.

Headline Story

KVUE special Report

Jay Janner/Austin American-States

Estates in Northwest Austin is among the many area communities with limited evacuation routes.

Limited access adds to wildfire danger

housands of area homes have few ways in and out for escaping

Plohetski
a Kumar
RS

o strolls his lakeside

significantly."

Nestled at the base of rolling hills, Shapiro loves the beauty of his 5-acre property. But as a national fire safety consultant, he also understands the

as residents try to escape and first responders try to get in.

The community is one of hundreds now at the center of a citywide push to prepare for the inevitable next

Evacuation Logistic Recommendations:

- Clear the evacuation route right of way with regularly scheduled maintenance.
- Coordinate with Fire Department and other entities such as Austin Energy to proactively manage vegetation overgrowth along evacuation routes.
- Prioritize enforcement of city ordinances that require removal of dead vegetation on the streets in the evacuation corridor.
- Create clear instructions for evacuation and educate residents.

Ways to Mitigate and Slow Fire Damage

After catastrophic fires, post tragedy research revealed two measures slowed and mitigated fire damage:

- 1/8th-inch ember-resistant mesh at chimneys, vents and other structure openings.

- Approximately 5 feet of defensible space between a building and any ignitable landscape.

Mitigation Recommendations

- A Pilot project to induce contiguous homeowners in the high-risk areas to “harden” their homes to slow a wildfire’s advance.
- A citywide rebate offer to induce homeowners to adopt ember resistant mesh and improve their defensible space.
- Utilize the experience of other counties that have had success with these incentive plans.

Tom Keller's Report: Criteria to Create Mitigation Incentives

- Homes in for the pilot project would be in high-risk zones.
- Use the Wildfire Risk Assessment Map to Qualify Homes
- Each property will be required to have a Fire Department safety inspection to guide the improvements.
- Initial candidates could be drawn from the following streets that have been identified by the Westlake Fire Department 2022 Wildfire Action Plan as representing "streets on a ridge with very steep slopes on the north side. These streets are examples of some that would be defenseless if fire approached":

Kennan Rd.	Old Wagon Rd.
Wren Valley Cove	Upper Yaupon Valley Rd.
Circle Ridge Dr.	Redbud Cove

- Rebates would be offered to incentivize high-risk area homes to minimize their fire risk which would slow wildfire spread to the community.

Aligning and Enforcing of Ordinances

Observed limitations on enforcement efforts:

- Recalcitrant Landowners
- Time lapses in the current complaint-based enforcement mechanisms
- Wrongful perception about the difficulty of the permitting process
- Limited ability to access resident's property

Building codes, ZAPCO policies, & Tree ordinances don't always align with fire wise goals.

Aligning & Enforcing Recommendations

- Focus enforcement on evacuation corridors.
- Encourage compliance by helping with brush removal, followed by stricter enforcement.
- Fast Track the enforcement process for homeowners in high-risk areas.
- Modify ordinances to allow homeowners to remove trees and vegetation within the five feet surrounding a structure.
- Review current ordinances to better align with firewise goals.

The future is in our hands.

- Community Outreach
- Evacuation Safety
- Mitigation and Incentive Programs
- Align & Enhance Enforcement
- Continued Committee Work

If you agree with these priorities, the Firewise Committee along with City Staff can propose policies and ascertain costs.