



**FIREWISE USA<sup>®</sup>**  
**RESIDENTS REDUCING WILDFIRE RISKS**

## **Carmel Views Community Firewise Action Plan (9.17.21)**

### **BACKGROUND & CONTEXT**

#### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this Firewise Action Plan is to spur and improve the efforts of individual homeowners in Carmel Views to harden their homes against fire, create defensible space on their own properties, and to better prepare for wildfire emergencies.

#### **Ongoing Efforts:**

The expanded and improved homeowner actions that result from our Firewise Action Plan will add an important new element to the established portfolio of ongoing efforts by the Carmel Views HOA (the Carmel Views Community Association, CVCA) to reduce community-wide wildfire risks. These ongoing efforts include:

- Extensive fuel treatments of the community common areas and greenspaces. Fuel loads in the undeveloped common areas of Carmel Views (comprising 36% of the neighborhood) have accreted since the community was developed in the early 1970's. For almost a decade, CVCA, in partnership with the Fire Safe Council for Monterey County, has been aggressively treating the common areas to reduce fuel loads and wildfire risks. Funding from successful grants, HOA dues, and voluntary homeowner contributions have and will continue to support this work. (Based on past experience, CVCA anticipates a minimum annual expenditure for work in the common areas of \$40-45,000 for the foreseeable future.) CVCA also is encouraging PG&E to ensure that fuel loads are treated adequately around PG&E's power station and lines.
- Development of additional emergency egress routes. Carmel Views currently has two egresses for community evacuation during emergency events (Canada Drive and, alternatively, Rio Vista Drive should Canada become impassable). Both exit onto Carmel Valley Road, a major road in an area that is highly likely to be defended during wildfire emergencies, since it is very close to the Carmel Middle School (a regional evacuation center during wildfires) and the Carmel Rancho commercial center.

CVCA is actively seeking additional alternative egress options that would improve residents' ability to escape the neighborhood in the event of fire or other large-scale disasters. However, this is not a task that our community can accomplish alone, because all possible alternative egress routes pass through private property and/or require additional road infrastructure. Consequently, CVCA is working through the appropriate government body – our County Service Area 47 Advisory Committee (CSA 47) which advises the County on local infrastructure investments – to collaborate with County Agencies and our local fire authority (Cypress Fire Protection District) to identify and develop alternative egress routes.

### **Expanding the Scope of Protection:**

Our Firewise Action Plan will enable Carmel Views to engage all homeowners more consistently and strategically in reducing wildfire risks by taking action on their own properties. Over the past few years, CVCA has experimented with several approaches for informing and motivating homeowners, including posting materials online, emailing the membership, and inviting speakers to the CVCA Annual Meetings. Our Firewise Action Plan draws upon this experience and the important knowledge gained through the Carmel Views Firewise Risk Assessment.

## **THE 3-YEAR ACTION PLAN**

### **Action Plan Goals to Achieve by Late-2024:<sup>1</sup>**

*ACTION – 75% of homeowners in Carmel Views are actively taking steps to reduce wildfire risks to their homes through improved home-hardening, defensible space, and emergency preparedness.<sup>2</sup>*

*KNOWLEDGE – Carmel Views homeowners have greater and deeper understanding of the practical steps they can take individually to reduce wildfire risks to their homes and properties through maintenance, improvements, and landscaping choices.*

*COLLABORATION – Improved neighbor-to-neighbor consultation and communication is enabling greater collaboration by neighbors across property boundaries to reduce wildfire risks.*

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<sup>1</sup> Expected adoption date of the 3-year Action Plan is late-2021. Late-2024 would be the 3-year endpoint of the this first Action Plan.

<sup>2</sup> 101 of the 115 Carmel Views homeowners who responded to the community wildfire risk assessment survey indicated they are already taking steps to reduce wildfire risks to their homes and properties. This represents 58% of the total number of homeowners (173) in the community. The 75% goal would require an additional 29 homeowners (for a total of 130) initiate and report home-hardening and defensible space work.

## **Action Areas & Tools:**

This Action Plan will build understanding and spur actions by Carmel Views homeowners in the following areas:

1. Home-hardening achieved through retrofits and maintenance;
2. Defensible space achieved through landscaping and plant material choices;
3. Emergency preparedness achieved through improved home access for emergency responders and evacuation planning.

The plan uses the following tools to share information and motivate homeowners:

1. Emails to all members of Carmel Views who have provided email contact information to CVCA (currently 86%). This includes continued distribution of periodic *Fire Preparedness Updates* (FPUs) begun in 2021 that synthesize “news you can use” for homeowners about relevant resources, education events, and public policies, as well as emails from the CVCA Board on an as-needed basis.
2. The Carmel Views Website, currently providing information for homeowners on wildfire mitigation, links to useful documents, and the community’s Firewise Risk Assessment.
3. CVCA Annual Meetings which provides an annual in-person venue for presentations by fire experts.
4. Demonstration Events held within the neighborhood in which fire experts provide hands-on learning opportunities for homeowners.
5. CVCA Annual Dues Assessment Mailing, an annual mailing received and read by every homeowner in Carmel Views that provides a unique opportunity for communicating and collecting information.
6. Targeted Approaches to reach specific audiences, including printed information packets for new homeowners and homeowners who do not use computers or email and community volunteers who can provide in-person help to neighbors who request assistance.

## The Actions:

### **Year 1 (2021-2022, anticipated start in Sept./Oct., 2021)**

- **Hold a defensible space demonstration event.** Work with the Cypress Fire Protection District and/or the Fire Safe Council for Monterey County to organize a demonstration event during which a defensible space expert identifies and explains the strengths and weaknesses of one or more home's landscaping choices. Will include clarification of requirements arising from new state law (AB 3074) related to the 5-foot ember-resistant zone. Advertise this event through emails and the CV website. Provide refreshments for a post-demonstration social event to keep the discussion going.
- **Host a firesafe landscaping education event at the Annual Meeting.** Invite a local firesafe landscaping expert to speak at the HOA's annual meeting about how landscaping design and choices of plant materials affect wildfire risks, including alternatives to organic mulches and special treatments for the 5-foot ember-resistant zone. Post a summary of this talk on the Carmel Views website and links to firesafe landscaping resources.
- **Build homeowner understanding of how to prepare for wildfire emergencies.** Distribute information to homeowners about evacuation planning (go-bags, egress routes, information sources) and about how to ensure their homes are accessible to emergency responders *via* the FPU emails and the Carmel Views website.
- **Develop & distribute a hard-copy package of community wildfire resources.** Develop a printed version of key information resources that have been made available to the community through the website and emails. Distribute to new homeowners as part of a "welcome package" and to community members who do not use computers, email, or the internet (starting with those who have not provided email addresses to the HOA).
- **Website update.** Establish a new content area on the CVCA website that will serve as an effective and user-friendly information hub and communication tool for supporting the community's Firewise efforts. Begin by establishing a Carmel Views Firewise page that provides easy access to our Firewise documents and a curated set of links to external information resources for homeowners.
- **Continue supporting homeowner reduction of fuel loads in their yards through waste pick-up events.** Advertise "Chipper Days" sponsored by the Cypress Fire Protection District through community-wide emails and posting banners near the entry to our community that encourage participation. Sponsor two (2) or more (depending on need) special pick-up days for the highly flammable and invasive weed *Genista* (not eligible for pick-up on Chipper Days).
- **Share additional new information as it becomes available.** Continue using the FPU emails, the CV website, and banners posted at the community entrance to share new information about resources and services that can assist individual homeowners in reducing wildfire risks to their homes and properties.
- **Develop relevant metrics for annually tracking Carmel Views' Firewise activities.** Preliminary candidate metrics include: % of homeowners reporting home-hardening

and defensible space work on their properties each year; % of homes that pass defensible space evaluations by the local fire protection district (if available); and % of homeowners participating in Chipper Days and *Genista* pick-up days.

- **Collect and share information about CV Firewise progress.** Use the annual HOA dues statement (sent out in February) to request information from homeowners that can be aggregated into community-wide metrics (see bullet above), and to request email addresses for fire-related communications from homeowners who have not yet provided this information. Additional information about homeowner volunteer time and expenditures may be gathered through an online survey or web-form – with the timing synchronized to coincide with preparation of our annual progress report to Firewise USA. Share summary results through the CV website and FPU emails.

## Year 2 (2022-2023)

- **Host an educational event at the Annual Meeting related to relevant state and local laws and ordinances.** Invite a real estate expert and a representative from Cypress Fire to the Annual Meeting to explain how state disclosure requirements during home sales, treatment requirements for the 5-foot ember resistant zone, and the local fire hazard ordinance have established new homeowner responsibilities and are now affecting members of our community. Post a summary of this talk on the CV website.
- **Create a home-hardening resource.** Develop and vet a list of contractors and products that are available locally for home-hardening improvements – starting with replacement vent covers. Resource eventually also should include information about skirting and deck and window replacement options. Post on website, add to new homeowner packet.
- **Establish a Firewise resource team.** Identify and train a small cadre of community volunteers who, upon request, can connect other community members with information and organizations that can assist in reducing wildfire risks to their homes.
- **Hold a home-hardening demonstration event.** Identify a local expert in home-hardening upgrades. Engage this expert to deliver a community demonstration event during which they identify and ballpark the costs of home-hardening improvements that would reduce wildfire risks. Advertise this event through emails and the CV website. Provide refreshments for a post-demonstration social event to keep the discussion going.
- **Continue supporting homeowner reduction of fuel loads in their yards through waste pick-up events.** Advertise “Chipper Days” sponsored by the Cypress Fire Protection District through community-wide emails and posting banners near the entry to our community that encourage participation. Sponsor two (2) or more (depending on need) special pick-up days for the highly flammable and invasive weed *Genista* (not eligible for pick-up on Chipper Days).
- **Share new information as it becomes available.** Continue using the FPU emails, the CV website, and banners posted at the community entrance to share new information about resources and services that can assist individual homeowners in reducing wildfire risks to their homes and properties.

- **Collect and share information about CV Firewise progress.** Use the annual HOA dues statement to request information that can be aggregated into community-wide metrics and to request email addresses for fire-related communications from homeowners who have not yet provided this information. Use an online survey or web-form to gather information prior to preparation of the annual progress report to Firewise USA. Share summary results through the CV website and FP emails.

### **Year 3 (2023-2024, anticipated end of first Action Plan in October, 2024)**

- **Host an educational event at the Annual Meeting.** Topic to be determined, based on community needs and interests, as well as current events. Post a summary of this talk on the CV website.
- **Update community information resources.** Review and update, as appropriate, information resources available through the CV website and hard-copy package related to home hardening, defensible space, evacuation, and emergency responder access. Inform community about updates *via* the FP update and annual dues mailing.
- **Hold one community demonstration event.** Identify a key community need and organize a demonstration event with appropriate experts to continue building understanding and engagement among homeowners. Advertise this event through emails and the CV website. Provide refreshments for a post-demonstration social event to keep the discussion going.
- **Continue supporting homeowner reduction of fuel loads in their yards through waste pick-up events.** Advertise “Chipper Days” sponsored by the Cypress Fire Protection District through community-wide emails and posting banners near the entry to our community that encourage participation. Sponsor two (2) or more (depending on need) special pick-up days for the highly flammable and invasive weed *Genista* (not eligible for pick-up on Chipper Days).
- **Share new information as it becomes available.** Continue using the FPU emails, the CV website, and banners posted at the community entrance to share new information about resources and services that can assist individual homeowners in reducing wildfire risks to their homes and properties.
- **Collect and share information about CV Firewise progress.** Use the annual HOA dues statement (sent out in February) to request information that can be aggregated into community-wide metrics and to request email addresses for fire-related communications from homeowners who have not yet provided this information. Use an online survey or web-form to gather information prior to the annual progress report to Firewise USA. Share summary results through the CV website and FP emails.
- **Evaluate progress and develop next 3-year Action Plan.** Convene an appropriate planning committee to review progress relative to the Action Plan Goals and to identify current community needs and priorities. Design a new 3-year Action Plan in light of this assessment.