

**University Park Homeowners Association Wildfire Mitigation Committee
(UP HOA WMC)
STATUS REPORT - 8 Nov 12**



Since its development, University Park --with all of its magnificent open space and natural rugged, wooded terrain -- has been designated by the Colorado Springs Fire Department (CSFD) as a high risk fire danger area within the city.

The devastation of the Waldo Canyon fire in June and July of this year serves as a stark reminder that wildfire mitigation is needed throughout our community.

With the heartbreaking Mountain Shadows and Peregrine neighborhood tragedies fresh in mind, the UP HOA Board of Directors wasted no time in forming and chartering a community Wildfire Mitigation Committee. The WMC has now been in existence for over three months, and much has been accomplished in the way of wildfire mitigation and community clean-up within that time.

Organization

- The WMC is currently comprised of nine volunteer UP homeowner members, and a Liaison Officer from the HOA Board of Directors. The HOA President also attends the committee meetings.
- Given a charter, mission and guidance from the HOA Board in early August 2012, the WMC organized itself and quickly planned an initial two-phased work approach. The community map was broken into 10 specific wildfire mitigation management areas.
- Phase One was designed to: Identify homeowner wildfire risks; to achieve immediate, measurable UP residential property mitigation results; and to set forth procedures and timelines for sustainable wildfire mitigation and community clean-up efforts.
- During Phase Two, the WMC will work with organizations or agencies (stakeholders) controlling open space within or adjacent to UP that have an influence, an obligation, or even a liability, in our long term UP wildfire mitigation requirements and goals.

Phase One - Complete

- Involving a concerted door-to-door effort conducted by volunteers over two months, and through a wildfire mitigation information campaign on the University Park website (<http://universityparkpoints.com>), committee members and additional temporary volunteers coordinated -- and CSFD has conducted -- over 110 home and property Wildfire Risk Assessments throughout the 10 designated areas in our community.

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- Additionally, many UP residents scheduled CSFD Wildfire Risk Assessments on their own, thus increasing the WRAs to an even greater number.
- The HOA Board authorized funding for contracted chipping of trimmed branches, etc., and the pick-up and hauling away of the chipped matter and wildfire mitigation debris generated by the work of residents within the community. Culminating Phase One, this highly successful event occurred on 29 - 31 Oct at 79 separate chipping/pick-up sites.
- Property owners throughout the entire community did an amazing amount of mitigation and clean-up work on their own properties, and many other residents elected to contract vendors to accomplish recommended fire mitigation work on their property.
- The work of WMC members, additional door-to-door volunteers, Z&R Property Management, and all residents who participated in this important project is greatly appreciated! Please check the website regularly for our next clean-up dates.

Phase Two - Underway

- Phase Two includes continuing to plan and announce wildfire mitigation and community clean-up activities designed to build upon and sustain the accomplishments of Phase One. However, in Phase Two the WMC also will focus on establishing appropriate points of contact and initiating or continuing relationships within the below mentioned stakeholder organizations.
- Open space stakeholders within or adjacent to UP include the City of Colorado Springs, School District 11, the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, and businesses or communities bordering UP. Our objectives are: To work with these stakeholders to discuss and agree upon interrelated wildfire mitigation responsibilities; to determine mitigation resource requirements and the feasibility of applying them; to identify existing and/or potential liabilities; and to develop ways, priorities and timelines to assist or support each other in meeting collective wildfire mitigation obligations.
- Leading up to what will soon become our first major Phase Two project, the WMC recently engaged the Colorado Springs City Forester who made a presentation to the committee on 1 Nov 12. During that initial meeting we discovered that certain limited city resources are available that will assist us perform wildfire mitigation actions in city-owned open space within UP. But the city will NOT enter any private property.
- The city will work with HOAs to determine open space mitigation needs and priorities, and then schedule mitigation actions for designated high fire risk areas, providing that the HOAs furnish enough volunteers to move the slash and debris to specified chipping and pick-up points in a coordinated effort on given dates. The city will fund the chipping and pick-up work.

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- City Arborist's or Forest Technicians make the determinations as to what vegetation will and will not be cut, and then perform the actual cutting tasks. No clear cutting will be done, nor will "fire breaks" be made.
- It must be emphasized that community volunteers are key to the success of this city assistance program. However, due to the city's insurance liability issues, volunteers CANNOT be involved in the cutting process using power tools during these work sessions. Some hand tools are allowed, but essentially, the volunteers' role is hauling slash and dead brush to the street to be chipped and/or hauled away by the city.
- The city works their trees Jun-Sep; hence, the Forester says that Nov-Apr would be best months to target for open space mitigation projects, perhaps with a goal of two sessions during that period. Each session would require 1-3 days, depending on weather, location, difficulty of working on the terrain, number of available volunteers, and other variables.
- With holiday events and schedules nearly upon us, the WMC intends to plan our first such mitigation effort to be conducted in early 2013. That will provide sufficient time to pick the best project date(s) possible, and to recruit a robust group of volunteers.
- Recognize that this will be a LONG TERM program that could span a couple years or more. It can be HARD WORK for volunteers because some of the "fringe" areas (a city term) are pretty much "way back in the woods."
- The HOA will need to sign an "Adopt-a-Park" agreement between the city and the UP HOA before work can commence. We should have that document reviewed by UP HOA attorneys for legal adequacy. An existing agreement which would require little revision may be on file already due to the existing Dr. Frank Houck Park arrangement between UP and the city. That will be verified.
- The City Forester wants all property owners to understand that "fire mitigation" is NOT fire prevention! Fire mitigation is what you do near and around built up areas and adjacent land to protect the structures. Fire mitigation is actually "fuels management."
- The committee continues to gather detailed risk assessment feedback from which useful wildfire mitigation information can be developed or updated and communicated to the Board, the community and other stakeholders. We look forward to working with the City Forester and his team in 2013 to help make our community and our city an even safer place to live. [End of Report]

All residents who participated in the highly successful Phase One project, WMC members, additional door-to-door volunteers, and Z&R Property Management, are to be commended and congratulated for a job well done. Thank you!