

**University Park Homeowners Association Wildfire Mitigation Committee
(UP HOA WMC)
STATUS REPORT - 1 Apr 13**

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 2012, as well as other Colorado wildfires that threatened and destroyed structures, homes and other property, served as a stark reminder that wildfire mitigation is needed throughout our community.

With the profoundly 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 in August of last year. The WMC has now been in existence for eight (8) 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 seven (7) volunteer UP homeowner members, and a Liaison Officer from the HOA Board of Directors. The HOA President also often 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 Two will require a significant number of community volunteers to support a multitude of wildfire mitigation and community clean-up projects over the months and years. Hence, a Volunteer Coordinator will be appointed for each project to manage the challenging tasks of recruiting, obtaining sign up and contact information from,

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(UP HOA WMC)
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organizing into work groups, and providing volunteer work instructions and guidelines to project volunteers. The Volunteer Coordinator may need one or more assistants depending on the magnitude of a given project.

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 130 home and property Wildfire Risk Assessments (WRAs) throughout the 10 designated areas in UP.
- Additionally, during and after Phase One, 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 and has contributed to making our community a safer place to live!

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 (D-11), the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs (UCCS), 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.

**University Park Homeowners Association Wildfire Mitigation Committee
(UP HOA WMC)
STATUS REPORT - 1 Apr 13**

- **Thank you CSFD!** One initial significant success story in our Phase Two undertakings was the Colorado Springs Fire Department/FEMA Mitigation Project. Because UP accomplished so much as a community in working with the CSFD in our Phase One risk assessments and individual property owner fire mitigation efforts, CSFD was able to land a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grant to assist us further



with our HOA-owned open space wildfire mitigation needs. At no cost to us, CSFD provided a crew and chipper to clean out a massive amount of wildfire fuel in the HOA-owned area north of Rockhurst Blvd across the road from the Villas from Anglo Drive west to Whittenberg Court/Sonnet Heights. Most of the cleaned out material was chipped and scattered back into the open space for erosion control. This project was completed mid-March. If you haven't seen the results, please go take a look at it!



Phase Two - February/March Mitigation Project Report

- Leading up to what was to be our first major volunteer-supported Phase Two project, the WMC engaged the Colorado Springs City Forester last fall, who made a presentation to the committee in November of 2012. During that initial meeting we discovered that certain limited city resources are available that will assist us in performing wildfire mitigation actions in city-owned open space within UP.



Before Mitigation

-We learned that the City Parks, Recreation & Services Department, Office of Forestry 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 (called "swamping") to specified chipping and pick-up points in a coordinated effort on given dates. The City funds the chipping and pick-up work so there is no monetary cost to our community (beyond the tax base).

**University Park Homeowners Association Wildfire Mitigation Committee
(UP HOA WMC)
STATUS REPORT - 1 Apr 13**

- 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, and neither city employees nor volunteers will enter any private property without first obtaining permission from the property owner to do so.



-It must be emphasized that community volunteers are key to the success in these city assistance programs. 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 (swamping) to the street to be chipped and/or hauled away by the city.

- Why do we do this in the middle of the winter? The City Forester says that November through April are the best months to target for open space mitigation projects for a number of reasons. Despite potentially difficult weather conditions (which we did face during our planned February dates for this project), it is markedly easier to move through, cut and swamp in areas covered with thick brush



when it is in its deciduous state. Wildlife is less affected by the mitigation activity in the winter, and there is usually less chance of creating serious soil erosion conditions in winter.



-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."

**University Park Homeowners Association Wildfire Mitigation Committee
(UP HOA WMC)
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- With an existing “Adopt-a-Park” agreement between the City and the UP HOA in place, at Dr. Frank Houck Park on their designated volunteer date and four-hour shift time, workers received a project orientation and safety briefing, read and signed acknowledging their understanding of the Adopt-a-Park agreement, and then proceeded to execute the wildfire mitigation work as shown in some of these photos.

- “After mitigation” results were phenomenal (see below). However, 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 property and adjacent open space land to protect the structures. Fire mitigation is actually “fuels management.”



All residents who participated in our first highly successful volunteer-supported Phase Two project, WMC members, and City Forestry employees, thank you again. All are commended and congratulated for another job well done.

**University Park Homeowners Association Wildfire Mitigation Committee
(UP HOA WMC)
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Phase Two - Our Next Project (June 2013)

- As a follow-on project to our February/March success, your WMC has been working with the City Forestry Office to dovetail our next wildfire mitigation volunteer project with Mayor Bach's June 2013 Parks Clean Up Initiative. On 4 April we got the final word from the City that the Austin Bluffs Open Space Fire Mitigation Project proposed by the Forester has been fully approved and will happen on Saturday, June 15th.
- As a result, we are committed now and we've got a serious challenge on our hands to notify residents and get the needed number of volunteers to support this effort. To generate maximum community awareness, interest and support, our planning scheme is to conduct this City/UP HOA wildfire mitigation project in conjunction with the UP annual clean up event, which will be modified somewhat from past practice.
- In lieu of the traditional garbage bag trash pick up walk around day, the HOA Board plans to contract the positioning of large construction debris dumpsters, as well as scheduling CSFD chipper support (for property owner wildfire mitigation material), to encourage more comprehensive individual residential clean up and property fire mitigation efforts the entire week prior to the City/UP HOA-sponsored mitigation event.
- The week will then culminate with UP and other City-recruited volunteers "swamping" (carrying out to a chipping location) felled trees and slash that will have been dropped by the City Forestry Team during the week of 10 June. The Forestry Team will include a contractor (Asplundh Tree Service) and they will be working in the Austin Bluffs Open Space mainly west of Rockhurst and behind the Quadrangle Court area. There will also be City Parks support for restoration of an eroded portion of a City trail, well used by members of our community, just off the University Park Blvd/ Rockhurst traffic roundabout. All of these City-provided resources will be at no cost to the UP HOA. We just need to provide enough volunteers to help the City Parks, Recreation, & Cultural Services Department and Forestry Office accomplish this ambitious project!
- An information campaign and more detailed planning for this big event--which is billed to include participation by Mayor Bach, and of course, some measure of local media publicity--is underway.



-Stalwart volunteers like these need your help in June. We need a Volunteer Coordinator and many volunteers for this project. Those interested in volunteering at some level, please provide your contact information via e-mail to Doug Harris, Chairman, UP HOA Wildfire Mitigation Committee, dnj71@comcast.net. Doug will have a WMC member contact you with more info.

**University Park Homeowners Association Wildfire Mitigation Committee
(UP HOA WMC)
STATUS REPORT - 1 Apr 13**

- The WMC 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 and other stakeholders throughout this year to help make our community and our city an even safer place to live.

- Not a week goes by without an article in the newspaper relating to the aftermath of the Waldo Canyon fire. The Final After Action Review for the fighting of that wildfire was just recently completed and released. Many actions were executed well to be sure, but there are also a multitude of lessons learned for all of us to heed. One topic within the review clearly points out that wildfire fuel mitigation efforts taken prior to the blaze were instrumental in minimizing the effects of the fire in several locations throughout the burn area. The message to us: ***Do Not Hesitate To Mitigate!*** [End of Report]