



## **Berkeley Woods Firewise Newsletter**

### **Winter 2025**

Here we are in 2025! We've all been shocked by the ravages of the Los Angeles fires. We hope that the fires have strengthened our resolve to be better prepared here in the Berkeley Hills. Now is the time to consider meaningful adaptations in our home environments as we collectively continue to advocate for more fire mitigation measures in light of the Los Angeles fires.

#### **Certification**

As of early January, we received our official certification as the "**Berkeley Woods Firewise Community**" and will be getting signs denoting the designation in the coming months. Our certificate of approval is available [here](#) for anyone who may want or need to send it to their insurance companies.

#### **Berkeley Woods Firewise Map and Information**

Our Berkeley Woods Firewise community encompasses approximately 250 homes/addresses. Because our community is so large, we've subdivided it into three neighborhood groups each with a captain(s). Our color coded [map](#) shows the entire area as well as the boundaries for each of the sub-groups. The sub-groups allow us to more easily manage local activities such as chipper days, debris bin days, etc. Jennifer Braun is the overall leader for our community and works in close coordination with the captains for the other two groups. The neighborhoods and captains are listed below.

#### **Neighborhoods and Captains**

- North Creston Area: Jennifer Braun, 769 Creston; [jzdancelover61@gmail.com](mailto:jzdancelover61@gmail.com)
- Woodmont/Woodhaven Areas: Yen Trac, 571 Woodmont; [yen.trac@gmail.com](mailto:yen.trac@gmail.com)
- Vistamont/Wildcat Areas: Georjana Barnes, 570 Vistamont; [gbarnes@berkeley.edu](mailto:gbarnes@berkeley.edu) and Heidi Hintz, 641 Vistamont, [hehintz@gmail.com](mailto:hehintz@gmail.com)

#### **Communication**

In line with our three sub-zones, we have a group email list for each neighborhood. Any household on the list can post to their own neighborhood, and any posting that's of general interest to the whole community will be forwarded by one of the captains.

### **Home Hardening Events**

Two homes in our neighborhood have undergone substantial home hardening, and the owners have graciously offered to open their doors to us and show us the possibilities for hardening our own homes.

**March 29, at 3:30 PM, 65 Sunset.** Dean and Marty Rutherford are the owners. Dean is a contractor with extensive knowledge of home hardening materials. He will show us what he's done in his home and talk to us about the materials that he recommends.

**April 27, time TBD, 548 Wildcat Canyon Rd.** Isabelle Gaston has done an impressive amount of work around her home and has invited her contractor to come discuss the project, including the materials used to resist wildfires.

Our home hardening emphasis this year is vent screening, so both open houses will include information about types of screening and how to install them. Depending on what we learn, later this spring we may organize a way for the neighborhood to acquire screening as a group and help each other with the installation. In the meantime, Firesafe Berkeley has opened a free mesh program (see below).

### **Evacuation Planning**

We recognize egress from our neighborhoods will be challenging in the event of an emergency, and we've seen the impact of abandoned cars littering the roads during the L.A. fires and how they can impede the work of our firefighters. Audrey Spector has set up an evacuation training workshop for our community with Berkeley Emergency Services.

**SAVE THE DATE Evacuation Workshop: March 8th, 1-3 pm, location TBA**

### **Grizzly Peak Project**

Regardless of where we've built our walls and fences, the 10 ft. on either side of a paved road belongs to the city of Berkeley and is called the right-of-way (ROW). The Berkeley Fire Dept. has acquired funding from CalFire to conduct vegetation management along the ROW in the fire zone, including all the streets in our neighborhood. We are seeking clarification as to whether they will be removing private landscaping that extends into the ROW.

**Phase 1** of the project will begin along Wildcat Canyon Road and Grizzly Peak Blvd., starting February 10th. The fire mitigation will include limbing up trees, trimming away from power lines, creating canopy space and clearing underbrush.

**Phase 2** of the project includes all the streets in our neighborhood.

**A community listening session for the project is scheduled for January 30th at 6pm.** You can learn more about the project and register for the session [here](#).

### **Fire Risk Modelling**

Xyloplan is a new fire modelling program to be conducted in our area this spring. When we picture a fire coming our way from Tilden Park, we tend to think of a wall of flames, but in reality, regardless of ignition point, fire follows particular pathways into a community, more like a river. Once those pathways are mapped, it becomes possible to put multiple barriers along them to slow or stymie an oncoming fire. We are hopeful that after the model is complete, we will have the information needed to better focus and prioritize our fire mitigation efforts within our community as well as collaborate with other firewise communities and various agencies, particularly the East Bay Regional Park District.

### **Free Firesafe Berkeley programs**

This year, Firesafe Berkeley is offering several free programs to help with home hardening and vegetation management. Information and applications for their programs can be found [here](#).

- **Mesh program:** free vent screens, gutter screens and deck skirting. You can apply for these screens now. Requires full property wildfire inspection.
- **Chipper program:** runs from mid-March to mid-December and offers removal of extra vegetation debris from around your home.
- **Eucalyptus understory cleanup:** one-time cleanup of properties with blue gum eucalyptus. The program is open now. Requires full property wildfire inspection.
- **Vegetation debris bin:** available June through September—we had a few of these bins last year to help take out additional yard waste. We plan to have a few bins this summer/early fall for our community.

### **Vegetation Management**

- **Defensible space:** Our fuel reduction emphasis this year is the 0-5' zone. This is the most crucial zone for creating defensible space. Please consider removing woody vegetation from this area, especially under windows and especially on the east side of your home.
- **Grant opportunity:** The Diablo Fire Safe Council is offering matching funds for vegetation removal. Projects must include 5 properties using one contractor, and the council will share the cost up to \$5,000. You can find details about the program [here](#). This is a great program if you have trees to remove and other neighbors in the community want to use the same crew to remove trees.

### **Hours/Money Logs for 2025**

To maintain our certification as a Firewise community, at the end of every calendar year we need to report time and money spent and cubic yards of vegetation removed. We've already reported our efforts for 2024, so now it's time to start keeping track for 2025. Here are the links to report your efforts (Jan-Nov 2025)—[please bookmark them](#):

- [UNPAID time log](#)
- [Monetary expenditures log](#)

You can fill out a log each time you do some work or spend some money, or you can keep track of your efforts and fill out a log for a stretch of time, whatever works best. All log entries upload to a spreadsheet, and in December the year's totals for the community will be submitted to the NFPA (no individual entries are reported). As an extra nudge, reminder emails will be sent at least quarterly.

Together as neighbors we can fight fire in our community. Thank you so much for your efforts.

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Leader, Berkeley Woods Firewise  
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