

Austin Firewise Alliance Resolution on CodeNEXT

WHEREAS, both forest wildfire and grassland wildfire are hazardous to Austin, and thus all sides of Austin face the risks of wildfire; and

WHEREAS, the intensity and frequency of wildfires, wildland urban interface (WUI) fires, and wildfire-initiated conflagrations are expected to continue to increase, and

WHEREAS, home insurance companies are becoming strict about issuing policies in the WUI, in some places canceling them when the risk appears too great; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin intends to protect Austin citizens and first responders from wildfire, as well as protecting Austin property and natural resources from destruction by wildfire; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin needs to minimize the amount of City resources spent to fight wildfires when they occur; and

WHEREAS, the number of homes being built in the wildland and WUI environments is increasing at an astonishing rate in Austin and Travis County, thus the budget for fire and emergency responders could significantly increase; and

WHEREAS, the International Wildland Urban Interface Code provides guidance on building methods and materials that minimize risk from wildfire;

THEREFORE, be it resolved:

The Austin Firewise Alliance asks our Land Use Commissions and City Council to ensure that CodeNEXT provides significant protection from wildfire to the City of Austin through intelligent planning and development. To this end, these major improvements are needed to CodeNEXT draft 2:

- The set of Technical Codes must include Austin's implementation of the Wildland Urban Interface Code (WUI Code), which is under development, expected to be adopted early in 2018.
- Decisions throughout the code need to reference the Wildland Urban Interface Overlay under development by the AFD Wildfire Division, which identifies the portions of Austin which are at medium, high, and extreme wildfire risk.
- Zoning maps and guidance must minimize development in the wildland urban interface (WUI) areas, in accordance with the WUI Code and the WUI Overlay. In the high-risk areas of the WUI, building must be kept at low density, such as RR, R1, R2, RM1. For the safety of the residents, no density bonus development can be allowed in WUI areas.

Adopted by Alliance Members October 20, 2017

About the Austin Firewise Alliance

The Austin Firewise Alliance is a coalition of 20 neighborhood leaders focused on minimizing the risk to their communities from wildfire, with the number of participants growing each year. Most of these are nationally recognized Firewise Communities, while others are working toward that designation. The Alliance works in collaboration with the Austin Fire Department's Wildfire Division to educate their communities about wildfire, assess areas of risk both at the level of the home and of the overall community, and conduct wildfire fuel reduction activities around homes, in common areas, and in the nearby green spaces, to eliminate hazards from wildfire.