

Boynton Florida Neighborhood Firewise Community (BFNFC)

Berkeley, California

Community Wildfire Action Plan 2023-2025



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RESIDENTS REDUCING WILDFIRE RISKS

The Boynton Florida Neighborhood Firewise Community (BFNFC) is a residential neighborhood in Berkeley, California with a moderate western slope orientation, and situated east of Arlington Avenue on Boynton Avenue and Florida Avenue. The BFNFC is in the Berkeley Fire Hazard Zone 2 and consists of seventy-two properties with predominately wood-framed residential structures that are periodically exposed to high-risk wildfire weather conditions. Building construction is a mix of combustible and non-combustible siding and predominately tile, metal, and asphalt composition roofs. The roads are paved, with clearly visible street signs. Electrical utilities are predominately above ground. The hydrants are generally spaced less than 1,000 feet apart. The vegetation within BFNFC is a mix of landscaped vegetation (specimen gardens) and mature trees such as redwood, pine, and oak. Parcels are medium in size in relation to home size. As a result, most of the vegetation in the neighborhood is maintained on the privately owned parcels. The 2,079-acre Tilden Regional Park is about a half-mile uphill from the neighborhood. The northern end of Boynton Avenue is split into two one-way roads with a ten-foot wide median strip that is landscaped and maintained by the City of Berkeley. The neighborhood includes three publicly owned paths (Boynton Walk, Maryland Walk and Florida Path).

The residents of the BFNFC are generally well-informed about the risks of wildfires in the Berkeley Hills and are highly motivated to engage in empirically substantiated, cost-effective measures to mitigate these risks and increase wildfire preparedness. This 3-year BFNFC Plan is informed by the City of Berkeley Department of Fire and Emergency Services Assessments of BFNFC and the Acacia Neighborhood conducted by Kevin Revilla of the Berkeley Fire Department.

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Timeline	Program	Description/Mitigation
Year 1 (2023)	Education & Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host community events to promote Firewise Community goals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Education & Outreach regarding community responsibilities and benefits from participation in Firewise USA ○ Home Hardening ○ Fuel Reduction ○ Evacuation Planning & Wildfire Preparedness • Continue to host BFNFC meetings twice per year for ongoing coordination and organization of community efforts • Work with Berkeley Fire Department to conduct home-hazard assessments and to install appropriate signage • After BFN creates a website, supplement it with Firewise-related materials • Maintain a community email list and spreadsheet with community-member contact information • Explore and disseminate information about the relationship between wildfire prevention and drought-tolerant and drought-resistant landscaping • Explore and disseminate information about the availability of public funding for BFNFC wildfire prevention and preparedness actions, including tree and vegetation removal, home hardening materials, go-bags for emergency evacuations • Track and maintain a record of volunteer hours

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Home Hardening

- Work with neighbors to encourage homeowners to:
 - Remove all combustible materials from under decks and porches
 - Replace non-Class A fire-rated roofing products, such as shake shingles, with a Class A fire-rated roofing product
 - Replace or repair loose or missing shingles or roof tiles to prevent ember penetration
 - Install metal leaf guards on gutters
 - Replace wood fencing and trellises within 5 feet of combustible house materials with a noncombustible material
 - Install weather stripping along the perimeter of garage doors to help keep flying embers out
 - Replace missing deck boards and reduce deck-board gap to less than 1/4 inch to keep embers out of area under decks
 - Inspect vents in eaves to ensure they are 1/8-inch metal mesh screen, and replace or repair if necessary
 - Place gas and charcoal grills away from combustible material, and store gas tanks away from houses and other structures

Encourage homeowners who are planning to remodel to:

- Use fire-resistant siding such as brick, fiber-cement, plaster, or stucco
- Use dual-pane low-E tempered glass windows
- Box in eaves, while maintaining sufficient ventilation to prevent condensation and mildew
- Replace vinyl gutters with metal gutters that have leaf guards

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Fuel Reduction

- Encourage community members to do the following within the Immediate Zone, 0-5 feet, around their home and other structures on their property:
 - Delimb all trees a minimum of six feet from the ground or from understory vegetation
 - Delimb all trees a minimum of five feet vertically above rooflines and ten feet from chimneys and stovepipes
 - Create a five foot wide ember-resistant area next to all structures using non-combustible materials, such as soil, crushed rock, stones, brick, or concrete
 - Clear debris and leaf litter from beneath large stands of trees next to house, and on or near wood decking, fencing, roofing and gutters and other structures, especially during Red Flag Warnings
 - During Red Flag Warnings, move combustible materials, such as yard furniture, away from house and other structures
 - Remove or thin combustible landscaping such as bamboo, juniper, rosemary and other plants high in flammable resins, oils, and waxes
- Maintain and thin decorative plantings immediately adjacent to homes and trim their lower portions to limit the amount of decaying woody material near vents and under eaves and to facilitate removal of dead and decaying material under the plants by creating an air gap between them and the ground
- Enlist community members to assist residents who are physically unable to do this work themselves
- Remove debris and vegetation and maintain commonly owned areas, including footpaths necessary for evacuation (Boynton Walk, Maryland Walk, Florida Walk)
- If needed, rent a dumpster for a community fuel-reduction day (in addition to residents' weekly disposal of vegetation waste in green curbside bins)

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Evacuation Planning & Wildfire Preparedness

- Partner with Berkeley Fire Department on annual evacuation drills that include the evaluation of alternative evacuation routes
- Designate at least two safe and easily accessible neighborhood evacuation routes, using footpaths as well as paved roads and sidewalks
- Encourage residents to sign up for the Alameda County Alert Evacuation Warning System at www.ACAAlert.org and for fire zone maps at <https://community.zonehaven.com>
- Encourage residents to consider evacuating in extreme fire weather, before a fire starts
- Develop a plan for assisting community members who need evacuation assistance both before and during a fire
- Encourage community members to take the following basic fire-preparedness measures:
 - Display clearly marked street numbers on houses and curbs
 - Indicate their specific evacuation needs on the community contact list
 - Compile home inventories to help settle insurance claims expeditiously
 - Review the scope and requirements of homeowners' insurance policies and modify policies to take account of changes in local building codes and costs for rebuilding as well as discounts for participation in BFNFC or similar programs
 - Prepare go-bags for short-notice emergency evacuations

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Year 2 (2024)	Education & Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on outreach to expand community participation • Promote Firewise Community awareness and participation through Berkeley community meetings • Recruit volunteers to arrange home tours or post videos showcasing BFNFC home hardening and fuel reduction accomplishments • Conduct home assessments in conjunction with Berkeley Fire Department
	Home Hardening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue and increase Year 1 home-hardening tasks with an emphasis on mitigating the risks of combustion from flying embers
	Fuel Reduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue and expand scope of Year 1 fuel-reduction tasks • Focus on fuel reduction in Intermediate Zone (5-30 feet from home), including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Creating fuel breaks with driveways, walkways, paths, patios, and decks ○ Removing ladder fuels beneath trees ○ Spacing trees to have a minimum of 18 feet between crowns, and higher for steeper slopes ○ Trimming tree canopies to be at least 10 feet away from the edge of a structure • Consider renting a dumpster for a community fuel-reduction day (in addition to residents' weekly disposal of vegetation waste in green curbside bins)
	Evacuation Planning & Wildfire Preparedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to educate community members about household-level wildfire preparedness measures before and during evacuation • Partner with Berkeley Fire Department on annual evacuation drills and testing of safe evacuation routes

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Timeline	Program	Description/Mitigation
Year 3 (2025)	Education & Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update community on Action Plan progress and achievements • Host two Firewise Community meetings per year for ongoing coordination and organization of community efforts • Sponsor a wildfire-related education meeting with a subject matter expert to improve awareness of wildfire risks and effective prevention measures • Update BFN web site with fire-safety and fire-preparedness information and resources (such as evacuation maps and smoke and air quality indices), and community and homeowner accomplishments • Co-sponsor community efforts to learn about and implement ways to coordinate wildfire prevention programs with drought-tolerant and drought-resistant landscaping projects
	Home Hardening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue Years 1 and 2 home-hardening tasks • Encourage homeowners to apply for federal, state, or local funding for home hardening projects
	Fuel Reduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue and expand scope of Years 1 and 2 fuel-reduction tasks • Participate in group risk-reduction activities for residents physically unable to do the work themselves • If needed, rent a dumpster for a community fuel-reduction day (in addition to residents' depositing vegetation waste in curbside green waste bins) • Encourage homeowners to apply for federal, state, or local funding for fuel reduction and drought-resistant landscaping projects
	Evacuation Planning & Wildfire Preparedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind and educate community members about household-level wildfire preparedness measures to take before and during evacuation • Partner with Berkeley Fire Department on annual evacuation drills and updating of safe evacuation routes