

Firewise

What every Grand Haven Homeowner
& Resident Needs to know



What is Firewise?

- A Firewise community is a neighborhood that collaborates to reduce wildfire risks and enhance safety through various preparedness measures.
 - This program encourages residents to work together to protect their homes and landscapes from wildfires.
- This involves a combination of individual and community-wide actions, primarily focused on reducing flammable materials and vegetation, and enhancing fire resistance through landscaping and building materials.
- Grand Haven has been a certified Firewise Community since January 15, 2010.
- Dr. Steve Davidson and Louise Leister developed this program for Grand Haven, and our certification has been renewed every year since.

Individual Actions

- **Defendable Space:** Creating a buffer zone around your home by removing flammable vegetation, clearing dead leaves and debris, and maintaining trees and shrubs to prevent fire from easily spreading.
- **Fire-Resistant Landscaping:** Choosing plants that are less flammable and more resistant to fire, such as those with high moisture content, low resin, and sparse foliage.
- **Fire-Resistant Building Materials:** Using materials like fire-resistant roofing, siding, and decks to help prevent your home from igniting during wildfire.
- **Home Ignition Zone:** Understanding the zones around your home and taking specific actions in each zone
 - Lean, clean, and green in the first 30 feet.
- Remember, these are **Homeowner Individual actions** that you should take when you live in areas prone to wildfires like Palm Coast & Grand Haven.

Removal of Saw Palmettos



There are several plant species in the south that are **highly flammable**, most notably the southern rough species. The **Gallberry** (*Ilex glabra*), **Saw Palmetto** (*Serenoa repens*) and **Wax Myrtle** (*Myrica cerifera*) are highly flammable. **These plants should not be within 30 feet of your home.**

Before Firewise

- The next slide shows some common areas of Grand Haven that had a lot of vines in areas that were dangerous and mowed to reduce the fuel.
 - These areas have been mowed and pushed back or have been planted with natural grass and are mowed by our landscape company.
- There are still more areas along the golf course that we would love to mow, or mow with the Golf Course to clear and open up areas.

Before Firewise & Mowing



Community Actions

- **Firewise USA Program**: A national program run by National Fire Protection Association that provides a framework for communities to organize, assess their wildfire risks, create action plans, and implement mitigation measures.
- **Community Collaboration**: Engaging with neighbors, fire departments, and other local agencies to collectively address wildfire risks and implement fire safety strategies.
- **Education and Outreach**: Raising awareness about Wildfire risks and prevention through community events, educational materials and online resources.

Grand Haven Community Action

- Grand Haven is a Firewise Community. The actions that we provide are mowing and reducing wildfire fuels in areas in Grand Haven on a rotation basis.
- The Florida Forestry Service has collaborated with Grand Haven for many years. They periodically review areas in Grand Haven. We also work with St. Johns River Water Management for permitting and an overall review of Grand Haven.
- Grand Haven was awarded two grants (the first was 2010 and the second one about 7 years later) for mowing to reduce fuels and creating a defensible space. They were provided to Grand Haven by Florida Forestry and the Firewise Program several years ago at no cost.
- Forestry has been consulted over the years to review areas, and we talked about prescribed burns for areas where mowing is not possible. This option is still being discussed but not being used.

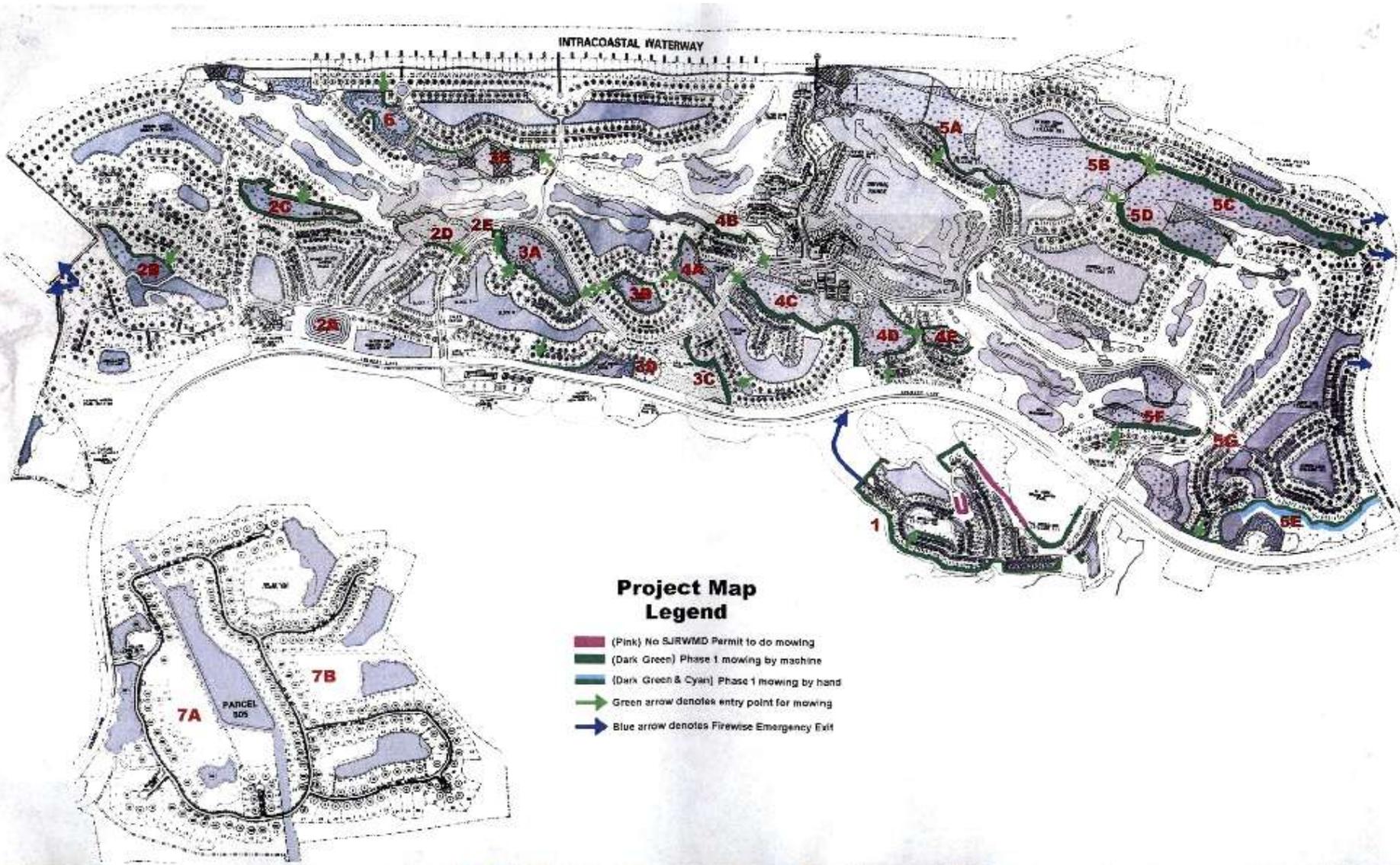
Tractors with Barrel Mower Removing Fire Fuel



Actions

- Grand Haven has emergency fire exit gates in several neighborhoods. Please familiarize yourselves with your area for emergency exits.
- The exits all have chain link gates with a lock. The code is the same for all the locks: 5150.
- See the map on the next slide that shows the exits. Please print this map and visit the exits in your neighborhood so you know where they are and keep the gate code in your car, so you have it handy in an emergency to exit the community.
- The Crossings has an exit gate at the end of Crosslink Court. In the event of a wildfire, this exit will allow the residents to drive through the gate to Colbert Lane. The gate code is 5150.
- In the event of a fire the CDD will open the gates, but you should always have the code in case you are the first one there in an emergency.

Firewise Exit Map



Actions

- Grand Haven mows the areas behind the street trees along Waterside Parkway to maintain a fire break so cars can travel along Waterside to exit either north or south of the community.
- During a Fire emergency all Main gates will be opened and most likely be one way out so there is no bottleneck at the gates to exit the community.
- Please have a plan for exiting the community in case of an emergency. Keep the exit gate code handy, bring important papers in a packet so you have them if needed. Inform friends and relatives you are evacuating. Stay calm and proceed out of Grand Haven.
- During fire season please keep your car gas tanks filled, your phones charged and your important papers handy so as not to waste time looking for them. Do not leave pets behind!

Mowing / Clean Up / Removal



Firewise Mowing

- Mowing in Grand Haven is on a rotation basis so areas are mowed between 3 to 5 years or as needed.
- Grand Haven is built and surrounded by wetlands. This means if it's too wet to mow we do not mow.
- We determine what too wet means. If it looks dry its only dry on the first few inches of ground.
- The machine weighs several tons and will sink and get stuck in the muck. The machine costs well over \$100,000 and the vendor will not risk mowing if the machine is lost in the muck.
- Mowing is done only if the area can be entered safely without damage to the equipment and the natural area.

Firewise Mowing (cont'd)

- If there is water or muck at the beginning of an area and the machine cannot enter, that means the area cannot be mowed even if the area looks dry.
- In the Crossings we cannot access areas if there is water at the beginning or end of the mow run. Some areas are not accessible to mow.
- If the crew can enter and start, they could encounter muck, and the machine may leave ruts or track marks .
- We are only allowed to mow. It's a natural area; we are not allowed to enter to remove trees or change the ground.
- Ruts will stay and downed trees will also remain. Those are St. Johns River Water Management rules.

What You Need to Understand

- Firewise mowing is not pretty for a reason. *It's not landscaping.* It's not going to be replanted. Firewise mowing is to remove fire fuel by mowing. The mowed material is then mulched and left on the ground. It will look bare and left to grow back naturally.
- We do not do hand removal of vegetation – it's impossible with the amount of area in Grand Haven.
- Getting angry or calling the CDD office about what we do is a problem. Firewise mowing is not an option. If its going to be done in your area, there is no opting out, it will be done. It's a community action to reduce fire fuel.
- You may not plant a garden on Grand Haven common natural areas. You cannot put up a fence or have a fire pit or have chairs, etc. in any area beyond your property line. Birdhouses, bird feeders, landscape plants or pavers, or any other things on CDD land or natural areas is prohibited.
- These common areas are the mowed areas. We have a lot of areas like this right now and it makes mowing a nightmare.

Guidelines for Creating a Defendable Space

Within the zone of defensible space, follow these guidelines:

- Thin trees so that the crowns (treetops) are 10 to 15 feet apart.
- Remove any "ladder fuels." Ladder fuels are vines and shrubs that can carry a ground fire up into the treetops.
- Remove dense fuels, trim overhanging branches, and carefully plan your landscaping within 30 feet of homes.
- Prune tree limbs so the lowest branches are 6 to 10 feet from the ground.
- Remove any large groupings of plants like saw palmetto, yaupon, wax myrtle and gallberry, especially if the plants are close to the home, adjacent decks or porches or under eaves or overhangs.

Creating a Defendable Space (cont'd)

- Instead of flammable mulch like bark or wood chips, use lava stone or coarse gravel around any shrubbery that is within 5 feet of the structure .
- Don't allow any flammable vegetation in contact with the structure.
- Remove brush and clippings out of your area.
- Firewood piles should not be near homes .
- Do not dump your yard waste in natural areas or CDD property.

Creating a Defendable Space (cont'd)

When managing natural areas in Florida for wildfire risk, it's important to be aware of plant species that can contribute to fire ignition and spread. **These are some types of plants that are deemed dangerous for wildfires in Florida's natural areas:**

- Invasive Species: Cogongrass (*Imperata cylindrica*) – considered one of the world's worst invasive plants. Cogongrass can form dense stands, significantly increasing fuel loads and fire intensity. It grows rapidly after fire and can outcompete native vegetation.
- Old World Climbing Fern (*Lygodium microphyllum*): This vine creates dense mats, acting as "ladder fuels" that carry fire from the ground into tree canopies, even into fire-resistant wetlands like cypress domes
- Melaleuca Tree (*Melaleuca quinquenervia*): Melaleuca trees are adapted to fire and are highly flammable. Their papery bark acts as ladder fuel, and dense stands can spread fire easily.
- Chinese Tallow (*Triadica sebifera*): While fire can kill smaller Chinese tallow trees, mature ones often survive and can resprout vigorously after fire. Chinese tallow can also change fuel bed structure, potentially impacting the frequency and spread of fires.

Additional information

- Remove highly flammable plants characterized by resinous sap and waxy leaves:
 - These include saw palmetto, wax myrtle, yaupon, red cedar, cypress and young pine trees.
- Locate firewood and propane gas tanks at least 50 feet from the structure.
- Keep 100 feet of hose readily available at a faucet away from the structure.
- Select less-flammable plant species to plant within the zone of defensible space.
- Review this [Landscaping to Reduce Wildfire Risk](#) guide from Florida Forest Service.
- The [University of Florida has Firewise Landscaping](#) and planting guides.

Mowing crew



Opening up the Views to the Golf Course and removing Fuel along Waterside Parkway



Before & After Mowing



The Crossings Mowing



Summary

- Firewise is not pretty. It's done to create a defensible space.
- 30 feet from your home should be open to create a defensible space. If your garden does not have 30 feet to the natural area you should open it up and remove highly flammable plants to create that zone.
 - That does not mean that the forest should have 30 feet, it means you should have 30 feet and if you have more than 30 feet that's great.
 - Create a 30-foot defensible area from the back of your house.
- Understand that mowing is done only in areas we can access.
 - After mowing there will be mulch left behind. Nothing is planted in that area. And the mower may leave ruts and or tracks.
- There is no opting out of Firewise mowing.
 - Mowing is usually done on a rotation about 3-5 years between mowing of each area. It is not done every year.

Reminders

- Do not dump clippings, tree branches, etc. in natural areas or CDD property.
 - There is no dumping allowed in any area of Grand Haven.
 - We have yard waste pick up service. Do not dump.
- Do not use Grand Haven natural areas as an extension of your garden.
 - Nothing but nature is allowed on CDD property or natural areas.
- Mowing is only done when its dry and that is determined by the CDD and the vendor.
 - Calling the office will not help get an area mowed.
- Know the Fire exits and the code (5150) and be prepared.
- Most importantly do not leave pets behind.
- Be safe.