

MEMORANDUM

Office of the City Manager



DATE: August 24, 2018
TO: Mayor and City Council
THROUGH: Julie Edmonds-Mares, City Manager *[Signature]*
FROM: Rick Frawley, Acting Fire Chief
SUBJECT: Summit Pointe Home Owners Association Update

As awareness of the threats with wildland fire activity has increased within the region and our community, the Milpitas Fire Department has been working closely with concerned homeowners to reinforce preventative measures and strategies for safer communities. Part of this outreach has been collaboration with the Summit Pointe Home Owner's Association (HOA). This outreach included inspections of the subdivision, homeowner education, and an HOA community meeting. During inspections of Summit Pointe, a Fire Marshal notice to clear potentially hazardous vegetation was issued pursuant to California Fire Code Section 304.1.1 - 1.2. This issue was mitigated by the HOA in short order. The Fire Department also attended the Summit Pointe HOA meeting on July 25th to discuss and advise on the aspects of fire safety and current status of the subdivision relative to wildland fire threat. A key discussion piece during the HOA meeting addressed the status of the community relative to the Wildland Urban Interface threat zone (WUI) that exists in the unincorporated areas of Santa Clara County in the Ed Levin Park. WUI designation would trigger increased levels of vegetation clearance around structures. The Summit Pointe community has not been defined as a WUI in the current threat zone as identified by California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE).

While all of California is subject to some degree of fire hazard, there are specific features that make some areas more hazardous. The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) is required by law to map areas of significant fire hazards based on fuels, terrain, weather, and other relevant factors. The Fire Hazard Severity Zone maps were developed using a science-based and field tested computer model that assigns a hazard score based on the factors that influence fire likelihood and fire behavior. Many factors are considered such as fire history, existing and potential fuel (natural vegetation), flame length, blowing embers, terrain, and typical weather for the area.

During the ongoing collaboration with the Summit Pointe HOA, a resident of Summit Pointe has requested the removal of pine trees in the common area of the HOA. The resident is referencing elements of the fire code that are applicable to communities identified as being part of a WUI. The HOA Board is not in support of removing the trees obstructing the resident's view. The Fire Department has inspected the area in question and the removal of these trees would not align with the requirements of California Fire Code Section 304.1.1 - 1.2. As previously stated, the Summit Pointe community has not been identified as a WUI in the current threat zone outlined by CAL FIRE.

The Fire Department will continue to monitor wildland fire risk factors throughout our community including Summit Pointe to ensure that fire codes are enforced and to reinforce best practices in fire prevention. As wildland fire behavior is reassessed throughout the region, CAL FIRE will continue to evaluate areas in Santa Clara County for the potential of reclassification of Wildland Urban Interface threat zones. Any potential changes to threat levels will be coordinated with homeowners and all applicable code requirements will be implemented. In an effort to increase awareness of fire prevention, I would be happy to discuss any of these issues in further detail.