Communities Taking Initiative To Reduce Their Risk From Wildfire

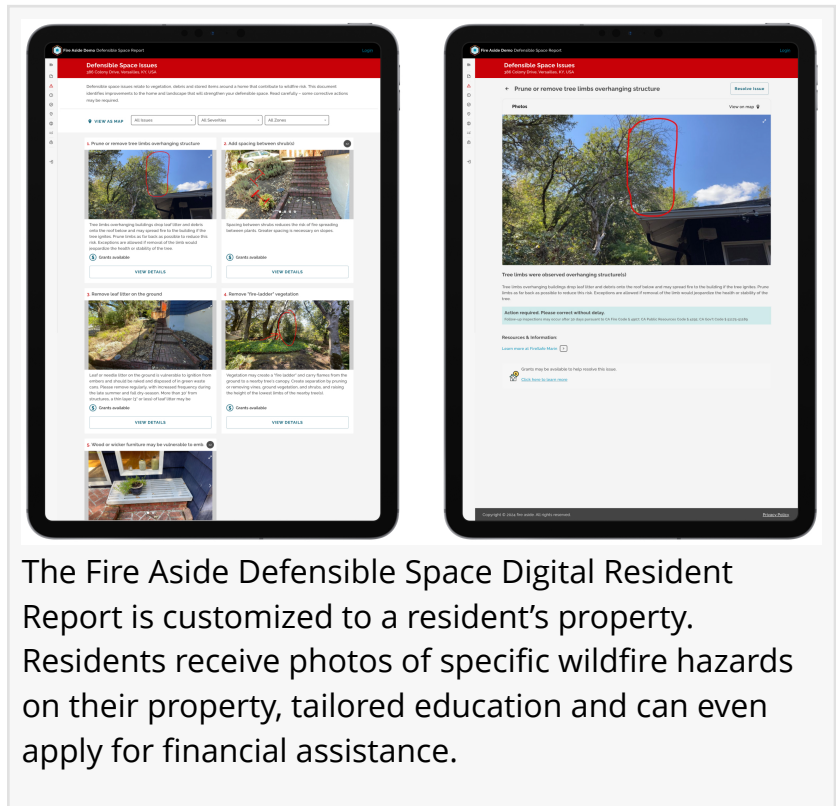*Fire Agencies, Cities Turn To Resident Friendly Software to Adapt to Wildfire*

SAN ANSELMO, CALIFORNIA, UNITED STATES, May 13, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Herd immunity is an analogy Todd Lando, Battalion Chief, Wildfire Hazard Mitigation Specialist with Central Marin Fire Department, has used to compare the work residents in Marin County are doing to adapt to wildfire. "We have reduced the risk in measurable ways on more than half of the parcels in Marin County, and we've targeted the ones that are most at risk of wildfire through a collective partnership with our residents, our technology partner Fire Aside and the Marin Wildfire

The Fire Aside Defensible Space Digital Resident Report is customized to a resident's property. Residents receive photos of specific wildfire hazards on their property, tailored education and can even apply for financial assistance.

Prevention Authority. When we reduce risk on a small scale on hundreds or thousands of interconnected parcels, we really make a measurable reduction in risk to the community."

According to the '22-'23 MWPA Annual Report, Marin residents removed over 10,502 cubic yards of residential wildfire fuel and resident participation in the MWPA Grant Program distributed $733,000 in grants to homeowners addressing issues found in their Defensible Space and Home Hardening Evaluations. They credit this to the fact that residents want to reduce their risk (especially given rising home insurance premiums and cancellations), that they can reach more homes through their defensible space and home hardening inspection program where they evaluated 30,388 homes in the '22-'23 season, easy to use digital experiences, focused homeowner education and integrated programs that residents can easily access.
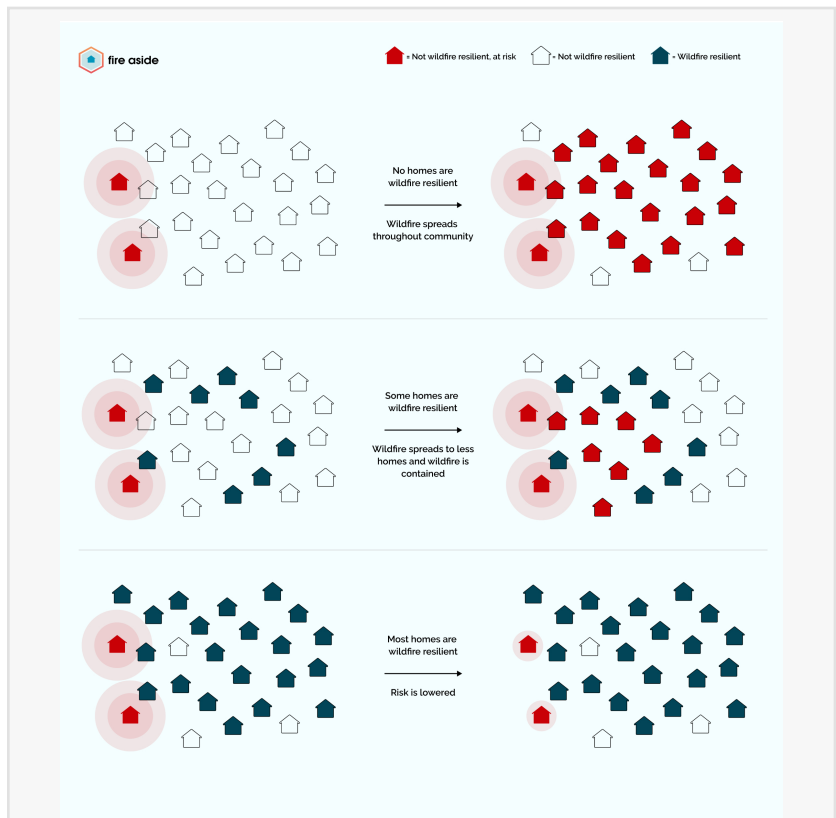
Critical to this has been a digital resident report which fire evaluators complete on an iPad during onsite home evaluations. The report is powered by a software platform called Fire Aside and it is customized to the property. In the report, residents receive an interactive map of where
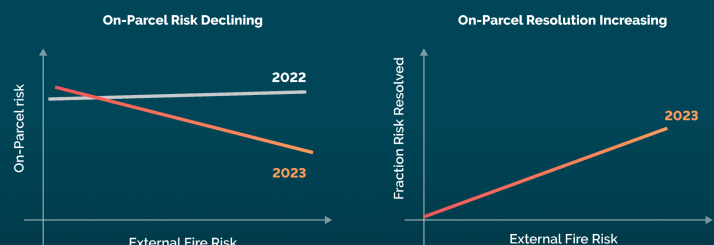
hazards are located on their property and photos of the hazards themselves, all prioritized based on risk and cost. This helps residents know which issues to focus on first. Residents can get information tailored to specific issues on their property including where financial assistance or chipping may be available to them. When residents remove their hazards they can even submit photos, subject to Fire agency review. If residents have questions they can communicate directly with their local fire department via Fire Aside, allowing officials to spend more time in the field and to more efficiently help more of the community.

"Resident engagement has improved exponentially since we adopted Fire Aside. Prior to Fire Aside we conducted inspections on a much smaller scale. We conducted inspections primarily on paper using triplicate copies. There was very little data collection. We communicated once with residents, we left a notice at their door on paper and we walked away and hoped that they would do the work that we were asking them to do. Now we know where residents are actually engaged. We have continuous conversations with residents beyond the inspection itself and we can measure the success of those interactions by hazard and parcel up to the community level"- Todd Lando, Battalion Chief, Wildfire Hazard Mitigation Specialist Central Marin Fire Department

When more homes are wildfire resilient, the overall community risk is lowered when a wildfire does occur.

The MWPA was able to measure impact of resident action on-parcel (property) in reducing community wildfire risk.

In 2022, the MWPA also began an initiative to develop quantitative, science-based risk scores for every vulnerable attribute identified during defensible space inspections using Fire Aside defensible space and home hardening evaluation software. These scores provide a rich set of

operational metrics characterizing the community safety risk of defensible space and home hardening vulnerabilities on private parcels. As a result, the MWPA was able to measure impact of resident action on-parcel (property) in reducing community wildfire risk.

Truckee, CA Defensible Space and Home Hardening programs, funded by Tax Measure T (which was approved by 79% of Truckee voters) have also been using Fire Aside's software. Truckee Fire's Community Wildfire Prevention Fund Annual Report for 2023 calculated that resident's spent over $4.1MM, invested over 47k hours in wildfire prevention and highlighted a 31% reduction in homes with hazardous vegetation in Zone 0 since last year.

The city of Berkeley is another community using Fire Aside software with impact; increasing the number of defensible space and home hardening evaluations by 7x vs. prior year. Berkeley Fire Chief David Sprague shared: "Berkeley, California, has a long history of wildfires, many of which have burned into the built environment. We know that it's not a matter of if, it's a matter of when the next one will be. The Defensible Space Inspection program, powered by Fire Aside, is the key to really making neighborhood scale change when it comes to vegetation in our community."

Fire Aside is a purpose-built wildfire tech platform, focused solely on supporting fire agencies and Fire Safe Councils to get residents to take wildfire prevention actions. The company supports over 1MM properties across 5 states including California, Colorado, Nevada, Oregon and Utah. Fire Aside estimates $29.8MM was spent by residents adapting to wildfire last year on their platform, and 14k acres of residential property removed over 218,000 cubic yards of fuel.

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