

2023

WHITECOURT FIRESMART

ANNUAL REPORT



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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the 2023 Annual Report

Welcome to the FireSmart 2023 Annual Report. This past year, the FireSmart Team focused heavily on community engagement, education components, and the FireSmart Home Assessment Program.

Thanks to Intact Public Entities (IPE) and Intact Financial Corporation Grant, the FireSmart Team was able to continue the Home Assessment Program throughout 2023.

The FireSmart Team thanks Town Council for its continued support of FireSmart programming; and, to the Whitecourt FireSmart Working Group for its hard work in 2023.

Brian Wynn

FIRESMART PROGRAM COORDINATOR



INTRODUCTION

Whitecourt FireSmart Working Group

The Whitecourt FireSmart Working Group, established in 2021, works collaboratively to create a FireSmart culture in the community that is rooted in the schools, industries, government policies and planning.

The Committee consists of 6 members:

- 1 Town Council Representative: Tara Baker
- 1 Whitecourt Forestry Area Government of Alberta Representative: Mike Penner (Alt. Milan Skrecek)
- 1 Whitecourt Fire Department Representative: Brian Wynn
- 1 Whitecourt Parks & Open Spaces Representative: Kamruz Zaman (Alt. Peter Smyl)
- 1 Whitecourt Planning & Development Representative: Jennine Loberg
- 1 CANFOR Representative: Mike Hudson (Alt. Ken Anderson)

The Director of Community Safety for the Town of Whitecourt, Lee Hardman, and the CANFOR FRIAA Administrator, Eden McPeak, act as Administrative Representatives for the Committee.



HOME ASSESSMENTS

Introduction

The Whitecourt FireSmart Coordinators have completed home assessments in Whitecourt since 2021.

With funding support from Intact Public Entities (IPE) and Intact Financial Corporation, Whitecourt created the FireSmart Homeowner Incentive Program. The incentive program encourages homeowners to sign up for a FireSmart Home Assessment, and to conduct recommended FireSmart practices to mitigate wildfire risks on their property. In 2023, \$10,500 was granted to Whitecourt residents to FireSmart their properties.



HOME ASSESSMENTS

Statistics

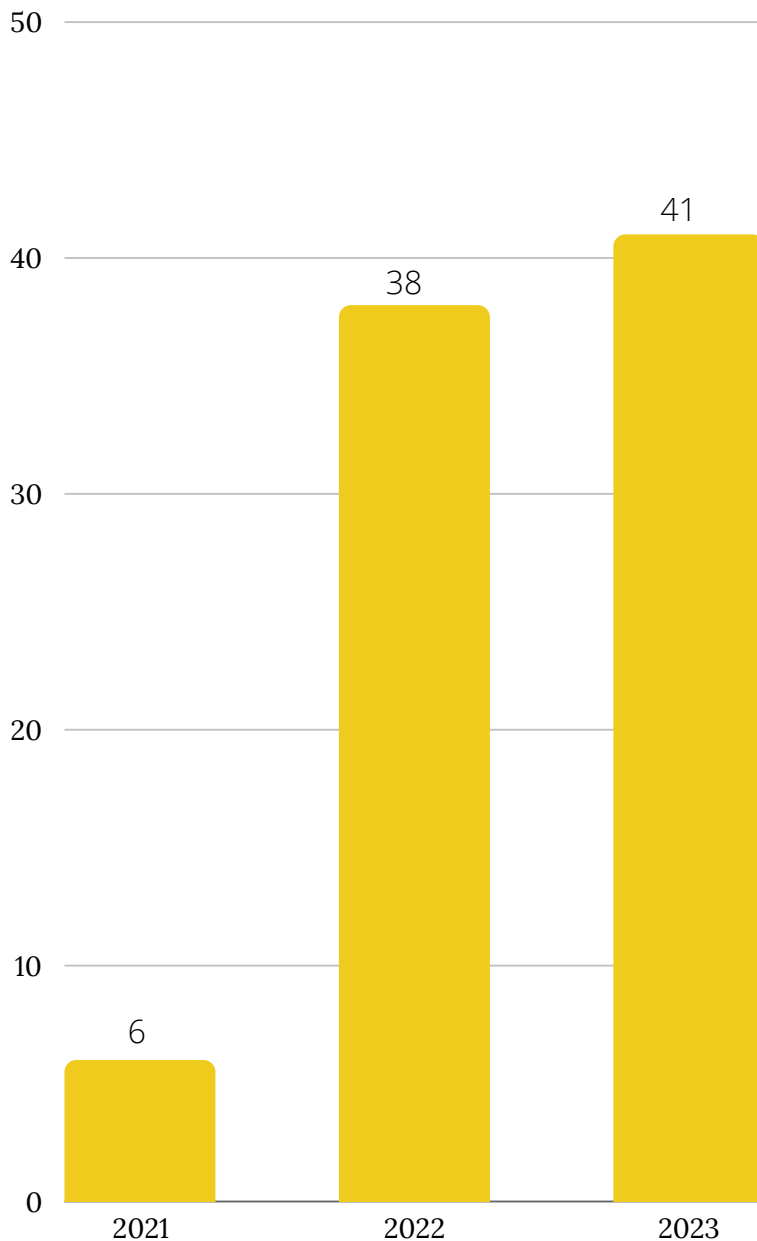


FIGURE 1.

The graph on this page features a comparison of the number of home assessments completed in Whitecourt and the surrounding area in 2021, 2022 and 2023. In 2023, 41 home assessments were completed: 31 in Whitecourt, and 10 within Woodlands County.

Home Assessments are completed with two Assessors on site, and offer an opportunity for one-on-one engagement with residents on FireSmart best practices.

The FireSmart Homeowner Incentive Program was a huge driver for increased requests to FireSmart residential properties in both 2022 and 2023.

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

2023 Vegetation Management Update

In 2023, FireSmart did not have a summer time vegetation management crew in Whitecourt and surrounding area. Due to this, the FireSmart Team focused heavily on home assessments and education aspects of FireSmart.

In summer 2024, FireSmart will have a summer time vegetation management crew that will focus on mulching maintenance in Zones 1 and 1.a, located on the west side of Dahl Drive.



VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

Sprinkler Trailer

Thanks to the Intact Public Entities (IPE) and Intact Financial Corporation \$100,000 grant received in 2022, the Whitecourt Fire Department was able to purchase and outfit a Sprinkler Trailer.

Throughout the 2023 Wildfire Season, the Sprinkler Trailer was deployed to Edson, Fox Creek and Anselmo for a total of 29 days.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement and education remain priorities to the FireSmart Team.

In 2023, the FireSmart Team attended numerous events, including the Whitecourt Trade Fair and Canada Day Celebration. The Team educates patrons of these events on FireSmart practices and programming.

In September 2023, the Whitecourt FireSmart Working Group held a First Responders Thank-You BBQ. Approximately 150 First Responders and industry partners attended the event.



GOALS FOR 2024

The FireSmart Team hopes to continue completing FireSmart Home Assessments in 2024. The Team will continue to train Whitecourt Fire Department Firefighters so members can complete home assessments.

With grant funding received from the Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta (FRIAA), a FireSmart Summer Crew will be hired to remediate areas as required throughout summer 2024. An additional grant was applied for through FRIAA in 2023. If approved, the funds will be used to hire a full-time FireSmart Coordinator on a 2-year contract basis.

The FireSmart Team looks forward to another great year serving Whitecourt and surrounding area, and continuing proactive measures in reducing our risk of wildfire.





Whitecourt

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