



2026-2027 Future City Competition Theme: Fire Resilient Future

Overview: Fire Resilient Future

Around the world, fires that once burned mostly in forests or grasslands are now reaching suburbs and cities. This often happens where neighborhoods and natural areas meet, in a place called the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI). The WUI is expanding as people build more homes, roads, and power lines in areas that were previously undeveloped. In the United States, more than 60,000 communities are located in or near the WUI, and this area is growing by about 2 million acres each year. At the same time, the impacts of climate change are influencing fire seasons by making some places warmer, drier, and windier for longer parts of the year.

These changes mean that fires can behave differently than they did in the past. Many of today's most damaging fires to people and structures are wildfires that spread from the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) into cities and towns. Once flames or flying embers reach a neighborhood, homes and buildings can sometimes ignite from one another like dominos, allowing fire to move quickly through communities instead of staying only in natural areas. This shows that the challenge is not just fire itself, but how and where cities are designed and built.

The good news is that cities are learning how to prepare and respond. In the past, fire management focused mostly on putting fires out or removing vegetation. Today, communities are exploring smarter, more balanced approaches that allow people and nature to live safely together. Engineers, architects, fire marshals, and city planners are working to reduce human-caused fires, designing fire-resistant buildings, creating defensible green spaces, and developing early-warning technologies that reduce risk and protect communities. The cities of the future can be places that grow wisely, adapt to change, and thrive, even in a fire-adapted world.

The Students' Challenge:

Design a resilient future city that can prevent, protect, and recover from urban wildfires.