



FORT SMITH FIRE DEPARTMENT

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Phil Christensen
Fire Chief

Memo

To: John Cooley, Chairman - Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee
From: Phil Christensen, Fire Chief
RE: Comprehensive Plan Update for Fort Smith Fire Dept.
Date: September 26, 2022

This report presents an evaluation of the Fort Smith Fire Department and outlines the goals, accomplishments, outcomes, and activities as set forth by the Future Fort Smith Comprehensive Plan. It is intended to promote public health, safety, morals, prosperity, and general welfare of the Fort Smith Community. It also establishes policy framework to implement the department's mission statement and vision of organizational values, all while setting a template for budget decision-making and direction that will be used to manage future growth and change.

As the Fire Chief of the Fort Smith Fire Department, it is my goal to not only maintain what our department has to offer the citizens for public safety, but enhance the measures we perform at in areas of response time, training, emergency medical, hazard mitigation, fire loss, and public education.

It is the goal of the Fort Smith Fire Department to fulfill the elements of the "Mission Statement" in a manner consistent with the "Statement of Organizational Values."

Mission Statement:

"The mission of the Fort Smith Fire Department is to serve the community by protecting lives, property and the environment in a safe, efficient and professional manner."

Statement of Organizational Values:

Accountability

We will recognize at all times our collective and individual accountability and responsibility to our community, our profession, our organization and members.

Service

We will deliver high quality service to our community based on timeliness, effectiveness and customer needs.

Performance

We will base our standard performance on effectiveness, efficiency and competence, with emphasis on maintaining state of the art skill levels through ongoing continuing education, training and personal development.

Behavior

We will demonstrate, through our behavior, collectively and individually, respect and dignity toward each other and the citizens we serve.

Values

We will strive to individually reflect a feeling of positive, open and honest interaction with each other, based on flexible, progressive and team-focused style.

Communications

We will seek to improve communication in an effort to achieve cooperation, respect and understanding while maintaining that participation and partnership must guide our interaction with each other and the citizens we serve.

Organizational Process

We will strive to make policies and decisions prioritized by placing the citizens first, the organization second and ourselves third. Organizational and individual goal setting must place emphasis on measurement of outcomes and results and conservation of resources.

Utilizing the Fort Smith Comprehensive Plan and keeping a vision for the future, the Fire Department will maintain a set of continual goals:

Fire apparatus replacement

- Identify costs associated with apparatus repairs to determine when/what apparatus to replace.
- In 2021 the Fire Department replaced two fire apparatuses. Pumper 2 was replaced with a new Pierce Enforcer CAFS pumper to serve the central north side district, and Pumper 11 was replaced with a new Pierce Enforcer CAFS pumper with a 750-gallon booster tank and will serve the Chaffee Crossing district. Due to the growing industrial population at Chaffee Crossing, increasing our water-carrying capabilities from 500 to 750 gallons was a necessary upgrade.
- For 2022, we have designed and ordered a 100' mid-mount aerial apparatus. This ladder truck will replace the current Ladder-1 serving the northwest districts.
- Have ordered two command staff vehicles for Training and Fire Prevention Divisions

Continued examinations of all fire department operations for efficiency and cost-effectiveness

- Review all department functions on a cost-benefit, efficiency-based platform.
- Identify areas open to revision and redistribution of resources.
- Identify components available for implemented cost-saving strategies.
- Continually monitor department functions for increased efficiencies.
- Continue weekly reviews of department budget to maintain a high level of fiscal responsibility.

Continually explore revenue enhancement opportunities

- Identify and apply for all appropriate individual, regional based, and federal grant opportunities. In 2021, the FSFD applied for and received:
 - \$224,329 in FEMA-State Homeland Security grants for our Bomb Squad and Hazardous Materials Response teams.
 - \$124,813 from Arkansas Department of Emergency Management, to purchase training props related to structural firefighting and medical services.

Continually develop firefighters through additional training, acknowledgments, and peer teaching, assessing, & counseling

- Conducted 64,828 hours of fire and EMS training in 2021
- Graduated 12 new firefighters from the Fire Academy

Continually identify target hazards for firefighter and citizen safety

- Fire Department works with the city's GIS Department in creating incident maps of emergency related incidents across the city. This data provides a visual showing in the neighborhoods of concern as it relates to fire safety. The Fire Department can actively campaign in these target areas for fire safety and smoke detector effectiveness. As the Fire and Police Departments migrate toward an updated CAD/RMS system, this data will be used to evaluate our current and future fire apparatus deployment.
- During the development of the City of Fort Smith Comprehensive Plan, there were certain key components outlined for the Fire Department in six different categories:

1) Future Land Use

Future Land Use			
FLU-1	Achieve a successful and market-driven balance of future land uses consistent with the Preferred Future		
	FLU-1.3	Coordinate and plan future development with neighboring jurisdictions and the City of Fort Smith	
		FLU-1.3.1	Exercise the City's extra-territorial jurisdiction over land in Sebastian County
		FLU-1.3.2	Ensure that the subdivision of land within the allowable Planning Area will comply with City subdivision and infrastructure requirements, as amended, to address rural and estate development
	FLU-1.4	Ensure adequate, well-maintained infrastructure, public safety, and public facilities for all development and prevent development ahead of infrastructure and service provision	
		FLU-1.4.1	Conduct an assessment of current service boundaries and ensure regulations to guide the expansion of services

The Fire Prevention and Investigation division of the FSD review any development plans for fire related life-safety codes. This is to ensure compliance of standards to certain land uses and building types.

As the city continues to grow to the south, the Fire Department will need to conduct further analysis of data for additional fire station(s) to ensure proper emergency response for its citizens. The Fire Department was able to acquire land several years ago near the Williamson Place subdivision in the Rye Hill area for a future fire station.

Current Fire Station locations, current emergency response times, existing land use map, and data of reoccurring fire and EMS incidents within any portions of the city will continue to be the steering guidelines as we conduct our future fire station location analysis.

2) Economic Development

Economic Development			
ED-4	Develop a partnership to coordinate City economic development policies with the Fort Smith Regional Chamber of Commerce		
	ED-4.1	Ensure that planning processes reflect how businesses plan for future expansion/growth	
		ED-4.1.1	Establish a framework to keep the business community fully engaged in the city's ongoing planning and budgeting efforts, maintain an open and consistent dialogue to equip businesses with the information they need to plan for future growth and expansion.

In 2010, the Fire Department conducted an in-house study on fire station locations, fire apparatus needs, and personnel. Many efforts were made to educate the city and its citizens that spending tax dollars on the right firefighting priorities could have a direct financial benefit for the citizens. The citizens listened and passed a sales tax realignment in 2012, resulting in the fire department to receive a 1/8% annual tax revenue dedicated for the new Fire Station 11 at Chaffee Crossing. Prior to Station 11's opening, the closest fire station was over 4

miles away. This 1/8% generates approx. \$3 Million annually and is to sunset September. With a major campaign in late 2021 through early 2022, further information was pushed to the public about the importance of adequate fire protection. Again, the citizens listened and voted to extend the current tax by another eight years.

In 2021, the Fire Department was under an Insurance Services Office (ISO) Public Protection Classification (PPC) review. ISO collected and evaluated information from different city departments with focus on the capabilities of the Fire Department in structural fire suppression. The data was analyzed by ISO using their Fire Suppression Rating Schedule (FSRS), end result was a better PPC grade of 01/1X assigned to the community. The City of Fort Smith and the Fort Smith Regional Chamber of Commerce can use this as an incentive in economic development for new business attraction. This would not have been possible without the support of the citizens, and the vision of the City of Fort Smith. With an ISO Class 1 rating, this puts the Fort Smith Fire Department among the top 1% of all Fire Departments nationwide.

During 2021, the FSFD responded to 160 structure fires where significant fire damage occurred. The total property value of those structures was valued at \$258M, with a total fire loss of only \$4.1M. That equates to a **\$253.9 Million return on the taxpayers' investments**. That's just on the building values alone, the trickle-down effect of a business not having to close its doors due to a total-loss fire is even greater. With an ISO PPC grade of 1, the FSFD has again proven we can be an economic development tool for years to come.

3) Housing and Neighborhoods

Housing & Neighborhoods			
HN-1	Preserve, protect, and revitalize Fort Smith's neighborhoods		
	HN-1.2	Limit high costs associated with building new infrastructure.	
		HN-1.2.1	Use a cost/benefit analysis to guide City decisions when seeking infrastructure approvals.
	HN-1.3	Promote private investment in identified growth centers and encourage adaptive reuse of historic buildings.	
		HN-1.3.2	Support the renovation and revitalization of existing housing and promote infill development of vacant land within the corporate limits.
HN-3	Foster regional housing strategies to benefit Fort Smith and surrounding communities		
	HN-3.2	Utilize the City's zoning and subdivision regulations to promote the construction of a variety of housing sizes and types.	

With Fort Smith being a city of neighborhoods, the fire stations located in these residential neighborhoods must continue to coexist with its customers, i.e. the citizens of Fort Smith. Pre-COVID, many times throughout the year, neighborhoods would invite the members of their local fire station to participate in block parties, church services, cookouts, etc.

The Fire Department routinely works with the Fort Smith Housing Authority in utilizing dilapidated houses to be used for fire ground training evolutions. This partnership allows firefighters to engage in firefighting training activities as close to real life and in a controlled atmosphere. While no actual "fire" is involved, the structures are used for forcible-entry, ventilation, and search & rescue techniques. This also allows the citizens of that particular neighborhood to see our firefighters in action first-hand. Once the training is completed, the structure is razed and land is ready for redevelopment.

Vacant structures are periodically pre-planned by fire personnel to help minimize the dangers of affected exposure fires. This also proves positive with the neighbors of such buildings, seeing their Fire Department being proactive.

4) Transportation & Infrastructure

Transportation & Infrastructure			
TI-1	Improve access and connectivity through enhancements to all modes of transportation		
	TI-1.3	Protect residential neighborhoods from excessive through traffic.	
		TI-1.3.1	Improve connectivity throughout the City's roadway network to increase access and eliminate high volumes of traffic in residential thoroughfares. - Identify the major destination areas in town - Evaluate how cars travel from major roads to the destination areas - Improve these access routes to minimize travel through neighborhoods.
TI-4	Incorporate the Future Land Use Map in the strategic planning of future utility and infrastructure expansions		
	TI-4.2	Ensure that utility and infrastructure systems can meet the city's long-term needs.	
		TI-4.2.1	Coordinate land use planning and capital programming to ensure infrastructure improvements and extensions are phased to support the future land use pattern.

Speeding vehicles and excessive traffic traveling through residential neighborhoods in an attempt to find ways around congested arterial roadways is a major public safety issue. While traffic calming techniques are a necessity for residential neighborhoods, certain types require special attention so as to not impede emergency response vehicles during times of need. As neighborhoods in the community request for traffic calming techniques, the Fire Department will work other city departments to ensure the procedures used are in the best interest of a public safety aspects.

5) Public Facilities & Services

Public Facilities & Services			
PFS-1	Promote a business-friendly and citizen-friendly government		
	PFS-1.1	Maintain fair and transparent codes and regulations.	
		PFS-1.1.1	Set up ongoing communication with other groups in the City (CBID, School Board, Chaffee Crossing, Planning Commission, CEO Group, Chamber, etc) to ensure that all organizations maintain consistent goals and objectives with each group focusing on the responsibilities best suited for them.
		PFS-1.1.2	Continue to update the City's UDO based on feedback from the business community and continue to improve on-line access.
PFS-2	Build consistency and trust with the public		
	PFS-2.1	Ensure that the City's planning and implementation process is transparent.	
PFS-4	Prevent wasteful use of public resources and services		
	PFS-4.1	Seek opportunities to co-locate future community facilities to maximize efficiencies in service provision and reduce capital and operating costs.	

With an ongoing effort to promote and maintain dialog with businesses, the Fire Department engages all commercial building owners, tenants, or managers in dialog regarding building safety, fire and hazard mitigation; and conducts life-safety code inspections and pre-incident plans for the safety of the business owners and/or tenants, its patrons, and the firefighters.

We are looking at future-proofing our techniques through technology based applications where the processes of plans review for fire codes through the issuing of certificate of occupancy and business licensing data can be automatically updated to our records management system. Occupancy data would be readily available in our fire apparatus through the use of mobile tablets. DeltaWrX is a public safety consultant and has

been hired to guide both the Fire and Police Departments in search of compatible software where data can be shared by both.

The need for a Fire Department maintenance facility remains a high priority. Currently, fire apparatus maintenance is performed in the engine bay at Fire Station 5. Discussions have been ongoing to combine resources of Fire and other city maintenance facilities in one location.

6) Natural & Cultural Resources

Natural & Cultural Resources			
NCR-2	Protect natural resources and reduce their waste and overuse		
	NCR-2.3	Improve air quality.	
	NCR-2.3.2	Improve miles per gallon (MPG) for all vehicle miles traveled (VMT). Reduce any unnecessary mileage and increase usage of CNG where deemed appropriate.	

As compressed natural gas (CNG) continues in growth as an alternative fuel to gasoline and diesel, the Fire Department has invested in two CNG bi-fuel vehicles for our command vehicle fleet. Efforts will continue to be made in researching return-on-investments concerning alternative fuel vehicles during future purchases.

With the continued improvements in lithium battery technologies, so many commonly "corded" items are now being introduced as "cordless". The fire department has done extensive research in many areas of this growing technology and has continued with purchasing battery operated hydraulic rescue tools and lighting equipment to replace the older gasoline-fueled electric/hydraulic-driven equipment. To date we have invested in four lithium battery operated auto extrication (Jaws of Life) tools and 3 battery operated high-volume ventilation fans.

In June 2021, Ford announced their plans for the all-new F150 fully-electric vehicle. This type of vehicle has a place in the fire service as a rapid-response emergency rescue vehicle while having the ability to utilize on-board electric for power tools.

The Fire Department preordered two of the new F-150s and received both trucks in early September 2022. The capabilities of these trucks are impressive and will eventually replace all our internal-combustion engine vehicles.

As for fire apparatuses, there is not any technology sufficient enough to replace the current diesel engine. Pierce Fire Apparatus and Rosenbauer have developed an all-electric fire apparatus, but neither meet our specific needs.