

Arcata Fire Protection District



Strategic Plan 2015 – 2020

Facilitated by Greenway Partners

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LETTER FROM THE FIRE CHIEF

I am pleased and honored to be able to present the first Strategic Plan developed for the Arcata Fire Protection District. In the finest tradition of our organization, this document represents the collaborative efforts of volunteer members, career employees, administrative officers, community members and District board members. It will serve as the framework for our personnel as we move forward in these dynamic times.

Beginning in 1857 with the Union Hook & Ladder Company, our community members have come forward to serve. That tradition of service continues today with career and volunteer firefighters providing emergency services throughout this diverse community. The challenges faced by our District are the same faced by many other communities. We are actively taking the steps necessary to modernize our staffing levels and operations so that we are able to provide the services our community wants and needs. This Strategic Plan is a reflection of our willingness to look critically at our organization and operations and adopt innovative methods to improve the ways we serve our residents.

The Strategic Plan identifies two strategic goals, with corresponding findings and implementation strategies, related to the current situation we face and the future needs of both the District and our residents. These goals are built around the concepts of organizational strength and communicating with all of our stakeholders. The hard work of the three task forces provided us clear direction on the issues of consolidation, communications, and facilities.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the staff members and community members who dedicated their time and effort to developing our Strategic Plan. They contributed not just their time, but their experiences, opinion, views, and ideas to the planning process. They all took time away from their families and friends in order to be a part of this valuable project. The planning process would not have succeeded without them. Additionally, the professional guidance provided by Greenway Partners has been invaluable. Their team has facilitated frank and productive conversations that are reflected throughout this plan.

Our organization has a long and proud tradition of service. We will continue to utilize a blend of career and volunteer personnel to carry on that tradition even as we change with our community. This Strategic Plan will be first of many in the future of this organization. We will not let it gather dust on a shelf. Rather, we will continually measure and evaluate our progress to be sure that we are meeting our objectives. As we move forward, we will continue to strengthen our organization and protect our residents, while keeping our Mission and Values Statements as our guiding principles.

Desmond Cowan
Fire Chief



Two firefighters at the Copeland Lumber Fire in Arcata in 1965

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Greenway Partners was retained by the Board of the Arcata Fire Protection District (District) to facilitate a strategic planning process that will assist the District in determining its direction through the year 2020. The process engaged a working group to assess the District's strengths and weaknesses who then looked for ways to capitalize on the strengths and minimize weaknesses. It encouraged open communication and frank dialogue between line staff and leadership within the organization to ensure dissenting opinions were heard and acted upon.

This process was designed to utilize the knowledge and insights of key personnel within the District – both paid personnel and volunteer firefighters – as well as key external stakeholders who served as the public's eyes and ears during the process. 18 participants (14 internal, connected to the District; and four external, members of the public) worked closely together over the course of several months to develop coherent strategies and initiatives that will enable that District to achieve its primary goals.

FINDINGS

The following are findings that resulted from the Strategic Plan process, stakeholder participation and research by Greenway Partners.

1. The District needs to make significant adjustments to its staffing levels, budgets, facilities and equipment over the course of the next five years to ensure that the emergency services provided to residents and businesses in the District are in line with industry standard and with “peer districts” throughout California.
2. The District needs to focus on developing organization-wide communication improvements. These improvements are necessary to communicate effectively with internal (board, staff and volunteers) and external (public and other agencies) stakeholders about funding needs, emergency services, facilities improvements and organizational direction.
3. The District Board needs to improve its decision-making protocol, its communication about decisions it is making, and needs to become a “transparent” body in all actions but those protected by employee privacy covenants. The board needs to develop an organizational development and training strategy to increase the capacity of its board members to work closely with staff leadership in analyzing challenges and threats to the organization.

4. The District needs to develop a comprehensive metrics standard for monitoring organizational activities and keying these metrics towards continuous improvement from the board level throughout the organization.
5. Humboldt State University (HSU) is an organization that is dependent upon the services provided by the District for fire and emergency medical. Collaborative efforts need to be initiated between the District and HSU in order to develop funding mechanisms that will offset the significant impact the University has on the District's operations.
6. The Arcata Fire Protection District and the Arcata Volunteer Fire Department are names that are confusing to the residents of the District service area and don't accurately represent the geography of the District. The District needs to re-name the organization with one name that encompasses both the District and Volunteers to eliminate the perception of two entities managing emergency response. Further, a name change that encompasses all of the communities within the District will lead to broader support within those communities for District needs.
7. The role of the volunteers within the District has changed significantly and the District will need to adapt to keep pace with training requirements, OSHA rules, International Association of Fire Fighters Union issues, and regional coordination.



District firefighters on scene

PROCESS SUMMARY AND INITIATIVES

Over the course of four whole group meetings and 15 task force and/or board meetings, the strategic planning process has been successful in identifying the organizational challenges facing the District and providing new ways to address those challenges. This process involved four members of the public and 14 members affiliated with the District as either career staff or volunteers. This diverse group was brought together to ensure that all perspectives were represented in the process.

Several task forces were developed throughout the strategic planning process to tackle thorny issues and develop a strategy for how to resolve them.

- A task force on Consolidation led the District directly into discussions with Humboldt Bay Fire for shared leadership contracts for Battalion Chief, Assistant Chief and Fire Chief. This conversation gained momentum quickly before the District board decided to select its own Fire Chief.
- A task force on Communication helped identify significant communication challenges happening between staff and the board, between the District and the Community, and between Volunteers and the District. The need for a name change for the organization that encompasses all of the communities within the District Service Area and defines the geography of the District has been identified as a priority.
- A task force on Facilities helped resolve a 21-year struggle to site, fundraise for and develop new fire facilities within the District. This task force allowed for clear communication, group learning and presentation of hard figures and facts in a way that enabled the group to quickly come to consensus about how and where new facilities should be developed.

STRATEGIC GOALS AND INITIATIVES

The stakeholder group that participated in the strategic planning process developed key initiatives based on two primary strategic goals:

- 1) Strengthen our Organization and
- 2) Connect to our Community.

Over the course of the next five years, these goals will be pursued through an organization-wide initiative program, outlined below. A number of these initiatives have already begun, or been completed, as a part of the Strategic Plan process.

STRATEGIC GOAL 1.0: STRENGTHEN OUR ORGANIZATION

Key Initiatives

1. Develop facilities that meet operational needs and access available funding and other resources
2. Develop shared services with other agencies to maximize resources
 - Establish Emergency Operations Center with McKinleyville Community Service District (MCSD), Humboldt County Sheriff's Office (HCSO), United States Coast Guard (USCG) and County of Humboldt for coverage of Redwood Coast Airport
 - Evaluate regional shared services for Training, Prevention and other positions depending upon economic conditions, with Humboldt Bay Fire
3. Enhance incident response (plans) for major events
4. Develop funding strategies to sustain optimal operational needs for District during Strategic Plan period to support three paid staff on an engine in addition to staffing for the ladder truck and three fully staffed, operational stations
5. Develop or adopt new tools and technologies to track and improve performance across operations
6. Remove barriers that exist/have existed between Volunteers and District; re-align volunteer training and qualification in-line with other agencies (both Humboldt Bay and Peer Districts)
7. Set response time goals consistent with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1710 within the 5-year window of this Strategic Plan.

STRATEGIC GOAL 2.0: CONNECT TO OUR COMMUNITY

Key Initiatives

1. Increase quality and consistency of internal communications
2. Increase quality and consistency of external communications to improve public image and identity of the District
3. Improve beneficial relationships and increase mutual benefits with key institutions and partner agencies
4. Improve “customer service” by developing channels of communication for receiving input from community
5. Establish mutual agreements between the volunteer organization and AFD, addressing operational goals including staffing, facilities and fundraising
6. Identify and develop a name change for the District.



District firefighters on scene

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This History Timeline was created during a Strategic Plan meeting

The following is a summary of the major eras of the organization, beginning over 150 years ago and continuing through to the present day.

1850s –1940s

The organization began in 1857 as the Union Hook and Ladder Company following significant structure fires in what was then the town of Union. These fires were mostly centered on, and adjacent to, the Plaza. Large fires were a frequent occurrence, as buildings were made of wood, from roof to foundation, and ignition sources were poorly controlled or prevented.



Arcata Fire Department, photo from 1961

- In 1875, a fire in the Brizard building, adjacent to the plaza, led to the destruction of 25 buildings and damaged others.
- Arcata Fire Company No. 1 was formed in 1884, and dealt with regular, major structure fires throughout the downtown business area.

1940s – 1975

In 1944 the District was formed and provided emergency services coverage to some of the residents in Arcata, and residents in outlying areas; Manila and McKinleyville.

Volunteer firefighters responded to incidents by coming to stations and returning on engines. Two separate entities, the City of Arcata and the District, shared responsibility for response and funding. Boundaries around response areas were drawn, which prevented the most efficient response to a fire, as it was strictly based on boundaries.

- The Volunteer Fire Hall, Excelsior Hall, burned to the ground in 1945.



Copeland Lumber Fire, 1965

Nearly all firefighters were volunteers, with the exception of one career staff at the Mad River and McKinleyville station per shift.

- In 1950, the first paid employee was retained as Fire Chief for the District.
- In 1960, the McKinleyville Fire Station was built and the first career firefighters were hired to staff the station. Volunteers continued to respond to incidents by

first coming to the station and then deploying on engines.

- In 1973, the City of Arcata agreed to relinquish its previous role in fire response and the District agreed to oversee emergency response to all incidents.
- In 1975, the Mad River Station was developed and additional career employees were hired.

1975 – Present

Volunteers continue to provide the majority of the staffing for incidents. Off-duty career firefighters are also recalled to assist with these incidents.

- The Barnes Drugs building burned to the ground in 1979.



Barnes Drugs Fire

- Two stations were staffed with one paid firefighter beginning with the opening of the Mad River Fire Station in 1975.
- The Feuerwerker Building, next door to Hensel's was destroyed in 1994.
- Hensel's Hardware, on the corner of 9th Street and I Street in Arcata, burned to the ground in 1990.



Hensel's Hardware Fire

- This staffing configuration remained unchanged until April of 2006.
- In 2001, the Marino's Fire destroyed several buildings included commercial and residential units on 9th Street between I Street and an alley just west of the Plaza.
- Following a fire in March 2006 at an apartment building on the Humboldt State University campus, the District Board decided to consolidate the two on-duty firefighters at the Mad River Station, pulling one from Mad River and the other from McKinleyville.
- Due to the award of the SAFER grant in 2012, the District provided career staff at the downtown Arcata station effective Thanksgiving Day, 2012. This is the first time in the history of the District that the downtown Arcata station was staffed with career on shift personnel.

MISSION AND VALUES STATEMENT

The District's Mission:

*"Our mission:
We exist to protect the lives, environment
and property of the communities we serve."*

The District's Values:

Safety first and foremost in all that we do

Teamwork uniting our diverse backgrounds to create a synergistic outcome

Responsibility to our citizens for creating the need for our existence

Integrity as the moral code that guides us on and off duty

Professionalism because the trust of our citizens is imperative

Education for firefighters and our community

Skill obtained through rigorous and progressive training



District Staff at a training

THE DISTRICT BUDGET – BACKGROUND

The District has the responsibility for providing emergency response through the service area, which includes McKinleyville and outlying areas, Arcata and outlying areas and Manila. The governing board of the District is comprised of representatives from five geographically contiguous areas that are balanced by population centers, or wards. The Fire District is funded through ad valorem (according to value) property taxes as well as through a special tax approved by the voters in 1996 and a Benefit Assessment approved by property owners in 2006. Additionally, there are other sources of funding that the District pursues to fund specific initiatives. Currently, there are grant sources for funding additional firefighter positions as well as volunteer recruitment and retention.

The District is established as a Special District, which receives a portion of the ad valorem property tax collected by the County of Humboldt. In addition, the District has a special tax, established in 1997, that provides for a fee of \$5 per unit of benefit as well as a Benefit Assessment established in 2006 that provides for a fee of \$22 per unit of benefit. California Proposition 218 (1996) outlines the strict rules regarding benefit assessments in the State of California. Essentially a “unit of benefit” rule must be employed, so that the use type of a parcel – which is determined by property use – dictates the amount of value to be assessed. The special tax and benefit assessment are levied on all parcels throughout the District. The larger or more valuable the assessed value of the parcel, the higher the fee.

The total revenue to fund the operations of the Fire District in 2013/14 is approximately \$3.8 million. Personnel costs account for an estimated 75% +/- of the annual budget. The chart below highlights year over year changes between Fiscal Year 2012/2013 and Fiscal Year 2013/2014.

*Response to an
incident on
the Arcata Plaza*



Budget Comparison of FY 2012/13 vs. FY 2013/14

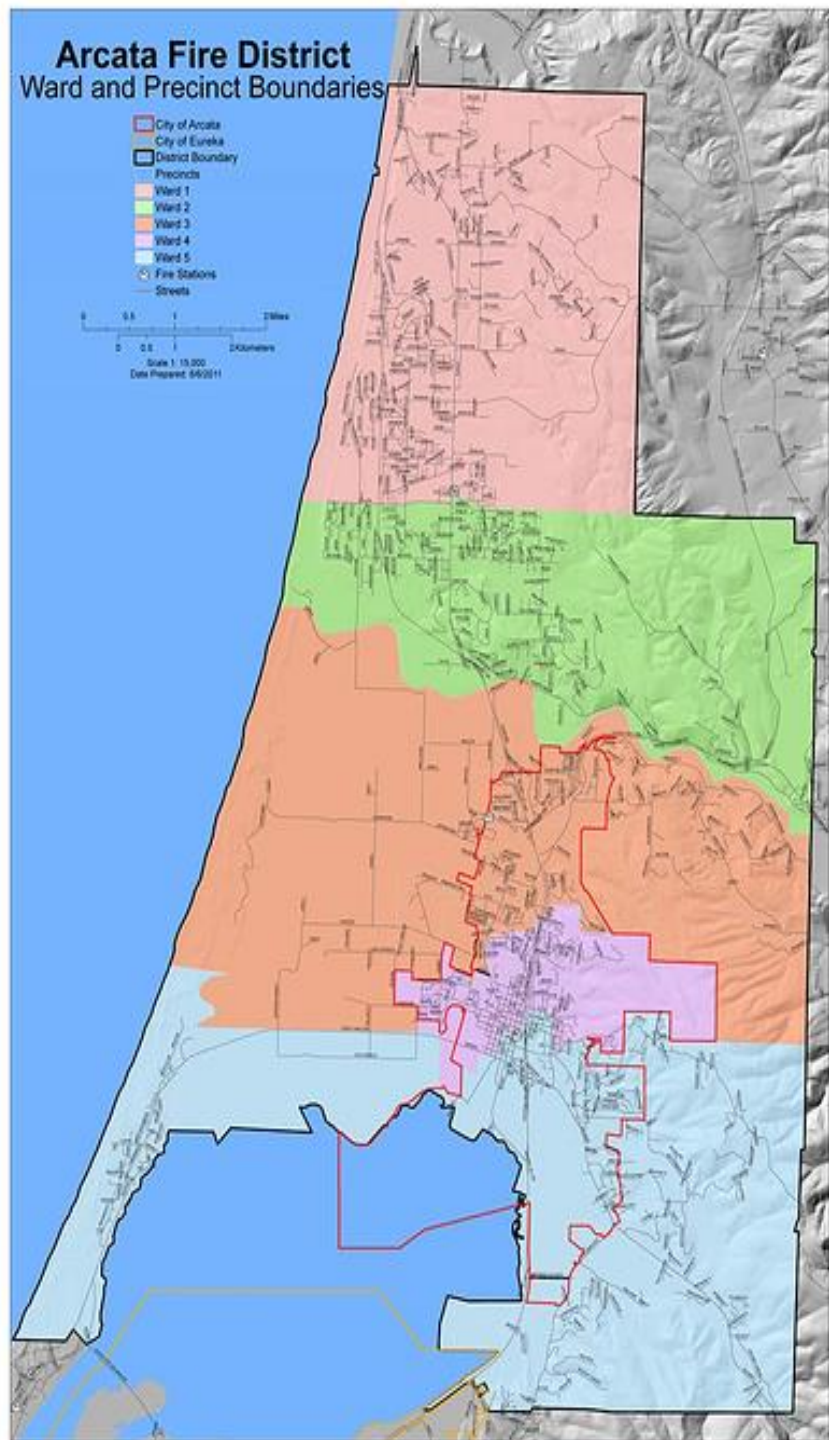
	2012/13	2013/14	DECREASE (INCREASE)
5010 Salaries & Wages	\$1,555,800.00	\$1,691,522.50	(\$135,722.50)
5020 Retirement	\$713,440.00	\$673,700.00	\$39,740.00
5030 Employee Group Insurance	\$493,755.00	\$596,470.00	(\$102,715.00)
5035 Workers Compensation	\$70,000.00	\$78,000.00	(\$8,000.00)
Total Salaries & Employee Benefits	\$2,832,995.00	\$3,039,692.50	(\$206,697.50)
5050 Clothing & Personal Supplies	\$18,000.00	\$25,000.00	(\$7,000.00)
5060 Communications	\$122,300.00	\$102,300.00	\$20,000.00
5080 Food	\$7,500.00	\$7,500.00	\$0.00
5090 Household Supplies	\$4,700.00	\$4,700.00	\$0.00
5100 Insurance	\$16,354.00	\$16,354.00	\$0.00
5120 Maintenance - Equipment	\$70,500.00	\$85,600.00	(\$15,100.00)
5122 Maintenance - Electronic Equip.	\$11,800.00	\$20,600.00	(\$8,800.00)
5130 Maintenance - Structures & Grounds	\$27,500.00	\$27,200.00	\$300.00
5150 Membership (Dues/Subscriptions)	\$9,400.00	\$12,100.00	(\$2,700.00)
5160 Miscellaneous Expenses	\$2,500.00	\$2,500.00	\$0.00
5170 Office Expenses	\$11,400.00	\$14,200.00	(\$2,800.00)
5180 Professional & Specialized Services	\$37,900.00	\$41,300.00	(\$3,400.00)
5190 Publications & Legal Notices	\$500.00	\$2,500.00	(\$2,000.00)
5210 Rent - Building	\$44,880.00	\$60,000.00	(\$15,120.00)
5230 Special District Expense	\$68,000.00	\$69,700.00	(\$1,700.00)
6442 Training	\$40,000.00	\$52,000.00	(\$12,000.00)
5250 Transportation & Travel	\$45,000.00	\$45,000.00	\$0.00
5260 Utilities	\$17,500.00	\$18,500.00	(\$1,000.00)
Total Services & Supplies	\$555,734.00	\$607,054.00	(\$51,320.00)
5290 Long Term Debt - Principal	\$114,960.92	\$114,009.40	\$951.52
5300 Long Term Debt - Interest	\$52,944.40	\$53,895.92	(\$951.52)
Total Long Term Debt	\$167,905.32	\$167,905.32	\$0.00
5370 Equipment Purchases (Incl. FEMA Grant Match)	\$79,500.00	\$71,700.00	\$7,800.00
Total Fixed Assets	\$79,500.00	\$71,700.00	\$7,800.00
3100 General Operating Designation Budgeted	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
3110 Capital Improvement Designation Budgeted	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Contingency Designation Budgeted	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
PERS Designation Budgeted	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total Expenditures	\$3,636,134.32	\$3,886,351.82	(\$250,217.50)
Projected Revenues	\$3,658,254.00	\$3,630,346.32	\$27,907.68
Revenues - Expenditures:	\$22,119.68	(\$256,005.50)	
To (From) Gen. Op. Desig.			

DISTRICT SERVICE AREA

The District provides emergency services to a geographically dispersed group of communities, including Manila, Arcata and McKinleyville as well as outlying areas.

The District also provides service coverage for State owned facilities at Humboldt State University (HSU); residence halls at HSU with approximately 1,920 students; parts of Highways 101, 299 and 255; and supports State responses (CalFire) in the Local/State Responsibility Area interface.

This area is where emergency response is led by a local agency and by state agencies such as CalFire. Further, the District is responsible for coverage of incidents at the Redwood Coast-Humboldt County Regional Airport and Coast Guard Air Station.



Arcata Fire District Boundaries

DISTRICT SERVICE AREA COMMUNITIES SUMMARY

ARCATA

A community of nearly 18,000 residents, Arcata is the home to Humboldt State University and is the oldest community within the District service area. A variety of factors make Arcata the primary community for incident response; age of structures, density of population, demographic and occupancy type are all major contributing factors. Arcata has the most zero lot line buildings in the District as much of the downtown commercial core was developed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These structures, built using balloon framing with redwood and fir lumber are highly susceptible to large, complex fires.

50% of Arcata's housing stock was built after 1950 during the post-World War II housing boom and in subsequent decades. These structures are primarily suburban lots with single story homes that are predominantly renter occupied. Multi-family housing comprises nearly 30% of the remaining; these were mostly built after 1970.

Both of these structure types were prior to the development of more stringent fire code requirements and are therefore more likely to continue to burn once a source of ignition is present than are newer homes in other areas of the District. The vast majority of the commercial and residential structures in Arcata are heated with utility gas, which is a safer heating source than wood heat, which predominates in rural areas of the District.

Over 60% of the residents of Arcata are renters: mainly Humboldt State University students and disadvantaged families. Households are as follows: 41.9% are family households, 18.5% of these households have related children less than 18 years. 58.1% of Arcata's households are nonfamily households. 37.1% of nonfamily householders live alone. Arcata's public utilities are provided by the City of Arcata except in outlying areas, where well water predominates. This increases the likelihood of a successful suppression effort using City hydrants.

LAND USE SUMMARY AND RISKS – ARCATA

Arcata's landscape is a mixture of agricultural, forest, residential, and commercial use. The commercial area is heavily centered between 11th Street and 6th Street, J St. and F St., although the Valley West area is also a center of retail commercial.



Fire on C Street in Arcata, early 1990's

Rural residential extends primarily east from Arcata out West End Road to Alder Grove Road, up Fickle Hill Road, and to the communities of Bayside and Jacoby Creek. These areas are all close to, or adjacent to the wild land-urban interface. This interface is the area where residential development has encroached into what was previously undeveloped forestland.

Additionally, fire response from CalFire, a State agency which has jurisdiction over lands known as the State Responsibility Area, overlaps the District boundary in these areas. The District has a mutual aid agreement with CalFire for coverage of incidents in these rural areas east of Arcata. The Fire District remains the first line of defense from wildfire for residents in these areas.

Further, significant fire risk exists in the Arcata Community Forest, which has regular small fires started by illegal campers. The fire return interval for Redwood forests has historically been infrequent, low intensity fires. New forest moisture conditions, caused

by climatic shifts, are leading to a drying of the redwood forests, which could dramatically increase both the frequency and intensity of fire events on the eastern boundary of Arcata.

Lastly, grass fires in the bottoms and Arcata Marsh have been more frequent as homeless camps are set up in those areas. High winds and dry conditions led one fire at the Marsh in late August 2014 to threaten nearby structures. A large multi-agency response to this event brought it under control, but there was the possibility of this fire becoming much more destructive.



Arcata Fire Protection District responds to a car accident on the Arcata/Samoa HWY 255 off-ramp along with other local first response agencies

PLANNED DEVELOPMENT – ARCATA

Northeast Arcata is selected for high levels of increased commercial and residential development. This is anticipated to extend north and east from the city borders along the Mad River on the Zanzi property along Giuntoli Lane. Additional developments are planned for the Mad River Hospital Wellness Campus, adjacent to the Mad River Station.

Humboldt State University will also see significant expansion over the course of the next five years due to increasing enrollment and new, on-campus housing. The University is projected to grow to over 15,000 students by 2020, bringing new housing, new facilities and new coverage requirements for the District to absorb.

MCKINLEYVILLE

McKinleyville is largely a bedroom community for people working in Eureka or Arcata, who commute by car. McKinleyville is largely comprised of suburban single-family homes and is home to more than 15,000 residents. More than 60% of the homes in McKinleyville are owner occupied; most were constructed after 1980.



Fire in McKinleyville, at a strip mall in 2002

The commercial core of McKinleyville is centered along Central Avenue, a four-lane thoroughfare that bisects the town. Rural residential development to the northeast of Central Avenue abuts the wild land/urban interface.

The McKinleyville Community Services District provides sewer and water utilities.

LAND USE SUMMARY AND RISKS – MCKINLEYVILLE

The majority of McKinleyville's commercial structures are along Central Ave. These commercial structures are surrounded by Residential Low Density areas and Mixed Use areas. The parcels skirting the Commercial Use area, west of Central Ave., are zoned for Residential Medium Density and Mixed Use. These parcels are primarily between Railroad Dr., McKinleyville Ave., and Heartwood Dr. The Airport area at the northwest end of McKinleyville is surrounded by Low Density residential, and a small business park/industrial area at the south.

East of McKinleyville there are tens of thousands of acres of redwood, spruce and fir forests, which have been heavily logged through industrial forestry practices for the last 100 years. These areas are at risk of wildfire, which could pose a significant threat to the properties that lie on the eastern edge of town and to Fieldbrook Valley and its residents.

PLANNED DEVELOPMENT – MCKINLEYVILLE

The majority of McKinleyville's planned residential subdivisions are complete, with a handful of projects yet to be built. No large commercial developments are planned within the current core area but infill development will continue for the foreseeable future. Sewer disposal has been an issue in the past and the capacity necessary for significant new development in McKinleyville doesn't currently exist, although the County of Humboldt has labeled McKinleyville as one of its Urban Study Areas and estimates that more than 2,000 additional housing units will be developed by 2025.

The Redwood Coast – Humboldt County Airport also lies in the McKinleyville area and provides significant coverage responsibility for the District.

MANILA

This small community is set between Humboldt Bay to the east and Pacific Ocean to the west and is divided by State Highway 255. The homes in Manila were primarily constructed before 1980 and are stick framed wooden structures. Most of the homes are heated with wood heat, which poses a significant fire risk in comparison to utility gas.

Manila has a Community Services District, which provides sewer and water utilities, which provide sufficient water for suppression activities during most events in the core area of Manila.

LAND USE SUMMARY AND RISKS- MANILA

Manila is a largely completed community, with little possibility of further development. Recent requirements from the California Coastal Commission make building within the projected Tsunami Inundation Zone difficult. Further, projected sea level rise will reduce the amount of permittable, buildable area in Manila, especially on the east side of Highway 255. Lastly, infrastructure investment in Manila is limited to the amount collected by the CSD or by grant award.

In sum, the District's service area includes more than 36,000 residents across more than 62 square miles. The District must plan for and respond to events related to traffic collisions, medical aids, residential, commercial and wild land fires and natural disasters related to earthquake, floods and tsunamis.



Firefighter on scene

OPERATIONS DIVISION

The District provides the following Essential Programs:

- Fire Suppression
- Emergency Medical Services
- Rescue
- Public Education
- Fire Prevention

The District has been providing emergency services to the communities it serves using a combination of paid staff and volunteers. Leadership staffing consists of a Fire Chief, who is also responsible for Fire Marshall and primary inspection services, an Assistant Chief for Operations, and a Battalion Chief for Training.

The District operates in a 48 hours on/96 hours off shift pattern with two paid staff on an engine at three stations; McKinleyville, Mad River and Downtown Arcata. One Chief officer is on call at all times, and serves as duty officer.

These staffing levels, which ensures two career staff on an engine at all times at three stations, are a recent development following the funding of a SAFER (Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response) grant, funded by FEMA in 2011.

Prior to this funding, staffing was limited to two paid staff on an engine at each of two stations (McKinleyville and Mad River), with support from volunteers and off-duty personnel responding from their homes during emergencies.



Firefighter Evan Gibbs on scene

The new alignment allows the District to make further progress towards its goal of maximizing efficiency while providing adequate coverage throughout its service area. The staffing of the third station, the Arcata Headquarters, was enthusiastically supported by the District board and has led to the agreement with the Arcata Fire Employees Association to keep this alignment during the most recent contract negotiations. This will be a key consideration financially as the District has made a commitment to keep the SAFER funded positions, with or without funding from the grant, in the future.

A district that uses both volunteers and career staff is less common in California, as fire volunteers are increasingly difficult to develop into professionally capable staff. The training requirements necessary to be an effective firefighter prevent many interested in volunteerism enough time to remain qualified. Further, the demographic for firefighters is drawing many younger firefighters into volunteerism as a way to determine their interest in working as a career firefighter. As there are few jobs for new firefighters in the District, young volunteers trained by the district tend to leave to pursue careers elsewhere after being trained.



Battalion Chief Sean Campbell and an Arcata firefighter on scene

THE ROLE OF VOLUNTEERS AND VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION

Fire response in the District areas has changed significantly since its inception in 1884 as a volunteer organization. The role of volunteers within the District has shifted from being the primary responders to an incident, to being a smaller, but still vitally important part of the organization. The training requirements for volunteers are significant and have become more stringent over the last 10 years. This training is a critically important stepping-stone for those looking to make a career out of fire service.

However, it is also an impediment to attracting volunteers who want to assist the District and serve their community, but are not able to dedicate the time necessary to remain compliant with the training requirements of a career firefighter. At a minimum, volunteers need to ride along 24 hours per month, attend weekly training sessions and commit to being in service for three years. Historically, and as a result of less stringent training requirements, volunteers were comprised of members of the community from all walks of life. There are a number of committed, long-time volunteers, but demographically, their numbers are rapidly declining due to training requirements, professional staffing coverage and age.

The Arcata Volunteer Fire Department is the name on the building in downtown Arcata, which creates the misperception that the District is a volunteer led organization. Unfortunately, this perpetuates a perception that is widespread in the service area that the firefighters are not career firefighters.



*Arcata
Downtown
Station*

The Arcata Volunteers have both a 501(c)(3) and a 501(c)(4) non-profit status that enables them to fundraise, own property and contribute to the organization during community events, fundraisers and social events that support firefighters, their families and other volunteers. The 501(c)(3) is the owner of the Downtown station property, and portions of a property on M Street in Arcata, where a new fire facility was proposed to be built. The 501(c)(4) owns different additional parcels on M Street in Arcata. All of these properties collectively, are, or were, the proposed location of a new Fire Station at one point in time.

Lastly, the Volunteers provide a pool of members dedicated solely to incident response and the District has developed, and manages, a Volunteer Logistics Unit, that helps with equipment and other technology issues. The Volunteer Association includes some “general” members who have no emergency response role with the District.

A significant wrinkle in the working relationship between the Volunteers and the career staff may develop due to the recent vote of the Employees Association to become an International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) union local. As stated in the IAFF constitution and bylaws Article XV, Section 1:

Advocating or encouraging any labor or any other rival organization, or acquiring or maintaining membership in any such organization including volunteer fire departments or associations.

Working a secondary job part-time, paid on call, volunteer or otherwise as a firefighter, emergency medical services worker, public safety or law enforcement officer, or as a worker in a related service, whether in the public or private sector, where such job is within the work jurisdiction of any affiliate or which adversely impacts the interests of any affiliate or the IAFF. Upon a finding of guilt of working a secondary job in violation of this subsection, it is recommended that the penalty include disqualification from holding office in any affiliate and/or expulsion from membership for the period that the misconduct persists. Charges filed for the misconduct described in this subsection shall be preferred by a member of the charged party's local and/or a member of an adversely affected affiliate.

The repercussions of adherence to this bylaw are significant. District career staff may increasingly oppose the deployment of volunteers to incidents over time and volunteer recruitment will suffer. Deployment of volunteers is necessary now to meet the District staffing goals and for adequate incident response, yet over time the role of volunteers is likely to shift.

One likely staffing scenario is for volunteer recruits to become “interns” who are knowingly being trained for the first step in a career in the fire service. As volunteers become more capable and demonstrate the capacity for response, they are retained as paid seasonal or part-time firefighters. The District gains enhanced response coverage and staffing and the part-time firefighter has a financial stake in the game and a commitment to show up for work when directed. Too often, volunteer response to incidents is lacking, with only a handful of volunteers responding regularly.



MUTUAL AND AUTOMATIC AID AGREEMENTS

Mutual aid and automatic aid agreements allow the District to give and receive support for incidents that are within the District service area and within the service area of other agencies. The District has Automatic Aid Agreements (Auto Aid) with Humboldt Bay Fire, Fieldbrook Fire, Blue Lake Fire and CalFire for coverage of State Responsibility Areas within the District. In the past, Samoa Peninsula Fire District (SPFD) was also an Auto Aid partner for response to Samoa and Manila. Due to longstanding concerns related to reciprocity and similar factors, the District ended the automatic aid agreement with SPFD. However, improvements in the Samoa Peninsula Fire District under the leadership of Chief Dale Unea have led to a closer working relationship in recent months.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHALLENGES

There are numerous challenges facing the District, which will impact its ability to perform its duties effectively. These challenges also present opportunities to change the way work has been done for generations and to improve efficiency, reduce cost and ensure long term organizational viability. In the Findings and Roadmaps section outlined in this report, a plan for addressing these issues is outlined in more detail.

FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

Due to stagnant income and rapidly growing expenses, the District is facing challenges similar to public agencies throughout the country. California public agencies in particular are hamstrung by the constraints added by Proposition 13. Passed by voters in 1978, Proposition 13 restricted annual tax assessment by local government on commercial and residential real estate; limiting assessments only upon sale of a parcel and preventing more than a 2% assessment of value being placed upon any parcel annually. This dramatically reduced the amount of funding available to public agencies in the state and left fire departments with limited funding opportunity. Most fire agencies in the state funded by property tax assessments began a long-term financial decline that continues to this day.

Public safety agencies also face challenges related to employee healthcare and retirement costs. The California Public Employees Retirement System (CalPERS) manages the investment portfolio and provides retirement funds for 1.6 million public employees from over 3,000 different public agencies, including the District. The CalPERS system is dependent upon investments made by the CalPERS Investment Board, which develops and manages an investment portfolio of \$265 Billion and is the largest fund of its kind in the nation. Recently however, failed investments during the economic downturn of 2006-2011 have increased rates for municipal and public safety agencies that are dependent on the CalPERS fund.

Additionally, in many agencies, these rates have led to mandatory cost sharing with employees for their own retirement, and increasingly, health coverage. In effect, this has led many public agencies, including the District, to create a two-tier system for its employees: long-term employees (pre-2005) receive compensation packages that include employer paid retirement and health coverage; new hires (post-2005) pay a significant amount of the cost of coverage out-of-pocket.

These two issues, the Proposition 13 mandated limits to property tax assessment and the increased cost of coverage for retirement and healthcare, are significant impediments to creating and maintaining a fire service that provides coverage necessary to protect communities in the District service area into perpetuity.

BENCHMARKING FOR ORGANIZATIONAL EVALUATION

There are three primary organizations that assist Fire Districts in the evaluation of their performance; the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), the Insurance Services Office (ISO) and the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI). Additionally, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) develops workplace rules for all workplaces in the United States. These organizations each evaluate a separate component of performance and award accreditation based on compliance with the selected standard. These accreditations are commonly used by fire agencies to assist them in determining how to improve their organizational efficacy.



Incident Response in Arcata – North Coast Environmental Center

The CFAI, which is driven by a community determination of which levels of service it wishes to provide first and then developing a standard of response to meet that service goal. The CFAI standard considers travel time and distance, multiple calls simultaneously, the assessment of risk and staff and equipment deployment to mitigate that risk. Many Districts, including both rural districts and urban such as San Diego County Fire Department, use the CFAI standard when the size of their service areas make compliance with the NFPA standard too costly or too difficult to achieve.

Among its numerous standards related to all incidents of Fire Service Management, the NFPA uses a time of response to incident standard, measuring how quickly staff is able to respond to incidents within their areas of coverage. The 1710 Standard for predominantly career fire departments, or the 1720 Standard for predominantly volunteer fire departments, both set time and response benchmarks that enable districts to pursue performance improvement. The standards are benchmarked off of the rules set by the Federal Government for workplace safety as indicated below.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration has outlined firefighter health and safety rules called the “two in/two out” rule for firefighters. The two in/two out rule requires that prior to an interior attack by two firefighters, two firefighters must be outside the structure ready to perform a rescue or to provide assistance for the crew attacking the fire. If there is a known reason or the crew has reason to believe that a rescue is likely, the “two out” rule does not apply.

This rule has led to significant increases in staffing requirements for many districts. This standard may, at some point, become mandatory for all Fire Districts in OSHA program States, such as California, to ensure full compliance with employee health and safety regulations currently enforced in larger departments.

Many smaller, rural districts in Oregon have determined that compliance with the NFPA standard 1710 or 1720 is unachievable and so they have developed an alternative review called the Oregon Fire Service Deployment Standard Process. This process provides rural and isolated communities an opportunity for performance improvements concurrent with their financial circumstances. While this may be infeasible for Arcata Fire due to the staffing and financial commitment inherent in California districts, there are some areas that can be evaluated for the sake of comparison.

The ISO evaluates the infrastructure in place within a service area and includes review of existing fire suppression infrastructure (water lines, hydrants, alternative water sources) as well as equipment and fire suppression response ability. These findings create an ISO score that enable a District to make annual assessments of its capabilities and needs. Further, many insurance companies use the ISO score to set homeowner’s insurance policy premiums within the District.

THE NEED FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING

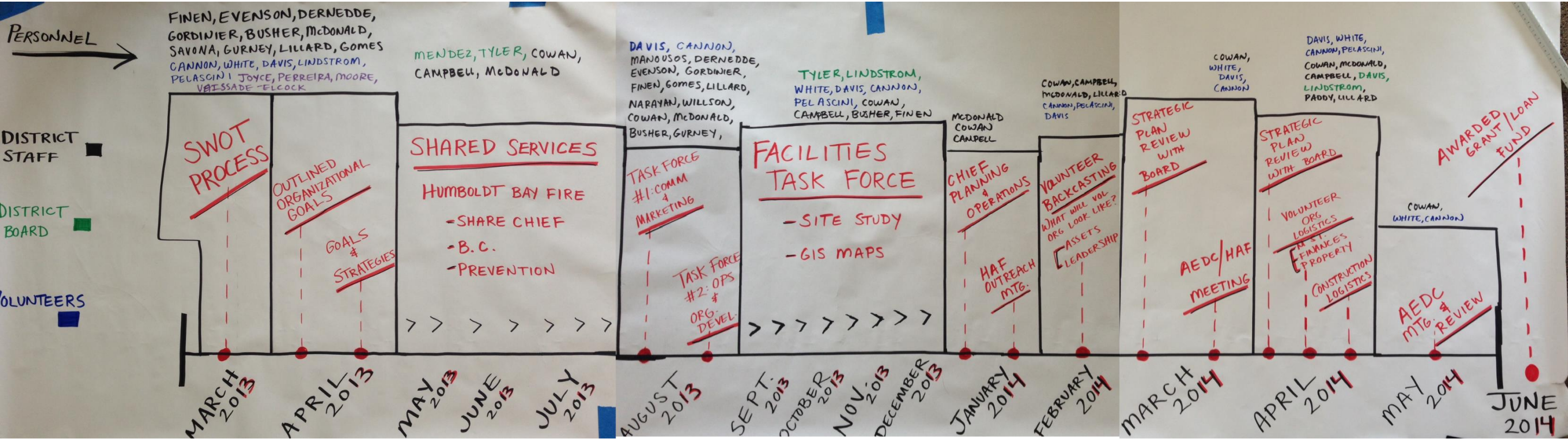
Greenway was originally hired by the Volunteers to perform an assessment of feasibility for the Sunset station development project, which had been in the planning stages for a long time without action. During the course of the assessment of feasibility, District senior staff was invited to participate in a discussion about the project at which time they presented their concerns that the District personnel had been largely excluded from the process of design and planning for the project. Further, Greenway suggested that to properly site a facility a Strategic Plan should be developed that outlines the operational need for facilities, amongst other issues. This issue was brought to the District board who agreed to retain Greenway to develop and execute a strategic planning process.

Additionally, the District had been without a Fire Chief since December 2012 when Chief John McFarland retired. Subsequent executive searches had produced one Chief candidate from outside the District and one from within. The outside candidate took another job he was offered and the inside candidate was not given the position. A second search began and again two candidates were selected, one from outside the District and the same one from within. Subsequent background checks eliminated the outside candidate and the District board didn't hire the inside candidate.

The two Assistant Chiefs, Desmond Cowan and Justin McDonald, as well as Battalion Chief Sean Campbell were running the organization, and sharing duty coverage on one week rotations each. This alignment was driven primarily due to a perceived lack of support by the board of the internal candidate and the inability of the District board to complete a Fire Chief search and select a viable candidate to lead the organization.

Lastly, the organization is coping with the increased operational costs and a flat, and due to inflation over time, declining revenue stream. All of these factors presented a perfect storm of opportunity to open the District operations, planning and finance to a team of stakeholders from inside and outside the District. This stakeholder group was brought on in Spring 2013 and strategic planning began.

STRATEGIC PLAN PROCESS



• The above image was presented at a 2014 District Board meeting

The process of strategic planning is at least as important as the plan it produces. The engagement of stakeholders on issues that have not been dealt with, or even discussed, provides a way to uncover institutional blocks, personnel issues and structural problems with leadership, communication and operations.

Internal Stakeholders, representing the District (Personnel and Volunteers) and External Stakeholders (members of the public) were both involved in the strategic planning process and contributed diverse and sometimes contrasting perspectives about the District and its direction. While collaborative in nature, the stakeholders from the public expressed concern and confusion, during the process, about some of the District’s direction in regards to recent hiring processes, staffing needs and locations for a new Headquarters building. These issues, are in fact the only thing many members of the public, not just the strategic planning stakeholders, have heard about the District over the course of the last ten years.

Internal Stakeholders

Jon Busher, *Captain*
Sean Campbell, *Battalion Chief*
Desmond Cowan, *Fire Chief (Asst. Chief at beginning of process)*
Angie Dervedde, *Captain*
John Evenson, *Captain*
Jonathan Finen, *Captain*
Rick Gomes, *Captain*
Scott Gordinier, *Firefighter*
Chad Gurney, *Firefighter*
Marcus Lillard, *Firefighter*
Alex Manousos, *Firefighter*
Justin McDonald, *Assistant Chief*
Neal Narayan, *Firefighter*
Daniel Wilson, *Firefighter*

John Davis, *District Board*
Steve Tyler, *District Board*
Larry Mendez, *District Board*
Rob Cannon, *Volunteer Association*
Alan Davis, *Volunteer Association*
Dennis Lindstrom, *Volunteer Association*
Kevin Pelascini, *Volunteer Association*
Dave White, *Volunteer Association*

External Stakeholders

Gene Joyce, *Owner Arcata Exchange*
Bob Moore, *Umpqua Bank Vice-President*
Sofia Perreira, *Field Representative State Senator Wesley Chesbro (D)*
Julie Vaissade-Elcock, *Owner, Vaissade Mortgage*

PROCESS-ALL STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS





The Strategic Plan process can be visualized as a funnel. The process begins with the stakeholder group focused on the big picture. At the beginning of the funnel, there is a lot of information to capture, sort and evaluate for relevance. The further along the group got into the process, during subsequent meetings, the information produced becomes more focused and prioritization decisions are made. This diagram outlines the Strategic Plan process, yet some modifications were made as a result of needing to develop more focused analysis of some of the issues that were being raised.

Meeting #1 – Performance Evaluation: The Good, Bad and Ugly

The group needed to make a sometimes-painful assessment of where the District is, before it can decide where to go. The first meeting can be visualized as the Brainstorm meeting, where stakeholders assess what the District is doing well, what it is doing poorly (both factors driven by internal control) to what opportunities exist and what threats exist (both driven by external factors).

Meeting #2 – Goals and Objectives

In this meeting, the stakeholders focused on identifying Strategic Priorities that will allow for organizational improvement. There were four primary priorities that were identified by stakeholders.

- Goal: Improve and Foster Partnerships
- Goal: Connect to our Community
- Goal: Strengthen our Organization
- Goal: Pursue Continuous Improvement

Meeting #3 – Critical Tasks

In this meeting, stakeholders evaluated what tasks were necessary to achieve the goals set forth in the prior meeting. Further, an outline for who would be responsible for implementing them, how the tasks are managed and how they are assessed for completion was developed.



*Meeting #2 – Organizational Goals and Objectives
L to R – Captain Busher, Asst. Chief McDonald, Captain
Savona, Gene Joyce (Downtown Arcata business owner)*

Meeting #4 – Organizational Operations

In this meeting, stakeholders examined possible re-alignment scenarios, including discussions about consolidation, population growth, new development areas within the District and incident response. The task forces dealing with consolidation, communication and facilities all came out of this last meeting. At this point the four goals identified in Meeting #2 were consolidated into two primary goals, Strengthen our Organization and Connect with our Community.

Meeting #5 – Public Presentation of Final Strategic Plan

- Communications Task Force
- Facilities Task Force
- CALPERS
- Staffing levels
- SAFER Grant
- New staff necessary to achieve NFPA 1710 Standards
 - Requires consistent funding from new benefit assessment tied to CPI
 - New equipment needed
- Partnerships
 - Humboldt Bay Fire (Long-term)
 - Local VFDs
 - Airport
 - Volunteers
- New volunteers working shifts rather than responding as available
- Volunteers are interning

STRATEGIC PLANNING TASK FORCES

CONSOLIDATION TASK FORCE

Beginning in late Spring 2013, as a result of the strategic planning Process, a Consolidation Task Force was established as a breakout group from the Strategic Plan stakeholder group. Initially, these meetings were established to review which areas of operations could be considered for consolidation with another Fire agency. Two District Board members, Steve Tyler and Larry Mendez participated in these task force meetings as well as Asst. Chief of Operations (and Interim Fire Chief) Justin McDonald, Battalion Chief Sean Campbell, Assistant Chief Desmond Cowan as well as Captain Angie Dervedde and Captain Jon Busher.

Humboldt Bay Fire is an agency based in Eureka that is a consolidation between the City of Eureka Fire and the Humboldt Fire District. Following a third party review of consolidation benefits/challenges in 2010, both agencies, with the support of the City Council and the Humboldt Fire District Board began moving towards consolidating leadership positions in 2012.

Arcata Fire District had been without a Fire Chief, despite two searches for a new leader since December 2012. Further, one of the candidates for the Fire Chief position, Desmond Cowan was still under consideration for the position. As a result, the senior staff all had the responsibility to perform some of the Chief job requirements, while managing their regular tasks and jobs. Further, the loss of the Fire Chief meant that in addition to the extra work required of the three remaining senior staff, they also had to provide duty coverage one week per month.

Assistant Chief McDonald was named Interim Fire Chief by the District Board up until such time as a Fire Chief selection process could be completed and a new Chief hired. AC McDonald reached out to Humboldt Bay Fire Chief Ken Woods to gain assistance from a Humboldt Bay Battalion Chief to assist with Duty coverage and to assist with his job as Chief of Operations. Humboldt Bay Fire agreed to provide Battalion Chief Chris Emmons for this task.

Additionally, Chief Woods and his board expressed interest in discussing a Shared Services contract for Fire Chief at Arcata with Humboldt Bay Fire. This began a two month odyssey of inter-agency meetings with Arcata Fire District and Humboldt Bay Fire that at one time had both agency boards agreeing in principle, that Chief Woods would be the Chief for both agencies. An economic analysis provided by senior staff and the Arcata board ultimately determined that there was little, if any, cost savings to be

had by entering a Shared Services contract with Humboldt Bay Fire and Arcata Fire District resolved to select their own Chief.

Consolidation Task Force Findings:

Long-term there are several areas of consolidation that both agencies should continue to discuss and pursue when the time is right. The most likely areas for these consolidation savings to occur are in training, prevention, equipment deployment and purchasing. There will be cost savings in these areas but the benefits outweigh the risks at the current time. If a benefit assessment passes in the District within the next five years and can support regionally optimal staffing for career staff, and the Humboldt Bay Fire Joint Powers Authority is finalized, consolidation of these agencies at least in part.



*Meeting # 1 – Organizational SWOT
L to R: Dave White – Retired Fire Chief & Volunteer Assoc. Board Member,
Bob Moore – VP of Umpqua Bank, Captain Evenson, Captain Dervedde,
Steve Salzman –Greenway Partners*

COMMUNICATION TASK FORCE

One top priority that arose from the strategic planning workshops was a need for improved communications, for both internal and external stakeholders. To dig deeper into the issues and to identify potential solutions, a Communications Task Force met for two sessions to clarify concerns raised during the initial workshops.

The Communications Task Force identified the following goals for this area:

- Improve internal communications and create opportunities for connections;
- Increase quality and consistency of external communications to improve public image and identity of the District;
- Improve beneficial relationships and increase mutual benefits with key institutions and partner agencies; and
- Improve “customer service” by developing channels of communication for receiving input from community.

In general, sentiment about communications within the District focused on inconsistencies in correspondence to and between staff and volunteers, a reduced sense of the “fire family” presence, and lack of clarity about internal policies and organizational relationships or identities. Improvements suggested to address some concerns included enhancing orientation to nuances and policies during recruitment and establishing clear communication protocols for email and other District-wide news.

To renew the “fire family”, suggestions for establishing a team for coordinating social efforts, new traditions, and regular outreach to the “extended family” were highlighted.

Many participants felt the image of the District could be a focus of improvement. To increase transparency, to battle poor public understanding of the services provided and challenges faced by District, and to improve the overall public image of the District, strategies included: designating a Public Information Officer, rebranding the District identity, opening channels of communication between Board, District and Public, and developing a paper newsletter mailer to circulate to constituents.

Growing concern over perceived inequities was a prominent distress raised in this process. In particular, working relationships with Humboldt State University, local police and ambulance services were highlighted. The Task Force felt that in addition to administrative changes needed to deal with partner agencies, other communication tools could help reduce negative sentiments toward these agencies.

District Staff assists with a car accident on campus at Humboldt State University



Suggestions included increasing opportunities for social engagement with these entities, building rapport with agency constituents (e.g., students, faculty), and opening communication channels from other agencies to District staff. Additionally, creating more public awareness of the challenges of funding and shared services was seen as a probable approach for resolving these issues.

Finally, improving “customer service” was seen as an important strategy specially in relation to enabling improved funding opportunities through assessments or other arrangements. The primary suggestion in this regard was to create an online portal for collecting public input and feedback, and for responding to that input. This issue also ties closely to the suggestion of creating a district-wide newsletter; including letters from District Chiefs that respond to or address public concerns would increase the public image of the District.

The rebranding of the District and the simplification and clarification of the relationship between the Volunteers and the District was considered a high priority for resolving growing public confusion and frustration over District actions.

Communications Task Force Findings:

To improve internal communications, the AFD will need to streamline its current efforts to ensure that communication tools reflect user needs, that content is distributed with consistency and efficiency, and that protocols allow for adjustment and flexibility as communication needs change. To create opportunities for more community connections, the AFD will need to take active steps toward enabling activities that engage staff and volunteers to build positive relationships with each other, partner agencies, and the community as a whole.

Resolving the distinctions between the Volunteer organization and the District will amplify any communication efforts made as the long-standing confusion in this area creates challenges with funding, relationship-building, and organizational identity.

FACILITIES TASK FORCE

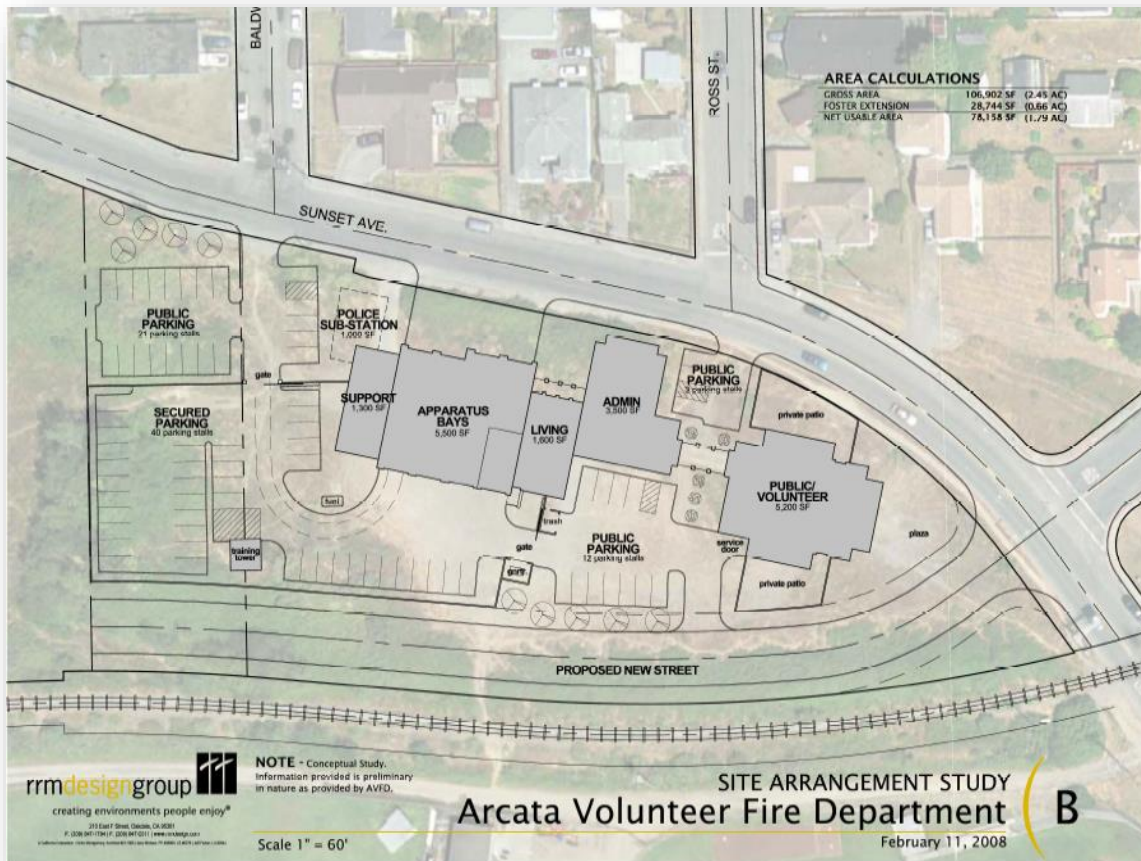
During the Strategic Plan process, a decision on how to deal with the development of a new fire station arose as a key unanswered question. As a result, a separate Task Force was established, and facilitated by Greenway, to look at the issue in September 2013. The goal of this task force was to come to consensus on where to site a new facility and get everyone in the room on the same page going forward.

Since the early 1990s the Arcata Volunteer Fire Department, which is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to fundraising and developing facilities for the District, has been searching for a new location for a fire station headquarters building. This effort has persisted for over 20 years with several different locations selected as an optimal location by the Volunteers, yet nothing was ever built.

A location on M Street between Alliance Road and 11th Street was identified as a good location and was purchased by the Volunteers. Subsequently, the Volunteers identified contamination of one of the multiple parcels they had purchased and established a separate 501(c)(4) organization to own that parcel. The Volunteers retained an architect and developed conceptual plans and a site plan that utilized existing buildings and developed new training facility on an adjacent parcel. This location was ultimately rejected when another site, located on Sunset Avenue West of Highway 101 and perceived to be more suitable, became available.

The site on Sunset Avenue is large and close to the Sunset Avenue freeway on ramp and surface streets that connect to downtown Arcata, the West side of Arcata and Humboldt State University. The Volunteers retained an architecture firm who designed a new fire station HQ and volunteer hall.

The completed design was estimated to cost more than \$8,000,000, far more than the Volunteers had in hand or could likely fundraise. However, fundraising with the community continued for 12 years for the project and monies were gathered, with the support of the Arcata Rotary and generous bequests from the Orvamae Emmerson Fund and Lily Lucchesi, among others.



Draft of Sunset Plans

In its earlier feasibility study of the Sunset project, Greenway found that it was cost-prohibitive to develop the facility; this task force was established to consider all options for fire facilities, including: build a new facility at Sunset or modernize and expand existing facilities.

Greenway facilitated the process of developing consensus with this group by identifying what information gaps could be filled with research and what information would be needed to assure the group they had made the right decision. The group determined that they needed to know:

- Potential costs to complete
- Operational requirements for current and future alignments
- Incident response data
- Constructability of existing facilities
- GIS Maps of Response

Further, the group wanted to discuss all options for new facility development or improvements, including Sunset Ave., Mad River Station, Downtown, and McKinleyville. Other sites owned by either the Volunteers or the District (M Street and Bayside) were determined to be logistically difficult and were not further evaluated.

The group listed:

- 1) Developing new all-inclusive Headquarters at Sunset;
- 2) Modernizing the Downtown station and expanding crew quarters and apparatus bays and additional equipment storage;
- 3) Building an all-inclusive station at Mad River for HQ and for expanded crew quarters;
- 4) Building an administrative HQ in McKinleyville with expanded apparatus bays and additional equipment storage

Each of these options was discussed in detail with the group. Greenway conducted research into the information gaps identified by the task force and did further assessment of constructability and construction budget necessary for completion after the first meeting. Upon a review of the findings researched by Greenway, the Task Force quickly came to consensus, thereby ending a generation long effort to locate and construct new facilities in the correct location.

GIS maps based on 14,000 data points from the Firehouse Software package the District uses for Incident Response management was developed. These maps identify clearly that the center of the incident response in Arcata is clustered directly around the Downtown Arcata Station.

The following maps outline the findings of these GIS studies in Arcata and McKinleyville. All categories of incident response for Arcata are outlined in the first map, the 100-300 series for Arcata, which are the most time sensitive, are outlined in the second map, and the third map shows incident response in McKinleyville.

Incident Density (All Categories): Arcata, Jan 2007 - Sep 2013

Legend:

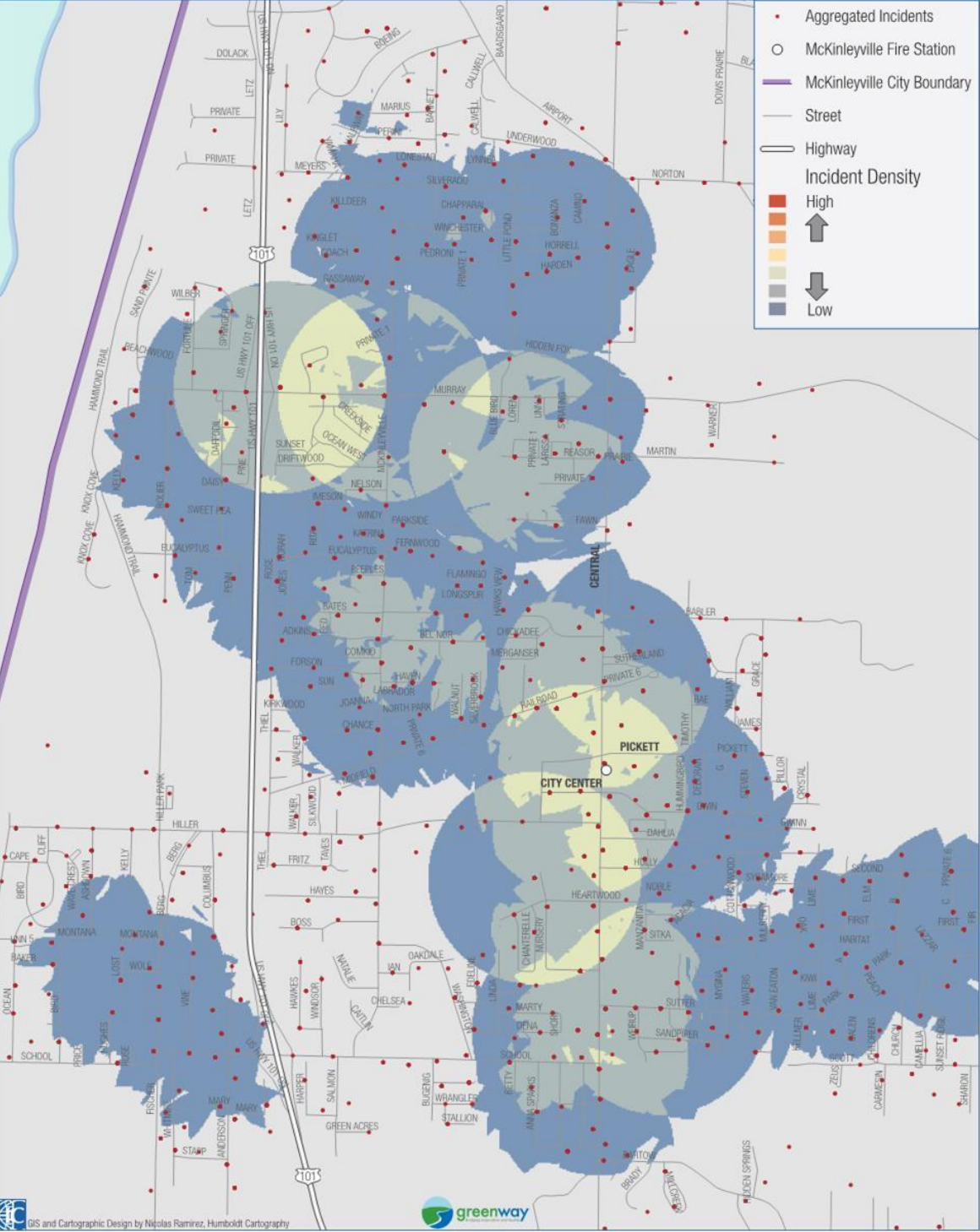
- Aggregated Incidents (Red dots)
- Arcata Fire Station (White circle with a black dot)
- Arcata Plaza (Black square with a white 'X')
- Arcata City Boundary (Thick purple line)
- Street (Thin grey line)
- Highway (Thick grey line)
- Incident Density (Color scale: Red = High, Yellow = Medium, Blue = Low)
- High (Red arrow pointing up)
- Low (Blue arrow pointing down)

Incident Density (100-300 Series): Arcata, Jan 2007 - Sep 2013

Legend:

- Aggregated Incidents (Red dot)
- Arcata Fire Station (White circle with black outline)
- Arcata Plaza (Square with 'X')
- Arcata City Boundary (Thick purple line)
- Street (Thin grey line)
- Highway (Thick grey line)
- Incident Density (Color scale: Red = High, Yellow = Medium, Blue = Low)

Incident Density (100-300 Series): McKinleyville, Jan 2007 - Sep 2013



Facilities Task Force Findings:

The Task Force determined that the two best locations for facilities improvements are the Downtown station and the McKinleyville station locations. The available project funds should be enough to complete the necessary modernization improvements unless the design needs exceed the \$3,400,000 for the entire project budget (design, engineering, construction, project management).

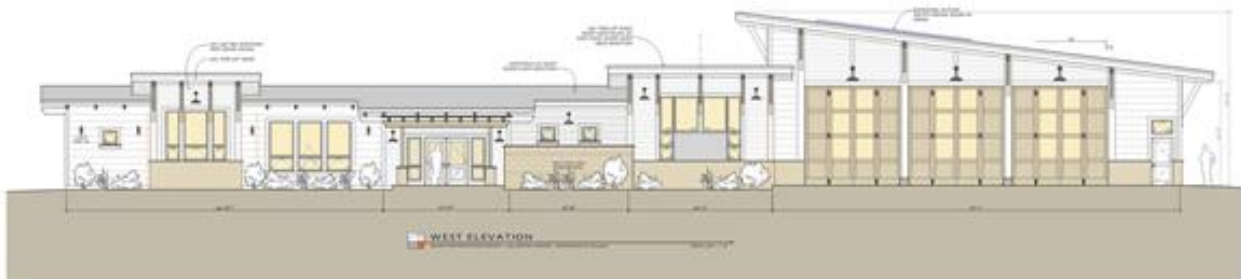
DOWNTOWN

Downtown is the center of the Arcata call volume as indicated on the map shown. This facility can be modernized and expanded to serve the operational needs of the District, in the short and long term. This facility will provide additional living quarters, expanded apparatus bays and equipment storage. Lastly, it keeps the existing Volunteer Hall and classroom, which showcases the historical legacy of the organization and the vital services it provides. The elevation below shows an updated downtown facility.



MCKINLEYVILLE

The McKinleyville station will be modernized and location of the Administrative HQ for the District, housing Senior Staff and Administration. Expanded and modernized crew quarters, expanded apparatus bays and equipment storage will be developed by refurbishing the existing station and by utilizing the neighboring parcel, which is owned by the District and was purchased during the tenure of Chief Frank Toste.



FINDINGS AND ROADMAP TO IMPLEMENTATION

These findings outline the work of the Strategic Plan participants and provide roadmaps for implementation. Each section has a short narrative, which is followed by a discussion of how the finding can be implemented within the 5-year lifespan of this plan. This is also outlined in the table at the bottom of each section, which describes the responsible person within the organization, the timeline and potential budget impact.

- 1) The District needs to make significant adjustments to its staffing levels, budgets, facilities and equipment over the course of the next five years to ensure that the emergency services provided to residents and businesses in the District are in line with industry standard and with “peer districts” throughout California.*

The first career firefighters were hired in 1960 at the McKinleyville station and they worked shift alignments of one career staff on an engine. The response was supplemented by volunteers who deployed to the station and enabled adequate engine support. A second station in Mad River was staffed in the same alignment beginning in 1975, with one career staff on an engine each shift. The downtown station in Arcata was staffed primarily by volunteer response and administration, with career staff not stationed there on 48/96 staffing schedule until November 2012.

For most of the last 50 years, the District staffing levels have remained unchanged, despite drastic changes in the number of incidents, the population of each area in the District and in the value of property within the District. The District staffing alignment has been primarily one career staff on an engine from 1960 to 2005. Beginning in 2007, two career staff on each engine at the Mad River and McKinleyville stations; in 2012, Two staff on each engine at all three District stations. The two career staff on an engine alignment is only possible currently because of supplemental funding from a FEMA SAFER grant. Even with two career staff on an engine, the District falls far short of the staffing level of its peers and neighbors.

The District is operating relatively well given its current staffing alignments. However, an increase in staffing will result in more rapid response to incidents. The critical factor in emergency response is time to incident. Medical aids and fires of all kinds need to be resolved before they become threats to life and property. More staff enables a faster, more direct response to incident and is compliant with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1710 staffing standards. These rules, in combination with the two firefighter in/two out rule enforced by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) are designed to provide a rapid and effective response to incident without jeopardizing firefighter safety in the process. More staffing enables this outcome more frequently.

The District is currently understaffed with 21 career staff. Staffing would need to increase to 54 career safety staff in the District to meet the rigorous NFPA 1710 Standard. The cost of this alignment would be cost prohibitive during the lifespan of this Strategic Plan as it would lead to assessed values at rates 4x – 10x hire than are being paid by property owners currently.

OPTIMAL ALIGNMENT – PER NFPA 1710 STANDARDS			
POSITION	STAFFING	SHIFTS	TOTAL # EMPLOYEES *For Shift Coverage
Fire Chief & Two Asst. Chiefs	3	N/A	3
Battalion Chief	1	3	3
Three Engines	4	3	36
One Truck	4	3	12
TOTAL	–	–	54

Instead, the District should plan to align its staffing and equipment to ensure enhanced regional response capability and to move closer to NFPA 1710 staffing standards over a longer period of time. The Humboldt Bay alignment is three personnel on an engine and four personnel on a truck. To mirror this alignment, the District could staff three personnel at the Downtown site, three personnel at the McKinleyville site and cross staff four personnel at the Mad River site who could engage either the truck or an engine depending on the incident and response need.

PROPOSED ALIGNMENT FOR AFD – REGIONAL INTEROPERABILITY			
POSITION	STAFFING	SHIFTS	TOTAL # EMPLOYEES *For Shift Coverage
Fire Chief & Two Asst. Chiefs	3	1	3
Battalion Chief	1	3	3
Two Engines	3	3	18
One Truck	4	3	12
TOTAL	–	–	36

While this cost is significant, it can more easily be accommodated by property owners in the District who would still be paying much less for the services they are receiving than property owners in Eureka.

ROADMAP FORWARD

- 1.1** Assistant Chief McDonald and Battalion Chief Campbell will develop a staffing and operations budget that defines the financial gap between current District revenue and required revenue.
- 1.2** District Board will make a resolution that it is a policy priority to increase District staffing levels to enhance regional interoperability and provide incident response coverage in line with peer districts and the community's needs during the Strategic Plan period ending in December 2020.
- 1.3** District Chiefs will develop a timeline and milestone plan that outlines new benefit assessment target date, staffing and operations needs and present to District Board by July 2015. This timeline has been developed to ensure that there is sufficient time to begin polling likely voters for either a Benefit Assessment or a Special Tax campaign to be launched in early 2016.
- 1.4** Volunteer transition plan needs to be developed with District board, senior staff and Volunteer leadership for disposal of all Volunteer assets to be purposed towards completion of District facilities in Arcata and McKinleyville.
- 1.5** Develop polling plan with HSU Sociology Dept. for bi-annual poll of District voters to determine levels of support and areas of concern expressed by respondents in regards to new benefit assessment.
- 1.6** Determination of staffing support by SAFER grant for 2014 – 2016 period by Spring 2015. SAFER grant funding should be treated as supplemental and should not be maintained as an ongoing source of revenue in the budget forecasting process.
- 1.7** District staff will move into modernized and expanded facilities in Arcata and McKinleyville by July 2015.
- 1.8** Chiefs will coordinate a communications and marketing plan regarding the benefit assessment and its importance to the community and property within the District.
- 1.9** Development of Volunteer staffing plan with transitions that modify volunteer requirements for training and shift coverage to possibly include seasonal and/or part-time employment.
- 1.10** Fill vacant Fire Inspector position and make the job duties also responsible for Public Information Officer and Quality Control Administrator.
- 1.11** Training Officer position should be re-focused on “boots on the ground” training with staff in the field, classroom and at the joint training center in Eureka.

	PERSONNEL INVOLVED	BUDGET IMPACT	TIMELINE
1.1 DEVELOP STAFFING AND OPERATIONS BUDGET	Chief Cowan Asst. Chief McDonald BC Campbell	HIGH	2015
1.2 STAFFING RESOLUTION	District Board	LOW	EARLY 2015
1.3 BENEFIT ASSESSMENT – TIMELINE AND PLAN, TARGET DATE, STAFF & OP NEEDS	Chief Cowan Asst. Chief McDonald B.C. Campbell	HIGH	JULY 2015
1.4 VOLUNTEER TRANSITION PLAN – ASSETS	Volunteer Board Chief Cowan Asst. Chief McDonald B.C. Campbell	HIGH	2015
1.5 BENEFIT ASSESSMENT- DEVELOP POLLING PLAN FOR DISTRICT VOTERS	Chief Cowan A.C. McDonald B.C. Campbell	HIGH	SEPT 2015
1.6 SAFER GRANT: STAFFING SUPPORT FOR 2014 – 2016	BC Campbell Dewey	HIGH	SPRING 2015
1.7 MOVE DISTRICT STAFF – ARCATA & MCKINLEYVILLE	Greenway	HIGH	JULY 2015
1.8 BENEFIT ASSESSMENT – COMM. & MARKETING PLAN	Chief Cowan	HIGH	SEPT 2015
1.9 DEVELOP VOLUNTEER STAFFING PLAN – TRAINING	Chief Cowan	MED	DEC 2014
1.10 FILL & UPDATE VACANT FIRE INSPECTOR POSITION	District Board Chief Cowan	MED	COMPLETED
1.11 REFOCUS TRAINING OFFICER POSITION	District Board Chief Cowan Asst. Chief McDonald B.C. Campbell	MED	JULY 2015

- 2) *The District needs to focus on developing organization wide communication improvements. These improvements are necessary to communicate with internal (board, staff and volunteers) and external (public and other agencies) effectively about funding needs, emergency services, facilities improvements and organizational direction.*

ROADMAP FORWARD

- 2.1** The Arcata Volunteer Fire Department name should immediately stop being used on letterhead, in presentations and in the media. It has created immense community confusion and has limited the effectiveness of the District's communication with the public. Further, it erodes the perception of the District having legitimate financial need in the communities the District serves, since staff are perceived to be volunteers.
- 2.2** The Volunteer organization should not be perceived as a separate organization but should be established as a support organization for the District and its operations.
- 2.3** Post all District budget reports, policy documents, staffing reports and operations plans, including salaries and benefits packages at the District website.
- 2.4** Retain a Public Information Officer for public relations and media following big announcements, fire incidents and to ensure there is one message coming from the organization at all times. This person should be under the direction of the Fire Chief.
- 2.5** Maintain and increase presence at community events, fundraisers, and service clubs.
- 2.6** Improve attendance and representation of District at agency meetings with Coast Guard, Airport, APD/UPD and at the County Chiefs meetings.
- 2.7** All District staff and Volunteers appearing on behalf of the District at off-site trainings, public incidents, events and fundraisers need to be wearing clean, professional Mad River Fire District branded clothing and/or gear at all times.
- 2.8** Develop "customer relations" plan, and designate a point person for customer relations as a collateral duty.
- 2.9** Continue engagement work on social media, YouTube, and website.
- 2.10** Increase community engagement through use of Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT). This is a program administered by FEMA and trains community members for situational assistance to fire agencies for response in large natural disasters.

2.11 The District should work through its outreach and marketing channels to educate residents about the need for developing a household “Go Bag”. This bag would contain food, water, medicine and other supplies as needed to be without services for a minimum of 72 hours. The bag would enable a resident to quickly evacuate from a threatening situation and provide for their most basic needs for a short time period, thereby diminishing impact to District staffing resources.

	PERSONNEL INVOLVED	BUDGET IMPACT	TIMELINE
2.1 THE ARCATA VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME SHOULD STOP BEING USED	Volunteer Board District Board Asst. Chief McDonald	LOW	JAN 2015
2.2 RE-FRAME THE VOLUNTEER	Volunteer Board Chief Cowan Asst. Chief McDonald	LOW	DEC 2014
2.3 POST ALL DISTRICT INFORMATION ONLINE	District Board Chief Cowan Sally Lindke	LOW	JAN 2015
2.4 RETAIN PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER FOR PR	Chief Cowan	LOW	COMPLETED
2.5 MAINTAIN & INCREASE PRESENCE AT EVENTS	Chief Cowan	LOW	DEC 2014
2.6 IMPROVE DISTRICTS' ATTENDANCE AT AGENCY MEETINGS	Chief Cowan	LOW	DEC 2014
2.7 _MAD RIVER FIRE DISTRICT BRANDED CLOTHING / GEAR	Asst. Chief McDonald	MED	JAN 2015
2.8 DEVELOP “CUSTOMER RELATIONS” PLAN	Chief Cowan	LOW	MAR 2015

2.9 CONTINUE SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT WORK	Asst. Chief McDonald Firefighter Narayan	LOW	IN PROGRESS
2.10 INCREASE CERT TEAMS	Chief Cowan Asst. Chief McDonald BC Sean Campbell Fire Prevention Specialist Williamson	LOW	2015
2.11 EDUCATE RESIDENTS ABOUT "GO BAG"	Chief Cowan Asst. Chief McDonald BC Sean Campbell Fire Prevention Specialist Williamson	LOW	2015

3) *The District board needs to improve its decision making protocol, its communication about decisions it is making, and needs to become a "transparent" body in all actions but those protected by employee privacy covenants. The board needs to develop an organizational development and training strategy to increase the capacity of its board members to work closely with staff leadership in analyzing challenges and threats to the organization.*

ROADMAP FORWARD

Internal Communications Issues

- 3.1** District Board should be acting as the policymaking body and budget oversight authority for the District.
- 3.2** Simplify communication throughout the organization by having all District staff under the direct supervision of the Fire Chief. Enforcement of the chain of command structure will enable the singular voice of control coming from the person the Board has hired to lead the organization.
- 3.3** Fire Chief should be responsible for negotiating directly with Union on labor issues. Board representation should be present at all times during negotiations and report back to whole board.
- 3.4** Fire Chief needs to be leading the budget process for board and provide options for decision-making.
- 3.5** Board needs Senior Staff to develop operations plans, budgets and training plans in line with policy objectives board supports.

- 3.6** Staff reports should be altered to provide meaningful context for board members. The value of the reporting process should be to assist the District in making policy and budget decisions, not to focus on routine details.
- 3.7** Board needs training on its roles and responsibilities and in public process. Retain Liebert, Cassidy and Whitmore (LCW) for professional board training.
- 3.8** Attendance at the Fire District Association of California conferences (FDAC) should be a priority for a minimum of two board members annually.
- 3.9** All hands meeting minutes should be distributed to all staff immediately following meeting.
- 3.10** Volunteers are working in support of District goals and objectives, which need to come from the District Board and Fire Chief. The Volunteer organization should align its direction with District Board and Chief to ensure their activities are in support of District policies and District operational needs.

	PERSONNEL INVOLVED	BUDGET IMPACT	TIMELINE
3.1 DISTRICT BOARDS ROLE AS POLICY MAKER	District Board Chief Cowan	LOW	IMMEDIATE
3.2 DISTRICT STAFF UNDER SUPERVISION OF FIRE CHIEF	District Board	LOW	2015
3.3 UNION LABOR NEGOTIATION	Chief Cowan District Board Rep.	HIGH	COMPLETED
3.4 FIRE CHIEF LEAD BUDGET CONVERSATIONS	Chief Cowan	HIGH	COMPLETED
3.5 DISTRICT BOARD DIRECTS CHIEFS ON POLICIES	District Board	HIGH	IMMEDIATE
3.6 UPDATE AND ALTER STAFF REPORTS	District Board Chief Cowan	LOW	COMPLETED
3.7 BOARD TRAINING	District Board Legal Consultant Chief Cowan	LOW	IMMEDIATE
3.8 BOARD ATTENDS FDAC	2 District Board Members	LOW	2015

3.9 DISTRIBUTION OF MEETING MINUTES	Chief Cowan Sally Lindke	LOW	IMMEDIATE
3.10 VOLUNTEER BOARD AND DISTRICT BOARD WORK TO ACHIEVE COMMON GOALS	Volunteer Board District Board Chief Cowan	LOW	IMMEDIATE

- 4) *The District needs to develop a comprehensive metrics standard for monitoring organizational activities and keying these metrics towards continuous improvement from the board level throughout the organization.*

ROADMAP FORWARD

- 4.1** National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standard 1710 should be utilized as a key metric for incident response, where feasible. This standard in effect becomes the driver for staffing, equipment and operations needs for the District to maintain an appropriate response.
- 4.2** Evaluate current median response time to incidents from all three stations using FireHouse Software and NFIRS coding system. Set these findings as a baseline for improvement going forward.
- 4.3** Implement Computer Aided Dispatch with Automated Vehicle Locator systems to monitor and improve time to incident.
- 4.4** Ensure metrics are used to improve training of deficiencies and are not used punitively.
- 4.5** Develop quality control protocol for incident report review by Battalion Chief, Duty Coverage IC, Assistant Chief. Protocol should be focused on determining shortcomings and improvements of incident reports. The review should also focus on proper coding of the incident, narrative accuracy and response time.

	PERSONNEL INVOLVED	BUDGET IMPACT	TIMELINE
4.1 NFPA STANDARD 1710 USED AS A METRIC WHERE FEASIBLE	District Board Chief Cowan Asst. Chief McDonald BC Campbell	HIGH	2020
4.2 EVALUATE RESPONSE TIME TO INCIDENTS	Chief Cowan Asst. Chief McDonald BC Campbell	LOW	LATE 2015
4.3 IMPLEMENT COMPUTER AIDED DISPATCH	Chief Cowan Asst. Chief McDonald BC Campbell	MED	LATE 2018
4.4 ENSURE METRICS ARE USED TO IMPROVE TRAINING	Chief Cowan Asst. Chief McDonald	LOW	EARLY 2015
4.5 DEVELOP QUALITY CONTROL PROTOCOL	Asst. Chief McDonald Fire Prevention Specialist Jennifer Williamson	LOW	EARLY 2015

5) *Humboldt State University is an organization that is dependent upon the services provided by the District for fire and emergency medical. Collaborative efforts need to be initiated between the District and HSU in order to develop funding mechanisms that will offset the impact the University has on the District's operations.*

ROADMAP FORWARD

- 5.1** The total valuation of property at HSU is hundreds of millions of dollars and the lives and well-being of the students, faculty and staff are dependent on an available, professional response from the District to all medical and fire calls.
- 5.2** The District responds to over 100 calls at HSU per year and currently receives the equivalent of less than \$1 per Full Time Equivalent (FTE) student.
- 5.3** The District needs to convene a steering committee with District Board representation, the Fire Chief and senior representatives of Academic Affairs, Housing and Facilities as well as Administrative Leadership at HSU, to resolve how to compensate the District for the cost of covering these incidents.

- 5.4** Peer Districts (those with a CSU campus) should be consulted to determine how/if they are compensated for coverage by the CSU system.
- 5.5** A fee levied only on HSU students must be passed through a vote of the student body. Student elections have very low rates of participation so this measure would be likely to pass.
- 5.6** A nominal fee that can be bundled together with a fee for emergency services response that includes the University Police Department could be marketed effectively.

	PERSONNEL INVOLVED	BUDGET IMPACT	TIMELINE
5.1 N / A			
5.2 N / A			
5.3 CONVENE STEERING COMMITTEE AROUND COMPENSTATION FROM HSU	Chief Cowan	HIGH	MAY 2015
5.4 OUTREACH WITH PEER DISTRICTS	Greenway Chief Cowan	LOW	COMPLETED
5.5 HSU FEE – STUDENT BODY	Chief Cowan Asst. Chief McDonald 2 District Board Members	HIGH	LATE 2015
5.6 HSU FEE – UPD EMERGENCY SERVICES	Chief Cowan Asst. Chief McDonald 2 District Board Members	HIGH	LATE 2015

6) The District and the Arcata Volunteer Fire Department are names that are confusing to the residents of the District service area and don't accurately represent the geography of the District. The District needs to re-name the organization with one name that encompasses both the District and Volunteers to eliminate the perception of two entities managing emergency response. A name change that encompasses all of the communities within the District will lead to broader support for District needs.

ROADMAP FORWARD

- 6.1** Mad River Fire District is a suitable name for the organization going forward. It defines the geographic area of the communities within the District and increases buy-in from the community.
- 6.2** All organizations associated with Arcata Fire District, including the Volunteers and the Employees' Association, should adopt this new name.
- 6.3** Re-branding of the organization with the new name should be announced on the date of groundbreaking at the new facility in McKinleyville.
- 6.4** The Mad River Fire Station may need to be re-named to remove further confusion in the community.
- 6.5** Current logo shape should be retained to minimize disruption to uniforms.
- 6.6** All branding of clothing, gear, apparatus, buildings, badges and equipment should be the same throughout the organization and that should be completed as soon as possible after the organization settles on a new name.

	PERSONNEL INVOLVED	BUDGET IMPACT	TIMELINE
6.1 DISTRICT NAME CHANGE	District Board	MED	JAN 2015
6.2 N / A			
6.3 N / A			
6.4 N / A			
6.5 N / A			
6.6 N / A			

7) *The role of the volunteers within the District has changed significantly and the District will need to adapt to keep pace with training requirements, OSHA rules, International Association of Fire Fighters Union issues, and regional coordination.*

The District has a culture of community volunteerism woven through its history. Over the course of the last 10 – 15 years the District, like most areas of the country, has been unable to sustain community volunteer interest in the numbers necessary to adequately supplement career response.

This has led to continued training of college age volunteers, who are interested in pursuing a career in the fire service, either here or elsewhere. As there are few jobs

locally, training a group of volunteers here for use in District response, essentially provides on the job training for another fire agencies firefighters. Further, a relatively small number of volunteers are actually completing their District mandated training requirements and responding to incidents. To ensure training that is provided by the District results in staff that shows up for incidents and completes their mandated shift requirements, part-time employees should be considered.

The part-time employees can be given assurance that they will be able to receive some compensation for their activities and most importantly, they will show up as required. It also provides dependable support for incidents during summer months when many volunteers are working for other agencies or are not living in the area.

There are a number of issues that will need to be overcome to enable this change. The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) guidelines on the use of volunteers becoming part-time employees or seasonal employees, suggests that they may not become eligible to return to volunteer status if they are no longer part-time or seasonal employees. This practice is widespread in other agencies, but there is concern that the practice may need to be clarified by District legal counsel to determine a proper course of action.

ROADMAP FORWARD

- 7.1** The Volunteer organization will need to plan for a transition away from their primary duties related to the building of new facilities. As the building project is completed there are increasingly fewer needs for fundraising and public interface will be dramatically reduced.
- 7.2** Explore alternate staffing arrangements to ensure adequate support for career staff. This may include, seasonal staff, part-time staff.

	PERSONNEL INVOLVED	BUDGET IMPACT	TIMELINE
7.1 VOLUNTEER PLAN TO TRANSITION AWAY FROM BUILDING DUTIES	Chief Cowan Volunteer Board	LOW	2015
7.2 ALTERNATE STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS	Chief Cowan Asst. Chief McDonald BC Campbell	MED	2015

APPENDIX A

SCENARIO PLANNING DISCUSSION

Scenario planning is necessary to ensure that the District is prepared to respond to major external changes that will affect its operations. While there is considerable uncertainty in predicting how future events will unfold, it is critical to identify issues on the horizon that may affect the District's finances, staffing requirements, service area coverage or incident type. The following issues are considered potential issues likely to affect the District.

SCENARIO 1.0: FUEL COSTS INCREASE

The District consumes a significant amount of gasoline and diesel to run its equipment annually and the District budget is very sensitive to price shifts that increase costs. While recent technological advances in drilling (hydrofracturing or fracking) have led to increased domestic oil production, this oil has not caused a drop in domestic gasoline prices. Demand in developing nations for fuel has led to inflationary pressure for oil prices and is likely to increase over time as global oil demand will only increase. Volatility in the price of oil will unfortunately continue in the future and institutional buyers of fuel will need creative ways to meet their fuel needs during times of budget scarcity. Lastly, nearly all of Humboldt County's supply of gasoline and diesel is shipped by fuel barge from refineries in the S.F. Bay Area. Any disruption to this supply or delivery route due to natural disaster, marine accident or other incident will increase prices sharply in a short timeline.

Recommendation

- **Buyers Pool:**
Consider development of M.O.U. with regional agencies in developing a purchaser's pool guaranteeing fuel sellers the market for an annual contract at a fixed fee. The only risk is that the fixed fee is higher than the annualized market price for fuel. This contract method does eliminate uncertainty for fuel costs however, and is likely to still be more economical.

SCENARIO 2.0: MARIJUANA BECOMES LEGAL

The marijuana economy in Humboldt County is, depending on which economist you ask, the largest or second largest sector of the regional economy. The gray area of a medical marijuana market that is flourishing in Humboldt County, has caused disruptive change to housing stock, energy usage and hazardous material exposure for

fire response. The development of alternative marijuana products known as “dabs”, “hash oil” and “honey oil” are essentially distillates of marijuana made through the use of solvents such as butane. The volatility of butane and its use in indoor settings with poor ventilation makes it a major fire hazard. Illegal wiring to accommodate the energy demand posed by indoor grows also creates increased fire risk and has led to notable increases in incidents related to marijuana production since passage of the Compassionate Use Act of 1996.

Further, the significant investment of time and resources necessary to respond to incidents originating from marijuana production is a cost borne solely by taxpayers. The vast majority of marijuana production is conducted outside the current tax structure and as a result, most public agencies are deprived of the income tax revenue that remains largely unpaid by marijuana producers. This lack of tax revenue essentially puts more cost back onto those who are paying for District coverage. The parcel taxes that are part of the funding mechanism for the District are subject to increases however if property sales occur. Unfortunately, the majority of indoor marijuana production has been conducted in rental homes due to asset forfeiture laws that take property used in the production of marijuana.

These issues are leading many to suggest California will become the third state in the U.S. to legalize recreational marijuana use and to stringently regulate its production. Legalizing poses several possible scenarios for the District to consider going forward.

Scenario 1: Legalization causes a dramatic drop in price for marijuana as the barriers to entry posed by illicit activity are removed. This price collapse leads to an exodus of marijuana production away from rural areas of the state to agricultural lands and to large warehouses in urban settings closer to the demand. Stricter regulation of a legal marijuana market should reduce the number of incidents caused in part by the need for secrecy.

Scenario 2: Legalization increases use of marijuana and the complexity of becoming and remaining compliant with the legal requirements of the law ensure that a black/grey market still exists. This scenario could lead to a still flourishing black market and increased local production of indoor grown marijuana.

Recommendation

- Appoint a career employee as “point person” related to marijuana issues and their effect on incident type, frequency and budget implications.

SCENARIO 3.0: CONSOLIDATION

Consolidation between the two largest career departments in the region, the District and Humboldt Bay Fire, may become advantageous to the taxpayers within the Districts during the Strategic Plan period running through 2020. It is more likely, however that sharing services for certain key personnel or positions, may prove beneficial for both financial and coordination purposes. An analysis of alternative arrangements prepared by CITYGATE Associates detailed the challenges of pursuing consolidation between these agencies, but also outlined opportunities. The report highlighted the benefits of sharing a training officer and non-sworn personnel dedicated to fire inspections. These opportunities may present themselves over the course of the Strategic Plan time period and should be pursued as a cost savings measure as well as a way to ensure regional interoperability for incident response.

Recommendation

- The District should entertain these consolidation options while paying close attention to the contractual relationship between the two Districts and the compensation structure of any arrangement.
- There should also be a recognition that the District is bound by labor agreements with employee groups and they must be partners in any discussions related to this topic.

SCENARIO 4.0: REVENUE STAYS FLAT INDEFINITELY, NO NEW BENEFIT ASSESSMENT

The current funding mechanism for the District through an Ad Valorem tax on parcels and through a Benefit Assessment, provides nearly all of the revenue that the agency receives in a given year. This revenue was not tied to inflation upon its passage, so in essence a declining amount of money is available each year as a result of inflation over time. For example, retirement and health care costs, as a part of the District budget, have increased significantly over time, yet because there is no increase in the annual revenue returned to the District through its two primary funding sources there is increasingly less money for the other line items in the budget.

If the District pursues approval of a new benefit assessment measure within the Strategic Plan time period and fails, the result will be catastrophic to the District goals and ability to deliver service.

Recommendation:

Develop benefit assessment steering committee in mid-2015, comprised of District leadership, consultant (if any) and key members of the District communities.

SCENARIO 5.0: NATURAL DISASTERS AND CLIMATE RELATED CHANGES

The District needs to develop incident response plans, training plans and needs to participate in policy level discussions that will involve multi-agency emergency response enhancements and improvements. The District inhabits lands that are potentially subject to catastrophic natural disasters including: tsunami, large regional earthquake, climate related changes to forest moisture leading to stand replacing fires in the redwood forests east of Arcata and the spruce and fir forests east of McKinleyville.

Readiness for emergency response agencies requires that the District plan for events that are atypical and to ensure that equipment and personnel are well trained and positioned to ensure they are capable of responding to multiple, simultaneous incidents.

The District facilities following an upgrade to the Downtown and McKinleyville station will be well protected from seismic activity, but the Mad River station may be damaged. In a large regional earthquake, loss of life and property will quickly overwhelm the District's ability to respond effectively. The District should continue its regional coordination efforts through combined training with its agency partners.

Recommendation:

- The District should review its training and equipment requirements annually to ensure it can implement needed Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) and Confined Spaces rescues as staffing and budget allows. These skills will be critically necessary in a major event like a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake.
- The goal is to have necessary staffing and funding to provide USAR and Confined Spaces services throughout the District.

Tsunami

The communities of Manila and Arcata and parts of Bayside may be subjected to threats from Tsunamis originating in the Pacific following large earthquake or land subsidence overseas or on the western coast of North America. Crescent City has suffered injury from numerous tsunamis, including one in 1964 following the Good Friday earthquake in Alaska and a 2011 event following the Tohoku earthquake in Japan.

The California Coastal Commission has restricted new development around Humboldt Bay to those areas that are 12 feet above the Mean High High Water line, to minimize the threats that tsunamis may bring to the commercial and residential areas of Eureka and other communities around the bay. A significant change to a large development planned for Samoa occurred because of enforcement of this policy.

The District will be the primary response agency to Manila and low lying areas of Arcata and Bayside following a tsunami and the potential for loss of life and property is significant in those areas.

Stand replacing fires due to changes in forest soil moisture

Over the course of the last century, fog production in the redwood forest ecosystem has declined by about half. Redwoods utilize this summer fog to move water throughout its vascular system ensuring that they have adequate moisture throughout the year. As these fog levels decline, both tree and surrounding forest soil moisture levels plummet, which will subject the redwood forest ecosystem to a steady drying out. Redwood forests have always been identified as fire resistant, due largely to the high levels of soil moisture and the evapotranspiration that redwoods have evolved that enables them to keep high levels of internal moisture year round relative to other trees.

With so many homes built up to, and within, the redwood forests surrounding Arcata, including Fickle Hill, and the outlying communities of Jacoby Creek and Bayside, the threat of fire will only increase. As these rural areas developed, narrow rural roads with gravel or minimal asphalt surfaces have prevailed. The sources of water within these areas are also minimal leading to very challenging response to large fires within the redwood forest areas. The loss of property and life due to difficult response could be similar in scope and scale to the Oakland Hills Fire of 1991. A fire in the Redwood forest areas of the District has the potential to grow to a massive regional wildfire that would most likely spread south and east due to prevailing winds and fuel availability.

Sitka spruce, and red alder forests dominate the hills just east of McKinleyville. This forest composition is in part due to McKinleyville's proximity to high levels of salt in the fog rolling off the Pacific. Redwood is not salt spray tolerant and is less likely to be found east of McKinleyville until the top of the ridge that separates the town from Fieldbrook. Green Diamond, a large industrial landowner owns most of the Sitka and Redwood/Fir Forests outside of McKinleyville. The industrial forest practices on these lands preference young even aged stands over multi-age stands creating more annual harvest and more fuel loads for wildfire in the form of slash. As a regional drying of forest soil moisture continues, these fuel loads will pose an increasing threat to wild land fire response throughout the District.

Cascadia Subduction Zone

A long stretch of the coast of Western North America between Cape Mendocino (south of Ferndale) to Vancouver Island Canada comprises the Cascadia Subduction Zone. This term refers to a confluence of tectonic plates that thrust and fold under each other over long periods of geologic time. The potential for a catastrophic earthquake originating from these forces is ever present and its effects could trigger tsunami events both locally and internationally.

Regional Faults

Within the District service area there are also numerous smaller faults that are subjected to these stresses and can release devastating large magnitude earthquakes episodically. These earthquakes have been damaging to the Humboldt Bay region for millennia, with several events every decade on average.

Regional Sea Level Rise

A rising sea brings threats to critical infrastructure, changes to existing land use, and increases the area of inundation during tsunami events. According to tidal gauges of Humboldt Bay, and research by the SeaGrant program of UC Davis, Humboldt Bay's sea level has increased by over 18 inches since 1900. Projected rise by the National Research Council has projected an additional 55-66 inches minimum rise between now and 2100. This rise will not come at once but will rise a minimum of .5 inch annually.

Transportation links between Highway 101 access and transportation routes between the communities of Arcata and Eureka, and between Arcata and service areas in Manila.

APPENDIX B

The following are notes captured during Strategic Plan meetings with all stakeholders and with Task Force meeting participants. The process of distilling information down from multiple opinions and ideas into cohesive ideas was the job of the facilitator between meetings. The information gathered was coalesced and presented at the next meeting for acceptance by the stakeholder group. At no time was the facilitation team working in isolation. Constant input, review and feedback was solicited from participants, board members and peer districts to ensure the actions were logical, viable and could be successfully implemented.

WORKSHOP NOTES

MEETING #1: STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, THREATS

Strengths Listed by Stakeholders

- Use of Volunteers-
 - volunteers are better utilized than in most other districts
 - volunteers are a cheap labor force
 - volunteers integrate well with the career workforce
- Staffing levels have improved
 - Staffed third station really helps
- Equipment is better than most departments
 - Very well equipped
- Training opportunities
 - For both career/ volunteers
- Good relationships with neighboring agencies
 - Humboldt State University
 - Arcata Police Department
 - Humboldt Bay Fire
 - Coast Guard
 - Manila CSD
 - McKinleyville CSD
 - Humboldt County Sheriff's
- Professionalism
- Fiscally responsible
- District has been open to change

- Doing a Strategic Plan is a key indicator of that
- Performance during incidents
- Very good public images
- Dedicated personnel
- Personnel/volunteers live in this community
- *Large # of young personnel to grow in this organization*
 - Recruiting college students as volunteers
- Fire family oriented (second family) for both career and volunteers
- Willing to take on new responsibilities
- Off-duty responses are allowed
 - If personnel are near incident off duty they can respond
- Reasonably funded
 - Been good with grant writing
- Strength in diversity (career/volunteer, age demographic)
 - Medical/forest/university, etc.

Weaknesses Listed by Stakeholders

- Resistance to change
- *Very young and inexperienced workforce (selected 2x)*
- Uncertainty regarding leadership
 - A Chief search that has been started/stopped on two occasions and is still unfulfilled
- Identification confusion in the District service area (are firefighters volunteers?)
- Income/Expenses (selected 3x)
- Press relationships-keeping the public updated
- Bad PR by older members who don't agree with changes necessary (selected 2x)
- Recruitment and retention
 - Not enough jobs
 - Volunteer time commitment necessary to become and stay qualified
- Limited on-duty staffing (selected 3x)
 - There should be more than two on an engine
- New building not constructed-no action
- Community thinks there are two departments, not one (selected 2x)
- Weak in recruiting volunteers who are "rooted" in community
 - College age recruits come and go
- No future planning for the volunteer organization.
 - What's going to happen when Dave or Alan go?
- Not politically connected. Not connected to a City or County gov't.

- Staffing is always behind, recruiting, retirements, etc.
- Always doing more without more funds (selected 4x)
 - Never saying no
- Constantly behind on hiring and promotion process
 - Shotgun approach
- Salaries are low, which makes the recruitment more difficult
- We charge the public much less than other areas or we do it for free
 - State mandated inspections
- Lack of ways to produce revenue
 - Low tax base
- In the last few years we've lost a lot of experienced leaders and workers

Opportunities Listed by Stakeholders

- Marketing
 - Quarterly newsletter
- Incident Response Survey
 - Similar to a customer service survey
- Brand Recognition
 - Name change reflecting the geography of the service area
- Consolidate services with other agencies (selected 3x)
- Organizational CAN report (Conditions, Actions and Needs)
 - Assess past decisions to evaluate operations during incidents
- Identify new revenue sources
 - Grants
 - Tax revenue
 - Fee based inspections
- Strategic Plan
- Volunteer outreach
 - Explorers
 - Retention
- Determine priorities
 - Managing time and resources
- Career advancement
- Social networking
- Department photographer
- New funding facility

Threats Listed by Stakeholders

- Loss of revenue
 - State taking local taxes
- Wronged citizens/volunteers bad p.r.
 - Perception is reality in community
- Increase in costs
 - PERS
 - Health Insurance
 - Retirement
 - Worker's Compensation
- Catastrophic Injury
 - Loss of Firefighter
 - Loss of community members
 - Lawsuits
 - Court costs
- Property devaluation
 - Reduced revenue from assessments
- Wages lowest in CA
 - Unable to recruit out of area professionals
 - Not able to retain younger members long term
- NO CHIEF
- Generational willingness to change
 - Young willing
 - Older members/volunteers less willing
- Citizens not knowing what District and its personnel do
- Stagnant revenue
- Lack of customer knowledge
- District leasing property from volunteers
 - Increase in costs over time
- Lack of Marketing
- Community impatience with new station/new leadership
- Consolidation with Humboldt Bay/Arcata Fire
 - Two chiefs, seven miles apart
- New regulations
 - Fed/State
 - Ex> OSHA rule may require two firefighters on scene in addition to first two responders to incident before they can enter a structure
- Required training
 - For volunteers
 - Personnel

- Pot economy
- Public perception of what we do when not fighting fires
 - Drunken old boys club
- Increase in calls
 - With no increase in staffing
- Aging population
- Increased litigation
- Public perception of outside fire departments causes ripples locally

MEETING #2: DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Goal: Improve and Foster Partnerships

1. Inter-agency Partnerships Create SMART Goal Statement for this heading
 - a. Create staff exchange program
 - b. Identify other volunteer (Blue Lake, Fieldbrook, etc.) collaborations
 - c. Develop JOA taskforce
 - d. Develop 3 – 5 year consolidation plan

Goal: Connect to our Community

2. Group Goal #2: Connect Uncertain public image re: volunteers and district with marketing opportunities
 - a. Goal a) Clean up public image by posting frequent and transparent news releases
 - b. Goal b) Search out and “like community members, business and organizations to bring “them” to “us”
3. Communications and Marketing-Create SMART Goal Statement for this heading
 - a. Develop comprehensive communications strategy
 - b. Develop clear messaging and get it out
 - c. Develop public opinion survey-re: poll on benefit assessment quarterly
 - d. Communicate leadership structure to public
 - e. Diversify public education/outreach and social events
 - f. Increase public awareness of accomplishments/activities through effective media campaign
 - g. Leverage online tools for customer relations
 - h. Develop “customer” survey for incident response
 - i. Mobilize public \$ after catastrophic events
 - j. Highlight volunteer/district relationship

- k. Political outreach strategy
 - l. Communicate to public long-term fiscal plan
4. Fiscal Sustainability Create SMART Goal Statement for this heading (maybe several different ones for income/expense)
- a. Investigate ways to reduce operating cost
 - b. Develop short and long term fiscal plan
 - c. Pursue revenue recovery
 - d. Determine core services to be offered and just say no to all else
 - e. Develop stable funding source to match “real” needs
 - f. Diversify funding sources

GOAL: “Strengthen our organization”

5. Recruitment and retention- Create SMART Goal Statement for this heading
- a. Recruit volunteers rooted in community
 - b. Advertise outside of area to recruit
 - c. Develop youth explorer program-“tagline: Big hats for little heads”
 - d. Increase marketing for recruitment
 - e. Develop marketing package for local businesses to support volunteers (free gas, gift certs, etc.)
 - f. Identify roles for people who want to “volunteer” to do other tasks aside from firefighting
6. Group Goal #1: Connected-Uncertain future of volunteers with funding new facility
- a. Group Goal: Make a decision on the form of new facility, implement it. Volunteers will be able to focus on fire suppression and burnout will be reduced.
7. Roles and relationship between volunteers and district
- a. Survey of existing and past volunteers about their experience
 - b. Develop new roles for long-term volunteers
 - c. Clarify volunteer/district future
 - d. Clarify and solidify roles and responsibilities
 - e. Develop leadership strategy for volunteer organization to continue past Dave and Alan
 - f. Open constructive communication channels
 - g. Update MOU volunteer/district for ALL issues

- h. Identify needed skills for volunteers in the community members we are recruiting

8. Personnel and Staffing

- a. Train/retain political liaison role on staff
- b. Train/retain marijuana expert role on staff

Goal: Pursue Continuous Improvement

9. Incident response and emergency preparedness

- a. Tsunami
- b. Earthquake
- c. Major Incidents
- d. Evaluate efficiency of ambulance/medical call relationship

10. Organizational Development

- a. Develop adaptation and contingency strategy for long-term viability
- b. Create decision making protocol for major issues
- c. Develop organizational metrics

11. Facilities planning

- a. Identification of organizational needs for facilities
- b. Modernize facilities
- c. Co-develop facility planning with volunteers

Vision: Improve and Foster Partnerships

Goal Statement

12. Inter-agency Partnerships-Goals Statement: "Develop Joint Powers Authority Task Force to evaluate partial or full consolidation with Humboldt Bay Fire beginning April 2013."

- a. Task force will study consolidation
 - Develop comparison of call volume, costs and revenues
 - Create comparison of contracts and MOUs
 - Identify strategies for blending personnel and crews
 - Identify key role players for JPA at bonds request
- b. Create staff exchange program with other agencies
- c. Identify other volunteer (Blue Lake, Fieldbrook, etc.) collaborations
- d. Develop consolidation plan
 - Create minimum engine company standards
 - Develop map of zoning and growth areas
 - Identify the impact of consolidation on building project
 - Drop response borders

- Identify operational needs and growth
- Develop operation and functional strategies
- e. Identify needs and associated costs for staffing levels, accompanied with a timeline
 - First establish what ideal staffing levels need to be
 - Peer comparison/national standards
 - Historical analysis and projecting future requirements
 - Obtain projected COLA for foreseeable future
- f. Identify “true” peers for comparison
 - Identify similar districts (combo, call volume/call types, geography, budget, socio-economy, special hazards)
 - Budget worst/best case scenario (back up through assumptions in detail)
 - Identify “break even” analysis
 - Review financials by line item, subtract costs compare ratio to peers

Vision: Connect to our Community

13. Communications and Marketing-Goal Statement: “District will develop a comprehensive communications protocol for both internal and external communication by December 2013.”

- a. Develop comprehensive communications strategy
 - Use social media to convey message
 - Identifying all the forms of media/communication to use to make a list of the contacts
 - Identify everyone the district wants to communicate to
- b. Increase transparency of organization
 - Notification to all members of all AFD board mtgs. Regular or Special
 - Develop a clear message about volunteer organization for external and internal communication
 - Invite a selected external stakeholder to AFD meetings
 - Post all agendas, minutes, budget and board packets on web
 - Develop a clear message about building for external and internal communications
 - Broadcast AFD board mtg. on ACAT
- c. Clean up public image by posting frequent and transparent news releases
- d. Search out and “like community members, business and organizations to bring “them” to “us”

- e. Develop clear messaging and get it out
- f. Develop public opinion survey-re: poll on benefit assessment quarterly
 - Use annual events to gather feedback
 - Make comprehensive list of services performed by the district
 - Partner with HSU to create a survey
 - Check past complaints for needs (deficiencies)
 - Make list of possible services to provide
 - Identify target populations to survey
- g. Communicate leadership structure to public
- h. Diversify public education/outreach and social events
- i. Increase public awareness of accomplishments/activities through effective media campaign
- j. Leverage online tools for customer relations
- k. Develop “customer” survey for incident response
- l. Mobilize public \$ after catastrophic events
- m. Highlight volunteer/district relationship
- n. Political outreach strategy
 - Meet with elected officials to attend public meetings regularly
 - Create local coalition of local districts to influence decision making
 - Engage with statewide association to influence policy
- o. Communicate to public long-term fiscal plan

14. Fiscal Sustainability-Goal Statement: “Identify operational needs for service area and develop funding strategies and implementation timelines by October 2013.”

- a. Investigate ways to reduce operating cost
- b. Develop short and long term fiscal plan
- c. Pursue revenue recovery
- d. Determine core services to be offered and just say no to all else
- e. Develop stable funding source to match “real” needs
 - Identify “real” needs what are they
 - Identify individuals to address/focus on developing needs
 - Determine/analyze cost and need
 - Identify individuals to address focus on developing needs
 - Identify options/sources of funding possibilities
 - Charge particular calls IE (multiple false alarms on PFAs)
 - Develop new tax assessment
 - Incorporate blue lake, Fieldbrook, Airport (tax assessment) merger reduce redundancy
- f. Diversify funding sources