

Strategic Plan – 2016

WEST FARGO



FIRE & RESCUE

Executive Summary

In early 2016, the West Fargo Fire Department set out to craft a strategic plan; to understand where the department and city has been, to identify the current environment the department operates in, and to forecast future impacts on the department. The committee included all fire department chief officers, company officers, and the board of directors. Additionally, a climate survey completed in 2015 was used as an internal resource.

Two separate meetings were held in March 2016; the first to review the history of the department, describe the current operating environment, and to frame the future of the city and the impacts on the department. During the second meeting, a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges (SWOC) analysis of the department overall, training, personnel, apparatus and equipment and buildings and grounds. Using the information from these analyses, goals and timelines were formatted using short term (12 months or less) mid-term (12 to 24 months) and long term (greater than 24 months). A reaffirmation of the department's mission statement and creation of core values was also conducted.

While this information is current as of the 2016, internal and external factors that impact the department can fluctuate. A timeline has also been included in this planning document for the department to update the plan, as well as an end of life for this specific document.

Section I provides an in depth analysis of current fire department operations and the external environment the department operates in. It is from this information that the strengths and weaknesses are identified.

Section II provides a forecast of internal and external influences on the department. It is from this information that opportunity and challenges are forged.

Section III is the reaffirmation of the department's mission statement, and an explanation of the new core values.

Section IV is the results of each of the SWOC analyses; the combination of historical information, current operating environment, future internal and external influences, the department mission statement and lastly, core values.

Section V provides the goals and timelines for separate areas of the department.

Appendix A provides the historical timeline of the department, allowing the reader to fully understand what environment the department was born into and the numerous changes that occurred over the past decades

Section I – Current Operating Environment

Personnel

The department operates with four full time staff members who work Monday through Friday, daytime hours. The Fire Chief handles the day to day operational duties of the department, including finance, human resources, planning, and supervising the three fire inspectors. Each Fire Inspector handles an assigned district of the city, and inspects commercial and industrial occupancies twice a year, along with multifamily and high hazard occupancies.

A roster of 45 volunteer firefighters handles emergency response throughout the city and rural areas. As of April 2016, the department has 37 active members and 10 probationary firefighters.

All operations are guided by a Standard Operating Guide (SOG) consisting of 18 specific guides on types of response, safety, and handling of alarms. The department is also governed by a policy and procedure manual written by the Chief and ratified by the Board of Directors.

Apparatus

The department operates fourteen vehicles for response and daily operations. A vehicle replacement schedule is used to manage the age of the fleet and the cost of replacement over a certain number of years.

Four are pumpers, which have both a water tank and high capacity pump and seating for a minimum of four firefighters. Engines 7720 and 7721 are 2015 and 2008 models, respectively. Engine 7722 is a 1992 while Engine 7723 is a 1985 model. The department also has two tankers for rural response as well as certain in city responses. Tanker 7731 is a 1,500 gallon, 1989 model while Tanker 7732 is a 3,000 gallon 2006 model. Two grass trucks with small tanks and

WEST FARGO FIRE DEPARTMENT STRATEGIC PLAN -2016

pumps are used for outside fires; 7750 is a 2008 and 7751 is a 2010 model. The only aerial apparatus is a 2011 Sutphen 95ft Tower Ladder and the only rescue is a 2002 Heavy Rescue built by Marion. The rescue boat is a 2015 Zodiac 14ft inflatable hull craft. Lastly, the department operates three administration vehicles; a 2011 Chevy 1500 pickup, a 2015 Chevy 1500 pickup and a 2016 Ford Interceptor Utility. Regular apparatus rotation is proceeding as scheduled and the condition of the fleet is excellent.

Call Volume and Response Times

In 2015, the department responded to a record 379 calls for service. Of these calls, 334 occurred in city limits and 45 occurred outside of city limits. Of these calls, 56 were actual fires and 18 of those occurred in private residences.

2015 Calls for Service

Alarms	36%
Cancelled/No Incident	17%
Fire	15%
Service	10%
Hazmat	9%
Rescue	7%
Smells	6%

The pre-incident value of all property involved in fire was \$4,782,500, while the actual fire loss was \$781,930. That equates to a \$4,000,570 value of property saved.

Over the entire year, statistics were kept to track of the month, day of the week and time of the day when calls occurred. The busiest day of week was Wednesday and the least busy was

Thursday, however the range was between 12% and 16%. The hourly statistics shows two clearly defined spikes; between 11am and 1pm and again from 4pm to 6pm. When the daytime versus nighttime calls were examined, 67% or 2/3rds of all calls occur from 8am to 8pm, while the remaining 33% or 1/3rd occurred from 8pm to 8am. The range was from 17 calls in February to 38 calls in April; however seven of twelve months has call volumes over 30; one call a day. In-city calls were more frequent than rural calls, at an 8:1 ratio.

Response times were also measured in 2015 and then correlated to describe the current performance of the department versus the NFPA Standard 1720. A 90th percentile rank order calculation was used to determine response time performance against the NFPA standard of 15 firefighters on scene within 9 minutes, 90% of the time. The department responded in less than 9 minutes, less than 45% of all daytime calls and less than 30% of all nighttime calls.

Several reasons have been noted for the response times, especially the reaction times, being longer than the recommended NFPA standard. First, traffic is increasing throughout the city, Steps are being taken to improve traffic flows through congested areas, such as Sheyenne Street and I-94, however smaller streets and intersections have also seen a marked increase. The average daily car count for main and secondary roads leading to the stations are in excess of 13,000 per day at the busier intersections. The increased geographical size of the city itself is also contributing to the reaction time; firefighters have longer to travel to the stations to turn out for a call than ever before. In the 1980's and 1990's, most firefighters lived in a ten block area, north of 13th Ave and west of 9th Street East. Today, firefighters have to travel up to four miles from home or work to get to the stations. Lastly, the southern part of the city, the area south of I-94, is a bedroom community. Very few employers are in that area, and most of the firefighters

who live in this area work in the northern part of the city or even in Fargo or Moorhead, precluding them from responding to daytime calls.

Training

The department holds three training sessions a month. Two are for all firefighters and focus on structural firefighting and hazmat, while the last is for the technical rescue team and focuses on vehicle extrication and technical rescue. A combined 96 hours for firefighters and 144 hours for firefighters on the technical rescue team are provided annually.

Addition training is provided for firefighters through regional and state schools on North Dakota and Minnesota, as well as the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, MD, the annual Fire Instructors Training Conference (FDIC) in Indianapolis IN, and other national conferences throughout the year. In total, West Fargo firefighters put in 6,412 training hours in 2015.

Fire Inspection and Prevention

Fire prevention is a successful endeavor in West Fargo and the data supports this statement. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Report on Fire Service Loss in 2014 shows a \$39.90 loss per 1,000 residents in the Midwest region of the United States. In West Fargo, in the same period, the loss was \$26.27 per 1,000 residents. The inspections bureau consists of three fire inspectors with 22 years, 13 years, and 1 year experience in fire inspections. The informal goal of inspecting all commercial occupancies twice a year is the catalyst for the bureau, however no formal objective has been set nor has a tracking system been setup. This year, all inspections are slated to go paperless and wireless.

Throughout the year, public education is conducted on an as requested basis. Workplace fire safety and the occasional daycare tour occur from January to the end of September. During September, October, and early November, the three inspectors conduct public education for the ten elementary schools, two kindergarten centers and a private elementary school in the district. Over 6,400 children were reached in 2015.

Equipment and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The department conducted an extensive inventory and inspection of all personal protective gear in late 2015. All items of personal protective equipment that were outside of their NFPA recommended end of life date were removed from service and discarded. A rotation was designed to replace all PPE ensembles for firefighting, commonly referred to as “bunker gear” every ten years which the recommended end of life per NFPA Standard 1851. It was noted that all helmets currently in service were outside of the end of life as well and a grant was applied for to cover the cost of replacement.

Power tools, hand tools, loose equipment and technology such as radios, computers and communications equipment account for a large portion of the department’s assets. Power tools, hand tools and loose equipment are replaced or repaired as needed. Technology is replaced as the piece of equipment ages and newer technology becomes available. The department’s thermal imaging cameras and all communications equipment are in need of updating. The most pressing issue is the system wide upgrade to the radio system and the cost that the department will incur to maintain operations.

Climate Interview – 2015

The Chief of the Department personally interviewed every firefighter and officer from June through August 2015. The interview was structured through a brief background of the Chief, and an opportunity for the member to give their background, such as how long they've been on the department, their family and work. Then, the members were asked three questions; what do you like the best, what do you like the worst, and what would they change if they were the new Chief.

The first question was aimed to find the values the member most closely aligns with. There were around 10 answers commonly given, such as adrenaline, community service, sense of family, training, experience and comradery.

The second question was aimed to see the underlying issues of contention from the viewpoint of that specific member. The answers were varied, some were duplicated. Of the 17 common responses, 5 were adaptive issues which need to be evaluated in the coming months. The Chief of the Department took on these issues through training, policy and standard operating guidelines (SOG) changes. Three of the 12 remaining technical issues remain un-addressed.

The last question was designed to get the more truthful response of the adaptive issues at play within the department. Several large scale changes were identified; some will require budgeting through the Capital Improvements, some require changes to policy or SOG or still others will require adaptive changes to the department.

Section III – Forecast of Internal and External Influences

Over the next five to ten years there are several inflectional factors that will affect the department. It is estimated that the growth seen from 2010 to 2015 will continue over the next five years to ten years, until the city reaches its built-out population, about 45,000 to 47,000 residents. Within the next two years, city planning officials believe the city will be platted out of available land, and construction will continue for the next five or more years. City officials have been also looking into annexation of land to the north of the city; an unincorporated township area of around 5 square miles. A new subdivision just began construction on the first house of 800 to be built in the next few years on the southern fringe of the city.

The expected growth's impacts on the department will manifest themselves in two ways; increase in call volumes leading to volunteer burnout, and increased response times due to traffic affecting reaction times and travel times. The increase in call volume can only be estimated, however three separate calculations lead to very similar and therefore, reliable estimations.

The first calculation of future call volume uses the five year aggregate percentage from 2010 to 2015, which was 65%. Using this percentage increase would result in a call volume of 627 calls for service per year in 2020.

The second calculation uses the average single year percentage increase from 2010 to 2015, which was 11% compounded over five years. The result is 643 calls for service.

Lastly, the call volume of is applied to the population of 33,600 broken down to 1,000 per capita. Over the last fifteen years, the calls per capita increased (irrespective of the population increase) from 8 calls to 11 calls per 1,000 residents. It can be estimated that in 2020, the city would have approximately 13 calls per capita and have a population around 46,000 residents; 598 calls for

WEST FARGO FIRE DEPARTMENT STRATEGIC PLAN -2016

service. The average of these three estimates is 617 calls for service; an additional 237 calls from the 2015 total.

The volunteers of the West Fargo Fire Department accumulated a minimum of 5,700 man hours in 2015 responding to calls for service, based on an average of 15 firefighters per call and an hour of time per call. The top 3rd of the department responded to 76% of all calls (289) the middle third responded to 57% of all calls (217) and the bottom third responded to 39% of all calls (148). The department average was 151 calls for the year.

When these percentages are calculated using the average estimated 2020 call volume of 617 calls for service, the top 3rd will respond to 469 calls, the middle 3rd will make 352 calls and the bottom 3rd will make 241 calls for service.

		1/3rd	2/3rd	3/3rd
Year	CV	76%	57%	39%
2015	380	289	217	148
2020	617	469	352	241

In short, the bottom 3rd will have to put in 93 more hours per year, and the top 3rd will put in 180 more hours per year. The yearly total will increase from 5,700 man hours per year in 2015 to over 9,250 per year in 2020.

The increase in call volume is an external influence that will incur an internal consequence as well. Per department policy, any member who makes less than 25% of all calls on a quarterly basis is placed on probation for the following quarter. If, after that quarter the member has not brought up his or her response numbers, a Board of Review is commissioned and if the member doesn't have a reasonable cause for the decrease, he or she is removed from the department.

This policy went into effect to increase participation on calls after a period of low turnout from 2013 through late 2014.

When looking at this data, three possibilities exist. First, the member made every call they possibly could, which means that the additional calls would drop their percentage below 25% and within six months of that tipping point, they would be gone. Second, the members in the middle 3rd of the responders would be on the bottom of the percentages. This equates to a lower number of firefighters responding to each call. Lastly, the firefighters who continue to make the top 3rd of calls would be responding to over 460 calls per year or 39 calls a month. No matter how dedicated a member is, burnout will occur. Employers would most likely stop allowing their employees to leave as they'd be losing up to five hours of productivity a week, possibly more depending on clustered calls. The member's personal lives would be affected too.

Nighttime calls, especially sequential or multiple calls in a single night, take a toll on responders. With 67% of calls occurring from 8am to 8pm, and the remaining 33% occurring from 8pm to 8am, it can be expected that 413 calls will occur in daytime hours and 204 will occur in nighttime hours. That is a nighttime call every 1.7 days or 4 nighttime calls every week, on average.

Section IV – Mission Statement and Core Values

The current department mission statement was created around 2010. It was examined to ensure that our current operations and projected future operations are adequately described in the statement. It reads, “In a spirit of excellence, integrity, and dedication, the West Fargo Fire Department is committed to serving the community, protecting lives and property through the provision of professional fire and emergency services, 24 hours a day”. Every member of the strategic planning committee agreed that the mission statement was appropriate, precise and to the point.

Further discussion was held on the concept of a core value; one that remains true to the organization, the public expects from the department and what the members of the organization are expected to personify. Several concepts and values were discussed before the committee agreed on four; Commitment, Community Service, Professionalism, and Integrity.

Commitment is the focusing of efforts, the dedication of service towards an objective or ideal. For the department, it means commitment to the people we serve in the community and to each other.

The focus of the department is to serve the community. We, as a department, make the pledge to respond when a member or visitor of our great city is in trouble; no matter what.

In maintaining a high level of professionalism, we are able to provide an excellent service to the community in the safest manner possible while maintain fiscal stewardship of the taxpayer’s resources.

Doing what is morally and ethically right, always, even when no one is looking. The public holds a great deal of trust in this department, and rightfully so. They depend on us to be having our best day when they are having their worst.

Section V-SWOC Analysis

A five part Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunity and Challenge (SWOC) analysis was completed to integrate the past, current operating environment and future internal and external influences.

The first SWOC was a department wide analysis, looking at plans, programs, and operational aspects. The four additional focus areas were selected based on the overall department SWOC.

Department SWOC

<ul style="list-style-type: none">Equipment and apparatusTrainingFinancial stabilityLeadershipVolunteer staffRelationship with cityRelationship with mutual aid partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Inconsistent call responseExtracurricular training motivationLack of experienceRapid growth of cityTechnology
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Training– EMS for technical rescueTechnology – paperless inspectionsIncentives for volunteersCommunity educationChanging organizational cultureGrowth of tax baseGrants	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Keeping new firefighters engagedApathy of current firefighters staffDiversity of populationIncreased call volume next five – ten yearsCity growth- named streets and >geographyCommunication systemFirefighter education-time constraints

Strengths

Apparatus and equipment- the current fleet of apparatus are in good repair and serviceability.

Maintenance plans were put into place in the last year to ensure major issues are identified and

fixed as soon as possible. Equipment is also in good repair and serviceability, and extra attention paid to the inventory of equipment, reducing duplication and replacing older, worn out pieces.

Training- the training program has recently shifted towards a more efficient program, supporting the new Standard Operating Guidelines and Policies. Several outside classes and instructors have been brought into begin new service programs such as the water rescue, and incident safety officer programs.

Funding and stability- the department has been very fortunate to have the funding to grow and evolve with the purchase of a new aerial apparatus and the construction of a new fire station in recent years.

Leadership- the department's leadership team works as an empowered team to make decisions

Relationship with the City- the Chief has been fostering a relationship with other department heads, elected officials, and the city administrator that will work well into the future.

Relationships with mutual aid partners- the department's mutual aid partners in the county and into Minnesota have been involved in training for Firefighter I certification. The class has been hosted and taught by the department.

Weaknesses

An inconsistent call response- the department has been tracking firefighters per call and has noticed that depending on the time of the day and they type of call, the turnout isn't consistent. For example, a fire call that occurs on a weekday evening has a statistically better response than an alarm call that occurs during the middle of the night on a weekend.

Membership motivation for training- as identified in the 2015 Climate Survey, it was discussed that certain members do not actively participate in trainings or tend to stand back and not participate to the level expected.

Lack of experience overall- it was noted that 62% of the department has less than 10 years' experience, and of that number, 18% have over 5 years' experience. As the department progresses, the loss of institutional knowledge will need to be replenished through training.

Rapid growth of city- the growth of the city and the anticipated rapid pace of the next five years is considered a weakness; stretching reaction times as traffic and congestion increases and travel times as the geographic area increases. A linked issue is the use of named streets throughout the new developments instead of numbered streets.

Branding- the department has historically kept information internally, and not provided a proactive approach to public relations.

Mobile Data Terminals- the MDTs in the apparatus have a mapping system installed; however the map file is very generic and doesn't allow for names on the streets. With the increase in new developments, responses can be affected by personnel trying to navigate an area unknown to them.

Opportunity

Technical rescue and emergency medical services- the department has historically not provided emergency medical training to its personnel who respond to motor vehicle entrapments. With the increase in calls comes a renewed pressure to readdress the issue and provide the right training to personnel who perform extrication. A linked issue is technical rescue, which the department

needs to be trained in to properly respond to calls for water, trench, collapse, and urban search and rescue (USAR).

Paperless Technology- with tablet computers, the inspections and prevention bureau can use paperless technology to complete inspections and tracking of inspections, increasing efficiency.

Incentives for volunteers- the need for evolution of the department is obvious and impending. With this evolution comes the opportunity to provide incentives for volunteers such as an hourly wage or stipend for responses and trainings.

Community education- the opportunity for community outreach has never been better for the department. Communication pathways have been opened with the use of social media, organizational outreach to community service organizations, better media relations, and a new website.

Changing organizational culture- the department culture has seen a change from the social club atmosphere of years past to a one focused on community service, training and safety.

Growth of tax base- the city has grown and the tax base as well, every year for the past ten years. The cost to provide a robust fire protection continues to grow, albeit not at the rate of tax equation. .

Growth of fundraising- the department was fortunate and forward thinking enough to start a gaming program to raise funds for the department. The funds are used to purchase equipment, provide training opportunities and generally reduce the tax burden of the citizens of West Fargo.

Grants- the department has also been very fortunate to receive several community grants over the past five years, as well as the Assistance to Firefighters (AFG) grant in 2009. This year, the

department continues to apply for grants to expand our capabilities and again, reduce the tax burden of the citizens.

Challenges

Keeping new firefighters engaged- in generations past, the members of the fire department stayed longer than the average “life span” of younger generations. For example, the department has over 30 retired members who put in 20 years or more and still live in the area. By comparison, since the department began offering a deferred compensation plan in lieu of call stipends in 2000, a total of 32 firefighters have placed at least one year of service and have since left. Of the six new members added in the year 2007, none of them are still on the department. A related challenge is the balancing family, work and the fire department. Each and every year, the members of the department are asked to give more time to training, fundraising, and response.

Apathy of current members- this could be considered the “burnout” of current firefighters. It is illustrated by the picking and choosing of calls based on the initial report; not responding to routine calls but rather waiting for “working” calls. The number of reporting firefighters is always higher when more serious calls come in; sometimes this swing can be from 6 firefighters for routine calls to 20 or more for working incidents.

Diversity of population- the department is 97.7% white males. This doesn't match the makeup of the community in gender or race. The committee saw this as a weakness, with the large population of New Americans in the West Fargo area. Being aware of other cultures and being able to communicate are two areas that would greatly increase the department's efficiency in operations.

Call volume increases- the city is expected to continue growth over the next ten years, and as such, an increase in call volume will continue. The 63% five year increase from 2010 to 2015 can be expected to occur again from 2015 to 2020. This is a challenge that is tied to many others; how to keep up, prevent burnout, reduce response times, keep a trained fire department, and all the while create a sustainable solution.

City growth- the growth of the city presents the department with several different aspects that can be labeled under any of the headings of the SWOC analysis. The challenge to firefighters is the addition of named streets every few months.

Communication systems- the current communications system has been identified as having a definite end of life in 2018. After this point, the manufacturer will no longer service or repair our equipment. Simultaneously, the State of North Dakota has a proposal and study underway to change the frequency ranges of public safety operations in the four large cities in the state. In the FM metro area, this means all communications equipment will be replaced with a different technology in the future. A quandary for the department is what type of equipment or system should replace the current one. The short time table and high price tag (\$200k) means a serious dilemma for a growing department that has financial needs in other parts of its operations.

Firefighter education- while the training program is listed as an opportunity; it can be a challenge as well due to time constraints of volunteer firefighters. In 2015, firefighters were expected to complete 96 hours of training, and those on the extrication team were expected to make 144 hours of training. The Insurances Services Office (ISO) which assigns risk to communities based on the performance and capability of fire departments requires firefighters to have 192

hours a year. Additional training opportunities are available; however the increased time requirements preclude some firefighters from participating.

Buildings and Grounds SWOC

Adequate facilities for current operations
All facilities are in excellent locations
All are modern and in good repair
Space is setup for future needs
Training grounds is a valuable asset

Southside HVAC system has major flaws
Parking at the Southside Station
Traffic control at Sheyenne Street (SS)
Exhaust recovery at Central Station

Living quarters at Southside for 24 hour FT
Living quarters at Central for 24 hour FT
Expanded office space at Central
Training grounds – blank canvas to develop

Maintenance of buildings
-Paint, interior and exterior
-Garage doors
-Roofs
Snow removal options
Funding for expansion of Southside for 24 hr

Strengths

Adequate facilities for current operations- the department operates two stations and the training grounds. Improvements over the past four years, including the addition of a parking lot at the Central Station and a handicapped parking spot have made the facility more “user friendly.”

All facilities are in excellent locations- both stations are located within 1.5 miles of a majority of the city with the exceptions of the Burlington Addition (W of 9th St E, S of 13th Ave E to Fargo

City Line) and the Westport Beach/Wilds area north of Horace. The training grounds facility is located in an industrial area, so the noise and smoke generated won't impact residential areas.

All are modern and in good repair- in recent years, maintenance upkeep has been a priority of the department.

Setup for future needs- both the Southside and Central Fire Stations have sizeable second floors that are ready for remodel to accommodate future full time 24 hour staffing needs. This reduces the impact of having to place additions to the stations.

Training grounds is a valuable asset- the training ground facility is a blank canvas that will be used to create a training center for the department and possibly the region.

Weaknesses

Southside HVAC system- has major flaws. In 2014 the system needed complete rebuilding after contaminated water and antifreeze got into the compressors; the department paid in excess of \$40k for the repairs. In 2015, the issue further deteriorated, as the entire summer was spent without AC while the supplier of the system replaced all the compressors again as they went out of service. The repairs in 2015 were covered by the supplier and manufacturer and the situation has been monitored all winter long to determine the root issue.

Southside parking- the Southside Station has limited parking in front of the building, which is where a majority of the firefighters park during a call. The rear of the building has more parking, however with five FT staff working out of the station by 2019, in addition to volunteer staff responding, we may have an issue with parking in the future.

Traffic control at Sheyenne St- with the redesign of Sheyenne St, firefighters will have to negotiate additional lanes of traffic to gain entry to the station and then renegotiate those traffic lanes when responding to a call.

Exhaust recovery at Central Station- the station does not have an exhaust recovery system to capture and expel diesel exhaust when the trucks are started. While the singular event of exposure to exhaust isn't extremely harmful, a lifetime of exposure to the carcinogens contained in the exhaust can create chronic health effects.

Opportunity

Living quarters- both stations are set up for housing 24 hour staff with living quarters. This is an opportunity to grow the department with the city and the initial investments were made years ago.

Expanded office at Central Station- this station has an office area that has not been in use since the 2000 addition to the station. If, in the future, the need for additional office space is realized, the department doesn't have to add onto the station, but rather simply remodel.

Challenges

Maintenance- all of the assets for the department need regular maintenance. A preventative maintenance program has been established for the structure of the buildings, the HVAC systems, garage doors, and roof systems. In short, the most expensive parts of the buildings to repair or replace. The challenge lies in keeping on top of the program and repairing problems before they become large issues.

Snow removal options- for the past four years, the department has been fortunate to have the City of West Fargo remove snow in lieu of rental costs for storing snow removal equipment at the Southside Station. This year, the public works department will not need to store their equipment at the Southside Station, forcing the department to look into snow removal options; either contract for services or up-fit an existing truck with a plow.

Funding for Southside living quarters- with the need to expand the current FT staff to 24 hour staffing, the funding for the move needs to be addressed, in particular how the physical construction to the station will be funded.

Apparatus and Equipment SWOC

<p>Very solid apparatus and equipment Process for replacement is in place Preventative maintenance program Major repairs done outside the department Current fleet meets current mission Replacement schedule is funded</p>	<p>Cost of new apparatus is going up -Over \$1M for aerial -Over \$450k for engines GIS maps on mobile data terminals</p>
<p>Additional training for engineers Technology improved</p>	<p>Cost Training on new equipment Resale – affects budget</p>

Strengths

Solid apparatus- the department's current fleet fits the needs of both the city and rural communities perfectly. Additionally, a comprehensive replacement schedule is in place and the escrow account is fully funded to date.

Preventative Maintenance Program- in 2015 the department began a preventative maintenance program which addresses areas of the apparatus that aren't simply taken care of with a visual inspection and routine oil changes. Ladder 7760, for example, has a complex system of hydraulic pumps that operate the tower ladder. Annual inspections and pump testing as well as ladder testing is now scheduled.

Major repairs done outside the department- while it is cost saving to have simple fixes to pump valves and minor repairs to engines done in house by competent personnel, the liability of major repairs falls to outside companies. These companies are more knowledgeable, have been trained in repairs, and take on the liability if repairs aren't done correctly resulting in more damage to department assets.

Weaknesses

Mobile Data Terminals- currently only four of the department's apparatus have a MDT installed. The benefit of having the MDT on board is mapping and GIS maps are available, including pre-fire plans. The GIS map on the current system is slow to be updated and doesn't provide much detail, including street names and hydrants automatically.

Opportunity

Training for engineers- the opportunity exists for adopting a new training program for engineers in the department. Since this type of training is the first step in the career ladder of the department, it is important to standardize the training across the board and to attach performance measures to the program as well. Since the NFPA has handed down training requirements to the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) the administration of the program rests solely on the department.

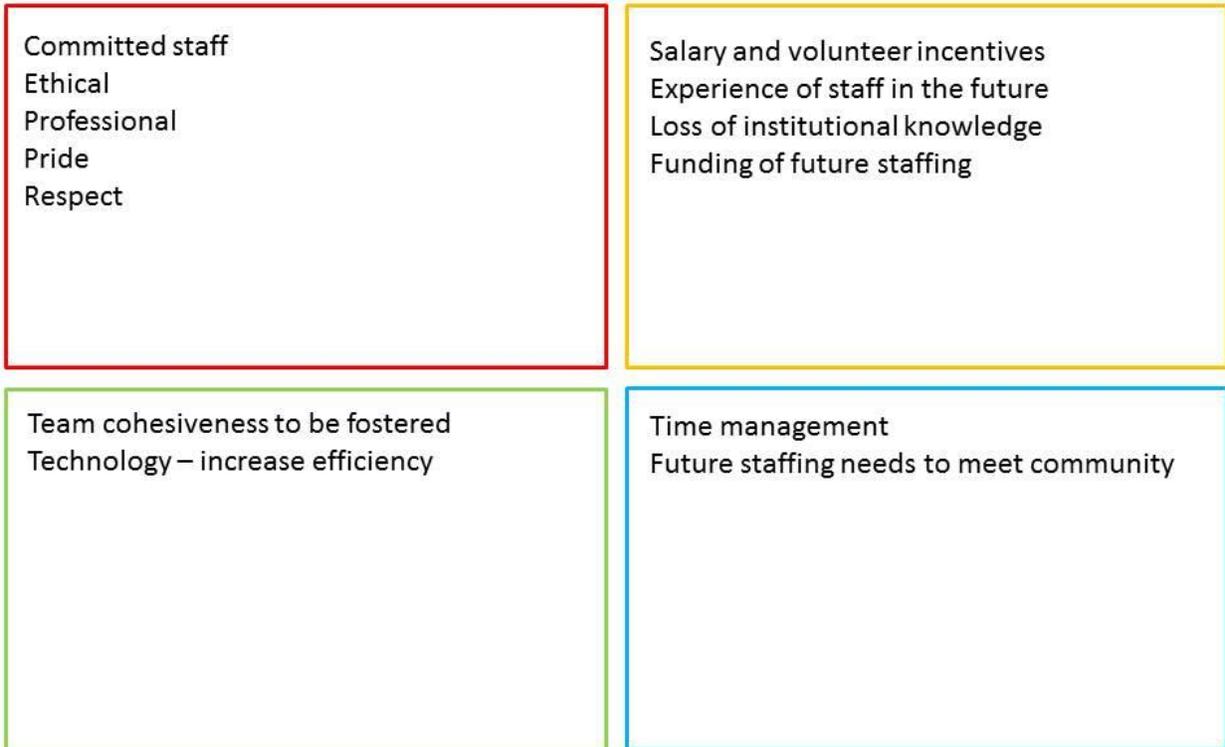
Technology- firefighting technology has been improving over time, however large scale breakthroughs such as thermal imaging have seen recent advances, as has communications and wireless technology. The time is right for the department to begin adopting.

Challenges

Training on new equipment- the department just completed a major upgrade in water rescue equipment, however it was quickly realized that with new equipment comes additional training requirements. As additions of equipment are added, the cost and time factor of training have to be taken into account.

Resale of apparatus and equipment- the department's escrow account of funds to pay for replacement of apparatus operates on resale/salvage costs. These estimates are usually higher than the actual resale cost and artificially lower the cost of the replacement on paper.

Staffing/Personnel SWOC



Strengths

Committed staff- both the full time and volunteer staff are very committed to the community and the department. Eleven members of the department made over 50% off all calls in 2015, a range of 227 calls to 143 calls. Throughout the summer, members participated in fundraising events; organization of the annual Firefighter’s Ball, attended block parties and public events, and in the fall, delivered public education to the entire school system. Members are ethical, professional, prideful and respectful.

Weaknesses

Salary and volunteer incentives- as time moves on, it becomes more difficult for employers of firefighters to adsorb lost time or pay for time out of work. Firefighters are also going to be asked to give more of their personal time for training and response to calls. Retention of personnel might become an issue in the future and hourly compensation might be an answer.

Experience and loss of institutional knowledge- the department lost two firefighters in early 2016 and is slated to lose another four in the next two years; an aggregate of 160 years of institutional knowledge. After these members retire, 2 of 55 members will have over 20 years, 14 will have over 10 years and 39 will have less than 10 years. While the department can and will alter the training program to provide as much surrogate experience as possible, eventually the amount of training required to get volunteer members to the level needed will take too much of the members time.

Funding of future staffing needs- in the future, volunteer incentives coupled with the cost of 24 hour full time staffing will dramatically increase the fire department's budget and in turn, the contract with the City of West Fargo. The department needs to do everything possible to retain volunteers as long as possible to keep the tremendous resource viable.

Opportunity

Team cohesiveness- with the need and path of the department trending towards creating a combination department that relies on more full time staffing than today, the opportunity is there to create a truly cohesive department using 24hr full time staffing, daytime overhead staffing, and volunteer staffing. The department has numerous examples of this type of system working well in the Twin City region of Minnesota.

Technology- increasing efficiency of the staff is possible through adoption of technology.

Paperless inspections, permits and reports will save on man hours currently dedicated to data input, while dispatch technology can alert only the closest units to an incident instead of having the entire department turnout for a call. E-Dispatching is a trend that is taking off across the state; a computer system records the dispatch and sends a text message to all members of the department. Another program, called I Am Responding allows for members to use an app or an 800 phone number to alert the station that they are responding.

Challenges

Time management- in 2016, the department increased the volunteer roster to 55 members. This comes on the heels of the department eliminating on call crews, where a certain crew of firefighters are assigned an on call month and take single resource calls while larger calls are paged out for both crews to respond. This program was eliminated because the numbers of firefighters turning out for calls wasn't acceptable and increased response times. The department could go back to a crew call system with the addition of staff and realignment of priorities.

Future staffing needs- the staffing of the department is geared towards the needs of the community and performance measures. As Section III of this plan outlined; the growth of the city is expected to continue and the terminal population the city can support (approx. 46,000) is going to be reached within a short timeframe. The increase in calls, response time and hours required for training will place a strain on the current system. It has been identified for the past fifteen years that eventually the department will need to go to some form of 24 hour staffing, and it appears the time has indeed come.

Section VI – Goals and Timelines

In each section, an objective, strategy and task list is identified in priority order based on short term (12 months or less), mid-term (12-24 months) and long term (24 months or greater). This section of the document will be supplemented by the department capital improvements budget. Strategies are listed by priority, not necessarily by year to be completed.

<i>Category</i>	<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Year</i>
Equipment	Replace all Self-contained Breathing Apparatus. Current SCBA is about to the three standards (15 yrs.) out of certification. NLT 31 December 2016	Short Term	2016
Training	Conduct a pilot program for training fire department engineers by 1 October 2016. After feedback, alter or adjust the program for implementation into policy NLT 1 January 2017.	Short Term	2017
Training	Conduct a pilot program for training fire department officers by 1 April 2017. After feedback, alter or adjust the program for implementation into policy NLT 1 July 2017	Short Term	2017
Technology	Adapt a paperless system, based on tablet technology, for fire inspections, permitting, and pre-fire plan for a test phase to end on 1 September 2016 and implementation of the system on 1 October 2016.	Short Term	2016
Buildings	Purchase a snow plow to be mounted on a brush truck for snow removal at all fire department buildings NLT 1 October 2016	Short Term	2016
Personnel	Create a Master Plan/Sub Committee addressing volunteer incentive pay and research FLSA as it applies to the department personnel, both volunteer and full time. NLT 1 April 2017.	Mid Term	2017
Buildings	Create a Master Plan/Sub Committee for developing the West Fargo Fire Department Training Grounds, to include; types and specifications of buildings and permanent structures to be built. Include a multi-phase schedule. NLT 1 January 2017.	Mid Term	2017
Buildings	Publish a Request for Proposal (RFP) for professional design services for the Training Grounds, based on the Master Plan. Selection of architect NLT 1 July 2017.	Mid Term	2017

WEST FARGO FIRE DEPARTMENT STRATEGIC PLAN -2016

Training	Provide Emergency Medical Responder (EMR) training to all members of the extrication team. To be complete NLT 31 December 2017.	Mid Term	2017
Buildings	Publish a Request for Proposal (RFP) for professional design services for the Southside Fire Station living quarters. Selection of architect NLT 1 January 2017	Mid Term	2017
Personnel	Create a Master Plan/Sub Committee to research best practices for integrating full time firefighting staff into a mainly volunteer fire department. Make recommendations on hiring, scheduling, training and pay scales. NLT 1 July 2017	Mid Term	2017
Equipment	Replace all mobile, portable and base station radios due to manufacturer dropping support and repairs on current models. NLT 1 July 2018	Mid Term	2018
Buildings	Publish a Request for Proposal (RFP) for construction of the living quarters for the Southside Fire Station. Goal for completion of NLT 1 December 2018	Long Term	2018
Buildings	Publish a Request for Proposal for Phase 1 construction of the training grounds. NLT 31 December 2019.	Long Term	2019
Personnel	Create a Master Plan/Sub Committee for staffing; Create a crew call schedule that keeps calls for service to 300 or less per crew based on calls estimated per month. NLT 1 July 2019	Long Term	2019
Personnel	Hire new full time staff. NLT 1 July 2019	Long Term	2019
Apparatus	Purchase a new pickup or full size SUV for the Battalion Chief to be stationed Southside. In service NLT 1 July 2019	Long Term	2019
Apparatus	Purchase a new light rescue/mini pumper for medical calls and small fires to be stationed Southside. In service NLT 1 July 2019	Long Term	2019
Apparatus	Replace 7731 (a 1990 tanker) with a tanker/engine for city and rural use. Request for Bids, 1 January 2020	Long Term	2020
Apparatus	Replace 7723 (a 1985 engine) with an engine or quint. Request for Bids, 1 January 2020	Long Term	2020
Buildings	Publish a Request for Proposal for the installation of an exhaust capture system at the Central Station. NLT 1 October 2019	Long Term	2019
Buildings	Lobby the City of West Fargo for the design and addition of an early warning traffic device along Sheyenne Street at 26 th Ave during the redesign of the area. NLT 1 January 2020	Long Term	2020
Buildings	Construct the training grounds to the design	Long Term	2020

WEST FARGO FIRE DEPARTMENT STRATEGIC PLAN -2016

Several “Master” plans and committees will need to be created to address some of the strategies in this document. These master plans should contain actionable items and timelines that, while dated, aren’t set in stone. The funding of the plan also has to be considered; there is no point in planning out the future of this department without determining the funding stream.

<u>Projects</u>		<u>Revenue / Escrow Schedule</u>		
SCBA Replacement	160,000	2016	*Fundraising	160,000
2016		Complete by EOY 2016		160,000
SS Drainage Project	1,200	2016	Budget	1,200
2016		Complete by EOY 2016		1,200
CS Landscape Project	3,000	2016	Budget	3,000
2016		Complete by EOY 2016		3,000
SS Landscape Project	3,000	2016	Budget	3,000
2016		Complete by EOY 2016		3,000
CS Carpet Replacement	5,000	2017	Budget	5,000
2017		Complete by EOY 2017		5,000
CS Interior Paint	4,000	2017	Budget	4,000
2017		Complete by EOY 2017		4,000
CS Apparatus Bay Paint	5,000	2017	Budget	5,000
2017		Complete by EOY 2017		5,000
CS Exhaust Removal System	25,000	2017	*Budget	12,500
2016-2019		2019	*Fundraising	12,500
		Complete by EOY 2019		25,00
Radio Replacement	190,000	2016	Fundraising	45,000
2016-2018		2017	*Budget	45,000
		2018	*Budget	100,000
		Complete by EOY 2018		190,000
SS Living Quarters	290,000	2017	Budget	45,000
2017-2019 EOY		2018	Fundraising	90,000
		2018	Budget	100,000
		2019	Budget	55,000
		Complete by mid-year 2019		290,000

WEST FARGO FIRE DEPARTMENT STRATEGIC PLAN -2016

Training Grounds	1,000,000	2017	Fundraising	10,000
2017-2023		2020	Fundraising	124,000
		2021	Budget	123,500
		2021	Grants	742,500
		<hr/>		
* Backup funds to grant award		Complete by		
		2023		1,000,000

Budget

2016	1,200
2016	3,000
2016	3,000
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	7,200
2017	45,000
2017	45,000
2017	5,000
2017	4,000
2017	4,000
2017	12,500
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	115,500

Fundraising Expenditures

Aug 2016	160,000
Dec 2016	45,000
Jan 2017	10,000
Jan 2018	90,000
Jan 2020	124,000
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Total	429,000

2018	100,000
2018	100,000
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	200,000
2019	12,500
2019	55,000
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	67,500
2021	123,500
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	123,500

Fundraising

2016	160,000
2016	45,000
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	205,000
2017	10,000
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	10,000
2018	90,000
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	90,000
2021	124,000
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	124,000

Grants

2016	160,000	AFG - SCBA Replacement
2017	25,000	AFG - Exhaust Removal System CS
2018	190,000	Countywide Grant - Radio Replacement
2019	742,500	AFG - Regional Training Center

Master Plan/Sub Committees

Volunteer Incentive Pay and the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)- This committee will be formed with the intent of researching the effectiveness of our current volunteer retention system (deferred comp plan) and the department's adherence to FLSA as it applies to both volunteer and career staff members. The work and research of this committee will be used to guide policy.

Training Grounds Development- This committee will be formed to address the deployment of the training grounds in regards to design, cost, and revenue streams from grants/fundraising, regionalization of the center, and manufacturer selection for the training props. The overall design will be split into manageable phases with timelines to be determined by the committee. A Request for Proposal (RFP) for design of the training center will be accomplished NLT 1 July 2017. An RFP for the first phase of construction will be published NLT 31 December 2019 for construction to begin in the summer of 2020.

Staffing- This committee will be formed to research ancillary issues with hiring full time 24 hour staff, as well as being charged with crafting a crew call system that reduces volunteer calls to 300 or less per year per crew.

Summary – Chief Fuller

In closing this strategic planning document, I want to thank the members of the committee for their time and efforts over the past few months to get together and talk about both big issues and small issues alike. But most importantly, the department as a whole is taking a look towards the future to become proactive. We've been in the midst of external change for the past ten years; however the next five to eight years will have the most profound impact on the department. It is certain that our population will continue to grow at one of the highest rates in the state, and this will impact our call volumes, response times, and most likely impacts our recruiting and retaining volunteers. With the identification of our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges, our deliverable actions have been set with timelines and escrow funding. But there are still challenges yet to overcome. First, we have to ensure that funding for this strategic plan is made available; through our contracts and budget, our grants from both local businesses and the federal government, and that we met our lofty fundraising goals to match budget funding for certain projects. It is the intent that this document doesn't sit idle but rather is reviewed annually for additions or corrections, and that every five years, the entire process is begun again.

Daniel Fuller, MPA, NRP
Chief of the Department

2016 Strategic Planning Committee

Daniel Fuller	Fire Chief	Dell Sprecher	Asst. Fire Chief
Rory Jorgensen	Asst. Fire Chief	Kendel Frost	Fire Captain
John Freeman	Fire Captain	Steve Baron	Fire Captain
Joey Porter	Fire Captain	Tom Clark	Fire Captain / BOD
Ken Zetocha	BOD President	Joe Tintes	BOD Treasurer
Perry McClellan	BOD Secretary	Brad Kommer	BOD

Appendix A

The West Fargo Fire Department was officially created in 1940, after the residents of the Village of Southwest Fargo decided the need for additional fire protection outside the city limits of Fargo was needed. In 1941, the department procured an apparatus and officially registered with the North Dakota Firefighters Association. The original fire station was a single stall garage which is part of the Central Fire Station today.

In 1950, the department grew to meet the needs of the community. A two story concrete block garage was added onto the original single story garage. Up until the Village of Southwest Fargo became the City of West Fargo in 1967, the department continued to add onto the station and add apparatus. After the incorporation of the city, the department retained its independent status and began to collect a yearly contract from the City of West Fargo, a process that continues today.

The department is one of the few remaining independent fire companies in the North Dakota and Minnesota area. The department also still handles a city and rural area with a single department.

The first full time personnel were hired in 1973; A Fire Chief and a Fire Inspector. The growth of the city and the department continued throughout the 1980s and 1990s. In 2000, the department grew again, with the addition of a two additional apparatus bays, a large training room, office space, and a second floor which remained empty for the eventual addition of full time twenty four hour staffing. In 2003 an additional fire inspector was hired, making a three person full time staff. Throughout this time the department maintained around 30 volunteer firefighters.

The most recent growth occurred through 2011 and into 2015. A second fire station, the Southside Station, was opened in 2011 in the Eagle Run area of the city. This station was added

due to the tremendous growth in the area south of I-94. That same year, a 95ft tower ladder, assigned as 7760, was purchased. This was the first aerial apparatus for the department. The volunteer roster was expanded to 45 members in 2014, and in 2015, a third fire inspector was hired to handle the increased workload of inspections throughout the city.

Throughout this period (1940-2015) the Village of Southwest Fargo and later on, the incorporated City of West Fargo, has grown from a small village of less than 100 homes to a bustling city of over 33,600 residents and a core city of the metropolitan Fargo-Moorhead-West Fargo area. In the early 1990's, the city began to see growth in the area south of I-94 along the Sheyenne River. By the early 2000's, this area was bustling with both commercial and residential development. In 2015, this area accounted for an estimated 20,000 residents and eight square miles of additional land and sprawl to the city limits.