

# Gilroy Fire Department Memorandum

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**TO:** Jay Baksa, City Administrator

**FROM:** Jeff Clet, Fire Chief

**SUBJECT:** Master Plan Update

**DATE:** September 11, 2003

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## Introduction

This memorandum is in response to your request for an update of the Master Plan for Fire Services as a supporting reference for the City's Nexus study.

## Overview

While controlled, continued residential and more notably commercial growth within the City of Gilroy will challenge the Fire Department's ability to maintain service levels. Commercial and industrial development away from the City's core, traffic congestion and increased service request volume has increased response times for public safety responders. In 1999 the City secured the services of Citygate Associates, a fire services consulting firm, to work with the Gilroy Fire Services Master Planning Task Force to develop both short- and long-term strategies to maintain service levels in light of these changes.

In the absence of comprehensive Department data, the consultants gathered operational "data" through personnel interviews and reviews of existing documentation on Department and City policy. Furthermore, the planning horizon for the project was 20 years. As a result of this evaluation, needs related to station location, facilities, apparatus, personnel/staffing, and equipment were identified. Since the release of the report, many of the report's recommendations have been completed with others in process or being implemented. However, a number of important recommendations remain to be addressed.

Of the 20 prioritized recommendations regarding operational and administrative functions, the most noteworthy affecting the Fire Impact Fees were recommendations to:

- Identify and assess risk within the City
- Plan and build at least two additional fire stations
- Purchase a "Quint" engine/ladder truck combination vehicle
- Plan and build a local training facility
- Construct a fifth fire station if the annexation of 660 acres on the City's northeast side occurred

It is important to note, however, that these recommendations were based on the City's historical growth and development policies and decisions prior to 2000. The consultants cautioned that future changes in the City's General Plan or development decisions, following the release of the report, would require updating of the Master Plan for it to remain relevant.

### **Master Planning Activities and Supporting Methodologies Performed By the Department To Date**

Since the Master Plan's completion, the City Council has made several significant policy decisions regarding both residential and commercial development. While the Master Plan briefly addresses the potential impact of changes in City policy related to development, there was insufficient information during the data collection phase of the report to adequately analyze and develop specific timeframes for the listed recommendations. In the absence of more detailed development and Department operational data, the recommendations of the Master Planning report do not provide specific thresholds or "triggers" for the addition of resources to service growth. In light of the need for specific triggers in developing long-range planning documents and capital budgets, the Department has conducted a variety of interim analyses. (**Note: The Department** is in the process of securing the service of the original consultant to assist in updating the Master Plan, which is scheduled to be completed January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2004.)

These analyses in some cases were performed without the benefit of extensive operational data. However, the Department has employed methodologies to perform the analyses when data were available consistent with those recognized by the Commission of Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) and thus has used a recognized standardized approach to analyzing fire department operations.

### ***A Review of the Master Plan of Fire Services Report***

In developing the following conclusions regarding the relevancy of the Department's Master Plan to the Fire Impact Fee, given development decisions since the Master Plan's release, the Department has performed an ongoing review of a variety of published documents, memos and budgets. Some of these include:

- The City's recently approved General Plan
- RDO Numerical Limits for 2004-2013
- Development agreements (e.g., Regency and Newman)
- Memos regarding residential development in "High Hazard" and "Hillside" areas

As development information becomes available, its implication and potential impact on the Department's fire suppression and "other risks" response capabilities has been reevaluated to determine growth-related service impact. This evaluation also includes a review and implication analysis of the Department's Master Plan. In light of several development decisions since August 2000, the following descriptions provide a summary



of the conclusions the Department has reach regarding the relevancy of the Master Plan in light of these decisions.

In response to “**Finding #1: The Department does not have a system for quantifying risk...**” of the Master Plan, the Department has started a risk analysis of the City. Preliminary findings of the risk analysis have permitted the Department to identify potential ramifications of fire incidents for the purpose of developing preliminary projections of needed fire protection resources. Specifically, preliminary analyses results indicated that additional personnel and capital resources would be necessary to effectively mitigate structure fires in “large box” commercial development (e.g., Regency and Newman type developments). Capital resources needed to service commercial growth include the purchase of a Ladder Truck/”Quint” with an aerial ladder to perform roof, rescue, ventilation, and salvage operations. This anticipated capital purchase is consistent with the Master Plan’s Finding #14 and recommendation.

The risk analysis has also identified residential development in “high hazard” and “hillside” areas. To remain consistent with the mandates of the City’s General Plan, the Department has proposed changes in the timing and types of capital improvement to service growth in these areas. These high hazard areas and hillside areas are primarily residential areas adjoining to wildland areas. Specifically, the Department has identified the need to purchase two specialized four-wheel drive apparatus capable of responding into and operating in the developed wildland interface areas.

Consistent with “**Finding #3...Citygate has identified deficiencies in current station coverage and determine that projected growth will cause the problem to grow more severe,**” of the Master Plan and in light of current standards of practice within the fire service, the Department has confirmed the conclusions of the Master Plan indicating the need for additional resources within the Northwest quadrant of the City. Specifically increased suppression resources are needed to perform an “interior fire attack” and perform rescue operations. While the total number of personnel has increased since the plan’s release and the city has initiated the construction of a permanent fire station, the current two person EMS squad configuration in the response district does not have adequate fire suppression capability.

The update to the Master Plan will provide specific recommendations based on current community standards of coverage for the implementation of additional resources in the area. However, based on a preliminary analysis of service levels throughout the City and risk type within the Northwest quadrant, the Department has worked with the Community Development Department to ensure its recommended changes in the timing of capital improvements have been included in the current Fire Impact Budget.

Information not available to the consultants during the data gathering phase of the Master Plan’s development were decisions regarding the Residential Development Ordinance



Numerical Limits for 2004-2013. Based on the information contained in planning documents dated September 3, 2002 and May 27, 2003, the Department has initially determined that a fourth fire station and corresponding capital resources will be needed based on the RDO allocation and planned development within the specific plan project for 2007-2008. However, this determination will be subject to the conclusions of the Master Plan Update and thus the timing of proposed improvement may change. Other factors affecting the timing of capital improvements include changes in the rate of development; changes in standards of practice related to fire suppression and emergency services; and changes in service delivery options.

Also consistent with the Master Plan's Finding #3 is the need to plan for capital improvements to service growth with the annexation of 660 acres in the Northeast area of the City. While the timing of the potential annexation of this area is dependent on several review and approval processes and is currently unknown, the City and Department have included anticipated improvement costs in the current Fire Impact Budget to ensure the Department has the ability to service the growth associated with this anticipated action.

Consistent with "**Finding #8...there are no adequate local training facilities available to the Department,**" the Department has determined, using its recently implemented record management system, that in-service training activities conducted at the Chestnut station have adversely impacted response time performance in other areas of the City. To service growth and maintain exiting service levels, as new fire stations are added, the location of fire stations will become more geographically dispersed. The absence of a centralized training facility with the construction of additional stations will eventually exacerbate response time performance and service levels.

## **Conclusion**

While the Master Plan accurately addresses the need for additional resources to serve growth, it does not provide specific triggers or thresholds to aid in the timing of capital improvements. In order to ensure adequate Fire Impact Fund levels, the Department has included its recommendations regarding the timing of capital improvements based on the most recent release of planning and development information. These recommendations have been included in the Fire Impact Budget to ensure funding levels necessary to service growth.

To ensure objective and conservative estimates, the Department has strived to continuously "update" its Master Plan by employing the universally accepted principles and practices of the "Standards of Coverage" methodology.

