

Gilroy Fire Department Memorandum

TO: Jay Baksa, City Administrator

**FROM: Hugh Holden,
Interim Fire Chief**

SUBJECT: Master Plan Update

DATE: October 4, 2004

Introduction

This memorandum summarizes the significant findings of the Master Plan Update project conducted by the consultant, Citygate Associates, Incorporated and provides staff's recommendation.

Overview

On September 11, 2003 former Fire Chief Jeff Clet wrote a memorandum to the City Administrator identifying progress toward a Master Plan Update project Citygate Associates Inc. had been commissioned to conduct. A final draft report was delivered to the Fire Chief's Office, by Citygate Associates, September 27, 2004.

The Fire Department Master Plan was completed in August 2000 by Citygate Associates, Inc. The report identified needs related to fire stations (locations and design), apparatus (types and numbers of fire vehicles), staffing (numbers and deployment of firefighters) and equipment. The report made 16 findings and 20 specific recommendations. The most noteworthy of those recommendations were:

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

Since the above findings and recommendations were completed much has been done to bring the Department up to par. Major service level

improvements along with progress on the above recommendations are listed below:

Major Service Level Improvements

1. The planning and full implementation of the firefighter/paramedic program providing paramedic service from all three of the City's fire stations,
2. An increase of 4 firefighters on-duty in the City 24 hours per day,
3. The implementation of Emergency Medical Dispatch services through a contract arrangement with Santa Clara County Communications services.

Progress on Key Master Plan Recommendations

1. Risk Assessment: Completed a risk assessment,
2. Fire Stations/Staffing: Planned, built and staffed, with a two firefighter rescue squad, the City's third fire station (Sunrise). Currently working with developer to acquire land and build 4th fire station in the southwest quadrant (near Santa Teresa Blvd. and Miller Ave.),
3. Quint Fire Vehicle: Will take delivery of a "Quint" fire vehicle this December,
4. Training Facility: Budgeted for land acquisition, design and construction of a training facility starting in 2015-2016 with completion 2017-2018,
5. 660 Acres Protection: No further action has been taken in regard to the planning for a fire station in the potentially annexed 660 acres on the northeastern boundary of the City.

Citizen Oriented Public Safety Programs Underway:

1. Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program: A pilot program was completed and a proposal for an on-going effort is planned for the near future,
2. A Public Access Defibrillator (PAD) program is underway. The first phase includes installation of defibrillators in City facilities within the year followed by support to non-profit and private organizations for implementation of the program in their facilities.

Analysis

Since embarking on the implementation of the many recommendations identified in the 2000 Master Plan other opportunities (i.e. findings from LAFCO study) and issues have arisen. The Master Plan Update provides 21 additional recommendations (see attached chart) the most significant of which follow:

1. Increase the staffing at the Sunrise Station to a full engine company (“This station has exceeded the triggers that are used in most evaluations for station implementation.”),
2. Begin construction of a fourth fire station in fiscal year 2009-2010 (this is when it is estimated 51% of that quadrant will be developed),
3. Develop plans and specifications for a local fire training facility to address the lack of any such facility in the south County (see LAFCO study finding below).

The many other recommendations for Fire Department internal improvements are either already underway or are being planned for implementation over the next several years as indicated in the Master Plan Update recommendations schedule.

LAFCO Study Findings

During the time since the Master Plan was completed in 2000, LAFCO has conducted a study titled Santa Clara Countywide Fire Protection Service Review, completed in March 2004.

The study identified several findings in relation to fire protection services in the South County, most notably:

“Implementation of a regional fire system in the South County Region could provide sufficient economies of scale to facilitate service improvements throughout the region. It could provide for consistent duty chief coverage on a regional basis. It could provide sufficient economies of scale to facilitate Truck Company and/or special rescue operations. Combining support

service resources for such functions as training and communications would provide these resources at a lower unit cost than on individual agency basis.”

A path to determine the more specific financial and service level benefits that might be reaped by Gilroy, should we consider to wholly or partially embrace the LAFCO suggestions, could take the form of a feasibility study conducted by the effected jurisdictions i.e. Morgan Hill, Gilroy and South County Fire District. Such a study could very specifically identify costs for each jurisdiction, savings, service level improvements, etc.

Conclusion

Gilroy has made significant progress in completing the recommendations from the 2000 Master Plan of Fire Services. However, Gilroy continues to grow and with that growth needs to keep pace with fire and emergency medical services demand. To that end complete implementation of both the 2000 Master Plan and the 2004 Update recommendations are essential to ensure critical life saving and fire protection services keep pace with growth. Staff concurs with Citygate’s recommendations and recommends their full implementation as funding and staffing allow.