



2022-2025

# Buffalo Grove Fire Department Strategic Plan



January 1, 2022

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# Executive Summary

From July through September 2021, the Buffalo Grove Fire Department worked to complete a thorough community driven strategic planning process that sought to identify a clear vision for the Department and the necessary goals and initiatives needed to make that vision into a reality. Facilitator Dr. Lewis Bender led a planning team made up of command staff and union leadership including both lieutenants and firefighters.

In advance of the initial planning team discussions, the Department solicited employee and community feedback through the distribution of two electronic surveys. The data collected from these surveys, combined with the extensive background information contained within the Department's Risk Assessment and Standards of Cover document, acted as a broad environmental scan of the Department's operating environment. To supplement this information, the planning team met on August 19, 2021 to conduct an initial strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis and on August 31, 2021 the facilitator led employee, resident, and business leader focus group discussions.

Based upon the results of the environmental scan, the planning team identified four primary goal areas needed to enact the collective vision for the future:

- Staff and Organizational Development
- Organizational Efficiency and Team Development
- Infrastructure Improvements
- Communication/Technology Enhancement

Within each goal area, key objectives and yearly initiatives were created to enable effective implementation of the plan. These strategic action items have been summarized on the following page.

## Planning Team Members

Mike Baker, Fire Chief

Bill Wagner, Deputy Fire Chief

Mike Spiro, Battalion Chief

Brian Beck, Battalion Chief

Ron Two Bulls, Battalion Chief

Shawn Collins, Battalion Chief

Tina Hayes, EMS Coordinator

Tyler Grace, Fire Analyst

Al Caballero, Lieutenant/Union President

Frank Doll, Firefighter Paramedic/Union VP

Phil Schroeder, Firefighter Paramedic

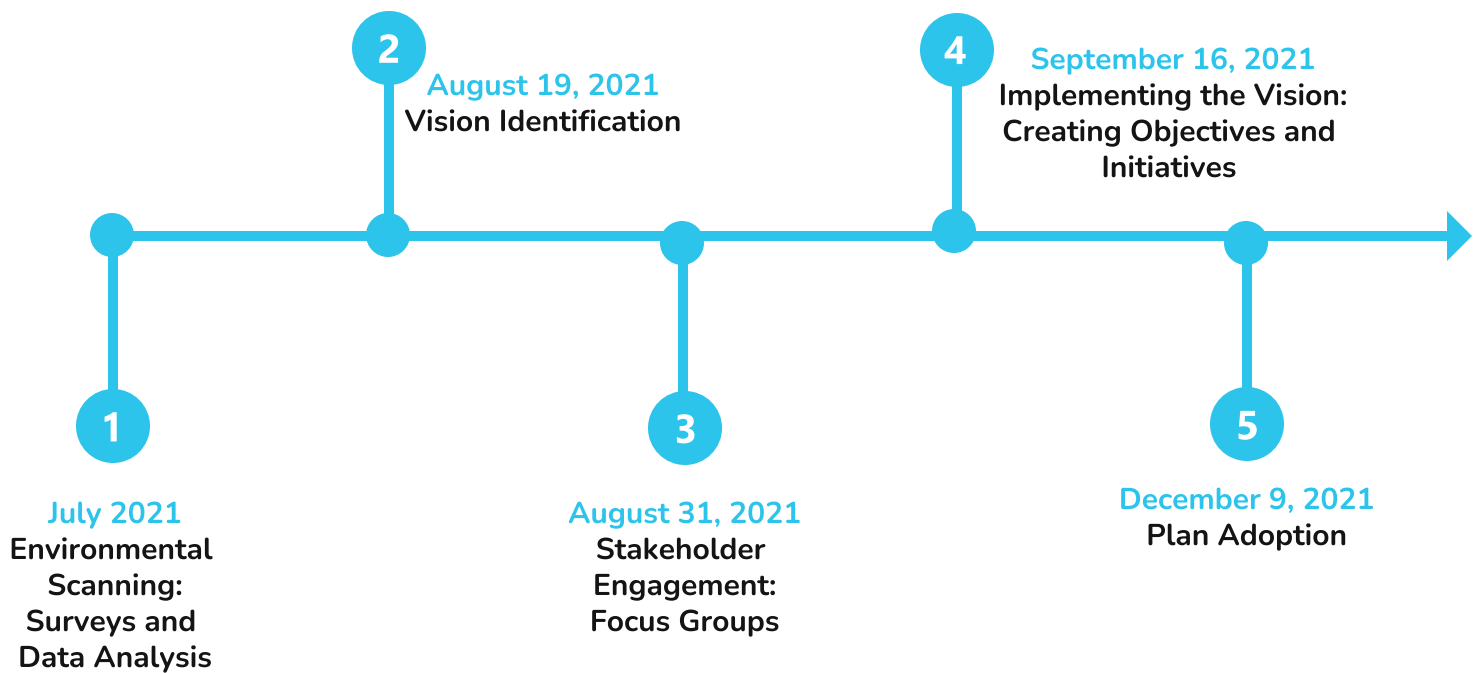
Tyler Petersen, Firefighter Paramedic

# Strategic Planning Action Chart

	Key Objectives	2022 Initiatives	Initiative Champion
<b>Strategic Goal</b> <b>Area #1</b> <b>Staff and Organizational Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Design and Implement Succession Planning Program</li> <li>- Develop a Leadership Development Program</li> <li>- Develop a Comprehensive Recruitment Program</li> </ul>	Review ALT Program  Research and Develop Structure for LT Orientation Program  Create recruitment plan and materials for 2023 Testing Cycle  Create ASC Program	BC Collins  BC Collins  Chief Baker  BC Collins
<b>Strategic Goal</b> <b>Area #2</b> <b>Organizational Efficiency and Team Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish consistency across shifts/uniformity of information</li> <li>- Improve communication content</li> <li>- Implement Generational Differences Mentorship Program</li> <li>- Empower Lieutenants</li> </ul>	Create and implement Internal Communications SOP  Identify and create a plan to address scope/expectation gaps  Create Generational Differences Training Program	BC Two Bulls  BC Two Bulls  BC Two Bulls
<b>Strategic Goal</b> <b>Area #3</b> <b>Infrastructure Improvements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Remodel/Replacement Station 25</li> <li>- Space Needs Analysis for Station 26</li> <li>- Effective vehicle maintenance and repair program</li> <li>- Accredited status</li> </ul>	Decision on remodel vs replacement for Station 25  Completion of SAM  Completion of CSPE Site Visit  Review Cost/Effectiveness of Fire Fleet Maintenance Contract  Clarification of Vehicle Maintenance Responsibilities with Public Works  Creation of Department Vehicle Repair Team	Chief Baker  Tyler Grace  Tyler Grace  Tyler Grace  Chief Baker  BC Beck
<b>Strategic Goal</b> <b>Area #4</b> <b>Communication and Technology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enhance use of in station technology</li> <li>- Improve use of vehicle technology</li> <li>- Improve internal communication methods</li> <li>- Create an effective Community Outreach Program</li> </ul>	Implementation of Infinite Command  Development of PrePlan Program  Data/File Cleanup in preparation for cloud.  Implementation of data validation and internal data portal	BC Spiro  BC Two Bulls  BC Spiro/Tyler Grace  BC Spiro/Tyler Grace

# Planning Process Overview

The Planning Team underwent an extensive process to identify both the current state of the Department and the Department's ideal future. The process, outlined below, was strongly based in both community and employee engagement and remained focused on creating an actionable end result. The process itself was designed to gain a clear picture of the Department's current position, the needs of the community it serves, and to identify the necessary path into the future.



## About the Facilitator

Dr. Lewis Bender, PH.D. retired as a professor from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. His primary research focus has been on organizational teams and the myriad factors and variables that impact team processes and effectiveness. He is a specialist in helping teams and organizations to become more effective and efficient. Throughout his career, Professor Bender has been deeply involved in community-based applied research, organizational goal setting and planning, and approaches to organizational development.

# Employee Engagement

## Electronic Survey

In early June 2021, a survey was released to all fire department employees soliciting feedback on Department service levels, administration, staffing and operations, and equipment and facilities. In total, 47 responses were received, representing 76% of the Department. Results were largely positive with respondents indicating that the Department's staff work well together to provide high quality services to a community that values it, that personnel have clear job expectations, and that the Department has the equipment needed to maintain service levels.

The most critical responses within the survey related to the maintenance and condition of the equipment and fire stations. Nearly 60% of respondents indicated that they disagreed that the existing fire stations provide suitable living and working conditions, while 34% of respondents indicated that the fire equipment was not properly maintained. However, it should be noted that the open-ended comments suggested that the low ratings given to fire equipment maintenance may be reflective of past performance rather than the new fire fleet maintenance contract.

## Staff Work Group

In late August, firefighters and lieutenants from all three of the Department's shifts met to conduct a SWOT analysis and worked to develop a vision for the future of the Department. In an effort to promote open discussion, the conversation was held without the presence of command staff and was facilitated by Dr. Bender. This exercise worked to supplement the broad electronic survey and to create the opportunity for free flowing, unrestricted conversation and brainstorming. The end result accurately captured the state of the Department from the perspective of the Department's personnel and helped to set the stage for the Planning Team to finalize the Strategic Plan's goal areas, objectives, and yearly initiatives.

### Key Findings

Strong trust in the capabilities of Department's firefighters/lieutenants

Improvement needed for internal communications across shifts

Plan for Station 25 needed due to the condition of facility

# Community Outreach

## Key Findings

High level of satisfaction with quality of service, professionalism and expertise of staff, and speed of response

Village funding priorities are in line with resident values

Focus needed on community engagement and education

## Electronic Survey

In July 2021, the Department released an electronic survey to the community to gather information on the perceptions and values of the community. The gathered responses were extremely positive, and broadly reinforced the Village's current funding priorities. The survey results also showed a clear desire for additional community engagement and education efforts both in traditional ways such as through school outreach or smoke detector programs, as well as through new techniques such as an expanded social media presence.

## Focus Groups

After the survey concluded, the Department held a community focus group in late August 2021. Community members from various demographic groups and backgrounds participated in a virtual conversation led by Dr. Bender. The community focus group was complemented by a business focus group with representatives from various sectors of Buffalo Grove's business community. The results of these discussions added needed depth to the survey and largely confirmed the survey's findings. The participants emphasized the high quality of service they have received and indicated a desire for further engagement and education opportunities.



# Environmental Scan

After considering the results of the Department's community outreach and employee engagement efforts, the Planning Team finalized its SWOT analysis. The analysis, summarized below, helped to provide the foundation for the formation of the Strategic Plan's goal areas and guiding objectives.

## STRENGTHS

- Professionalism and Expertise of Personnel
- Training and Education
- Vehicles and Equipment
- Mutual Trust between Department, Village, and Community
- Dedication of Personnel
- Department Culture

## WEAKNESSES

- Lack of racial/gender diversity within employees
- Limited exposure to low frequency/high risk incidents
- Lack of experience
- Vehicle maintenance
- Internal communication

## OPPORTUNITIES

- Expanded Involvement in Community
- Public education
- Expanded use of technology/social media
- Training

## THREATS

- Budget cuts
- Political shifts within community
- Unfunded mandates
- Potential changes to population/increased call volume
- Recruitment
- Social Media
- Economy
- Public health/pandemics

# Implementing the Vision

## Goals and Objectives

After conducting a full environmental assessment, including input from both internal and external stakeholders, the Planning Team identified four primary strategic goal areas to achieve the Department's vision for the future. Each goal area consists of several objectives that will be achieved prior to the Strategic Plan's conclusion in 2025. While these objectives are often intangible, they act as the target for the Department as it moves into the future and as Department leadership determines priorities on an annual basis.



## Annual Initiatives

In recognition of the dynamic environment in which fire agencies operate, the 2022-2025 Strategic Plan seeks to ensure that it remains as adaptable as possible. While the overarching goals and objectives remain the same, annual initiatives provide the necessary milestones that ensure that progress is being made. Initiative Champions have been identified and act as the leaders for their associated initiatives. Depending on the initiative, a team of both shift and administrative personnel may be used to accomplish the tasks. Due to changing circumstances, it is important to note that not all objectives will have an associated initiative each year.

# Next Steps

## The Buffalo Grove Fire Department views strategic planning as a continuous process.

In order to remain relevant, accurate, and actionable, the current status of the strategic plan and the needs of both the organization and the community need to be consistently assessed. While the overarching goal areas and strategic objectives remain in place, the plan is annually refreshed with new initiatives and action items. The annual strategic planning process will take place as outlined in the chart below. At the close of each year, after the planning process has concluded, the action chart located on page 4 will be updated to reflect the upcoming initiatives.

