



Hendersonville Fire Department

Overview

The Hendersonville Fire Department serves community members in times of crisis and provides crucial education on fire safety and prevention. Firefighters and staff strive for every interaction to be professional, timely, and helpful and pride themselves on carrying out the Department's mission of "provid[ing] excellent customer service by minimizing risk to life, property, and the environment while creating a strong bond with our community through public education and prevention."

To create this Strategic Plan, the Hendersonville Fire Department engaged the Hendersonville community through various efforts. Additional detail can be found in the Strategic Planning Process section.

The Hendersonville Fire Department has developed this five-year strategic plan to articulate its core identity and identify high-level strategic priorities. The plan provides clarity, direction, and focus, with a forward-looking emphasis. This direction encompasses six strategic focus areas and subsequent objectives to successfully meet these goals. These strategic focus areas will be evaluated regularly to identify new or shifting areas of focus as our community grows and evolves.

The purpose of the Strategic Plan is to:

1. Set the focus for the Department
2. Define the Department's actions and investments; and
3. Direct the achievement of short- and long-term goals.

The strategic plan will be used to:

1. Focus the Department's organizational efforts and resources
2. Set priorities for staff work plans
3. Evaluate progress toward achieving the Department's goals
4. Serve as a decision-making filter for determining Department priorities
5. Assess/adjust the Department's direction in response to our changing environment



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Hendersonville Fire Department Strategic Plan



Anticipating Growth

Update capital plan to keep pace with community growth
Explore alternative funding models



Innovating & Thinking Differently About How We Deliver Services

Use technology to increase community safety
Pursue response options that optimize response time & services



Engaging & Educating the Community

Use technology to engage with community members
Build on existing positive relationships with community stakeholders through targeted outreach



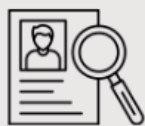
Maintaining A Well-Run Department

Enhance Department processes & systems by pursuing accreditation
Ensure internal administrative support reflects community growth
Emphasize need for data collection, analysis, and use in decision-making



Building A Strong Climate & Engaged Staff

Build a positive Department climate
Increase support for firefighters & staff



Recruiting & Retaining a Diverse Department

Recruit & retain personnel from diverse audiences
Provide comprehensive officer development training
Launch Hendersonville Fire's Recruit Academy



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Strategic Planning Process

Throughout this process, Hendersonville Fire Department engaged many different stakeholders and focused on resident feedback. In addition to a community survey and focus group, Hendersonville Fire Department also engaged local businesses, City of Hendersonville staff, and City leadership. Additionally, Hendersonville Fire Department worked to gain comprehensive input from Department firefighters and staff. Additional information on each engagement carried out through the strategic planning process can be found below.

Community Survey: The 15-question community survey was sent out through official City of Hendersonville channels in an effort to engage with and receive input from residents. Questions were asked to understand residents' feelings on the services offered by Hendersonville Fire Department. The survey was open for approximately two weeks and closed with a total of 68 responses.

Community Focus Group: In addition to the community survey, a 90-minute focus group was held to understand residents' thoughts on the Department in greater detail. A total of six residents participated in the community focus group, which was held in a hybrid format to increase accessibility for residents.

Business Focus Group: The Department sought out feedback specifically from Hendersonville's business community through a focus group. The 90-minute session had a total of 23 participants who discussed how the Department interacts with the community's businesses.

City of Hendersonville Staff Focus Group: A staff focus group was conducted to gain feedback on how Hendersonville Fire Department interacts with other City departments. Eight individuals from a variety of departments attended the focus group.

Hendersonville Fire Department Internal Engagement: The Department engaged the North Carolina Fire Chief Consultants (NCFCC) to complete an analysis of its internal structure. NCFCC conducted three different engagement sessions to gain feedback from all Department personnel.



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Strategic Focus Areas

In order to provide the most effective and efficient services to Hendersonville's residents, we will focus on strategic initiatives that equip us to be both reliable and adaptable. These strategic focus areas will be coupled with a greater emphasis on performance management, where the Department will perform ongoing assessments of our work to ensure we are aligned with our strategic plan.

We have identified six strategic focus areas for our work moving forward. We are focused on these targeted areas so we can productively manage our work. We anticipate evaluating the results of each initiative area regularly and identifying new or shifting areas of focus as our circumstances change.

Focus Area 1: Anticipating Growth

As the Hendersonville community continues to expand, Hendersonville Fire Department must stay agile and adaptable. Our budget and capital plan will support the growth we are currently experiencing while maintaining the flexibility required to quickly adapt to community needs.

Objective 1.1: Update capital plan to keep pace with community growth

The Department will revisit and update the capital plan with a focus on investments that will support the continued growth the Hendersonville community is experiencing.

- Increase dollars budgeted to promote efficient delivery of services
- Re-evaluate growth annually and capital plan resource allocations

Objective 1.2: Explore alternative funding models

Hendersonville Fire Department will regularly review its funding opportunities ensure the Department's funding model is sustainable.

- Review local, state, and federal grants
- Continue to track interactions with other agencies and resources utilized
- Consider funding options like interlocal agreements if budgetary resources are constrained

Potential Progress Measures

- Amount of staff time dedicated to long-term planning
- Number of reactive budget shifts



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Focus Area 2: Innovating & Thinking Differently About How We Deliver Services

To be able to adjust to a rapidly changing world, the Department will look at challenges through an innovative lens, seeking opportunities to provide more efficient and effective services to Hendersonville's residents. The department will react quickly to the community's needs by utilizing technology and innovative response options.

Objective 2.1: Use technology to increase community safety

The Fire Department will explore and implement technology that can increase the City of Hendersonville's safety.

- Explore new technologies for community safety, such as pre-emption devices
- Prioritize technology and systems in our resource allocation, including resources to maintain existing technologies

Objective 2.2: Pursue response options that optimize response time and services

Hendersonville Fire Department will research and analyze new technology options to maximize our ability to respond quickly to resident needs.

- Explore non-traditional vehicle options, such as quick response vehicles, quick attack vehicles, and mini-pumpers

Potential Progress Measures

- Staff time allocated to innovation
- Number of new concepts brought to the table

Focus Area 3: Engaging & Educating the Community

Hendersonville community members will continue to hold the Department in high regard and find interactions to be professional, timely, and helpful. The community, including students and seniors, will be more knowledgeable about fire safety and department updates. Business owners will be more knowledgeable and there will be higher inspection pass rates. Relationships with neighboring fire districts will be strong and Council will be consistently updated on Department highlights, including progress on the strategic plan.

Objective 3.1: Use technology to engage with community members

The Fire Department will explore and implement technology that can increase the Department's relationship with the community, such as virtual meeting software for education outreach events, communication systems, and more.



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- Use existing communication technology, such as YouTube and Zoom, to increase engagement with the Hendersonville community
- Coordinate with City of Hendersonville's Communications Manager to monitor best practices and recommendations for impactful engagement

Objective 3.2: Build on existing positive relationships with community stakeholders through targeted outreach

Hendersonville Fire Department will create opportunities to engage with business owners, neighboring fire districts, and other stakeholders in an effort to improve relationships in and around the Hendersonville community.

- Continue to pursue and expand popular community educational programs (e.g., CPR classes, Citizens' Academy, and fire extinguisher classes)
- Continue demonstrating excellent customer service in interactions with community

Potential Progress Measures

- Number of interactions at outreach events

Focus Area 4: Maintaining A Well-Run Department

We will pursue the Commission on Fire Accreditation International's accreditation, which is a rigorous and challenging standard held only by five other Departments in North Carolina. We will review and update our policies, procedures, and systems as we move through the accreditation process and focus on using data as a decision-making tool. We will actively collect, analyze, and use data in decision making to ensure we are providing the most efficient and effective services. As we work to improve our systems and data use, it is also critical that our organizational structure matches our efforts, and we will have internal support staff who are dedicated to the Hendersonville community.

Objective 4.1: Enhance Department processes & systems by pursuing accreditation

Hendersonville Fire Department will review and strengthen its systems and processes as it seeks to join an elite group of agencies by pursuing the Commission on Fire Accreditation International's accreditation.

- Form Accreditation committee
- Create Accreditation Action Plan

Objective 4.2: Ensure internal administrative support reflects community growth

The Department will ensure there are well-trained support staff to provide needed knowledge and services to residents and emergency operations personnel.

- Evaluate current support administrative staff workloads



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- Appropriately budget staffing resources to administrative and support functions

Objective 4.3: Emphasize need for data collection, analysis, and use in decision-making

We will integrate data collection and analysis into our process and system updates, while Department leadership focuses on using data to make evidence-based decisions.

- Work with Budget Analyst to collect and update data
- Improving our data inputs to inform decision-making (i.e., property value & losses)

Potential Progress Measures

- Progress on accreditation checklist
- Results of internal and external report card

Focus Area 5: Building A Strong Climate & Engaged Staff

Hendersonville Fire Department relies on the officers and staff that provide critical services each day. We will continue to encourage an atmosphere of professionalism, safety, respect, and diligence when interacting with the public and one another. Our firefighters and staff will be excited to serve the Hendersonville community and consistently go above and beyond what is expected. Firefighters and staff will feel safe and supported physically and mentally. There will be improved growth opportunities and comprehensive development training for firefighters and officers.

Objective 5.1: Build a positive Department climate

We will work with Hendersonville Fire Department personnel to identify what climate the Department will work towards and create annual work plans to model this climate.

- Conduct a climate-specific SWOT analysis w/ members
- Based on the SWOT results, find ways to increase opportunities to build positive climate and address challenges with current climate

Objective 5.2: Increase support for firefighters & staff

We will support a culture of stability and reliance by building the base of administrative and mental health support for emergency operations personnel.

- Increase access to embedded clinician
- Provide mental health awareness training
- *Evaluate current support administrative staff workloads**
- *Appropriately budget staffing resources to administrative and support functions**

**Also noted in Focus Area 4, Objective 2*

Potential Progress Measures



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- Number of training hours
- Employee turnover rate
- Employee satisfaction
- Use of embedded clinician

Focus Area 6: Recruiting & Retaining a Diverse Department

Hendersonville Fire Department will recruit firefighters and staff from a variety of backgrounds, including high school students, military veterans, and non-local individuals. The Department will have a low turnover rate and will be comprised of individuals with a wide range of experiences from diverse skillsets.

Objective 6.1: Recruit & retain personnel from diverse audiences

Hendersonville Fire Department will target specific and diverse backgrounds, including high school students and military veterans, as well as advertise positions across wide geographic ranges.

- Utilize data from City of Hendersonville's DEI consultant to pinpoint challenges around recruiting
- Re-evaluate job descriptions and postings to highlight long-term benefits of fire service
- Explore sponsoring BRCC Fire Academy recruits
- Proactively address staffing challenges (i.e., overhiring)

Objective 6.2: Provide comprehensive officer development training

We will sustain departmental growth by ensuring personnel have strong professional development tracks and growth opportunities.

- Explore specialized certifications and trainings
- Re-visit and, if needed, revise existing succession plans

Objective 6.3: Launch Hendersonville Fire's Recruit Academy

Hendersonville Fire Department will develop and host its own Recruit Academy to educate and train new recruits, allowing the Department greater flexibility in hiring cycles.

- Form Fire Academy business/startup plan

Potential Progress Measures

- Number of applicants for job postings
- Number of recruits enrolled in Recruit Academy relative to open positions
- Department demographics more closely match that of the community
- Net promoter score



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- Retention rate



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Key Metrics

In addition to the metrics outlined in each focus area above, the following metrics are integral to tracking Hendersonville Fire Department's Performance

1. Response time
Measures the time between when the Department is first notified of a call and when they are on-scene
2. Reliability
Measures the percentage of the time a crew is available to respond to a call
3. Turn out time
Measures the time between a call alarm sounding and the truck leaving the station
4. Property value losses
Measures the resulting loss of property value from emergencies
5. ISO rating
Measures how well-equipped the Department is to put out fires in the community

Action Plan

To ensure the Department makes regular progress on the actions in the Strategic Plan, the Department will create annual Action Plans. These plans will outline what progress the Department will make in a one-year time frame on each strategic focus area. This detail will include what specific projects/initiatives will be pursued, what the one-year objective is, and who is responsible for each project/initiative.

2023 Action Plan

When putting together the Strategic Plan, Hendersonville Fire Department identified specific steps to take in order to set a strong foundation for the Strategic Plan's implementation. These steps will be the foundation of the 2023 Action Plan and include the following:

- Review & revise Standard Operating Procedures & Standard Operating Guidelines
- Revise the Department's 10-year capital plan
- Prioritize where we want to add FTEs to match the needs of the community
- Research a citizen engagement and feedback system (e.g., PowerEngage)
- Use virtual tools to increase access to community trainings
- Explore permanent part-time positions to meet fluctuating demand for staffing



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Appendix

Current Context

Stations & Equipment:

Fire Station 1:

Location: 851 N. Main St., Hendersonville, NC 28792

Status: Currently scheduled for full demolition and rebuilding; temporarily responding to calls from the Henderson County Emergency Services Building located at 2529 Asheville Highway, Hendersonville, NC 28792

Fire Station 2:

Location: 632 Sugarloaf Rd., Hendersonville, NC 28792

Status: Currently houses all Fire Department emergency operations personnel and administrative staff; 3 pull-through single bays

Apparatuses:

Front line engines: 3

Tower engines: 1

Reserve engines: 2

Staffing:

The Hendersonville Fire Department has a total of 51 full-time employees across three divisions. Below includes the breakdown of employees within those divisions, and the Department's organizational chart.



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Hendersonville Fire Department Organizational Chart

