

# **NORTH RIVER FIRE DISTRICT**



## **STRATEGIC PLAN**

FY 2024 – 2028

Developed by the Members of the North River Fire District

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## **Executive Summary**

As Fire Chief, of North River Fire District (the District) I am pleased to present the FY2024-2028 Strategic Plan. This plan aims to provide a living document that clearly outlines the structure, goals, and direction for improving service delivery to the citizens we serve daily.

This Strategic Plan utilizes information from our fiscal year budget, capital improvement plan, and response priorities. It provides a clear and concise overview of the most recently adopted organizational goals and objectives, budgetary commitments, and assessment of the District's activity.

This Strategic Plan outlines the programs of the District and the performance measures that govern each. Proposed improvements will meet the needs of a growing community and provide new approaches to fire prevention, community life safety education, fire suppression, Emergency Medical Services, employee training, membership support, communications, maintenance, and department administration.

This Strategic Plan includes project and program recommendations for new fire stations, additional staffing, and service enhancements. It also includes evaluating its programs for efficiency and effectiveness. In the future, the influence of growth and the economy on these items will require a review and weighing against other vital community needs. New revenue sources or opportunities may be necessary to meet the needs of this growing Fire District.

This Strategic Plan provides an opportunity to unify management, employees, and stakeholders with a roadmap into the future. This document is under constant review and will continue to change to meet the needs of our community and stakeholders. Ongoing evaluation of outcomes is critical to determining the success of the organization's efforts and direction. Utilizing this Strategic Plan as a guide, we will ensure the District has the skills, equipment, and resources to provide the best possible service to our cherished community.

Joseph Sicking, Fire Chief

## **Mission Statement**

**Provide excellent public service for our community through technical and tactical proficiency, compassion, and integrity.**

## **Vision Statement**

**Cultivate a culture of C.A.R.E. through professionalism, empowerment, innovation, and diversity.**

**C - Courage   A - Accountability   R - Respect   E - Excellence**

## **Slogan**

**“SERVE, PROTECT, EDUCATE”**

## Values

As members of the District, we are committed to conducting ourselves ethically and professionally in all that we do. We ascribe to the following values, which are crucial to accomplishing our mission and vision:

**Family** – We will support coworkers, their families, and our community. Our "Fire Family" extends beyond the station into daily life. Someone is always there to call or help in a time of need.

**Accountability** – Members are accountable to themselves, each other, and the community we serve. We will take full responsibility for our actions, resources, and attitudes.

**Integrity and Trust** – Members are ethical and fair in our dealings with the community and each other. We will conduct ourselves accordingly even when no one is looking.

**Honor and Tradition** – We value each member's role in our organization. We respect those who came before us and will strive to improve the organization for those who follow.

**Leadership and Teamwork** – We seek out and value the input and opinions of our members at all levels of the organization. Teamwork is our building block towards success. Working together allows us to meet our goals. We must mentor and guide each other as we maintain our knowledge, skills, and abilities.

**Competency** - We are public safety professionals who maintain a state of constant readiness. Continuous training in all aspects of our career supports professional excellence.

**Innovation and Diversity** - We recognize the value of change and innovation in responding to and meeting the ever-evolving needs of our customers and members. We are committed to thinking outside the box and recognize that challenges welcome productive change opportunities.

**Professionalism and Respect** - We provide service with the utmost personal and ethical behavior.

**Compassion** - Providing service with empathy and sympathy for the suffering of others.

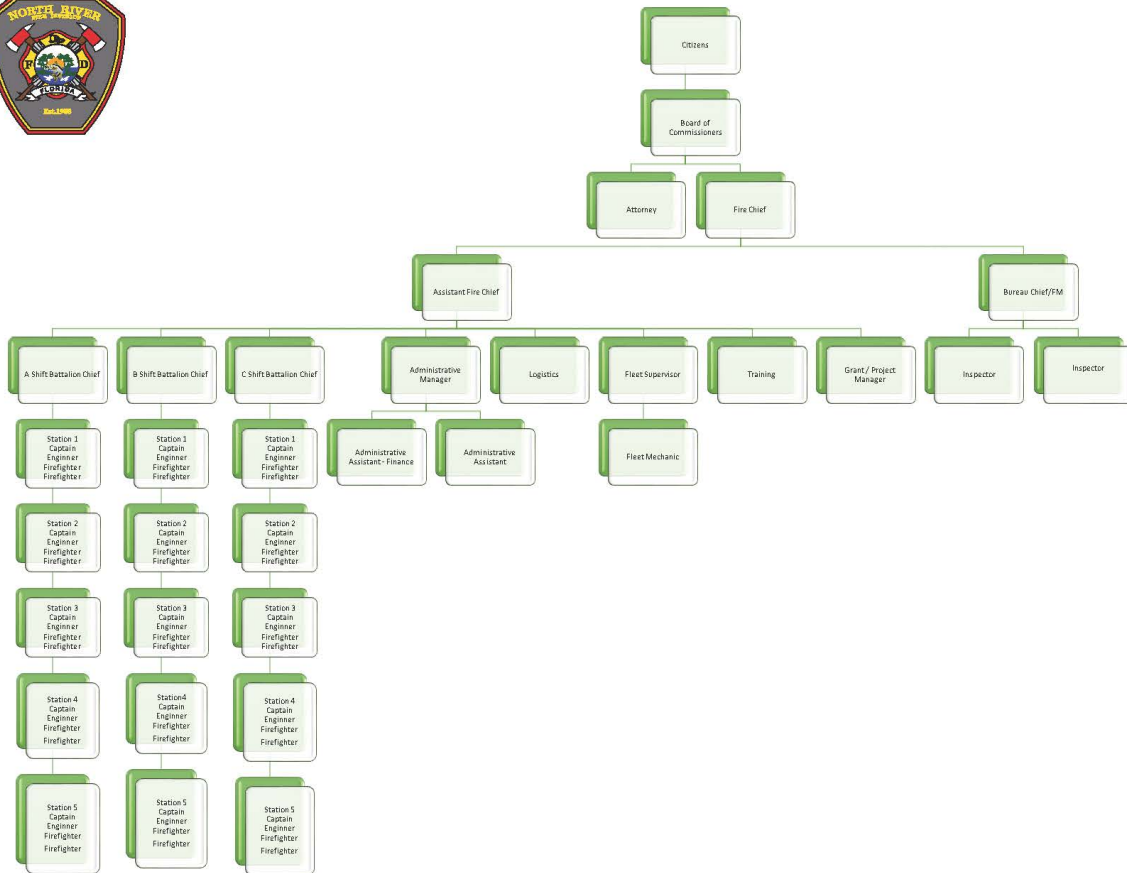
**Health and Safety** - We will cultivate a safety-conscious environment, ensuring the welfare of ourselves and those we serve.

## Services Provided

To fulfill our mission, and under the authority of Chapter 191, Florida Statutes, the District provides the following programs and activities to the residents and visitors of the District:

1. Fire Suppression
2. Rescue and Emergency Medical Services – Basic and Advanced Life Support Level First Response
3. All-Hazards Response
4. Community Risk Reduction

# Organizational Chart



## S.W.O.T. Analysis

A strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis provides an agency with a candid outlook on its positive and less-than-desirable attributes. The District's participation in this analysis allowed us to record our strengths and weaknesses while identifying possible opportunities and threats.

### Strengths

Any organization needs to identify its strengths to ensure that it can provide the services requested by the community and that its strengths are consistent with its issues. Often, identifying organizational strengths leads to channeling efforts toward primary community needs that match those strengths. A thorough review of

programs not in line with organizational strengths or the organization's primary function evaluates the rate of return on staff time. Through a consensus process, the internal stakeholders identified the strengths of NRFD as follows:

Elected Fire Board	Customer Service
Camaraderie	Reputation
Apparatus	Staffing
Equipment	Competitive wages/benefits
Retention	Career path development
PPE	Health and safety support
Open to change	Pride, Passion, Humor, fun
Education	Financial Support
ALS	Budget
Updated Policies	Relationship with outside agencies
Deployment support	Morale

## Weaknesses

For any organization to either begin or continue to move progressively forward, it must be able to identify its strengths and those areas where it functions poorly or not at all. These areas of needed enhancements differ from threats outlined later in this document but rather those day-to-day issues and concerns that may slow or inhibit progress. The NRFD members identified the following items as weaknesses:

Medical Training	Participation
Dedication	Facilities NRFD St. 3 and St. 4
Equipment maintenance	Staffing
Time Management	Revenue
Personal accountability	Turn out time
Moral	Communication
Operational processes	Professional development
Community Support/Pub Ed.	Career Path Development
Ownership	Physical Security
Environmental consideration	Standardization/inconsistency
Pride	Bureau
Education, implementation	Admin policies and procedures
Media/PIO	Relationship with community partners
Committee participation	Language Barrier
After Action Reviews	

## Opportunities

An organization's opportunities depend on identifying strengths and weaknesses and how to improve upon them. The focus of opportunities is not solely on existing services but on expanding and developing new possibilities inside and beyond the traditional service area. The NRFD Members identified the following potential opportunities:

Expand ALS program	Community Risk Reduction
Sources of Revenue	Community Relations
Social Media/Community Involvement	Improved Technology
Special Operations	Performance metrics
Recruitment	Expansion of services
AAR process/Initiation of recovery	Training Grounds/Facility
Health and Safety Programs (mental Health)	Peer support
Professional development	Support education

## Threats

The threats to the organization, with their new risks and challenges, must also be identified to draw strength and gain the full benefit of any opportunity. By recognizing possible threats, an organization can significantly reduce the potential for loss.

Political Influence	Legislation
Longevity	Economy
Growth vs. Operational Readiness	Natural or Man-Made Disasters
Supply Chain	Public image and exposure
Complacency	Morale
Target Hazards	

## Strategic Goals and Objectives Overview

### Strategic Goals Fiscal Years 2024 – 2028:

1. Community Support and Awareness Through Education
2. Organizational and Professional Development
3. Enhance the Utilization of Technology Throughout the District
4. Deployment of Resources Effectively
5. Improve Our Existing and Future Infrastructure
6. Develop Long Range Financial Plan and other Revenue Opportunities
7. Establish and Maintain a High Level of Service

## Strategic Goal #1: Community Support and Awareness Through Education

### Action item: Enhance Life Safety Education Programs

1. Define the scope of the public education program to ensure consistency throughout the program and in our presentations to the public
2. Define the education and training to be provided and how to best provide those services including:
  - Method of delivery (including multilingual materials)
  - Develop/update written lesson plans
  - Train all staff to deliver presentations in a similar fashion
  - Review available incident data and perform a risk reduction analysis and needs assessment for public safety education
  - Develop an evaluation mechanism to measure public safety education effectiveness
  - Determine and secure necessary resources to ensure successful presentations
  - Increase use of line personnel in the delivery of community programs
  - Increase the frequency of Public Safety Announcements and issue immediately after a significant incident on cause, if available, and provide prevention information
  - Conduct more community meetings with line personnel
  - Determine if the school programs are effective and improve the delivery of these programs in the school system

- Develop a resource on the topics of all public education classes/programs performed by the District

**Action item #2:** Enhance the Public Information Program

1. Inform all media outlets about the following events:
  - Major incidents including fires, special operations-hazardous materials, and major EMS incidents such as MCI's
  - Multi-company multi-agency drills and other types of training
  - Promotions, awards, and citizen recognitions/awards
  - Annual run statistics
  - Major grant awards
2. Utilize all forms of media to deliver our messages and to inform them of immediate and ongoing events. The PIO should deliver information through press releases, face-to-face interviews, emails, or other acceptable forms, including pictures or film clips.
  - Television
  - Newspaper (all types and all area editions)
  - Radio
  - North River News
  - Websites and email
  - Florida Fire Chiefs Association (FFCA) monthly publication
  - Homeowner Associations (HOA) websites and newsletters
  - Develop and conduct a one (1) day Media Day for all media members

**Action item #3:** Promote the District

- Enhance our website
- Create and distribute District brochure (This is who we are)
- Develop Public Education Newsletters and email them out
- Be more involved in community programs
- Partner with other agencies and other governments
- Conduct annual Open House events
- Enhance our Year-end / Annual Report for citizens, agencies, and other government entities.
- Participate in homeowner association meetings

**Action item #4:** Enhance the District website

1. In addition to Florida Statute requirements, at a minimum, the website should include:
  - Vision Statement
  - Mission Statement
  - District Values
  - Strategic Plan
  - Current budget (Summary & Detail)
  - Performance review results
  - Special Event information
  - Insurance Service Office (ISO) rating
  - The District contacts (phone number / email)
  - District fire assessment rates and user fees (all)



- List of the programs and services we offer and contact name and number for seeking additional information
- List of Fire Station locations (GIS map)
- Photos of stations, apparatus, training events, recent promotions, awards, grants, action shots, etc.
- QSA's about employment
- Audits
- Pension Information
- Commissioner meeting dates/time, minutes, and any Board items
- IAFF Agreement

## Strategic Goal #2: Organizational and Professional Development

### **Action item #1:** Pursue Succession Planning

1. Develop a list of employees expecting to retire within the next five (5) years.
2. Develop and conduct a Training Needs Assessment
3. Refine recurring schedules for all promotional exams
4. Maintain promotional lists of eligible employees
5. Identify key position(s) in which the replacement selection should occur before the intended vacancy
6. Send 3 to 4 personnel a year to Paramedic school
7. Develop/update job descriptions for each position within the District
8. Develop minimum qualifications and coursework for each ranked position within the District
9. Develop a mentor program for each ranked position within the District

### **Action item #2:** The District recognizes the need to develop and retain existing and new employees.

1. Research new online Fire and EMS continuing educational programs to meet State of Florida Continuing Education requirements
2. Research the implementation of a fire apprenticeship program within the District

### **Action item #3:** Develop an Officer Development program for all Fire Department Officers to enhance their skills and leadership abilities.

1. Develop a mentor program for newly promoted officers
2. Develop an inventory listing of resources the District can offer its new and existing Officers to enhance their skills, knowledge, and leadership abilities

### **Action item #4:** Review and refine communication mechanisms

1. Email:
  - Develop and provide training for those who are less comfortable with the use of computers, programs, & email
  - Develop and provide continuing training on the District's computer software at the worksite at least annually or anytime an upgrade is performed

- Develop / enhance the use of an electronic calendar to track schedules of personnel and events that are accessible to the Fire Stations
2. Formal meetings:
    - Publish agendas in advance for all formal meetings
    - Ensure that meetings that require minutes reach all members of this department, *i.e.*, the Safety Committee
    - Ensure managers and supervisors communicate information from meetings to appropriate staff
    - Utilize mandatory meetings to inform all staff of significant issues or changes
  3. Official communications:
    - Define the various types of official communications, the required chain of approval for each type, and the level of compliance required by each type of communication
    - Ensure that each communication identifies, if appropriate, the duration for which the information is applicable
  4. Announcement of promotions and special assignments. Ensure to notify individuals before the public announcement is published.
  5. Ensure all communications are timely, clearly establish timelines and expectations, and are distributed to all involved staff
  6. Explore live meeting concepts from desktop computers

**Action item #5:** Review Standard Operating Procedures, and Protocols. The District recognizes the need to update Standard Operating Procedures and Protocols to reflect how we handle incidents. These items should be reviewed and published, and all personnel should be updated on any changes made to these documents. The following steps have been identified to support this action item:

1. Update Policy and Procedures to reflect current conditions and best practices.
  - Identify personnel to oversee this process
  - Organize and define topics
  - Maintain consistent style and format
  - The Fire Chief reviews and approves all additions and revisions
2. Update Standard Operating Procedures and Protocols
  - Identify personnel to oversee this process
  - Organize and define topics
  - Fire Chief reviews and approves all additions and modifications

## **Strategic Goal #3: Enhance the Utilization of Technology Throughout the District**

**Action item #1:** The District recognizes the need to develop a replacement program for its computer hardware and software.

- Identify the number and types of computers, including file servers, and detail their use
- Implement software for scheduling and payroll
- Develop a computer replacement program
- Ongoing enhancements to cybersecurity software to mitigate evolving threats
- Research redundancy for network connectivity

**Action item #2:** The District recognizes the benefits in utilizing technology for Fire and EMS Operations by identifying closest unit(s) response to emergencies.

Maximize the use of technology (AVL and GIS) to enhance response times.

- Develop a system to assess technology to meet changing departmental needs

## **Strategic Goal #4: Deployment of Resources Effectively**

**Action item #1:** The District currently responds to every call for service. While this is the desired level of response, there may be better uses of District resources.

1. Revise / update the Fire Code Ordinance
2. Revise /update the Fire Prevention User Fee Resolution
3. Investigate false alarm responses to determine if the policy is effective in reducing false alarm responses
4. Review Priority Dispatch concepts and procedures with all personnel so they fully understand its intent
5. Identify locations for ALS Non-Transport Engines
6. Review and consider modifications to how we respond to specific calls that may not require our services or fit our mission
7. Review safety issues created by our response strategies
8. Research automatic aid with other agencies to ensure the closest and appropriate response of emergency apparatus and initiate formal written agreements

**Action item #2:** Create a Level of Service Plan for the District that contains a minimum Fire Station deployment of new and existing Fire Stations, minimum staffing of apparatus, and new services to be provided by the District.

1. Level of Service Plan should include Community Outcomes.
  - Expected Customer Service
  - Saving Lives and Protecting Property
  - ALS Non-transport Engines
  - Improve Health and Safety
  - Fiscal Efficiencies
2. Fire Station Deployment
  - New Fire Stations
  - Existing Fire Stations
  - Temporary facilities
3. Staffing of apparatus
  - NFPA 1710
  - F.S. 633 (2 in / 2 out Safety Rule)
  - Insurance Service Office
  - Explore the SAFER grant program
  - Reasonable ISO Rating
  - Current ISO Rating
  - Establish ISO Rating goal
4. Equivalencies or alternatives

- Investigate the adoption of codes/ordinances to require sprinklers in all residential and non-residential buildings
- Investigate the adoption of Fire Resistive Construction in all types of buildings (NFPA 5000)

## **Strategic Goal #5: Improve the District's Existing and Future Infrastructure**

**Action item #1:** The District needs to complete a Comprehensive Facility study of all existing Fire Stations.

Create a Comprehensive Facility Plan.

1. Create a Capital Improvement Plan based on a Comprehensive Facility Plan
2. Review and update funding strategy
3. Review and update total costs and ensure temporary housing costs are included for existing Fire Stations
4. Review and update site location maps

**Action item #2:** Develop a preventative maintenance schedule for all existing Fire Stations.

1. Create a preventative maintenance schedule for all existing Fire Stations. At a minimum, this schedule should include the following:
  - Interior painting
  - Exterior painting
  - Carpet cleaning and replacement
  - HVAC replacement
  - Appliance replacement
  - Furniture replacement
  - Landscape
2. Establish timelines for this maintenance
3. Establish a funding strategy

**Action item #3:** Develop a vehicle replacement program for all existing apparatus. The following steps have been identified for this action item:

- Create or designate a fund for the apparatus replacement program.
- Apparatus purchase price
- Determine apparatus life expectancy
- Current age of apparatus and annual maintenance cost
- Determine expected yearly cost increase
- Determine the rate of return on investment, how much interest the District will earn on the money deposited in this fund
- Determine the trade value of the apparatus vs. the sale of the apparatus

**Action item #4:** Develop a replacement program for major equipment such as SCBA, Fire Safety Gear, and extrication equipment.

- Identify / define major equipment.
- Identify the life expectancy of equipment.
- Develop replacement programs for major equipment.
- Create or designate a fund for a major equipment replacement program.
- Identify equipment costs.
- Current age of equipment and yearly maintenance cost.
- Determine expected yearly cost increase.
- Determine the rate of return on investment and how much interest the District will earn on the money deposited in this fund.
- Develop a system for surplus equipment to generate revenue to purchase new equipment.

## **Strategic Goal #6: Develop a Long-Range Financial Plan**

**Action item #1:** Develop a long-range financial plan that projects expenditures and revenues to 2026

- Always look for ways to operate more efficiently.
- Determine all current and projected expenditures, including debt.
- Determine all current and projected revenues.
- Monitor new State legislation that would affect our revenue base.
- Review non-ad valorem data monthly.
- Explore alternative revenue sources. (Ad Valorem)
- Update the Fire Impact Fee Methodology every four (4) years.
- Develop a rate model for the projection of fire assessment rates based on projected costs in the long-range financial plan.
- Review the long-range financial plan monthly

**Action item #2:** Develop a fund balance policy per GASB #54. The following steps have been identified for this action item:

1. Develop a policy for the District per the new GASB standard #54.
2. Create a Resolution that designates unreserved fund balance for the following categories under the designations:
  - Restricted
  - Committed
  - Assigned
  - Unassigned
3. Finalize dollar amounts for the new categories.
4. Establish a process to ensure end-of-year unspent dollars automatically will roll into these newly designated categories.

**Action item #3:** Develop a process to review and update fire assessment methodology on a two (2) year cycle. The following steps have been identified for this action item:

- Try to establish uniformity among the other Districts over their non-ad valorem assessment methodology and its application.
- Develop a methodology for fire assessments that is fair to all ratepayers.

**Action item #4:** Develop a process to review and update fire impact fees.

- Develop a methodology for fire impact fees that fairly allocates cost to new construction and is comparable to the other Manatee County Fire District's Impact Fees.

## **Strategic Goal #7: Establish and Maintain a High Level of Service**

**Action item #1:** Identify and participate in or support community programs and associations that align with the District's mission.

**Action item #2:** Develop key performance measures to compare projected performance with actual performance and industry benchmarks (Best Practices).

**Action item #3:** Enhance transparency and relationships demonstrating public responsibility and accountability.

**Performance Measures** See performance review document.