



## **ANSWERING YOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT THE RESTRUCTURING OF THE MAPLEWOOD FIRE DEPARTMENT**

### **Why is the City of Maplewood making so many changes in its fire department?**

*The City Council and its staff are continually looking for ways to improve fire, medical and other emergency services. Last year, the City changed to a full-time fire department as a step to ensure that local residents receive more reliable, full-time coverage 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This spring, the City Council will determine whether we should make the investments needed to keep operating three active fire stations, or whether we can transition to two modern fire stations and sustain our current level of service.*

### **Has the transition to a full-time fire department been successful?**

*Very successful. We are pleased that some of our part-time employees joined the City on a full-time basis. We have increased staffing levels and have more reliable staffing than ever.*

### **Why is this an issue now?**

*While the South fire station is fairly new, both Central (Gladstone) and North (Hazelwood) stations need repairs and renovation. Before the City decides to make a significant investment in both stations, staff is completing the analysis of the need for three stations and accepting public comments.*

### **Is demand for fire and emergency service dropping in Maplewood?**

*No, but the services provided by the fire department are evolving. Emergency medical incidents are responsible for 85 percent of calls, while fire incidents within Maplewood are now fewer than 12 percent of annual calls. In 2018, there were 6,183 incidents that required a response, an increase from 4,861 in 2014.*

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### **Are most fire departments experiencing the same change in services?**

*The number of fires in Maplewood is fairly stable each year, but as our population both grows and ages, the need for emergency services continues to grow. This is a trend in many other places locally, regionally and throughout the country.*

### **What options are under consideration by the City for the fire stations?**

*We have studied the cost and effectiveness of continuing to operate three stations, as well as closing the Central station once the new North station is operational. The current North station needs extensive repairs, and City staff believes replacing the building will be more effective than trying to remodel and renovate the current building.*

### **What is the cost of replacing the North station with a brand-new building?**

*In 2017, the cost was estimated to be \$4.2 million to replace the 45-year old station.*

### **How much more would it cost to keep the Central station operating?**

*Central station would require remodeling that would cost an estimated \$2.5 million. In addition, it would cost at least \$45,000 per year to continue operating that station in the future.*

### **How will Maplewood raise the money to replace a fire station?**

*Funding will come from a combination of the sale of surplus fire stations and bonding, which is part of the processes to pay for the city's long-term capital needs such as roads and infrastructure, vehicles and other buildings.*

### **Would response time lengthen with two stations rather than three?**

*According to analysis by Fitch and Associates, an independent consultant to the City, a two-station system can respond to 96.4 percent of calls within eight minutes, travel time, the standard set by Maplewood for emergency responses. Continuing to operate a third station improves that performance to just 96.8 percent. With an initial cost of \$6.7 million and annual operating costs of at least \$45,000 for each fire station, that is a high price to pay for a very small increase in performance.*



**Does this mean that the Central station has been a waste of money?**

*No, but as we have considered options for significant capital investment to upgrade our fire stations, it has become obvious that the Central and North stations provide duplicative coverage within the eight-minute drive time standard in the central region of the City.*

**If Maplewood only operates two stations in the future, should they be relocated to improve drive time to a call?**

*Based on the work of Fitch, we have concluded that new locations for the North and South stations would not provide improvement over the coverage offered at their current locations.*

**Would fewer stations mean Maplewood would have difficulty responding to multiple calls at the same time?**

*The Maplewood Fire Department is adequately staffed to respond to multiple incidents simultaneously. Three out of four requests for emergency services are currently handled without a second event occurring at the same time. If that number were to change substantially, we would respond by hiring additional employees and increasing staffing at our stations.*

**Would only two stations mean it is more difficult to respond to multiple emergency calls in the far northern or far southern parts of Maplewood?**

*During those few times when we are responding to multiple calls that are far from the center of Maplewood, teams from neighboring suburbs are better able to respond quickly than a crew from our current Central station.*

**Would reducing the number of stations change the number of employees who staff the fire stations?**

*No. The number of emergency calls is increasing in Maplewood by about five percent each year, and is projected to reach 9,000 incidents by 2025. City staff is looking for ways to improve the efficiency of the services and reduce capital costs, not cut staffing.*



## **How does the City know that we have enough emergency staff on duty to meet our needs?**

*The City regularly reviews fire station staffing, including the length of shifts and coverage during both peak times (8 AM to 10 PM) and non-peak times. As major adjustments are needed in future coverage, the City will authorize overtime or add a new employee.*

## **Are there enough fire department employees to fight multiple fires at the same time?**

*In Maplewood, there are fewer than 10 fire responses per week, typically requiring service for fewer than 30 minutes each. The Maplewood Fire Department has adequate staff to respond to more than one fire at a time, and we also have mutual aid agreements with surrounding cities such as Woodbury, Oakdale, Roseville, White Bear Lake, Little Canada, North St. Paul and St. Paul to respond to needs within Maplewood.*

## **Do these mutual aid agreements cost the City of Maplewood additional tax dollars?**

*No, since our fire department responds in these communities when needed.*

## **Do other suburbs have more than two fire stations?**

*Most suburbs that are part of Maplewood's peer group operate no more than two fire stations, including Roseville (1), White Bear Lake (2), Oakdale (2), North St. Paul (1).*

## **What are the next steps?**

*Over the next several months, the City Council and staff will take input from the public and continue to review issues related to the two- and three-station options. A final decision is likely sometime this summer.*

## **How can I get more information?**

*You can call the City of Maplewood at 651-249-2000 or go to [Maplewoodmn.gov](http://Maplewoodmn.gov) and click "Public Safety."*

