

# ***OSWEGO FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT***

## Strategic Planning Report

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NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

**Center for  
Governmental Studies**

*Outreach Engagement and Regional Development*

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The Oswego Fire Protection District would also like to thank all staff and the community members who participated in the stakeholder feedback phase of the process. An effective strategic plan includes feedback from stakeholders to ensure that needs and expectations are understood.

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# OSWEGO FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT BACKGROUND

The Oswego Fire Protection District operates out of 4 stations around the clock, covering 52 square miles in Kendall County and 4 square miles in northwest Will County. It serves various communities, including Oswego, Boulder Hill, Montgomery, Plainfield, and Yorkville, with an estimated population of 75,000 residents. The District has witnessed a consistent increase in service calls, totaling 6,678 in 2023. Apart from emergency response, the Oswego Fire Protection District offers community services and specialty teams such as fire prevention programs, technical rescue teams, CPR classes, and child passenger safety services. Additionally, it provides training facilities for neighboring fire departments and Waubonsee Community College's fire science program.



Special Events



Training



Water Rescue



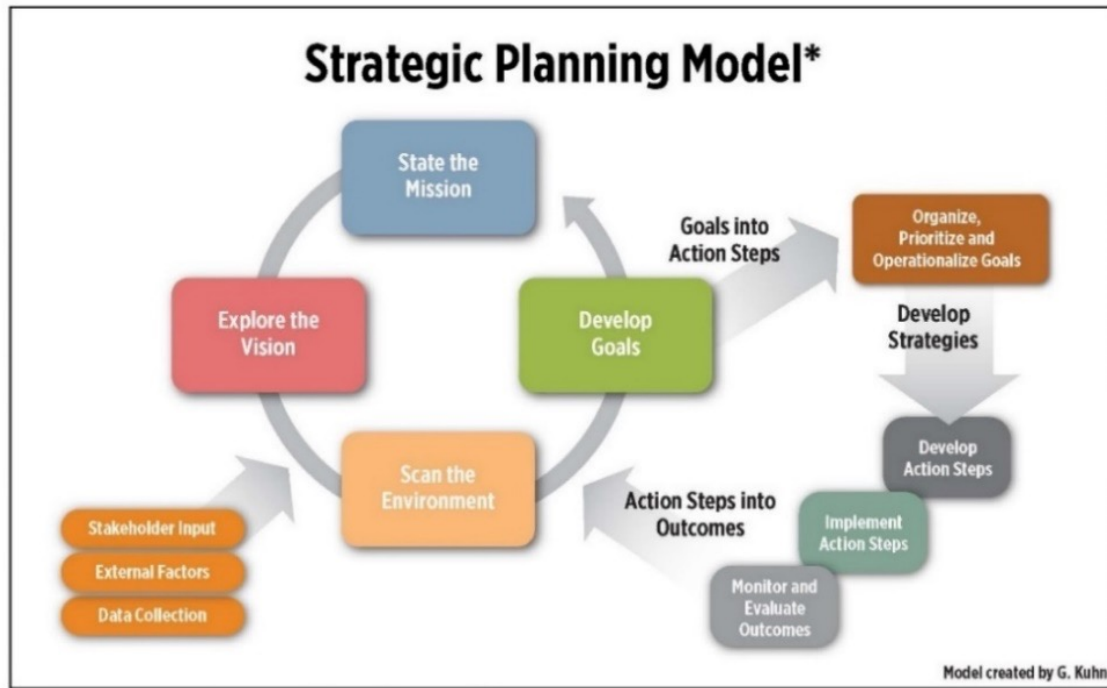
Fire Rescue

# INTRODUCTION

Strategic planning is an effective way to identify and confirm an organization’s vision for the future and set organizational purpose and direction by incorporating clear priorities and measurable goals. To this end, the Oswego Fire Protection District (the District) engaged the Northern Illinois University Center for Governmental Studies (NIU-CGS) in July 2023 to facilitate its strategic planning process. From December 2023 through January 2024, the NIU-CGS team gathered internal and external stakeholder input that was shared at the leadership workshop held in February 2024. The workshop was an opportunity for senior staff and appointed officials to discuss a future vision for the District and establish short and long term goals. It also provided a positive atmosphere to determine the future vision and direction of the District to best serve the organization and the broader community in the coming years. The value of such processes continues to be recognized by policy-making boards, councils, and executive staff in both private and public organizations (Figure 1).

It is important to keep in mind that the judicious use of the District’s limited resources (including financial resources and professional staff time) will be key to achieving good results. Only a limited number of goals and objectives can be managed and implemented effectively at any given time. In a very realistic sense, clear and stable priorities must be maintained if the District desires to stretch its resources as far as they can go.

Figure 1. Strategic Planning Model



\* Model generally represents the steps that are taken for this type of initiative.

# PRE-WORKSHOP

## ENVIRONMENTAL SCANNING AND STAKEHOLDER INPUT

The District’s leadership and elected officials recognized the importance of gaining a comprehensive understanding of their service area and gathering input from various stakeholders during the environmental scanning phase of the strategic planning process. This phase involved examining internal and external factors that shape and influence the District’s activities and mission. To accomplish this, the NIU-CGS team developed a demographic and economic profile of the District, along with conducting focus groups and interviews involving internal and external stakeholders.



### DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC PROFILE

Prior to the strategic planning workshop, the NIU-CGS team developed a demographic and economic profile of the District. The purpose of this process is to understand the characteristics, trends, and dynamics of the District’s population and the economic activities within their service area. This information helps policymakers and staff make informed decisions about resource allocation, policy development, investment opportunities, and community development initiatives. The demographic and economic profile included the four corner counties: Kane, DuPage, Kendall, and Will. The overview of the profile was shared at the strategic planning workshop and the main points highlighted from the demographic and economic profile are provided in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Oswego Fire Projection District’s Demographic and Economic Profile Key Takeaways

#### Demographic Takeaways

The District area has grown faster than the surrounding region

The racial and ethnic composition of the District is consistent with the four counties

The District population skews somewhat younger than the region

#### Housing and Income Takeaways

Housing stock in the District is newer and skews toward owned dwellings

Population trends toward younger families with children

District has fewer residents with income below poverty level and more with higher income

#### Employment and Commuting Takeaways

Most residents commute out for work, and most workers commute in

One-fifth of jobs in the District are held by residents

The top three employment sectors for residents and workers are retail, education, and accommodation or food service

## FOCUS GROUPS

To gain perspectives from a cross-section of stakeholders, the NIU-CGS team facilitated a series of focus group sessions with community members and partners. A total of three in-person focus groups were conducted in December 2023 to gain stakeholder input. The focus group sessions ranged in number of participants from 10-15 in each group. Figure 3 highlights the groups represented in the focus group sessions.

*Figure 3. Focus Group Participants*



The focus group sessions were designed as a primer for the strategic planning process. The information presented was shared in summation at the workshop and added exploratory and thematic information for the Board and senior leadership team to consider. As a result of the focus group feedback, the facilitators identified three overarching themes presented in Figure 4. The themes represent important topic areas that the District's leadership and Board considered as they went through the workshop exercises to develop short and long term goals. Therefore, it is not unusual to see alignment between the focus group themes and the priority areas identified as part of the entirety of the strategic planning process. Please see [Appendix A](#) for a full summary of all focus group questions and aggregated responses for each theme.

*Figure 4. Aggregated Focus Group Identified Themes*



## LEADERSHIP INTERVIEWS

Interviews with the District's leadership allowed the facilitators to gain perspective by building a balanced and informed view of the District, from each stakeholder's unique vantage point. Individual interviews were offered to all Board members and administrative leadership in January of 2024. These important conversations helped NIU-CGS to understand priorities and opportunities for the District. Several themes and suggestions emerged from these interviews and were also shared at the workshop:

- Rapid growth has impacted all the governments, especially the District due to property tax lag and issues relating to impact fees.
- The District is experiencing issues related to recruitment, hiring, and retention. Not unlike other agencies, the District faces challenges with keeping compensation competitive.
- Succession planning, shared vision, leadership pathways, and mentorship are key areas of focus.
- The District's employees are its greatest strength.
- The District's large service territory is a challenge.

# LEADERSHIP WORKSHOP

## OUTLINE OF EXERCISES AND DISCUSSION SESSIONS

All the discussion sessions in the planning effort employed approaches that were highly participative and interactive. The workshop facilitators utilized a group discussion approach called ‘Nominal Group Technique’ where the facilitator assured participants equal opportunities to speak and share opinions. During the workshop discussions, individuals had the opportunity to generate and share their ideas, as well as participate in small and large group activities allowing them to weigh alternatives and refine their thinking through dialogue. As ideas were shared and debated, the group worked steadily toward a consensus regarding the District’s purpose, future direction, goals, and priorities.

### INTRODUCTIONS AND ICEBREAKER EXERCISE

Participants were asked to introduce themselves and share how they became involved with the District, either as a Board or staff member. Next, they engaged in an icebreaker exercise titled, “Garage Sale.” Workshop participants collected an item from a “garage sale” table that represented to them an idea, issue, or topic that they felt was important to the District’s future and should be discussed as part of the strategic plan. This was a brainstorming exercise, and no evaluative or judgmental debate was permitted during this session. Next is a word cloud summary (Figure 5) and a list (Figure 6) of those answers.

*Figure 5. Garage Sale Icebreaker: important issue, initiative, or idea that should be part of the District’s future? Word Cloud*



*Figure 6. Garage Sale Icebreaker: important issue, initiative, or idea that should be part of the District’s future? List*

GARAGE SALE ITEM	IMPORTANT ISSUE, INITIATIVE, OR IDEA
Dollar sign	Money drives everything.
Hard hat	Growth creates challenges such as the need to build and maintain more stations.
Refuse toter	Sometimes we need to be willing to throw things out, change, and move forward. We need to be more proactive and future focused vs. reactionary; be guided by plans and planning for the present and future.
Fire truck	Funding for resources will be critical for the District, especially due to impact of growth (e.g., equipment is expensive).
Super glue	Keep it all together, hard to hire, finances. Working together, retention is key (e.g., need for succession planning).
Life Ring	Safety for membership of the District and for community.
Train car	Parked at the station or moving backward. Need to start moving forward.
Walking the walk	Words are easy to say...actions have bigger impact. Back up the words.
Brick	Building relationships with the public through engagement and building trust. Build relationships with other governments. Keep up with growth. Keep up with station sites.



## VISIONING FOR THE FUTURE

The Board and senior staff next participated in a visioning exercise to describe the desired future direction of the District by answering the following question: “If you left the District and the community and didn’t return for 10-15 years, what do you think you will see or what do you hope you will see when you return?” Participants were asked to think about their ideas ahead of time and then be ready to share them with the group during the first session of the workshop. Responses are listed in Figure 7.

*Figure 7. Visions of the Future—Hope or think you will see in 10-15 years*

*Statements that include an asterisk (\*) indicate the idea was repeated/agreed with by other participants.*



## IF YOU LEFT THE DISTRICT AND THE COMMUNITY AND DIDN’T RETURN FOR 10-15 YEARS...”

### WHAT DO YOU **THINK** YOU WILL SEE WHEN YOU RETURN?

- Properly staffed fire stations, potentially 7 or 8 stations, 150 firefighters/paramedics\*
- Defined culture and strong foundation
- Will see more mergers and consolidations
- Aging workforce, 2028 retirement bubble, need to maintain identity
- Massive consolidation of smaller districts\*
- Mental health ambulance, maybe social worker and EMT
- Equipment will keep changing
- Station 5 and 6 built

### WHAT DO YOU **HOPE** YOU WILL SEE WHEN YOU RETURN?

- Appropriate level of staff to support the operation of the District\*
- Organization thinks outside of the box, proactive, keeps pace, innovative
- Organization not afraid to change, progressive, not reactive
- Intergovernmental relations improve, recognize each other’s issues. Impact fees keep pace.
- Money spent, hours spent not in vain, keep training and staff development funded, leadership from the top. Teach the next generation.
- If change from appointed to elected Board damages organization
- Keep up with maintenance of buildings, firefighters/paramedics, and equipment
- Progressive, thinking ahead, proactive

## ENVIRONMENTAL SCANNING PART I— SURRENDER OR LEAD

Next, participants were introduced to a leadership exercise entitled “Surrender or Lead.” Participants were asked, in small groups, to respond to a series of structured questions to reveal hopes, perspectives, challenges, opportunities, and possible barriers based on the collective view of each group. The responses were recorded and combined themes from the three groups are reported next. For a full list of Surrender or Lead responses from each group, see [Appendix B](#).

### Themes from Surrender or Lead:

1. Prepare for the future through proactive and strategic planning focused on common goals
2. Undertake succession planning including mentorship and leadership pathways
3. Manage service level demands amidst the District’s growth
4. Maintain financial sustainability and exploration of funding opportunities

## ENVIRONMENTAL SCANNING PART II— LARGE GROUP S.W.O.C. ANALYSIS

The next step of the strategic planning workshop involved reviewing and accounting for the internal and external factors present in the environment that can potentially influence the District, both negatively and positively. Workshop participants were asked to identify the District’s **strengths (S)** and **weaknesses (W)**. In what areas does the District regularly excel, and in what areas are there difficulties or shortcomings in terms of expertise, resources, training, etc.? What **opportunities (O)** are on the horizon that can be used to the District’s advantage? Conversely, what trends or **challenges (C)** lie ahead that would be obstacles or hindrances? These elements could include both internal and external factors, conditions, trends, regulations, agencies, resources, etc. The top responses to the exercise are provided in Figure 8. For a full list of S.W.O.C. analysis responses, see [Appendix C](#).

Figure 8. S.W.O.C. Top Responses



## NOMINAL GROUP GOAL IDENTIFICATION

With the preceding discussion sessions and exercises acting as a sound foundation for goal setting, the next exercise provided time for a healthy group discussion and development of goals and/or objectives needed to achieve the future visions as expressed by workshop participants.

Participants worked in the same small groups from the Surrender or Lead exercise. Each group was allotted time to develop and then report out the three or four important policy and program goals they thought the District should accomplish. Groups were asked to create goals using two timeframes; **short-term** goals (which could be accomplished in the next one to three years), as well as those that would be considered **long-term** goals (four- to eight-year time frame). Each workgroup then shared their short and long term goals with the larger group for feedback and discussion. Goals could be highly specific or general.

## OPEN GROUP DISCUSSION AND CONSOLIDATION OF GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

This final phase of the discussion served as the forum for Board members and staff to discuss, refine, and compare the ideas and goals offered by each participant. Participants gave their opinions and further explained the fit, ideas, and policy outcomes expressed in the goals and discussed if additional goals were needed. Lastly, the group categorized each goal as complex or routine. Complex goals are complicated, multi-layered goals that require extraordinary resources, such as technical specialists, funding, or the collaboration or agreement of another unit of government or an outside organization, business, or agency. Routine goals are not simple or easy but could largely be accomplished by the organization with required budget and staffing allocations or with minor external assistance.

**Routine goals**

not simple or easy but could largely be accomplished by the organization within current resources

**Complex goals**

multi-layered goals requiring extraordinary resources, such as specialists, funding, or collaboration with an outside organization

# POST-WORKSHOP GOAL PRIORITIZATION AND RANKING EXERCISE

Workshop participants and the Board of Trustees were asked to delineate, via a post-workshop online ranking exercise, which goals should be given the highest priority. The workshop participants and Board were provided an online ranking tool where point values were assigned to each goal in both the short and long term categories. The calculation of goal prioritization consisted of “forced ranking” where the ranking of each identified goal is calculated as the average of the rankings given by all participants. For example, if a goal was given scores of 2, 5, 6, 6, 1, 2, and 3, the average total would be 3.57. The lower the score, the higher the priority. Again, the average totals were based on the rankings provided by the workshop participants and the Board of Trustees.

The outcomes of the District’s goal ranking exercise, along with the assigned priority levels for each goal, are presented in Figure 9. The dashboard demonstrates the strategic goals, tasks, and objectives for the Board and staff to address in the months and years ahead. Following the ranked goals, the District’s broader priority areas are shared and defined.

Figure 9. 2023 Ranked Strategic Goals Dashboard

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SHORT-TERM ROUTINE STRATEGIC GOALS</b></p> <p><i>Short-term goals have a time frame of 1-3 years. Routine goals are not simple or easy but can be accomplished with current District resources.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Priority Level</b></p>
Undertake a staffing level plan encompassing both operational and support/civilian roles including an analysis of inefficiencies and process improvement plan.	<b>High</b>
Conduct a thorough analysis of existing staff leadership roles and responsibilities to identify areas for optimization and improvement to implement a staff leadership structure/flowchart (e.g., changing department heads to Division Chiefs).	<b>Medium</b>
Create a recruitment and retention plan including strategies addressing apprentice and cadet opportunities.	<b>Medium</b>
Develop and implement a comprehensive succession plan to identify potential employee gaps, needs, requirements, and areas for recruitment, mentorship, and leadership opportunities (e.g., the hiring of a full-time maintenance person, administrative assistant, and full staffing for all stations).	<b>Medium</b>
Expand upon and further develop the District’s Leadership/Mentoring program aimed at firefighters/paramedics, lieutenants, captains, battalion chiefs, etc.	<b>Lower</b>
Develop a multi-year Capital Improvement plan.	<b>Lower</b>
Formulate comprehensive communications strategies for internal and external communication.	<b>Lower</b>
Update the strategic plan every 2-3 years to track progress and status of goals.	<b>Lower</b>

### SHORT-TERM COMPLEX STRATEGIC GOALS

*Short-term goals have a time frame of 1-3 years. Complex goals require extraordinary resources, experts, or funding to accomplish.*

**Priority Level**

Implement the recruitment and retention plan to effectively meet both current and future staffing needs and requirements; including apprentice and cadet opportunities and enhanced EMS training.	High
Consider a comprehensive employee wellness program including physical, mental, and emotional wellness.	Medium
Develop and implement strategies to establish positive working relationships with other organizations, municipalities, and units of government.	Medium
Engage governmental partners involved in building, zoning, and development to ensure input and perspective of the District regarding operations, services, and near and long-term impacts.	Lower
Issue a Request for Proposals and select an architect to design Station 5.	Lower

### LONG-TERM ROUTINE STRATEGIC GOALS

*Long-term goals have a time frame of 4-8 years. Routine goals are not simple or easy but can be accomplished with current District resources.*

**Priority Level**

Develop and implement an equipment and facility repair and replacement program.	High
Develop and implement a Community Risk Reduction Plan.	Medium

### LONG-TERM COMPLEX STRATEGIC GOALS

*Long-term goals have a time frame of 4-8 years. Complex goals require extraordinary resources, experts, or funding to accomplish.*

**Priority Level**

Develop and implement a comprehensive plan for continued adaptation to growth including additional stations, site selection, land acquisition, staffing, and equipment considerations.	High
Implement the multi-year Capital Improvement plan.	High
Assess and evaluate opportunities and concepts that explore shared services or consolidation with other providers, districts, or agencies.	Medium
Start the design of Station 6 while completing construction for Station 5 and addressing apparatus and staffing requirements for both facilities.	Lower

# STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREAS

Based on an evaluation of the entirety of the process, including the demographic profile, stakeholder feedback, discussions at the workshop, and the goals developed, several high-level strategic priority areas were identified. These priority areas highlight the activities and initiatives that the District will focus on in both the short and long term. The strategic priority areas identified as a result of the strategic planning process are illustrated in Figure 10 and fully defined next. For strategic goal and focus group data alignment related to each area, see [Appendix D](#).

Figure 10. 2023 Strategic Priority Areas



## COMMITMENT TO QUALITY SERVICES WHILE MANAGING THE IMPACTS OF GROWTH

Emphasizes maintaining high standards of service delivery while addressing the challenges of potential expansion and development. It involves strategies to ensure that service quality remains consistent and effective despite the pressures and changes brought about by growth, including infrastructure expansion, resource allocation, risk management, and community engagement.



## CAPITAL INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING AND FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

Focuses on the strategic management of financial resources and the systematic planning, development, and maintenance of capital and physical infrastructure assets. It encompasses the careful allocation of funds for infrastructure projects, ensuring cost-effective solutions, optimizing asset utilization, and maintaining fiscal responsibility to sustain the organization's long-term viability and operational efficiency.



## ORGANIZATIONAL ADAPTATION, LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND SUCCESSION PLANNING

Aims to improve the organization's adaptability to changing circumstances, foster leadership skills, and ensure smooth transitions of responsibilities and roles over time. It involves enhancing organizational resilience, developing leadership abilities among employees at all levels, and identifying and preparing potential successors for key positions to meet future needs through comprehensive recruitment and retention strategies.



## INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH, COLLABORATION, AND ENGAGEMENT

Concentrates on fostering strong relationships with government partners and community members. This involves actively engaging with a variety of internal and external stakeholders to enhance communication, work together on projects, share resources, exchange information, and participate in meaningful discussions addressing common interests.

## CONCLUSION

The value of the strategic planning process will only be realized if this report is used as an active working guide for both the Oswego Fire Protection District Board of Trustees, commissioners, and staff. This document captures the content of the discussions and assists the District's leaders in developing implementation plans for their high-priority goals.

In the District's ever evolving operating environment, adapting to changes in demographics, community trends, technology advancements, and best practices, among others, will be key. The strategic plan is meant to be a roadmap for the District with the flexibility to adapt to those changes. Therefore, it is recommended that the District undertake a regular review (monthly, quarterly, or semi-annually) of the strategic plan, its goals, and implementation schedule to identify the need for updates or modifications so the entire District consistently recognizes and meets changes in community needs and expectations. In addition, the District is encouraged to continue to engage in regular strategic planning process updates and renewals every three years.

What is apparent from the exchange of ideas and dialogue during the environmental scanning and strategic planning workshop is that the District is fortunate to have progressive leadership and a management team that is looking ahead and committed to strategic thinking and planning.

We wish you well with the ambitious years that lie ahead.



Greg Kuhn and Jim Norris, NIU-CGS Project Coordinators and Session Facilitators

# APPENDIX A: FOCUS GROUP FEEDBACK

## SUMMARY

One of the key analytical techniques used for focus group notes is an analyst's search for key phrases, words, or terms that emerged during the focus group sessions, a process known as coding. Coding is done by analysts' individual readings of the data, followed by key term searches. The words and phrases listed below are the results of the study team's analysis of the collected focus group notes. At a glance, the reader can discover what terms were used or referred to most frequently in the feedback notes. Using individual analysts' coding, the researcher identifies terms that recur across groups and across questions. The results reveal key topics or issues that should be weighed and considered when proceeding with strategic planning discussions.

The information that follows is a summary of key themes and topics that emerged during the exploratory focus group sessions. The focus group sessions served as a primer for the strategic planning process. The information that is presented in this summation was designed to add exploratory and thematic information for the Board and leadership staff to consider during the strategic planning workshop.

The same exploratory focus group discussion questions were asked to each focus group and are listed below:

**1** How would you describe the District to a stranger or someone who doesn't live or work here?

**2** If you left the District tomorrow, and didn't return for 10-15 years, what do you think you'd see, or what do you hope you'd see, when you returned?

**3** What do you like best about the District? Related to that, what are the strengths or greatest assets of the District?

**4** Conversely, can you identify areas or topics in need of attention or improvement? Related to that, what are the weaknesses or greatest needs for the District? Challenges?

**5** What are or should be the top priorities for the District over the next three to five years?

**6** If you could change or initiate one key item or thing about District, what would it be?

## OVERALL THEMES BASED ON ALL FOCUS GROUP FEEDBACK

### CORE SERVICES AND ORGANIZATIONAL ADVANCEMENT

- Maintain or improve response times even with growth in the District
- Ensure the sustainability of the District's services, equipment, and facilities
  - *Keep technology current*
  - *Explore the addition of a Fire Station #5*
- Implement the strategic plan – work it and follow it
- Keep up with changes in the District (e.g., services, facilities, staffing of facilities)
- Increase services offered (e.g., Dive and search and rescue, number of EMS calls will increase due to aging population – what does that look like?)

### COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION

- Develop an all-encompassing, regular communication plan
  - *Internal, reach consensus on future needs of Board, management, and employees*
  - *External, increase regular external communication (e.g., residents, other taxing bodies)*
- More community engagement
  - *E.g., hiring civilians to do community education and share public information*
  - *Engage and partner with the District's businesses to provide programs and events*
- More community outreach and education
  - *E.g., communication and education about what the District does, who falls into the District, services offered, etc.*

### PROACTIVE GROWTH MANAGEMENT

- Develop financial plan to keep level of service amidst growth and communicate plan to public
  - *Explore increased revenue opportunities*
  - *Address developer contributions and impact fees*
  - *Develop a facilities plan that is related to growth*
- Focus on attracting, hiring, and retaining qualified employees
  - *Develop a recruitment, training, cross-training, and retention plan, competitive compensation evaluation*
  - *Succession planning for all roles*
  - *Need for more support staff to accommodate the growing district*
- Encourage strong intergovernmental cooperation to minimize impact of growth

# APPENDIX B:

## SURRENDER OR LEAD EXERCISE

The **bolded and underlined** sections are key phrases that each group provided in response to the Surrender or Lead exercise's open-ended questions and prompts during the leadership workshop.

### Group #1

1. We want to **prepare and plan for the future** but we **lack a strategic plan.**
2. The two most important things to focus on are **funding** and **personnel** because **of growth.**
3. If it weren't for the **lack of planning,** we would **be prepared for current and future growth.**
4. We need to finally **establish and implement a plan.**
5. **Funding** will have the biggest impact on the Oswego Fire Protection District in the coming 2-3 years.

### Group #2

1. We want to **progress** but **we must be united and share common goals.**
2. The two most important things to focus on are **recruitment** and **retention** because of **well-being and community commitments.**
3. If it weren't for the **lack of vision and direction,** we would **be off to the races.**
4. We need to finally **go offensive.**
5. **Retirement and turnover** will have the biggest impact on the Oswego Fire Protection District in the coming 2-3 years.



# APPENDIX C:

## S.W.O.C. ANALYSIS

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Challenges (S.W.O.C.) – Full List

### INTERNAL

#### STRENGTHS

- Training
- Staffing
- Intergovernmental relations
- Technology
- Bond referendum
- Employees
- Strong employee work values
- Strong commitment
- Self-initiative
- Professionalism
- Desire to excel
- Growth
- Openness
- Buildings, facilities, and equipment
- Safety
- Fire ground operations
- Ability to adapt
- Our members, dedication,
- Overall, it is our people
- Teamwork on incidents
- Good leaders
- Compassion
- Integrity
- Trustworthy
- Excellent Maintenance Department

#### WEAKNESSES

- Politics
- Retention and recruitment
- Finances and the small amount of funding
- Intergovernmental relations
- Communication
- Maintenance and technology
- Vision – Planning
- Compensation
- Leadership – lack of experience diversity
- Promoting intangibles to recruits and public
- Being proactive
- Executing a vision
- Management by emotion
- Growth – hard to keep up
- Impact fees
- Educating the public
- Lack of EMS training
- Financial constraints

# APPENDIX C: S.W.O.C. ANALYSIS (CONT.)

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Challenges (S.W.O.C.) – Full List

## EXTERNAL

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Capital replacement plan
- Training
- Politics
- Staffing
- Recruiting
- Intergovernmental relations
- Getting more staff involved
- Communications (internal and external)
- Technology
- Employees and personnel
- Our long-term service
- Leadership development
- More diverse thinking, innovation
- Creative leaders
- Organic culture
- Communicating our intangibles and telling the District's story
- Board relations and new Board membership
- Explore comprehensive wellness plan
- Let's go get things done
- Response to growth
- County government
- State of Illinois and legislation
- Municipalities, impact fees, and development input
- Prepare for the unknowns
- Prepare for the next administration in a positive manner

### CHALLENGES

- Politics
- Retirements and upcoming vacancies
- Overtime fatigue
- Finances – monetary issues and saving money
- Intergovernmental relations
- Communications (internal and external)
- Technology
- Technical maintenance and utilization
- Availability of equipment and vehicles
- Competitiveness of salary – compensation
- Keeping up with change
- Rate of growth
- State of Illinois
- Legislation
- Municipal policies and decisions
- County government
- Aging fleet
- Recruitment and retention
- Building and staffing stations
- Proactively obtaining vehicles and equipment
- Keeping the Board educated
- Utilizing the bond money effectively

# APPENDIX D: STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREAS, GOAL AND STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK ALIGNMENT

## PRIORITY AREA:

### COMMITMENT TO QUALITY SERVICES WHILE MANAGING THE IMPACTS OF GROWTH

*Emphasizes maintaining high standards of service delivery while addressing the challenges of potential expansion and development. It involves strategies to ensure that service quality remains consistent and effective despite the pressures and changes brought about by growth, including infrastructure expansion, resource allocation, risk management, and community engagement.*

#### Commitment to Quality Services While Managing the Impacts of Growth-Related Goals from the Workshop:

- Update the strategic plan every 2-3 years to track progress and status of goals.
- Develop and implement a Community Risk Reduction Plan.
- Assess and evaluate opportunities and concepts that explore shared services or consolidation with other providers, districts, or agencies.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive plan for continued adaptation to growth including additional stations, site selection, land acquisition, staffing and equipment considerations.

#### Commitment to Quality Services While Managing the Impacts of Growth-Aligning Stakeholder Comments from the Pre-workshop Stakeholder Sessions:

- Encourage strong intergovernmental cooperation to minimize impact of growth.
- Maintain and improve response times even with growth in the District.
- Ensure the sustainability of the District's services, equipment, and facilities.
  - Keep technology current.
  - Explore the addition of a Fire Station #5.
- Keep up with changes in the District (e.g., services, facilities, staffing of facilities).
  - Increase services offered (e.g., Dive and search and rescue, number of EMS calls will increase due to aging population – what does that look like?)
- Rapid growth has impacted all the governments, especially the District due to property tax lag and issues relating to impact fees.

## PRIORITY AREA:

### ORGANIZATIONAL ADAPTATION, LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND SUCCESSION PLANNING

*Aims to improve the organization's adaptability to changing circumstances, foster leadership skills, and ensure smooth transitions of responsibilities and roles over time. It involves enhancing organizational resilience, developing leadership abilities among employees at all levels, and identifying and preparing potential successors for key positions to meet future needs through comprehensive recruitment and retention strategies.*

#### Organizational Adaptation, Leadership Development and Succession Planning-Related Goals from the Workshop:

- Undertake a staffing level plan encompassing both operational and support/civilian roles including an analysis of inefficiencies and process improvement plan.
- Create a Leadership/ Mentoring program aimed at firefighters/paramedics, lieutenants, captains, battalion chiefs, etc.
- Conduct a thorough analysis of existing staff leadership roles and responsibilities to identify areas for optimization and improvement to implement a staff leadership structure/flowchart (e.g., changing department heads to Division Chiefs).
- Create a recruitment and retention plan including strategies addressing apprentice and cadet opportunities.
- Implement the recruitment and retention plan to effectively meet both current and future staffing needs and requirements; including apprentice and cadet opportunities, and enhanced EMS training.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive succession plan to identify potential employee gaps, needs, requirements, and areas for recruitment, mentorship, and leadership opportunities (e.g., the hiring of a full-time maintenance person, administrative assistant, and full staffing for all stations).
- Consider a comprehensive employee wellness program including physical, mental and emotional wellness.

#### Organizational Adaptation, Leadership Development and Succession Planning-Aligning Stakeholder Comments from the Pre-workshop Stakeholder Sessions:

- Focus on attracting, hiring, and retaining qualified employees.
  - Develop a recruitment, training, cross-training, and retention plan, competitive compensation evaluation.
  - Succession planning for all roles.
  - Need for more support staff to accommodate the growing district.
- Implement the strategic plan – work it and follow it.
- The District is experiencing issues related to recruitment, hiring, and retention. Not unlike other agencies, the District faces challenges with keeping compensation competitive.
- Succession planning, shared vision, leadership pathways, and mentorship. Develop plan to address retirement bubble potentially occurring in 2028. Proactive vs. reactive planning for the future of the District.
- The District's employees are the greatest strength.
  - The employees really care and are positively engaged in the community beyond just doing their job, go above and beyond.

## PRIORITY AREA:

### CAPITAL INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING AND FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

*Focuses on the strategic management of financial resources and the systematic planning, development, and maintenance of capital and physical infrastructure assets. It encompasses the careful allocation of funds for infrastructure projects, ensuring cost-effective solutions, optimizing asset utilization, and maintaining fiscal responsibility to sustain the organization's long-term viability and operational efficiency.*

#### Capital Infrastructure Planning and Financial Stewardship-Related Goals from the Workshop:

- Develop a multi-year Capital Improvement Plan.
- Issue a Request for Proposals and select an architect to design Station 5.
- Develop and implement an equipment and facility repair and replacement program.
- Start the design of Station 6 while completing construction for Station 5 and addressing apparatus and staffing requirements for both facilities.
- Implement the multi-year Capital Improvement Plan.

#### Capital Infrastructure Planning and Financial Stewardship-Aligning Stakeholder Comments from the Pre-workshop Stakeholder Sessions:

- Develop financial plan to keep level of service amidst growth and communicate plan to public.
  - Explore increased revenue opportunities.
  - Address developer contributions and impact fees.
  - Develop a facilities plan that is related to growth.

## PRIORITY AREA:

### INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH, COLLABORATION, AND ENGAGEMENT

*Concentrates on fostering strong relationships with government partners and community members. This involves actively engaging with a variety of internal and external stakeholders to enhance communication, work together on projects, share resources, exchange information, and participate in meaningful discussions addressing common interests.*

#### Intergovernmental and Community Outreach, Collaboration, and Engagement-Related Goals from the Workshop:

- Formulate comprehensive communications strategies for internal and external communication.
- Engage governmental partners involved in building, zoning, and development to ensure input and perspective of the District regarding operations, services and near and long-term impacts.
- Develop and implement strategies to establish positive working relationships with other organizations, municipalities, and units of government.

#### Intergovernmental and Community Outreach, Collaboration, and Engagement-Aligning Stakeholder Comments from the Pre-workshop Stakeholder Sessions:

- Develop an all-encompassing, regular communication plan.
  - Internal, reach consensus on future needs of Board, management, and employees.
  - External, increase regular external communication (e.g., residents, other taxing bodies).
- More community engagement.
  - E.g., hiring civilians to do community education and share public information.
  - Engage and partner with district businesses to provide programs and events.
- More community outreach and education.
  - E.g., communication and education about what the District does, who falls into the District, services offered, etc.