East Contra Costa Fire Protection District
Strategic Plan
2019 through 2023

Includes
Mission
Vision
Values
Goals
Strategies
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As the newly-elected Board members for the East Contra Costa Fire Protection District, we are honored to share with you this Strategic Plan for our District. This project was initiated by our prior appointed Board of Directors to provide ongoing insight and guidance as we address the significant service delivery challenges we continue to face.

This Strategic Plan was developed through extensive outreach with our community, including a public survey, two community workshops, dozens of interviews and even targeted outreach to fire professionals who live in our region but work for other agencies and departments. In addition, we have engaged public officials and community leaders throughout our District in discussions about the future of fire and emergency services in East Contra Costa County. The Board has listened to the input of the community in drafting and adopting this Strategic Plan.

Hard work lies ahead. The District is financially stable for the time being, but our response times are far below the standards of other agencies due to our lack of resources. This plan outlines what we must do both to remain financially stable and to increase the level of services required for our rapidly changing community.

Achieving this Strategic Plan will require discipline by the Board and staff, and support from the community. We hope you will join us in this effort.

Thank you to these prior Board Members who also participated in the development of this Strategic Plan:

Joy Benson
Susan Morgan
Erick Stonebarger
Sandra Strobel
Susanna Thompson
On behalf of the East Contra Costa Fire Protection District, I am pleased to present this Strategic Plan. The Board of Directors and the employees of our District are committed to delivering exceptional service to the community. These services and our response times are only constrained by the historic funding limits placed on the District.

This five-year Strategic Plan contains our mission, vision, values, goals and strategies to achieve those goals. Through an extensive process that involved a broad cross-section of our community, we identified ways to continue to deliver the quality of services our community expects. However, most of the proposed improvements will be dependent on new sources of funding.

We are committed to working in partnership with the community and our employees to continue to be an outstanding Fire Protection District.

Sincerely,

Chief Brian Helmick
East Contra Costa Fire Protection District
About the East Contra Costa Fire Protection District

Background
In November 2002, the Bethel Island Fire District, the East Diablo Fire District, and the Oakley Fire District combined to form the East Contra Costa Fire Protection District (ECCFPD). The independent special district provides fire protection services to the cities of Brentwood and Oakley and the townships of Discovery Bay, Bethel Island, Knightsen, Byron, Marsh Creek and Morgan Territory. The District relies on funding from a portion of the 1% property tax on assessed valuation of all parcels within the District (since the passage of Proposition 13). The percentage is set by state law.

Governance
ECCFPD is an independent special district formed pursuant to the Fire Protection District Law (California Health and Safety Code section 13800, et seq.). ECCFPD is governed by a Board of Directors that sets District policy and appoints and supervises the Fire Chief. On November 8, 2016, the District’s voters passed Measure N to transition from what had been a board appointed by its member cities and the County Board of Supervisors, to an elected board. The first Board elections were scheduled for November 6, 2018, but with only five candidates for five seats, no election was necessary. Consequently, the new Board members will take office on December 12, 2018.

Service Area
ECCFPD provides fire, rescue, and emergency medical services (EMS) to eastern Contra Costa County. The District’s service area spans 249 square miles of rural, suburban and urban development along with lands formerly designated as frontier or wilderness. Today, about 115,000 residents depend on ECCFPD for fire protection and emergency medical services (enhanced basic life support). The District responds to more than 8,000 calls a year from three District fire stations and a CAL FIRE station contracted by the District to provide year-round services. Each District fire station is staffed with three firefighters, for a total district on-duty staffing of nine firefighters per day. A prior ECCFPD Staffing Adequacy Study identified a need for nine stations to meet anticipated service demands and response times according to national standards.

Station 52 Located at 201 John Muir Parkway, Brentwood

Station 53 Located at 530 O’Hara Avenue, Oakley

Station 59 Located at 1685 Bixler Road, Discovery Bay

Station 16 Located at 11851 Marsh Creek Road, Clayton (CAL FIRE Sunshine Station). This station belongs to and is operated by CAL FIRE. ECCFPD contracts with CAL FIRE for year-round services for the Marsh Creek and Morgan Territory region.
Strategic Planning Process

The District, with assistance from Management Partners, conducted extensive research and community outreach between March and November of 2018. This included:

- Individual or small group interviews with 40 people (March and April 2018),
- A community survey with 643 respondents (June 13 through July 9, 2018),
- An employee survey with 28 respondents (June 25 through July 9, 2018),
- A survey of firefighters who reside within the District’s boundaries with 38 respondents (July 25 through July 9, 2018),
- Two community workshops with approximately 73 participants combined (July 17 and November 14, 2018), and
- Two strategic planning sessions with the Board of Directors (July 27 and August 17, 2018).

Direction from the Board of Directors

Board members developed the mission, vision, organizational values, goals and strategies that will guide the future of fire services in the area served by ECCFPD.

Strategic Planning Sessions

On July 27 and August 17, the ECCFPD Board and staff conducted strategic planning sessions to discuss the future of the organization. These were opportunities to review the data gathered through surveys, the community workshop and the environmental scan. The Board heard from the community and as a result at these sessions developed a mission, vision, set of values, along with goals and associated strategies for achievement.

Environmental Scan

Contra Costa County staff under the direction of County Supervisor Diane Burgis, in consultation with ECCFPD staff and Management Partners, prepared the
environmental scan, providing essential information to guide the development of the Strategic Plan through the community workshops and Board strategic planning sessions. This included the following:

- Budget information;
- Existing services and how they have changed over the past several years; and
- Service demand drivers, particularly related to population growth and employment patterns.

**Stakeholder Input**

Input from a variety of stakeholders was gathered, as follows.

- **Interviews.** Management Partners conducted individual interviews with each Board member, elected and appointed leaders of the cities and townships served by the District, and other community representatives and leaders identified by the District.

- **Employee Survey.** Management Partners designed a confidential online survey seeking employee input about vision, mission, values, goals and strategies to implement the goals.

- **Firefighter Survey.** In addition to surveying the staff, the District administered a survey to non-ECCFPD firefighters who live within the service area and work for another fire department. The survey provided input about priorities for the strategic plan, strategies that would help ECCFPD reach its goals, opportunities for improvement, satisfaction with existing service levels, and opinions about potential funding strategies.

- **Community Survey.** Seeking input from residents and businesses in the communities served by ECCFPD was important in developing the strategic plan. Management Partners designed and administered a confidential online survey to obtain this input. The survey was distributed through emails and social media. Questions focused on interests related to the vision for the District and priorities for the future.

- **Community Workshops.** Two community workshops were conducted to gain resident input. The first workshop considered the environmental scan and survey results and developed possible goals and priorities for the strategic plan. The second workshop reviewed the draft mission, vision, values, goals and strategies developed by the Board of Directors. Both workshops were streamed live for home or remote viewing.

The District response times possible with the current level of funding are far below national norms and not satisfactory to District residents, staff and firefighters.

(For more details, see Attachment B)
A mission is a statement of the purpose of the organization. It defines what the organization stands for and what it will do.

Our mission is:

To preserve and protect life, property, and the environment with service above all else.
The vision statement is aspirational with a focus on the future. It is a statement of where the organization is going.

Our vision is to be recognized as:

- A district that is a model of excellence in both fire protection and life safety programs.
- Responsive to the needs of the communities we serve.
- Committed to continuous organizational development.
- Committed to an environment of trust, involvement, innovation, creativity and accountability.
Values provide the basis for how the organization and its members will work to achieve the mission, vision and goals.

Values

- Be fiscally responsible, while maintaining a commitment to excellence.
- Safeguard the lives of our team and the public.
- Offer reliable, compassionate and professional community services.
- Communicate openly and share knowledge.
- Integrity, courage and personal accountability will guide our actions.
Goals

Five goals support the vision and mission.

Five Goals

**Goal A.** Ensure financial stability and sustainability.

**Goal B.** Reduce response times for emergency services throughout the District.

**Goal C.** Maintain a high-performing workforce.

**Goal D.** Modernize stations, apparatus, and equipment.

**Goal E.** Develop a community risk reduction program.

Note: The goals are not ranked in priority order.
Goal A. Ensure financial stability and sustainability.

Five strategies will contribute to achieving the goal.

### Strategies

1. Use a two-track fiscal planning model (with and without new tax revenues).

2. Establish a revenue stabilization plan to manage through varying economic conditions.

3. Pursue local and District-wide development fees and Community Facilities District(s) to cover costs resulting from new growth.

4. Partner with local jurisdictions to identify and secure future station sites and needed funding mechanisms which may include both capital and operating contributions.

5. Pursue parcel taxes, assessments and other District-wide revenue alternatives that resolve tax and fee inequities among District residents.
Goal B. Reduce response times for emergency services throughout the District.

Four strategies will contribute to achieving the goal.

Strategies

1. Add staffing and/or stations to meet current service level response time standards.

2. Temporarily expand existing stations with additional units during the construction of new stations to accelerate improved response times.

3. Discourage rapid growth that may further exacerbate response times and service levels.

4. Work with City and County staff to improve the transportation network and emergency access, including the enforcement of existing traffic laws.
Goal C. Maintain a high-performing workforce.

Four strategies will contribute to achieving the goal.

Strategies

1. Obtain facilities to support a comprehensive training program.

2. Create and implement professional development and succession plans for pending retirements in the District.

3. Maximize employee retention by improving compensation and benefits as can be afforded by the District.

4. Implement employee health and wellness programs and support.
Goal D. Modernize stations, apparatus, and equipment.

Two strategies will contribute to achieving the goal.

Strategies

1. Pursue available one-time grants for equipment and facilities improvements.

2. Establish and implement existing station and equipment budgets and reserves to fund future major maintenance and replacement needs.
Goal E. Develop a community risk reduction program.

Three strategies will contribute to achieving the goal.

Strategies

1. Define and implement a cost-effective plan review and inspection program to reduce current and future emergency needs.

2. Increase communications to engage and educate the public about emergency response and preparedness for home and workplace safety.

3. Support and encourage the development of a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program for improved community-based self-help during a natural disaster.
An Implementation Action Plan is an important accompaniment to this Strategic Plan. The Action Plan will contain a schedule, assignments, funding parameters and key milestones for each strategic initiative. It will be developed by the ECCFPD Board and staff, with assistance from Management Partners, following adoption of the Strategic Plan.

District staff will then report on progress of the strategic initiatives on a regular basis. Providing timely information to stakeholders is critical to the success of the District. Stakeholders include Contra Costa County, the cities of Brentwood and Oakley, other agencies and the public. District communication efforts help engage community groups to ensure the District operations are working and people are informed.

Through annual reports and the District’s budget process, the Board of Directors and District staff will ensure that the Strategic Plan and its Implementation Action Plan are pursued and achieved through the year 2023.
This East Contra Costa Fire Protection District Strategic Plan establishes strategies for the next five years to meet the District’s five overarching goals. The Plan articulates the organizational mission and vision of the District and establishes a set of values and goals as a guide for decision making. The associated Implementation Action Plan identifies projects and funding needs necessary to implement this Strategic Plan. Without new resources and funding, significant reductions in emergency response times will not be possible.

Accountability for the Strategic Plan will be provided through regular reports to the Board of Directors. Progress on the Plan will be reviewed annually, with updates as strategies are completed and as new issues emerge.

Significantly reduced response times will only be possible with additional staffing – which requires more funding.
Communities Served

The East Contra Costa Fire Protection District is an independent special district governed by an elected Board of Directors that sets policy, appoints and supervises the Fire Chief. ECCFPD serves about 115,000 residents in the cities of Brentwood and Oakley and the townships of Discovery Bay, Bethel Island, Knightsen, Byron, Marsh Creek, and Morgan Territory. The ECCFPD service area covers 249 square miles, including rural, suburban, and urban development.

Calls for Service

ECCFPD responds to over 8,000 calls for service each year and provides both fire protection and emergency medical services (basic life support). Service response times present a unique challenge for the District given resource, staffing and station constraints. In addition to serving a diverse range of land use types, limited resources and capacity translate to response times that do not meet national standards.

Based on national standards, the “first due” engine company should arrive earlier than is currently possible as detailed in the chart on the next page. These standards also require 15 firefighters to adequately and safely fight a structure fire, which is more staffing than the District currently has on duty at any one time. As the District has only three fire stations,
most structure fires are dealt with in only a defensive manner with a focus on life safety (firefighters and residents), preventing the fire from spreading to adjacent structures, and minimizing the size and damage from the fire. Consequently, the District is underperforming when compared with national standards. The recommended and actual response times are provided below. These data show the need for the added fire stations and staffing called for in this Strategic Plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Recommended Response Times</th>
<th>Actual District Response Times (meets 90% of the time)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Urban Areas</strong> (Brentwood and Oakley)</td>
<td>7:30</td>
<td>10:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Suburban Areas</strong> (Discovery Bay)</td>
<td>11:30</td>
<td>13:28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rural Areas</strong> (Other County unincorporated areas)</td>
<td>15:30</td>
<td>16:02</td>
</tr>
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**Coordination with Other Agencies**

**Contra Costa County and Neighboring Communities**
The District maintains agreements with Contra Costa County for dispatch and ambulance services and with the cities of Brentwood and Oakley for the provision of fire stations. The District also contracts with the City of Brentwood for financial, human resources, and information technology services, as needed.

**CAL FIRE**
The District contracts with CAL FIRE to provide first responder services in the Marsh Creek/Morgan Territory area. ECCFPD pays CAL FIRE to keep that station open in the non-wildfire season when it would otherwise be closed.

**Staffing and Organization Chart**
ECCFPD has three fire stations staffed by three firefighters (one captain, one engineer, and one senior firefighter), for a total district staffing of nine firefighters per day. The FY 2018-19 budget authorized 35 employee positions. This is substantially reduced due to budgetary constraints from the 2010 level, which was 57 employees and eight fire stations.
*Indicates unfunded future positions.
Attachment B – Background Research

The District’s strategic planning process incorporated substantial background research through an environmental scan conducted by Contra Costa County under the direction of County Supervisor Diane Burgis, as well as online surveys of District residents, employees, and firefighters with other agencies who reside in the District. This attachment summarizes the key findings from this research.

Environmental Scan

External Factors

The District’s service area impacts the priorities and strategic goals for the agency. The District is facing rapid population growth in the coming years, especially in the urban areas. The population for the District service area is expected to grow to 139,097 by the year 2040 which will increase fire response demands and needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Mean Travel Time to Work* (in minutes)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brentwood</td>
<td>56,923</td>
<td>42.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discovery Bay</td>
<td>14,765</td>
<td>47.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bethel Island</td>
<td>2,199</td>
<td>35.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bryon</td>
<td>1,429</td>
<td>34.2</td>
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*Mean travel time to work data is not available for Oakley, Knightsen or other areas not listed above. Population for each community is provided on the next page.
The District serves eight distinct communities, which vary demographically and economically. The service area population and ethnic make-up are shown in the charts below. Economically, the City of Brentwood was founded before Proposition 13 was passed and has higher per capita revenues than the City of Oakley, which was incorporated after Proposition 13. The large unincorporated area is represented by the County and served by an assortment of townships, community services districts and homeowners associations.

Internal Factors
District operations, including staffing and governance, directly affect the agency’s strategic direction. The District remains financially stable at the current low service levels and is recognized as having a strong, high-performing frontline staff team. A new Fire Chief began with the District in 2017. Since he began, there has been increased focus on community outreach and engagement, as well as planning and performance management for the District. In addition to the change in staff leadership, the District’s governance is shifting from an appointed board to a Board that is directly elected by voters. The new Board members began their term in December 2018.


**Survey Research**

As part of the strategic planning process, Management Partners administered three surveys to employees, the community, and other firefighters that live within the District. The survey gathered information on service satisfaction as well as potential funding strategies for the District.

The survey results indicate that less than 20% of the community, less than 10% of ECCFPD staff and less than 15% of other firefighters living in the community are satisfied with the District’s current low service levels and response times.

In order to identify methods to improve overall response times and fire containment, the survey questioned respondents on their level of support for various funding mechanisms, as shown in the charts on the following pages.

Results show support for a voter-approved tax to fund additional fire stations and staffing. Respondents were more supportive of a tax increase to improve service levels to meet current conditions rather than a larger increase to meet anticipated future demands.

In addition, there was strong support for reducing the impacts of regional population growth that may exacerbate response time and service level challenges.

There was little public support for dissolution of the District or attempting to reallocate taxes or other funds from education or existing City services.
A reallocation of property taxes received significantly less support than the voter-approved tax as a solution to the District’s funding needs.

In addition to funding solutions, respondents indicated strong support for reducing or halting new development in order to allow the District the opportunity to improve its service without experiencing continual demand increases. There was little support for the suggestion of dissolving the District entirely, leaving the cities and county responsible for fire protection and emergency response services.
East Contra Costa Fire Protection District Strategic Plan  

December 2018

**Stopping all new or increased development, including both residential and commercial expansions, until fire service standards can be met?**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Source</th>
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<th>Support</th>
<th>Oppose</th>
<th>Strongly Oppose</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
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<tr>
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<td>149</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>47</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employee Survey</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Firefighters</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Dissolution of the District and returning fire protection and emergency response services to the cities and county, likely with no improvement to response times unless new funding is identified or other services are reduced?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Strongly Support</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Oppose</th>
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<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
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