



City Facilities Project



FIREFIGHTING A PROFESSION IN TRANSITION

Fire Departments across the country are in transition. The three main reasons include challenges in:

- recruiting and retaining non-career firefighters
- achieving best practices for firefighter health and safety
- accommodating modern firefighting equipment, training, and operations

Golden Valley is no different. In 2016, the Golden Valley Fire Department (GVFD) completed a study to identify what it needs to do to continue to provide the community with high-quality, fast, and efficient emergency services while being fiscally responsible with taxpayer funding. This was followed in 2020 by a study of all City facilities to determine future needs and opportunities.

For the GVFD, outcomes focused on the need for facilities that would support a new staffing model and modern, safe firefighting practices.

Firefighter Recruitment And Retention

Golden Valley's fire stations were established to support a paid on-call staffing structure, which is no longer sustainable in today's culture. Fire departments nationwide are finding it more and more difficult to recruit and retain paid on-call firefighters due to increased family and job obligations. This is also making it more difficult to respond to fire calls within Industry response-time standards.

As a result, suburban cities are moving to the more modern duty crew staffing model, which creates part-time jobs with predictable scheduled shifts and allows firefighters to use their training on a regular basis, so retention increases.

The 2016 study concluded Golden Valley needs to move from a three-station paid on-call staffing model to a two-station duty crew staffing model. To accommodate this, the City needs facilities to house firefighters 24 hours a day.

Firefighter Health And Safety

Facilities also must improve safety measures for staff, including proper facilities to clean carcinogens off equipment and gear, proper ventilation, and ample work space to reduce exposure to carcinogens.

Firefighting Equipment, Training, And Operations

Facilities must accommodate contemporary firefighting equipment and enable best firefighting practices. This includes:

- drive-through truck bays
- space to avoid conflicts with large vehicles and pedestrians
- a protected space for firefighters to dress for calls
- equitable facilities for male and female staff
- improved spaces for maintenance, hands-on training, and physical fitness training

Firefighter Recruitment and Retention

In response to recruiting challenges and retention issues, in March 2022 the GVFD began staffing duty crews, rotating between the three fire stations. Each crew includes three to four paid on-call firefighters scheduled from 5–11 pm Mon–Fri, with full-time GVFD staff (chief officers and fire inspectors) covering 8 am–5 pm Mon–Fri.

Before implementing duty crews, the first fire vehicle to arrive at a call was the duty officer in a SUV. After

March 1, 2022, the first vehicle to arrive 52 percent of the time is a fire engine with four firefighters. The table below shows the difference in response numbers and times for paid on-call and duty crew models.

The duty crew model has also enabled the GVFD to respond to an additional 23 types of medical calls, which were previously handled by Golden Valley Police Department and ambulance services.

As the GVFD continues to shift to a full-time duty crew staff with two stations, numbers for call response and response times are expected to continue improving.

	Paid On-Call* Model	Duty Crew** Model
Average calls per month	57	131
Calls paged to off-duty firefighters	65.7%	24.5%
Times fire engine arrives first on scene	9.7%	52.2%
Average response time from paging the call to arrival of a fire engine	9:14 min	6:21 min
Times fire engine arrives in less than 5:20 min	18.4%	37%

* Paid on-call statistics were collected from Jan 1, 2018–Feb 28, 2022.

** Duty crew statistics (operating out of one station) were collected from March 1, 2022–Sept 30, 2022.

GVFD By The Numbers

Active Paid-On-Call Firefighters
50

Full-Time Staff
6

Annual Average Hires Needed For Resigned/Retired Paid On-Call
4.9

Resigned/Retired Paid On-Call In Last 10 Years (2011–2021)
49

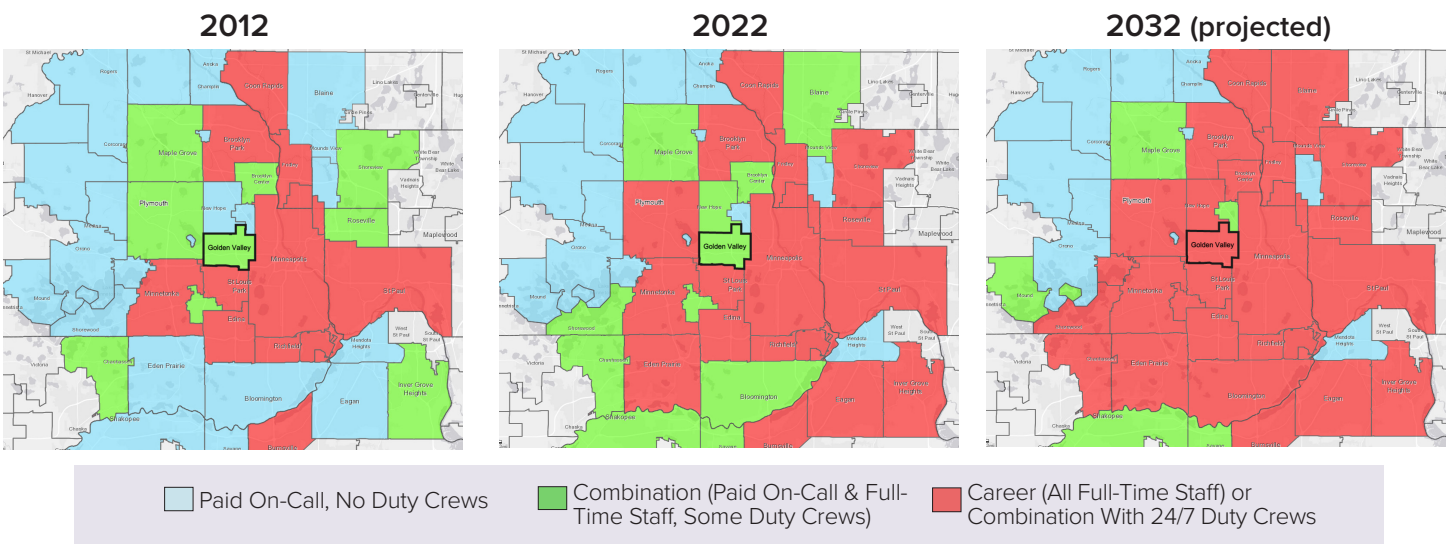
Increase in Resigned/Retired Paid On-Call vs 43-Year Average
22%

Training/Outfitting Costs Per Firefighter
\$12,000 (approx)

Training Time Needed
2 Years

Fire Department Operations In Transition

Across the Twin Cities metro area, fire departments are transitioning from paid on-call service to 24/7 duty crew and full-time operations.



Firefighter Health and Safety

GVFD's current facilities do not provide adequate measures to protect firefighter health and safety. Stations are not equipped with ample work space to reduce exposure to carcinogens and proper facilities to clean carcinogens off equipment and gear. They also lack a protected space for firefighters to dress for calls.



Firefighting Equipment, Training, and Operations

The transition to duty crew staffing will ensure long-term resiliency of the fire department and its operations. It will require facilities that support 24/7 operations, including on-site training, a kitchen and day room, bunk rooms, physical fitness/workout facilities, and shower/changing/locker rooms. None of Golden Valley's three stations have the physical capacity in site size or building construction to meet these functional needs.



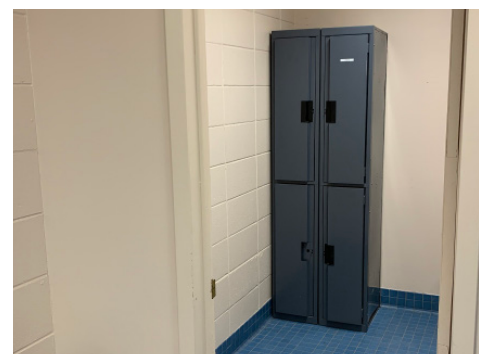
Lack of adequate training space means most training occurs on concrete and outdoors, which is not ideal in winter.

Current stations do not have sleeping quarters.



Current facilities do not offer adequate locker room space, including gender-equitable amenities.

Photos show Station 2 locker rooms—left is men's and right is women's.



Next Steps

In December 2021, the City completed a comprehensive study of its municipal facilities, including the Fire Department and its three stations. The objective was to affirm long-term (20 year) operational and space needs, evaluate the condition of existing facilities, and identify issues with existing facilities.

This fall the City will begin a process to select a site for a new remote fire station, a priority determined by a 2021 analysis of all of its facilities and how they meet community needs.

Location, Location, Location

The City's three current fire station locations are not geographically optimized for today's updated highway system. Station 3 provides coverage for Minneapolis, while Station 2 (Turners Crossroad) no longer connects

to main roads but also provides coverage into St Louis Park. Renovating existing stations is not feasible due to costs and restrictions posed by the current site sizes.

To improve efficiencies and response times, the City needs to consolidate Stations 2 and 3 to one remote fire station along the Hwy 100 corridor.

After reviewing preliminary ideas for the station location process in June 2022, the City Council approved a contract Sept 6 with BKV Architects to complete the site selection analysis.

More Information

For more information, contact Golden Valley Fire Chief John Creilly at 763-593-8065 or jcreilly@goldenvalleymn.gov, or visit www.goldenvalleymn.gov/facilities-study.

