

DEVELOPING FIRE & RESCUE STATIONS: THE PUBLIC PROCESS

A Summary for Involved City Bureaus

BACKGROUND

Public involvement in siting and developing fire stations in Portland has five purposes:

- To help ensure that the public—which approved the G. O. bond issue and will pay the increased property taxes—has input into how the money is spent.
- To improve the end product by involving different perspectives and community expertise.
- To help ensure that, when the development process is over, the Fire Bureau and the personnel who staff the fire stations will be regarded as good neighbors in their Fire Management Area.
- To meet applicable State law and/or City ordinances regarding land use.
- To express the democratic values on which our City government is based.

Public involvement is also an integral part of the Bureau's Community Emergency Services approach to serving Portland's residents. According to Memorandum 96-08 (3/15/96), all CES activities have a common purpose and priority:

- Community-oriented projects are intended to contribute directly to the reduction of the negative impacts of fire and controlling elements that threaten the health and lives of citizens. As such, community-oriented projects will be regarded as a priority throughout the Bureau.
- As a Bureau priority, community-oriented activities and projects will warrant increased flexibility in scheduling other work activities.
- We will utilize citizen input to help develop projects and use citizens to help carry out the projects. Each project will be a partnership between the Bureau and communities we serve. In this way, the Fire Bureau is committed to building a more livable Portland.

SITE SELECTION AND STATION DEVELOPMENT

Whether siting a new fire and rescue station, or relocating an existing station, the overall public process will include two components—*site selection* and *station development*. We will also use the station development process when remodeling a station.

Site selection will occur first. Potential sites will be evaluated using criteria that include the interests of the Bureau, the neighborhood, and the City at large. (See Attachment A for the selection criteria that will apply to all potential sites.)

As site selection proceeds, the second component of the public process begins—*station construction/renovation*. The Bureau will solicit community input on station construction for new and relocated stations, and on renovation for those stations that will be retrofitted and remodeled.

Station construction/renovation includes five elements of concern to the Bureau and the community, with each station putting more or less emphasis on each element as the situation dictates. The elements of station development include *programming, internal design, external design, landscaping, and specific community concerns*. (See Attachment B for a description of these elements.)

THE OVERALL PROCESS

Throughout site selection and station construction or renovation, it is important for the Bureau to be clear about the role that the community plays, that is, providing input and advising the City on siting, station design and operation. We expect to include many of the recommendations made by citizens, but this cannot be guaranteed, since there are legal, operational, and other items that must also be factored into these decisions. The Bureau, the Commissioner-in-Charge, and the City Council have the *decision-making* responsibility; the Fire Management Area community has the *advisory* responsibility.

Along with being clear about the role that the community plays in this process, it's important to keep in mind that neighbors hate surprises. (So do elected officials.) By having an effective public involvement process, we hope not only to avoid surprises, but also to develop fire and rescue stations that are community assets.

The actual process for gathering public input should begin with and continue to be grounded in the Neighborhood Associations that represent the neighborhoods served by the station. For all of the City's fire stations, their respective Fire Management Areas overlap significant portions of three and up to eight Neighborhood Association areas. All of those Neighborhood Associations need to be represented in the process, not just the neighborhood within which the station is located. "District Coalitions" support many of the city's Neighborhood Associations and they can be helpful in the Bureau's process. Many Fire Management Areas also include a business area, and most of these have Business District Associations. These should be treated as Neighborhood Associations in the process. (See Attachment C for a list of Neighborhood Associations and Business District Associations by Fire Management Area.)

We do not assume that these three types of organizations completely represent the neighborhood. The possible station-based activities in Attachment B (and any others that may be suggested) all have constituencies and organized groups concerned with them. These other "stakeholders" will be identified in the public process outlined below. The due dates will be determined for each station project.

A: PUBLIC PROCESS FOR SITING FIRE STATIONS			
ACTION		WHO?	DUE DATE
S1.	Inform affected Associations about all stations to be sited, relocated or remodeled and the approximate timeline.	Chief's Office, Logistics, BGS	
For each station:			
S2.	Hold a public meeting to provide information on the process and timeline, and to solicit participation on the Station Advisory Committee (SAC). Announce public meeting six weeks in advance to <i>The Oregonian</i> , community newspapers, neighborhood newsletters, and Association contacts.	Logistics, BGS, CES	
S3.	From attendees at public meeting and other interested groups, develop community stakeholders list. Choose 10 stakeholders to invite onto the SAC.	CES, Logistics, BGS	
S4.	Send out letter to invite 10 individuals to join the SAC. The letter should include a "job description" for the SAC, the date, time, place and agenda for the first meeting, and an RSVP request.	Logistics, CES	
S5.	Hold first SAC meeting to establish SAC procedures*, discuss most appropriate method for identifying possible sites, and review site evaluation criteria. Products (in writing) from this meeting should include the SAC's internal operating guidelines, their recommendation for best method to identify possible sites, and any additional community criteria they will use in evaluating possible sites.	SAC, Logistics, BGS	
S6.	Identify possible sites that meet the 4-6 minute response time criterion.	Logistics, BGS	
S7.	Develop additional information on possible sites to facilitate evaluation.	Logistics, BGS	
S8.	Evaluate sites using criteria and additional information.	SAC	
S9.	Develop SAC's final recommendations on siting. Send to Fire Chief and Commissioner-in-Charge.	SAC, Logistics	
S10.	Determine site. Put all decisions into "fact sheet" format. The fact sheet should also summarize the design and construction timeline for the station and address any related issues raised by the SAC during their discussions.	Fire Chief, Logistics	
S11.	Send cover letter with fact sheet for each station to relevant Associations and all Fire Management Area stakeholders (#S4).	SAC, Logistics	

S12.	Inform <i>The Oregonian</i> , community newspapers and neighborhood newsletters of siting decisions.	PIO	
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*See Attachment D for guidelines on forming and working with a citizen advisory committee.

B: PUBLIC PROCESS FOR FIRE STATION CONSTRUCTION / RENOVATON			
The process below assumes that all stations to be sited, relocated or remodeled will have been identified and that the approximate timeline will have been communicated to affected Neighborhood Associations.			
ACTION		WHO?	DUE DATE
For each group of stations (grouped by year in the overall implementation of the G. O. bond measure):			
D1.	Develop an information packet for each station in the group. The packet should include a fact sheet about each existing station (Degenkolb) or the fact sheet from the siting process for each new station (#S10). The packet should also include information about the public involvement process to be used (generic) and some general ideas about programming and internal design, external design, and landscaping. This will give citizens some ideas to start their thinking.	Logistics, BGS, CES	
D2.	Meet with Station Captains to discuss the renovation and the public process. Meet with each affected Association to discuss process.	Logistics, CES	
D3.	Distribute information packet (#D1) to media, including <i>The Oregonian</i> , community newspapers and Association newsletters.	PIO	
If a Station Advisory Committee (SAC) was established during the siting phase, proceed to #D8 and continue working with the SAC.			
D4.	Contact neighbors within the equivalent of two blocks in all directions from the existing station. Each household should be reached via direct mail or door hangers to provide formal notification of the station remodel project.	Logistics	
D5.	Hold a public informational meeting on the station project. Announce six weeks in advance to <i>The Oregonian</i> , community newspapers, neighborhood newsletters, Association contacts, and immediate neighbors (#D4).	Logistics, BGS, CES, Station Captains	
D6.	From attendees at public meeting and other interested groups in the Fire Management Area, develop community stakeholders list. Choose 10 stakeholders to invite onto the Station Advisory Committee (SAC).	Captain, CES, Logistics, BGS	

D7.	Send out letter to invite 10 individuals to join the SAC. The letter should include a “job description” for the SAC, the date, time, place and agenda for the first meeting, and an RSVP request.	Captain, CES	
D8.	Conduct SAC meetings* and cover each of the development elements—p programming, internal design, external design, landscaping, and specific community concerns.	SAC, Captain	
D9.	Compile SAC’s final recommendations on the development elements and input on any other concerns. Send report to Logistics.	SAC, Captain	
D10.	Integrate all input from each SAC report and other relevant information into a report for decision-makers. Send copy of report to Captains, SACs and relevant Associations.	Logistics, BGS	
D11.	Determine programming and design components for each station. Put all decisions into “fact sheet” format. The fact sheet should summarize the overall plan for the station—programming, internal and external design, landscaping, any specific issues raised by station’s SAC, and the construction timeline.	Decision-makers	
D12.	Conduct final meeting of SAC to announce decisions, distribute fact sheet, acknowledge and celebrate SAC’s work	Captain, Logistics	
D13.	Send cover letter with fact sheet for each station to relevant Associations and all Fire Management Area stakeholders (#D6).	SAC, Logistics	
D14.	Use the fact sheets to inform <i>The Oregonian</i> , community newspapers and neighborhood newsletters of siting and/or station development decisions.	PIO	

*See Attachment D for guidelines on forming and working with a citizen advisory committee.

SITE SELECTION CRITERIA

Primary emergency response criterion for the site:

- Allows for 4 – 6 minute initial response time within the Fire Management Area.

Additional emergency response criteria for the site:

- Accommodates a two-bay fire and rescue station (8100 square feet) or a new generation station (15,000 square feet), with adequate off-street parking.
- Allows for drive-through apparatus bays or deadhead back-up.
- Facilitates operational interaction with neighboring fire and rescue stations and departments, e.g., potential mutual aid agreements, co-location possibilities, response time obligations with existing stations.
- Located close to a major street arterial for quick access by emergency vehicles.
- Adjacent to streets with adequate sight lines for safe and efficient route access.
- Located outside floodplain, potential landslide area or potential liquefaction area.

Community criteria for the site:

- Does not compromise City-designated resources, such as views and landmarks.
- Use would not require major alteration of landforms, vegetation, or wildlife habitats.
- Has the potential to be aesthetically complementary to the surrounding community.
- Could accommodate community activities.

General City criteria for the site:

- Use would not require the clean-up of environmentally hazardous materials.
- Has potential for public-private partnership to enhance function and defray construction costs.
- Sale price and development costs fall within designated budget limits.
- Use is feasible under the City's land use policies.

ELEMENTS OF STATION DEVELOPMENT

1. *Programming* is the first thing the Bureau, the surrounding community, and potential partner agencies need to consider. What kinds of activities will be occurring at the station? Some examples:

- Emergency response—fire, EMS, hazmat, special rescue, etc.
- Prevention—inspection, public education, etc.
- Community meetings
- NET activities and/or storage space
- Public information area for current City information and forms (e.g., building permit applications)
- Other agency space (e.g., a Portland Police Community Contact Center)

2. *Internal design* should flow from the programming suggestions that have been made for a particular station. For example, if a variety of City permit applications are going to be available at the station, then space will have to be designed into the station to accommodate this function. Space availability may limit the number and/or type of programming which can be done at a particular station.

3. *External design* is a key concern for the Bureau's neighbors. When Station 17 was built in 1994, the Bureau had an opportunity to work with the neighbors. These included the Neighborhood Association, Payless, and key neighborhood leaders. The station was going to be built between some condominiums and Payless, and those neighbors were concerned that the station's paint would blend in. The neighbors also reviewed the architect's drawing and made comments.

4. *Landscaping* is a key component of the station's "fit" with the neighborhood. At Station 17, Payless wanted landscaping around the station which would "soften" it. The building permit also required landscaping. In many areas of the city, keeping existing trees while building a new fire and rescue station will be a concern for the neighbors.

5. *Specific concerns* that the neighborhood will want to discuss with the Bureau should be on the agenda as we work together. Examples include noise, flashing lights, and parking.

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS AND BUSINESS DISTRICT ASSOCIATIONS
By Fire Management Area

[Table is under revision for attachment to this document.]

WORKING WITH A CITIZEN ADVISORY GROUP

Each station will form a Station Advisory Committee (SAC) made up of invited stakeholders from the Fire Management Area community. The SAC will hear about and discuss the work to be done on the station and suggest ways to make the most of the opportunity which presents itself to the Fire Management Area community when the Bureau is rebuilding, replacing, or adding a station.

Effective advisory committee work takes time and effort, and we need to make sure that no one's time is wasted. We need to be organized and efficient when asking citizens to volunteer. A few basic issues to keep in mind:

- *Overall coordination of the public input effort will be handled by Logistics; however, managing the SAC is a task that will be led by the station Captains, with support from the Bureau.* Since Logistics will be the Bureau's lead unit on getting the actual work done, input on programming, design, and other issues must be communicated to Logistics in order to be considered in the final decisions on each station project. In working with the SACs, the Captains are the key, but they will be supported with resources from the Bureau as a whole.
- *In conducting the SAC meetings, use a facilitator if possible.* A facilitator can ensure that meetings stay on track and that objectives are clearly identified and accomplished in a timely manner. And while we do not expect a controversy, if one should arise it will be very helpful to have a facilitator—one who does not have a position on the issue—managing the process. There may be someone among the stakeholders who can play the facilitator's role. If this is not the case, Logistics and CES will assist in obtaining facilitation.

Committee Membership

Each station will form a Station Advisory Committee (SAC) made up of invited stakeholders from the Fire Management Area community. Each SAC should be large enough to represent a variety of community interests, but small enough to be manageable and efficient. 8 - 10 people is a good size. Potential SAC members can be identified at the public information meetings held early in the station siting or development process (see Step #S4 and #D6). At the meeting an announcement should be made about the need for members of the Fire Management Area community to participate so attendees can indicate their interest.

Other potential SAC members should be requested from Fire Management Area community stakeholders—people and organizations that have a stake in what we are doing. Even if they do not attend the initial public information meeting, they could be sent the letter inviting participation on the SAC. Examples of such groups in the Fire Management Area include the following:

- Neighborhood Associations
- Business District Associations
- Ethnic groups
- Environmental groups
- Religious groups and associations
- Neighborhood Emergency Teams (NETs)
- Social service agencies
- Users of a particular service (e.g., owners of buildings that get Bureau inspections)
- Public and private schools, PTAs
- Service clubs (e.g., Kiwanis, Rotary)
- Neighbors within the equivalent of two blocks in all directions from the station

Committee Meetings

We can expect that SAC members will have a variety of agendas coming into the process. Our job will be to find a balance between their agendas and the City's interest, which is to get community input and use it as much as possible in the siting, programming and design of the Bureau's new or remodeled stations.

Invest the Bureau's time to do it right. The first meeting of the SAC is especially important for developing ground rules, clarifying expectations, laying out assumptions and boundaries, and getting organized. Priorities at the first meeting should be to review basic information about the work to be done on the station and what the SAC is being asked to do. If the SAC's task is to develop a recommendation for a new site, present the siting criteria. If their focus is station development, present some generic ideas about programming and internal design, external design, and landscaping. In either case, *emphasize that the Committee will discuss ideas, give input, and make recommendations. Emphasize that the Bureau will make decisions, based on the SAC's input and a number of other factors.*

It's important to have a printed agenda for each meeting of the SAC. An agenda that specifies how much time should be spent on each item can be helpful. For the first meeting, for example:

AGENDA

- | | |
|---------|---|
| 5 min. | 1. Welcome by Station Captain |
| 10 min. | 2. Introduction of Committee Members |
| 20 min. | 3. Review seismic study and work to be done on our station |
| 30 min. | 4. Discuss the Committee's role and responsibilities |
| 30 min. | 5. Review input and decision-making process |
| 10 min. | 6. Establish Committee's internal procedures |
| 10 min. | 7. Preview [siting criteria] [programming and design ideas] |
| 5 min. | 8. Schedule next meeting |

A total of three work meetings after the initial one should be enough to get the community's input on either station siting or development. Any additional concerns should be noted in the written summary of input and recommendations from the SAC.