

# 2026 Goal #1 – IR&R 5-year plan review

## 2026 District Goal #1 – Section 2

### **SWOT Analysis and Master Plan Review (2025 Assessment) and operational recommendations.**

As part of 2026 District Goal #1, Section 2, the District conducted a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis of the response capability including a review of the 2025 Master Plan efforts.

The purpose of this review is to determine whether any adjustments to assumptions, planning strategies, or implementation timelines are warranted.

It remains the District's goal to staff 2 stations (Currently Station 81 and Station 83) twenty-four (24) hours per day, seven (7) days per week to provide consistent and reliable service delivery to the community.

#### **Strengths**

The District has increased its number of career responders. In 2025 the district hired six new career members (one resigned since) and in early 2026 we hired three additional (For a total of eight new positions).

Each of the three platoons now includes eight (8) career members.

With this increase, the District now generally maintains a steady capability of having a qualified apparatus driver available at both Station 81 and Station 83.

Overall career staffing levels are stronger than in previous years and have improved our baseline operational reliability.

The District has an effective volunteer IR&R recruiting, selection and onboarding system, managed by our new Administrative Assistant. Volunteers are processed, oriented and sponsored to the county EMT and/or Fire academies.

#### **Weaknesses**

In 2025 the District staffed our North Olympia Station 8-3, 97% of the time. In addition, 82% of that time, the District staffed the engine at Station 83 and 12% it was staffed an aid unit. Namely due to not having an officer available, but occasionally due to not having enough members on duty. (Based on staffing data summary for 2025). The current 5-year Master Plan notes that we intend(ed) to add three additional Lieutenants and one additional FF/EMT; however, due to the latest projected revenue forecast, we currently do not have

immediate plans to do so (as we have hired three less positions than the 5-year plan notes.)

During those periods, Station 83 was staffed with an aid unit rather than a fire engine, reducing fire suppression capability in that response area.

Although in 2024 Proposition 1 was approved, the District's new revenue stream has been negatively impacted by a significant reduction in the estimated future assessed valuation growth.

As a result, current career staffing levels remain below the original Master Plan projections.

While we never staff apparatus with less than two responders, two is admittedly less than ideal. The impact and effectiveness of having at least three responders on an engine is vastly better. Staffing often dictates that in order to staff Station 8-3, crews often run with two responders on each engine. We still suffer the debate of "what's best" – having two engines with two responders each or having staffed one station staffed with one engine and three or four responders. Often the District's primary goal of staffing two stations trumps the goal of having three or more responders on each engine.

### **Opportunities**

While many volunteer applicants are primarily interested in gaining career experience, the District continues to see a strong application pool of individuals interested in volunteering locally.

The size of the volunteer applicant pool presents an opportunity to continually recruit and replenish the volunteer ranks.

With a well-developed and structured volunteer program that includes recruiting, selecting, onboarding, mentorship, and engagement strategies, the district can leverage applicant interest to enhance operational support capacity.

With the additional new career hires, combined with the personal and professional growth of existing staff, there is a wealth of gained experience and talent. Having these new members provides tremendous opportunities. (Wildland firefighting, pre-fire planning, public education, facility and equipment expertise, special rescue and diverse new perspectives.)

## **Threats**

The District has experienced a decline in volunteer longevity over the past several years.

A high percentage of volunteers seek career fire service employment, resulting in frequent turnover as members are hired elsewhere.

Volunteers have conflicting primary personal and professional commitments that may limit long-term availability and contribute to resignations. Volunteers also generally have less extra time to commit to shift coverage.

The District acknowledges a service delivery shortcoming in the northeast section of the district (Station 82 response area).

This shortfall has been identified in the Washington Surveying and Rating Bureau (WSRB) evaluation as a staffing and response capability concern. This could potentially have a significant negative impact on the community's fire insurance premiums in the area.

This area also represents our slowest response times. To better serve our community the District needs to address this issue and determine how to improve its level of service.

The Resident Firefighter Program has not yet proven to be successful, as the District has been unable to consistently recruit qualified, willing, and available candidates to participate.

Historically, the District response has relied on volunteer operation support and/or other tender qualified members to drive/operate the water tenders for fire calls. The operational support membership has been decreasing as fewer volunteers live in the area, are not willing and able to qualify to drive the tender and not interested in continuing the full duties of a FF/EMT.

## **Master plan recommendations and considerations moving forward**

Based on this analysis, the District should consider:

1. Whether staffing assumptions in the five-year Master Plan remain realistic given new revenue assumptions. If the District's revenue stream will not support the existing 5-year master plan's staffing levels, we may consider updating it to reflect maintaining our current staffing levels of having 24 career shift responders.
2. The District might update the 5-year Master Plan to target a specific need for volunteers to support the District response plan. Recent studies and review of the volunteer program show that there has been a significant decrease of return on investment. Namely most volunteers join with the primary intent to get their "foot in the door" into the fire service with the end goal of gaining a career position. The

District has not been receiving enough deployed staffing value compared to the costs, efforts and resources we invest. While there are far fewer people interested in volunteering for the sake of volunteering, ideally, there may be long term value in seeking volunteers that are already more established in life and local in our community. More emphasis should be placed on our selection process to prioritize volunteers that may remain with us for a longer period. Understanding this will likely mean finding fewer candidates, but with the hope that they will be long-term members.

**Targeted staffing counts.** With the assumption that we maintain 24 career responders (eight on each of three platoons) the District could target 21 volunteers (seven on each platoon). Volunteers are currently expected to commit to at least 48 hours of on duty coverage per month. This would be a similar shift staffing count as having two additional career members on each platoon. While volunteers are not expected to have all the same qualifications as career members (i.e. may be EMT or Firefighter only vs. career members required to be FF, EMT and apparatus driver operator qualified) however this will help increase staffing numbers and manpower.

#### **Station 82 response area.**

There is a significant response issue in the northeast area of our District (Station 8-2 area) The District should develop and plan to update the 5-year master plan. At this time four options have been considered.

1. Relocation of a new fire station on the east side of the district. Plan to staff two stations at the current Station 8-3 and at the new facility, on District owned land on 63<sup>rd</sup> Ave NE.
2. Continue to strive to recruit and maintain volunteers for the resident program as an interim measure.
3. Hire career and/or additional volunteers to enhance staffing levels to staff the existing station 8-2. (I.e. staff three locations – 8-1, 8-2, 8-3)
4. Accept the area's response deficiencies. If such option is selected, it's highly advised to plan for a significant public communications/information campaign and/or be prepared to explain the topic and be prepared to address community inquiries.