



An analysis of contemporary staffing, recruitment, and retention practices for the Victoria, MN Fire Department



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Method

Review of Relevant Research

- Books, trade magazines, academic journals, and technical reports
- National firefighting publications and websites
- Fire department websites and press releases

Interviews

- We interviewed the City Manager on October 5, 2015.
- We interviewed the Fire Chief on October 12, 2015.

Survey of City of Victoria Volunteer Firefighters

- Questions covered a wide array of topics based on a literature review.
- Survey was administered online using Qualtrics.
- Participants were 22 current VFD volunteer firefighters.

Comprehensive City Plan for Victoria, MN's Geographic Expansion by 2030

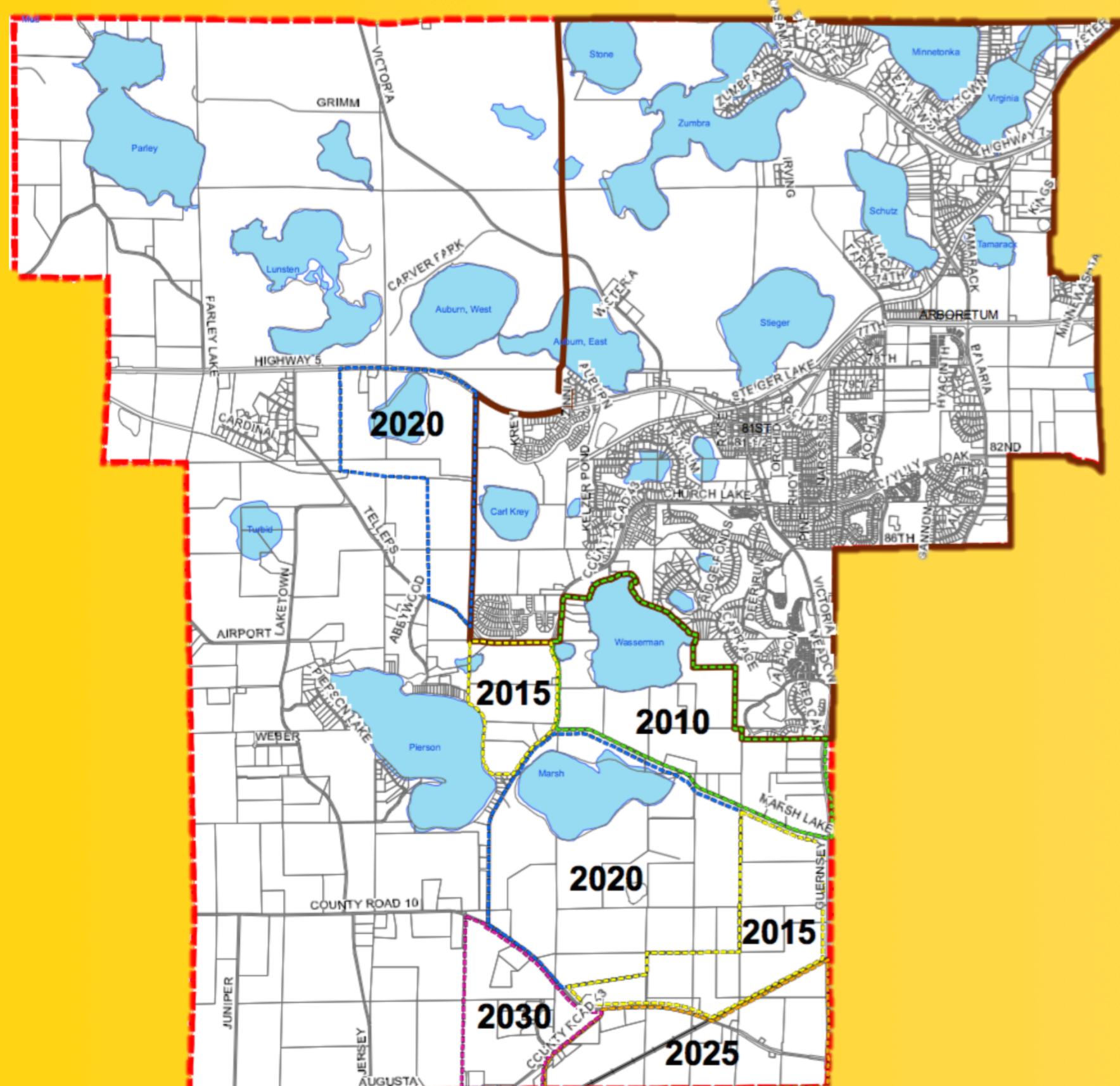


Image credit: City of Victoria, MN (2009)

Staffing

Needs

- Create a staffing model to meet the needs of a rapidly growing community.
- Maintain acceptable response times as the city limits expand.
- Determine how to staff an eventual second station.
- Ensure adequate staffing during daytime hours.

Top Recommendations

- Document trends in call volumes.
- Explore the possibility of duty crews.
- Consider the use of turnout gear for individuals working outside city limits.
- Implement a more formalized specialization system.
- Recruit non-active and support staff.
- Monitor response times to inform the viability of new staffing models.

Recruiting

Needs

- Determine the most effective ways to recruit new volunteers.
- Build visibility within the community and establish a strong reputation to attract volunteers.
- Ensure consistent stream of incoming recruits to match the number of individuals exiting the department.
- Identify the most effective media and methods for reaching potential recruits.

Top Recommendations

- Use personal recruiting.
- Train volunteers in recruiting skills.
- Establish department-owned social media accounts.
- Create branded ads.
- Pilot test ads to increase their effectiveness.
- Institute a referral program.

Retention

Needs

- Determine ways to alleviate burdensome time commitments.
- Ensure consistent motivation among volunteers.
- Discover reasons that people are likely to exit the department.
- Enhance the quality and quantity of communications.

Top Recommendations

- Adjust the timeline and format of training.
- Contact local stores for firefighter discounts and promotions.
- Recognize firefighters and their family members for their service.
- Hold frequent informal social gatherings.
- Provide realistic job previews.
- Collect anonymous feedback from firefighters.
- Recognize employers who are supportive of firefighters' responsibilities.

Conclusion

We developed recommendations to address a number of the department's needs and prioritized them according to feasibility and cost effectiveness. We also identified general timelines in which these recommendations could be implemented, ranging from the very near future to several years out.

Our recommendations are based on local, state, and national best practices and have been implemented with great success in communities similar to Victoria. We believe that any of these recommendations could reasonably be put to use in Victoria and could help to meet the department's needs.

For more information, please reference our final technical report.

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