KERNERSVILLE
STRATEGIC PLAN
2026-2031
FIRE RESCUE

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Acknowledgements

The Kernersville Fire Rescue Department extends its sincere appreciation to everyone who contributed to the development of this Strategic Plan.

This plan is built on feedback from internal (department staff) and external (citizens, partner agencies, businesses, elected officials, and town departments) stakeholders. Your honesty, concern, and support are critical to our organization now and into the future, and we cannot thank you enough for your help guiding our department.

Special appreciation goes to the Strategic Planning Team for their commitment, professionalism, and dedication in evaluating stakeholder input, identifying organizational priorities, and helping shape the department's future direction.

We also share a special thank you to everyone who meticulously proofread and provided input on corrections and refinements to the document.

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Message from the Fire Rescue Chief

It was both an honor and a privilege to help facilitate the Kernersville Fire Rescue Department Strategic Plan for 2026–2031. Throughout this process, I appreciated the opportunity to listen to and carefully review feedback from our department personnel, town departments, partner agencies, elected officials, businesses, and residents. Everyone's perspectives, experiences, and expectations were instrumental in shaping this plan and in identifying the priorities that will guide our department over the next five years.

I was especially proud to watch our Strategic Planning Team come together over three days to thoughtfully evaluate stakeholder feedback, departmental data, emerging trends, and the core issues facing our organization. The team looked beyond our immediate needs to consider the challenges and opportunities that will shape our department well into the future. While none of us can know exactly what the future holds, this process helped the team chart a clear course based on what we are hearing and experiencing today and define where we aspire to be tomorrow.

Since our previous plan was completed in 2019, the department has experienced significant growth and transformation, including expanded staffing, improved facilities and training capabilities, new technology, enhanced emergency response services, stronger regional partnerships, and the achievement of an ISO Class 1 rating.

As our community continues to grow, increased call demand, expanding development, workforce transitions, changing expectations, and more complex service needs require us to plan proactively. This strategic plan establishes a framework centered on leadership, accountability, professional development, operational readiness, workforce sustainability, community engagement, and service excellence.

The plan provides measurable goals and actionable objectives to guide our progress, strengthen our organization, and prepare our personnel for the challenges ahead. Most importantly, it reinforces our commitment to protecting life, property, and the environment while serving our community with professionalism, integrity, compassion, and excellence.

I am grateful to everyone who contributed to this process, and I sincerely thank you for your help with guiding our department into the future.

Respectfully,

R. Scott Alderman
Fire Rescue Chief

Executive Summary

The Kernersville Fire Rescue Department Strategic Plan for 2026–2031 serves as a comprehensive roadmap to guide the organization through continued growth, evolving service demands, and organizational development.

The department initiated the strategic planning process following the expiration of its previous strategic plan in 2025. Recognizing the importance of proactive planning, the department engaged both internal and external stakeholders to ensure the updated plan reflects the expectations, concerns, and priorities of the workforce and the community.

The strategic planning process included:

- Department-wide staff engagement meetings
- Community stakeholder outreach
- SWOT analysis
- Organizational gap analysis
- Evaluation of service delivery trends
- Assessment of future operational demands
- Review of mission, vision, and organizational values

The planning process identified several recurring themes:

- The importance of rapid and reliable emergency response
- Workforce recruitment and retention challenges
- Organizational accountability and consistency
- Leadership development
- Communication and transparency
- Operational readiness and deployment planning
- Community engagement and education
- Long-term equipment and facility sustainability

To address these priorities, the department established six strategic initiatives:

2026 – 2031 Strategic Initiatives

Unified Direction	**Leadership**	**Community Engagement**
Workforce Development & Sustainability	**Equipment & Facilities**	**Services & Deployment**

These initiatives establish the foundation for measurable goals and objectives intended to strengthen organizational performance, improve service delivery, enhance workforce development, and prepare the department for future growth.

The department's updated mission statement now reflects the addition of contract areas outside the town limits for which the department is now responsible:

MISSION STATEMENT

"The Kernersville Fire Rescue Department is an all-hazards organization dedicated to protecting life, property, and the environment for the citizens and visitors of the Town of Kernersville and the neighboring communities we serve."

The department's updated vision statement reflects the desired future state of the organization:

VISION STATEMENT

"The Kernersville Fire Rescue Department strives to be a high-performing organization that delivers exceptional service through disciplined, accountable leadership and a unified professional workforce—meeting our community's evolving needs."

This strategic plan is intended to be a living document that guides decision-making, budgeting, operational planning, and organizational development over the next five years.

The success of this strategic plan will depend upon the commitment of department personnel, town leadership, elected officials, and community stakeholders. By focusing on these six strategic initiatives, the Kernersville Fire Rescue Department will be better positioned to meet future challenges, capitalize on emerging opportunities, and continue providing exceptional service to the community.

Executive Dashboard

Strategic Initiative 1: Unified Direction			
Goal	**Objective(s)**	**Lead**	**Support**
Organizational Consistency	Standardize Operational Performance	Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Operations Battalion Chiefs, Training Battalion Chief, and any other identified department/town staff
	Training Meets Department-Wide Performance Expectations	Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Training Battalion Chief, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff
	Department-Wide Accountability System	Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Training Battalion Chief, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff

Strategic Initiative 2: Leadership			
Goal(s)	**Objective(s)**	**Lead**	**Support**
Establish a Structured Multi-Level Leadership Development System	Build a tiered leadership development model for Entry (Firefighter), Emerging Leader (Senior FF/Driver), Company Officer, and Chief Officer	Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Operations Battalion Chiefs, Training Battalion Chief, and any other identified department/town staff
Define and Institutionalize Followership as a Core Skill	Formally define "effective followership" and incorporate it in training and evaluations.	Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Training Battalion Chief, Operations Shift Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff
Standardize Officer Expectations and Leadership Performance	Define clear expectations for company officers	Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Training Battalion Chief, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff
	Establish Officer Accountability and Performance Evaluation Standards	Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Training Battalion Chief, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff
	Create a Company Officer Performance Framework	Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Training Battalion Chief, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff

Strategic Initiative 2: Leadership (continued)			
Goal(s)	**Objective(s)**	**Lead**	**Support**
Align Leadership Development, Evaluation, and Accountability	Evaluate promotional processes for Engineer, Captain, and Battalion Chief Positions	Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Training Battalion Chief, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff
	Implement 360 feedback for emerging and current officers	Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Training Battalion Chief, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff

Strategic Initiative 3: Community Engagement			
Goal(s)	**Objective(s)**	**Lead**	**Support**
Enhance Community Visibility and Communication	Continue to enhance a positive presence at local events	Fire Marshal	Fire and Life Division Staff, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff
	Expand social media and website presence	Fire Marshal	Fire and Life Safety Division Staff, and any other identified department/town staff
	Develop Quarterly Community Announcement Newsletter (CAN)	Fire Marshal	Fire and Life Safety Division Staff, Operations Battalion Chief(s), Logistics Battalion Chief, Training Battalion Chief, and any other identified department/town staff
Increase Community Education on Department Services and Capabilities	Formalize Department History Program	Department Historian	Fire and Life Division Staff, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff
	Conduct Station Open Houses and Public Demonstrations	Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Fire and Life Safety Educator, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff
	Develop an Annual Citizen Fire Rescue Academy	Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Fire and Life Safety Division Staff, Operations Battalion Chief(s), Logistics Battalion Chief, Training Battalion Chief, and any other identified department/town staff

Strategic Initiative 3: Community Engagement (continued)			
Goal(s)	**Objective(s)**	**Lead**	**Support**
Vulnerable Population Outreach	Identify High-Risk Groups throughout the Town of Kernersville and Contract Service Areas (i.e., Colfax Service District)	Fire Marshal	Fire and Life Safety Division Staff, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff
	Develop and/or Enhance Current Outreach Programs for High-Risk Groups	Fire Marshal	Fire and Life Safety Division Staff, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff
	Implement Community Risk Reduction Programs for Identified High-Risk Groups	Fire Marshal	Fire and Life Safety Division Staff, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff

Strategic Initiative 4: Workforce Development and Sustainability			
Goal(s)	**Objective(s)**	**Lead**	**Support**
Recruitment Efforts	Develop proactive recruitment strategies that expand applicant pools and attract high-quality personnel to the organization	Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Fire and Life Safety Division Staff, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff
Retention and Workforce Sustainability	Strengthen staff retention through wellness initiatives, compensation advocacy, professional development opportunities, and employee recognition	Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Fire Marshal, Logistics Battalion Chief, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff
	Develop and implement a workforce succession planning program	Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Fire Marshal, Logistics Battalion Chief, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff

Strategic Initiative 5: Equipment and Facilities			
Goal(s)	**Objective(s)**	**Lead**	**Support**
Maintain and Improve Apparatus and Equipment Readiness	Continue evaluating apparatus, equipment, PPE, SCBA, maintenance, and replacement	Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Logistics Division Staff and any other identified department/town staff
	Expand Equipment Lifecycle Management and Tracking	Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Logistics Division Staff and any other identified department/town staff
Evaluate Facility Needs for Current Operations and Future Growth	Assess current and future facility needs to support operational effectiveness and organizational growth	Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Logistics Division Staff and any other identified department/town staff
	Improve Facility Maintenance Tracking	Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Logistics Division Staff and any other identified department/town staff

Strategic Initiative 6: Services and Deployment			
Goal(s)	**Objective(s)**	**Lead**	**Support**
Evaluate the Emergency Medical Service Delivery System	Evaluate future medical service capabilities with Forsyth and Guilford EMS agencies to ensure the department is prepared to meet increasing EMS demand and evolving patient care expectations	Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff
	Educate Stakeholders on EMS Service Demands	Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Operations Shift Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff

Strategic Initiative 6: Services and Deployment (continued)			
Goal(s)	**Objective(s)**	**Lead**	**Support**
Continue to Evaluate Support Services Branch Services and Staffing	Evaluate current and future staffing and service delivery needs within the Fire and Life Safety Division to support community growth, increasing workload, and expanded prevention responsibilities	Deputy Chief	Fire Marshal, and any other identified department/town staff
	Continue to assess Logistics Division staffing and service delivery needs to improve operational sustainability and logistical support capabilities	Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Logistics Battalion Chief, and any other identified department/town staff
Continually Evaluate Resource Deployment	Continually assess resource deployment strategies to improve operational efficiency, response effectiveness, and regional coordination	Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff
	Continue to Monitor Deployment Performance	Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff

Department Overview

The Kernersville Fire Rescue Department is an all-hazards emergency services organization dedicated to protecting life, property, and the environment for the Town of Kernersville and the neighboring communities it serves.

The department provides a wide range of emergency and non-emergency services, including:

The department serves a rapidly growing community experiencing increased residential development, commercial expansion, transportation growth, and evolving service demands. These changes continue to impact call volume, deployment strategies, staffing needs, and long-term planning.

Since the completion of the previous strategic plan in 2019, the department has experienced substantial organizational growth and operational advancement. As a kickoff to the planning process, the Strategic Plan team was asked to reflect on “What has happened in the department since 2019.” The team discussed various things and their impact on the department over the last seven years. The following is a summary of some of the changes that have occurred, which have advanced the department:

- Expanding staffing levels
- Opening of Station 42 on Highway 66 South
- Opening of a new training facility
- Transition of response services in the Colfax Service District from Colfax Volunteer Fire Department to the Kernersville Fire Rescue Department
- Establishing a logistics division

- Implementing a Firefighter III career ladder
- Expanding internal training delivery capabilities to include conducting the department’s first in-house recruit academy that provided state certification training for the new recruits
- Achieving ISO Class 1 status for the Town of Kernersville and Colfax Service District
- AVL dispatch integration with Winston-Salem Fire Department, Greensboro Fire Department, and High Point Fire Department
- Placing into service a rescue company that is staffed with personnel highly trained in technical rescue specialties such as confined space, water, trench, structural collapse, land search, high and low angle rescue, vehicle and machinery extrication. These services are essential for addressing current and evolving technical rescue risks in the department's response areas.
- Increasing regional coordination and partnerships with Winston-Salem, Greensboro, High Point Fire Departments, Guilford County Emergency Services, and Forsyth 911 and Guilford Metro 911 centers
- Enhancing apparatus replacement planning by developing an Apparatus Replacement Plan
- Improving station alerting systems
- Implementing Blue Card incident command training

Strategic Planning Process

The strategic planning process was intentionally designed to be collaborative, data-informed, and community-driven. The department sought participation from both internal personnel and external stakeholders to ensure the resulting plan reflected a broad range of perspectives and priorities.

The planning process followed a structured ten-step framework (Figure 1):

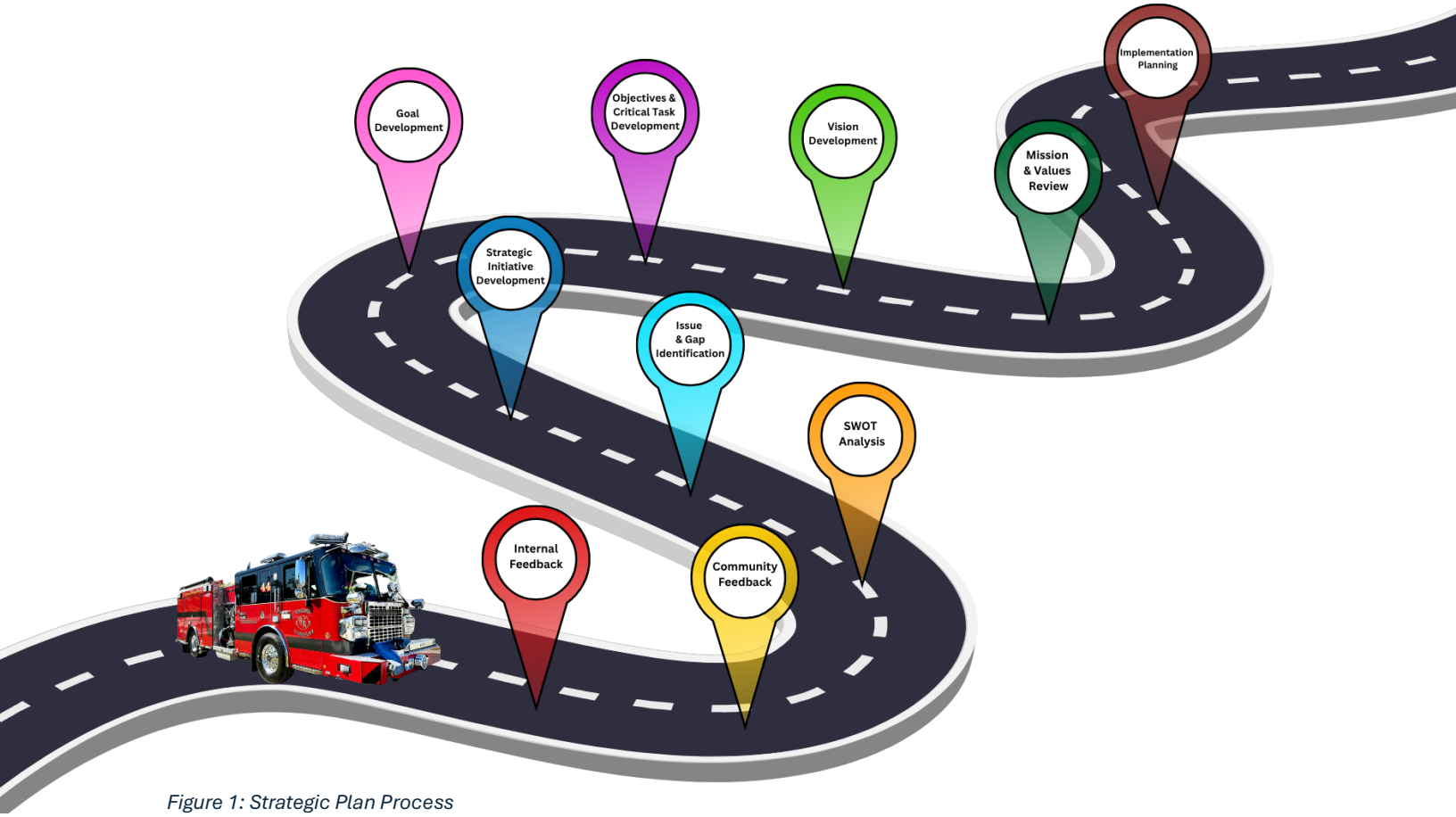

Figure 1: Strategic Plan Process

Internal Stakeholder Feedback

Department personnel participated in multiple structured feedback sessions across all divisions in the Operations and Support Service branches. These meetings focused on:

- Organizational expectations
- Operational concerns
- Department strengths
- Opportunities for improvement
- Future organizational needs

A total of 25 meetings were held across the department between September 2025 and December 2025. At each meeting, an overview of the strategic planning process was provided, and staff completed a survey answering questions focused on the areas above.

External Stakeholder Feedback

Community feedback was gathered through:

- Completion of a feedback survey during in-person stakeholder sessions
- Development of an electronic survey that was distributed to external stakeholders via email, social media, and with the help of local media coverage.

External stakeholders included:

- Elected officials
- Town leadership
- Emergency services partners
- Business leaders
- Nonprofit organizations
- Civic groups
- Faith-based organizations
- Residents and community members from both the Town of Kernersville and Colfax Service District

Strategic Planning Team

A strategic planning team was assembled, consisting of personnel from multiple ranks, shifts, and divisions. The team met in April 2026 to review stakeholder feedback, conduct a SWOT analysis, identify strategic priorities, and develop goals and objectives for the updated strategic plan. The team members were:

Name	Rank	Shift/Division	Group Assignment
Aaron Monroe	Battalion Chief	B	3
Austin Flynt	Asst Fire Marshal	Fire and Life Safety Division	1
Barry McLean	Battalion Chief	C	1
Brian Williard	Captain	A	2
Chase Mabe	Engineer	C	3
David Willard	Training Battalion Chief	Training	3
Dustin King	Battalion Chief	A	1
Dustin Shields	Engineer	B	2
Isaac Hampton	Firefighter	B	3
Josh Stafford	Battalion Chief	C	2
Kyle Yarborough	Engineer	A	1
Madison Hallman	Firefighter	C	1
Matt Robinson	Captain	C	3
Michael Hedgecock	Logistics Battalion Chief	Logistics	2
Nick Wylie	Battalion Chief	B	2
Thomas Hilton	Firefighter	A	2

The team reviewed and discussed responses from internal and external stakeholders to survey questions on expectations, concerns, strengths, and suggestions for improving the department. Specifically, the team answered these two key questions:

1. What are our internal stakeholders saying?
2. What are our external stakeholders saying?

After answering these questions, the team performed various exercises and group discussions to address the following questions, keeping stakeholder feedback at the forefront of the discussions: It is 5 years from now. Our department is operating at a high level and effectively meeting internal and external needs.

1. What does that look like?
2. What are we doing differently?

The answers to these questions guided the team in developing strategic initiatives, goals, and objectives for the next five years.

Environmental and Organizational Assessment

The Town of Kernersville has a population of approximately 29,850 people and covers 19 square miles (Figure 2). The department is contracted by Guilford County to provide fire, medical, and rescue response in the Colfax Service District (Figure 3). The Colfax Service District covers approximately 14 square miles and has a population of approximately 5,237. Additionally, the department is contracted by the Town of Walkertown to provide services within a portion of the Town of Walkertown's limits that lies off West Mountain Street. The total response area is 33 square miles, with an approximate population of 35,087.

The Town of Kernersville and the contract areas are divided into five response districts. Five fire stations are strategically located throughout our service area to help achieve our goal of arriving at emergency incidents within a 4-minute travel time, 90% of the time. This benchmark is important because fire and medical emergencies are highly time-sensitive.

In a fire incident, an uncontrolled structure fire may reach flashover within 6 to 10 minutes, creating conditions that significantly increase the risk to occupants and firefighters. For medical emergencies, particularly sudden cardiac arrest, survival rates decrease rapidly when CPR and defibrillation are delayed. Without early intervention, the likelihood of survival diminishes significantly within the first several minutes after the heart stops.

Strategically locating fire stations throughout the community helps ensure that emergency personnel can arrive quickly to provide lifesaving care, control fires before they escalate, and reduce the overall impact of emergencies on the community

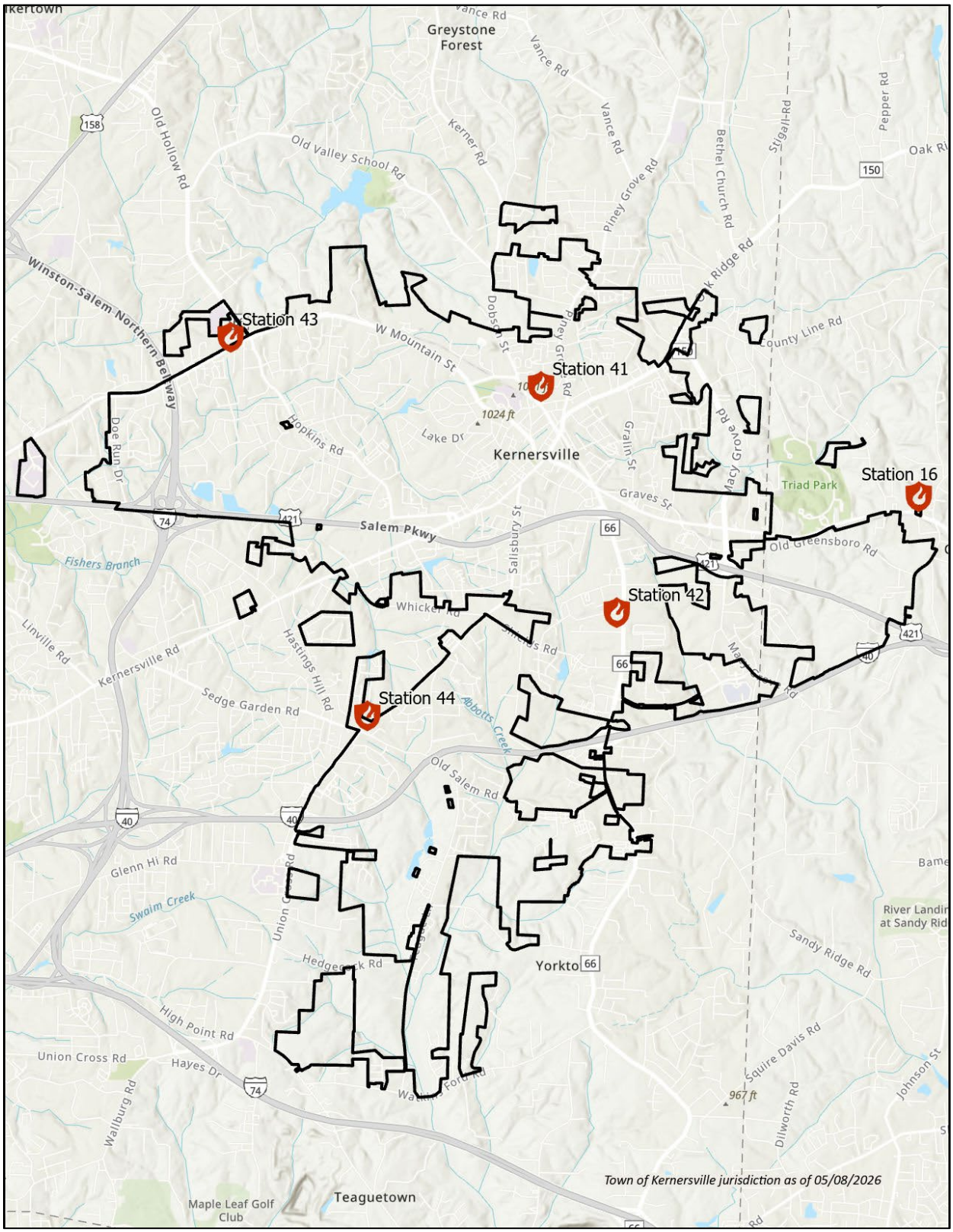

Figure 2: Map of Town of Kernersville Response Area and Fire Rescue Department Station Locations

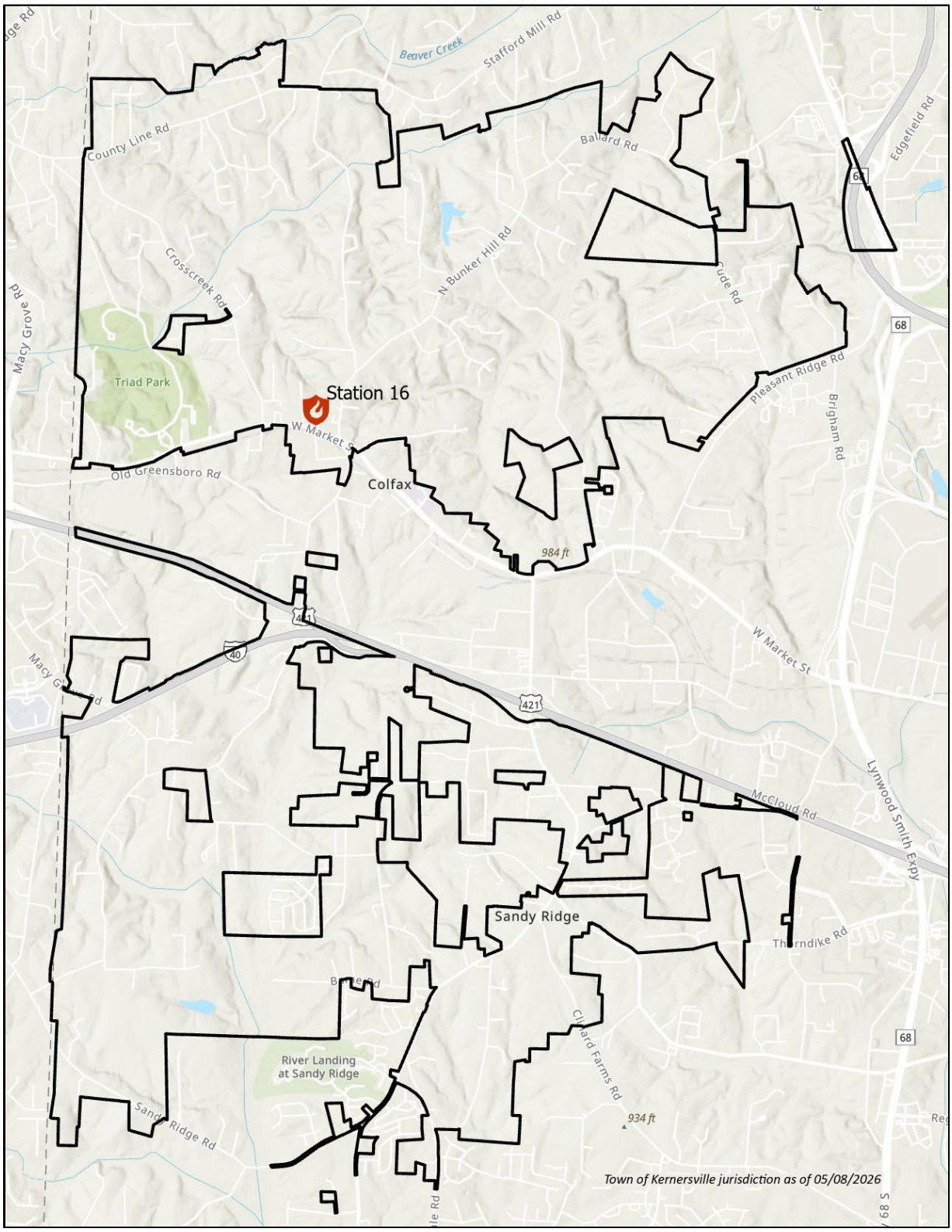

Figure 3: Map of Colfax Service District Response Area

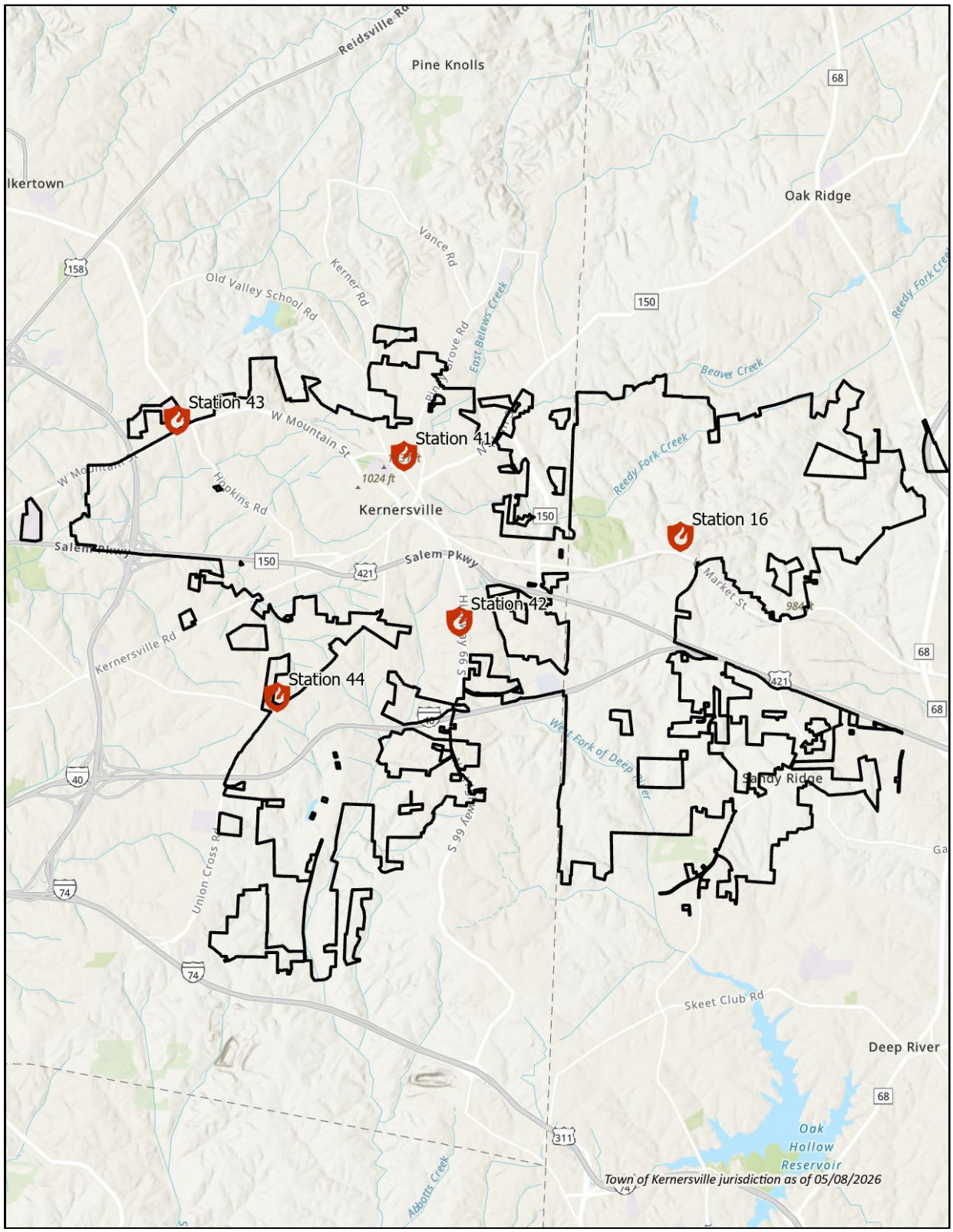

Figure 4: Map of Town of Kernersville and Colfax Service District Response Areas Combined

Fire Stations

Fire Station 16 "*Colfax Fire Station*"
9414 West Market Street, Colfax
Engine 16 – 4 personnel assigned (minimum daily staffing - 3 personnel)
Tanker 16 – not staffed
Logistics Division

Figure 5: Station 16

Fire Station 41 "*Bodenhamer Street Station*"
316 West Bodenhamer Street
Engine 41 – 4 personnel assigned (minimum daily staffing - 3 personnel)
Ladder 41 – 4 personnel assigned (minimum daily staffing - 3 personnel)
Battalion 41 – staffed with 1 person
Fire & Life Safety Division Staff
Town Employee Wellness Center

Figure 6: Station 41

Fire Station 42 "*Fire Chief Walter M. Summerville, III Memorial Fire Station*"

1180 NC Highway 66 South

Engine 42 – 4 personnel assigned (minimum daily staffing - 3 personnel)

Rescue 42 – 3 personnel assigned (minimum daily staffing - 3 personnel)

Battalion 42 – staffed with 1 person

Forsyth County Emergency Medical Services Ambulance

Administration, Training, Fire Marshal Offices

Figure 7: Station 42

Fire Station 43 "*Ned R. Stuart Fire Station*"

2050 West Mountain Street

Engine 43 – 4 personnel assigned (minimum daily staffing - 3 personnel)

Figure 8: Station 43

Fire Station 44 / Beeson Cross Roads Station 26 "*Beeson Crossroads Station*"

1105 Old Salem Road

Engine 44 – 4 personnel assigned (minimum daily staffing - 3 personnel)

Shared Station with Beeson Crossroads Volunteer Fire Department

Figure 9: Station 44

Community Growth

"The Town of Kernersville has grown rapidly in the past 50 years, blossoming from a small town of about 5,000 residents to a dynamic, diverse, and prosperous community of nearly 30,000 residents today. Between 2000 and 2023, Kernersville grew by 65%, the highest growth rate among its peer communities." (*Source: TOK Comprehensive Plan Presentation May 12, 2025*)

Between 2000 and 2023, "Kernersville and its peer communities have seen household numbers grow alongside their population. Notably, households grew by 69% in Kernersville, while the population grew by 65%, suggesting smaller household sizes on average. This trend can be seen in many of the peer communities and is occurring nationally." (*Source: TOK Comprehensive Plan Presentation May 12, 2025*)

Major developments influencing future planning include:

- Multi-family dwelling and residential neighborhood growth in the southern areas of the Town
- Construction of commercial and warehouse properties in the eastern areas of the Town
- Increased transportation corridor activity and development
    - Current Highway 74 (future I-74) connectivity to Salem Parkway (Highway 421) and future connectivity to I-40 and I-74 (Highway 311)
    - Macy Grove Road extension and connection to Salem Parkway
    - Big Mill Farm Road and Hopkins Road Improvements and connection to South Main Street and Salem Parkway
    - Ogden School Road extension
    - Glenn Hi Road extension

"Kernersville is a regional employment hub, as far more workers come to the Town daily for work than residents who leave Town for work. About 1,404 residents both work and live in Kernersville....." *(Source: TOK Comprehensive Plan Presentation May 12, 2025*) (Figure 10)

This daytime influx of employees increases the population present within the community during business hours and contributes to the need for emergency services beyond what residential population figures alone would suggest.

Figure 10: Work/Live in Kernersville - TOK Comprehensive Plan Presentation May 12, 2025

"Kernersville residents are employed in a wide variety of white collar, blue collar, and service industries. Though many residents work outside of the Town, the top employment industries are present in Kernersville. Service industries and healthcare in particular have seen significant growth as new development has occurred." (*Source: TOK Comprehensive Plan Presentation May 12, 2025)* (Figure 11)

Figure 11: Top Industries Where Kernersville Residents are Employed - TOK Comprehensive Plan Presentation May 12, 2025

"While many of the top employment industries for Kernersville residents are present in the Town, transportation and warehousing is the largest employer. This is likely the result of the significant new investment in logistics facilities along Interstate 40 and Kernersville's favorable regional position at large." (*Source: TOK Comprehensive Plan Presentation May 12, 2025)* (Figure 12)

Figure 12: Top Industries in Kernersville - TOK Comprehensive Plan Presentation May 12, 2025

Population and development growth have contributed to increased traffic throughout Kernersville and the surrounding region. The highest traffic volumes are concentrated along the community's primary transportation corridors, particularly U.S. 421 and Interstate 40, as illustrated in Figure 13. Traffic congestion along these corridors and connecting roadways can increase the number of motor vehicle incidents, affect emergency response travel times, and create additional demands on fire and rescue resources.

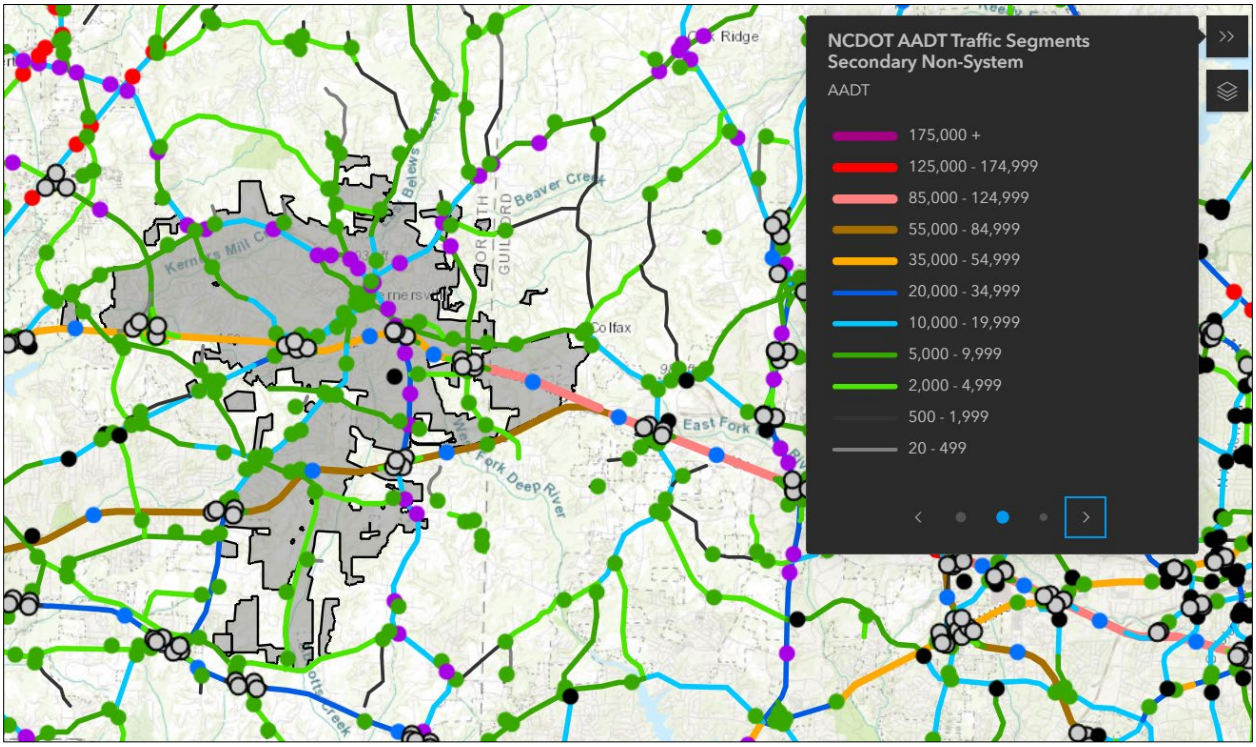

Figure 13: NC Department of Transportation Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT)

Source: *https://tok.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/basic/index.html?appid=29a2044cb2e04053bb7fa8a7e58b6521*

The Town of Kernersville and its surrounding service areas continue to experience sustained population growth, as illustrated in Figures 14 and 15. This growth has been accompanied by expanding residential development, commercial and industrial investment, a growing daytime workforce, increased traffic volume, and the construction of larger and more complex occupancies. Combined with the community's regional transportation connectivity, these changes have significantly altered the environment in which the department operates.

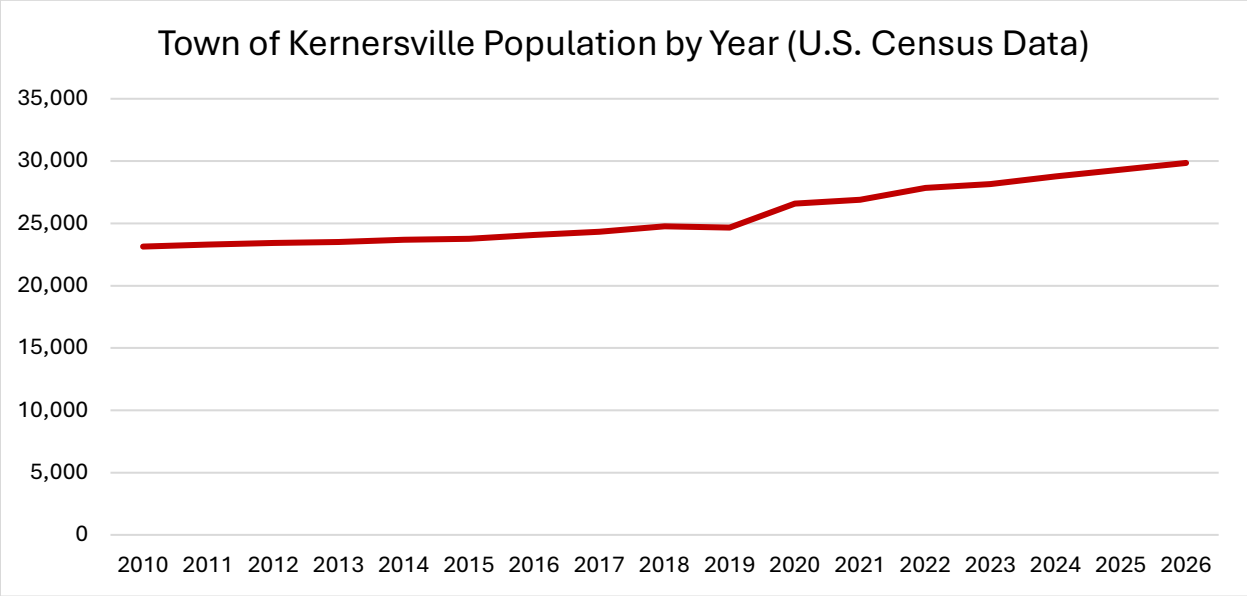

Figure 14: Town of Kernersville Population by Year

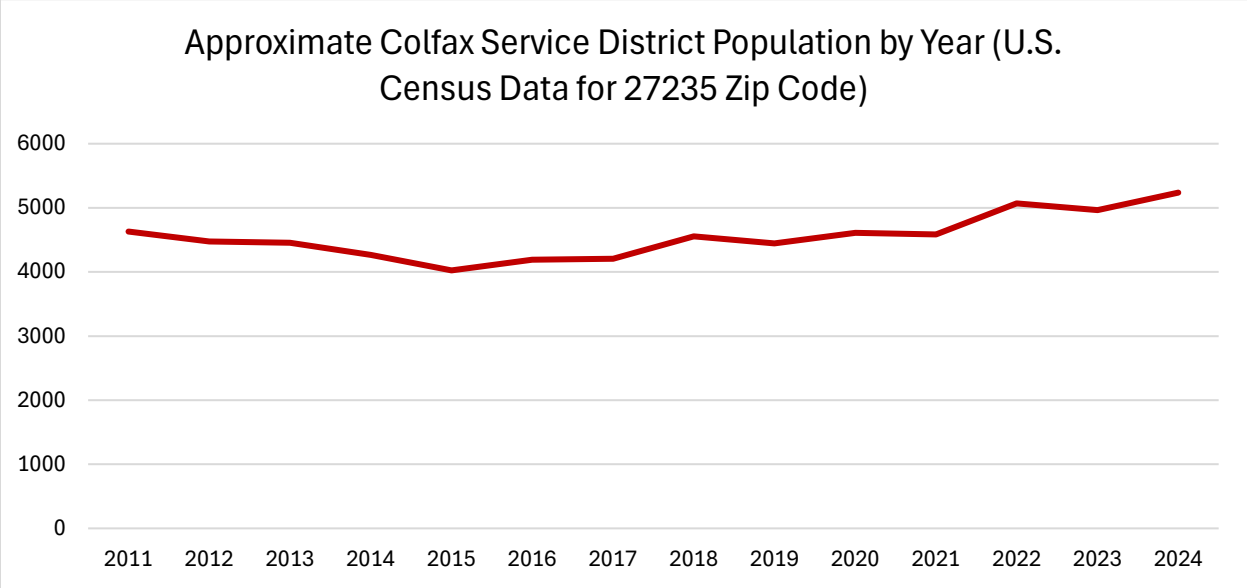

Figure 15: Approximate Colfax Service District Population by Year

Collectively, these factors are contributing to increased annual incidents, as shown in Figure 16, while also increasing incident complexity, resource requirements, and the need for continued evaluation of departmental staffing, facilities, apparatus, equipment, and deployment strategies.

Incident Volume Trends

The department continues to experience increasing incident volume and service demand. Forecasting models project continued growth in emergency and non-emergency responses over the next several years.

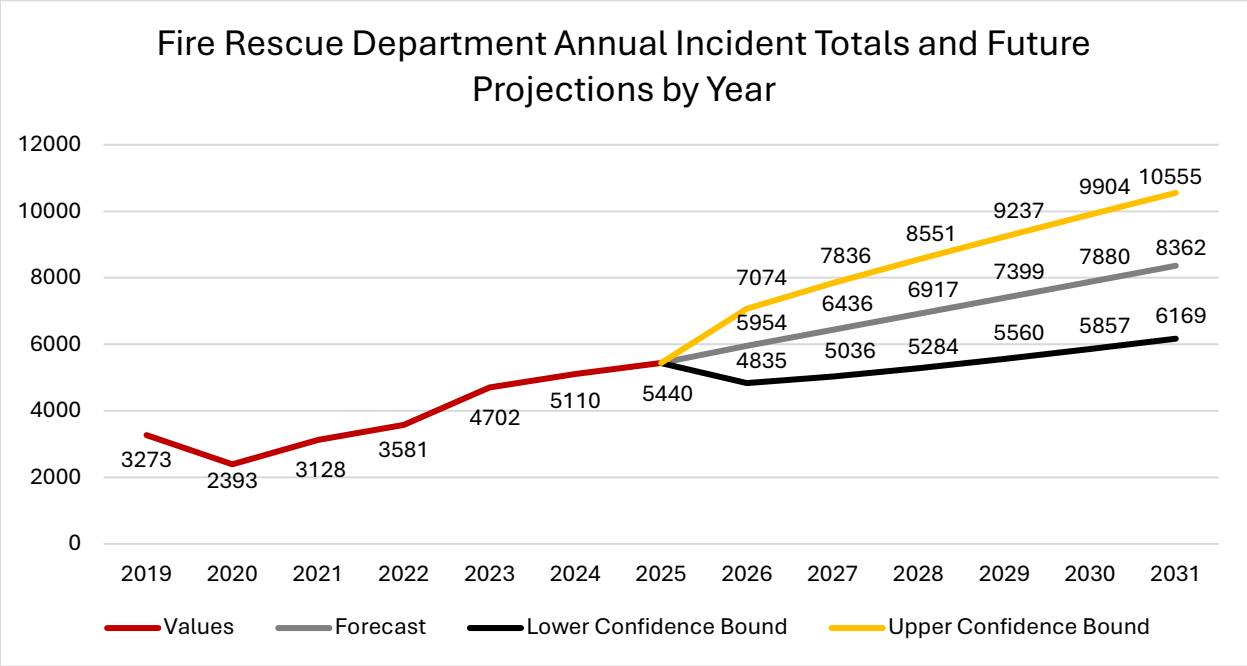

Figure 16: Annual Incident Totals and Projections by Year

An analysis of incident data (Figure 17) demonstrates that the department's service demand is driven primarily by Rescue and Emergency Medical Service (EMS) incidents, which account for approximately 51% of all responses between 2019 and 2025. Service calls represent the second-largest category, accounting for approximately 19% of total incidents. Combined, these two categories account for approximately 70% of all incidents responded to by the department. While fire suppression remains a critical core service, the data indicates that emergency medical services and public assistance-related responses represent the majority of the department's current workload and resource utilization.

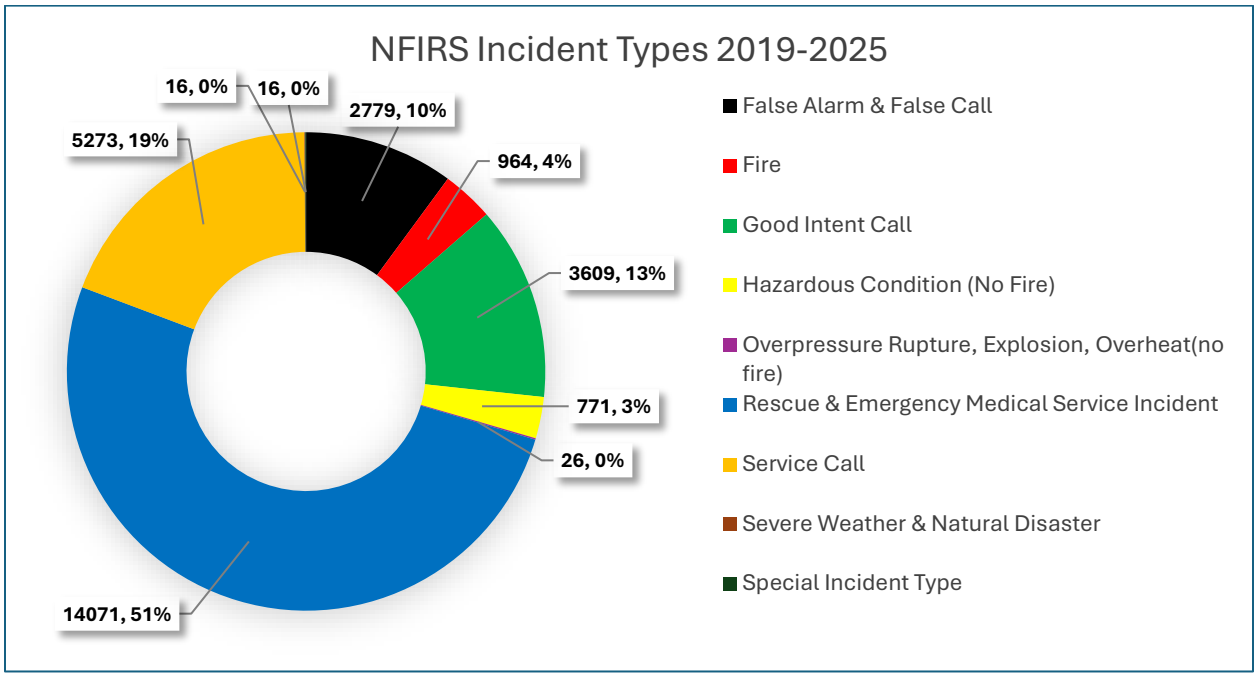

Figure 17: 2019-2025 Total Department Incidents by National Fire Incident Reporting (NFIRS) Type

Contributing factors to incident volume and type include:

- Community growth
- Aging demographics (Figures 18 and 19)
- Increased EMS and Citizen Assist type incidents
- Expanded and/or evolving service expectations
    - Decline in volunteer firefighters in neighboring county departments, more reliance on the department in these areas with limited personnel
    - Increasing and evolving risks in the community (i.e., lithium-ion battery technology, confined spaces, large-scale events)
    - Potential expansion of contract areas around the town limits where KFRD units are the closest units
- Regional development
    - Growth at PTI airport and neighboring cities adds to traffic, population growth, and additional call volume in neighboring jurisdictions

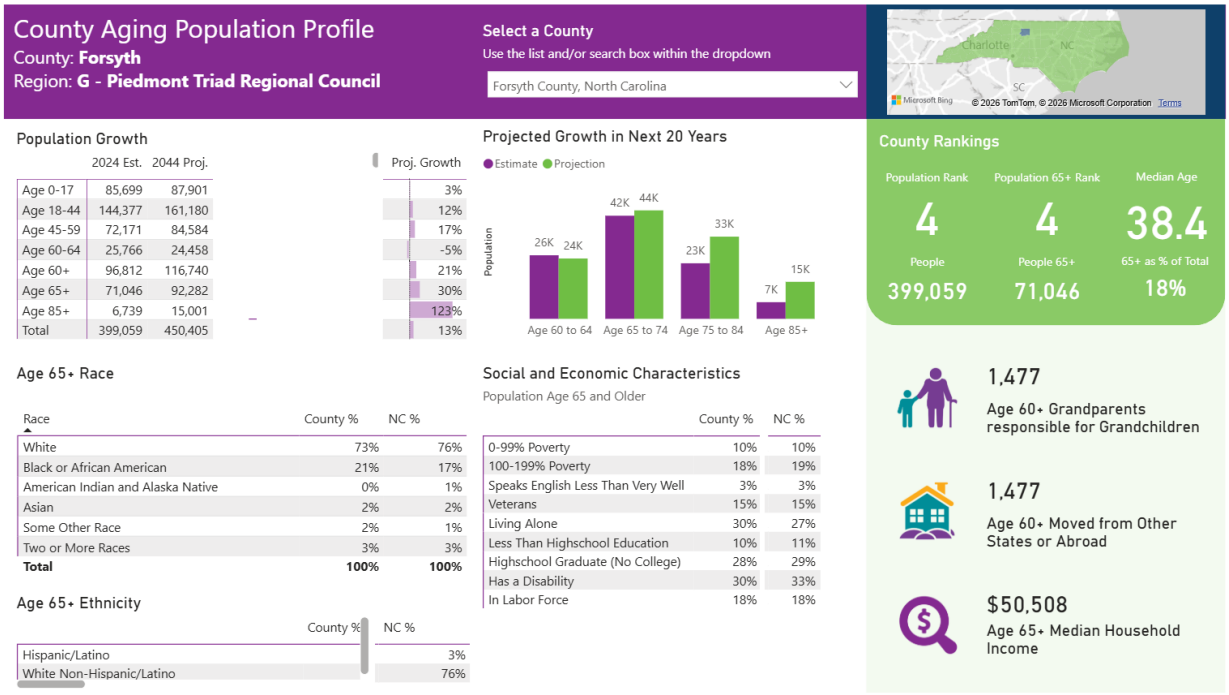

Figure 18: Aging Population Projected Growth / Forsyth County

Source: North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/aging/facts-figures-and-reports)

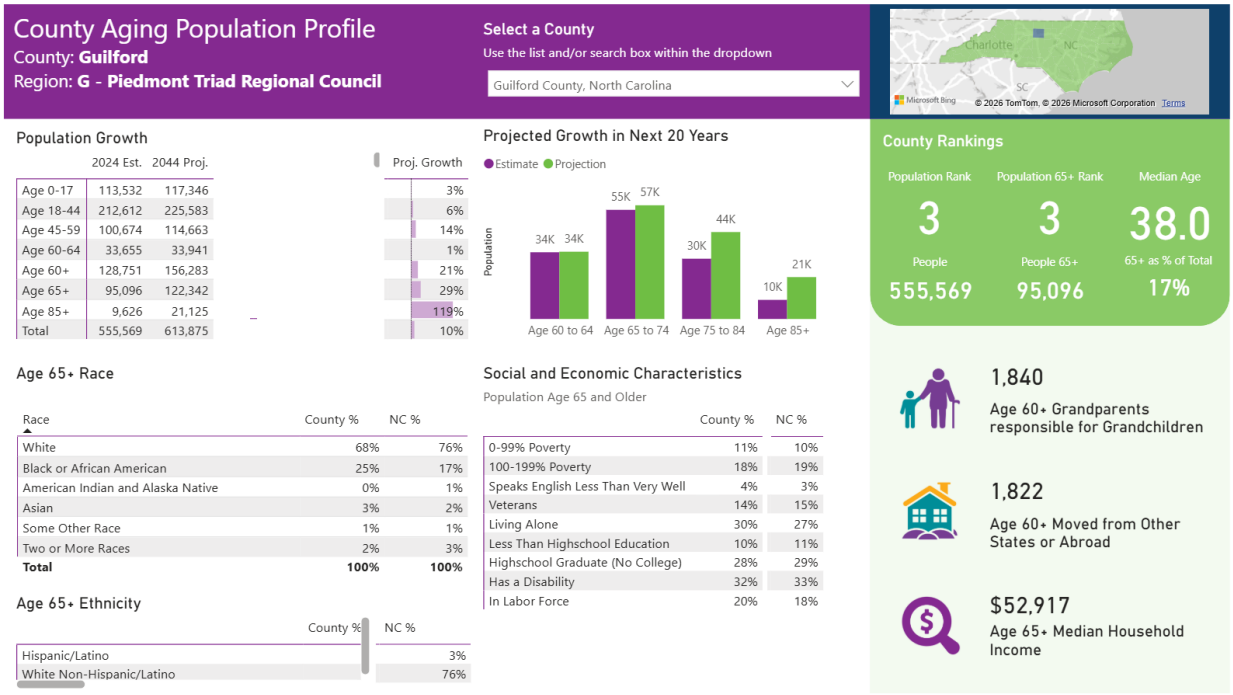

Figure 19: Aging Population Projected Growth / Guilford County

Source: North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/aging/facts-figures-and-reports)

Population growth and aging demographics are expected to continue influencing future service demand. As the community grows, the number of residents requiring emergency medical services, lift assists, welfare checks, public assistance, and other service-related responses also increases. Additionally, both Forsyth and Guilford Counties are projected to experience continued growth in their older adult populations. Older populations typically generate a higher demand for EMS responses due to increased medical needs, chronic health conditions, fall-related incidents, and other age-related emergencies. As a result, the department anticipates continued growth in EMS and service call demand throughout the planning period, requiring ongoing evaluation of staffing, deployment strategies, training, apparatus, and community risk reduction programs.

The continued growth in incident volume, increasing operational complexity, and evolving service expectations have significant implications for the department's workforce. Meeting future service demands will require not only sufficient staffing levels, but also a workforce that is properly trained, developed, and prepared to operate in an increasingly complex emergency services environment. As a result, workforce recruitment, retention, succession planning, and employee development have become critical strategic considerations for the department.

Workforce Capacity and Organizational Readiness

The department has experienced, and continues to experience, a significant workforce transition since 2019. This is characterized by:

- Addition of positions – Personnel added from Colfax Volunteer Fire Department transition (13 positions), addition of Rescue Company (6 positions), addition of Logistics Battalion Chief (1 position), Fire and Life Safety Educator, and addition of firefighters for Engine 44 (3 positions).
- Reorganization - The department has also worked to reorganize itself based on service delivery needs and growth. This reorganization has involved changing 3 shift Safety Captains to 3-shift Battalion Chiefs and creating Battalion 42. The department also modified the Colfax Assistant Chief position into 3 firefighter positions.
- Retirements – 15 have occurred between 2019 and 2025, 7 are projected between 2026 and 2028, and 13 are projected between 2029 and 2034. 7 of the 13 between 2029 and 2034 are projected to retire in 2034 alone.
- Experience gaps – personnel with 0-4 years of service in the department account for 43% of the department's total staffing. See Figure 20.

- Increased competition for recruitment - A decline in volunteers in neighboring departments has reduced the department's applicant pool over the last several years. Historically, neighboring departments were a major source of applicants for the department. Competitive pay, opportunities for advancement, and the department's activities, such as incident response, often attract applicants. The department typically recruits two types of applicants: those not affiliated with a department who have little to no experience and training, and those affiliated with a smaller department who may or may not have some training and/or experience. Statewide departments (small and large) have experienced similar recruitment challenges.
- Changing workforce development needs – personnel hired with and without certifications and experience.

These workforce trends were a significant factor in the development of the Leadership and Workforce Development strategic initiatives.

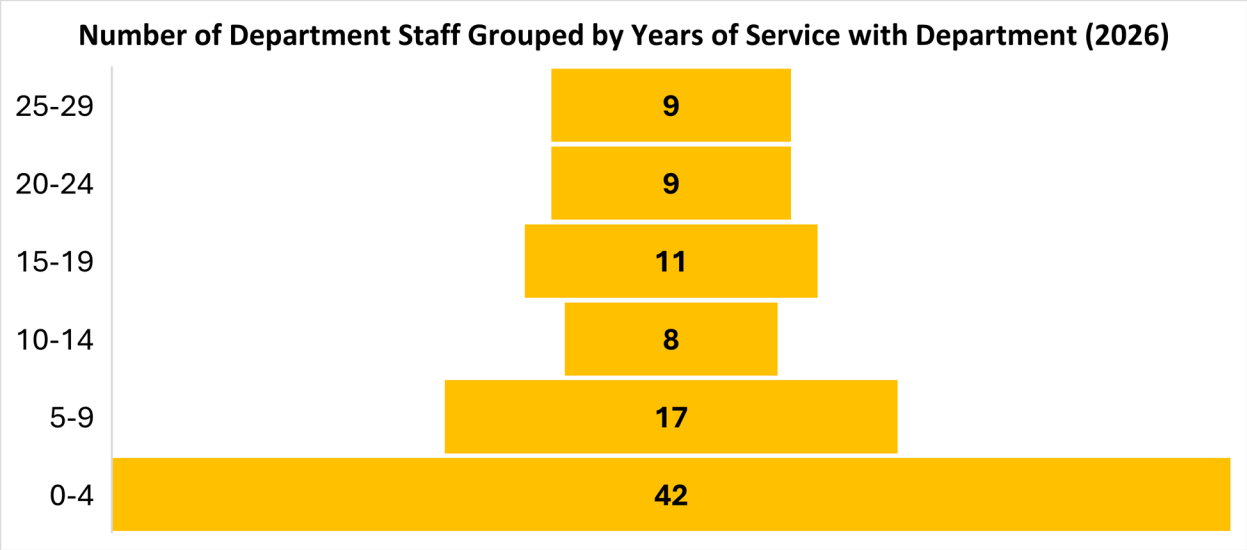

Figure 20: Number of Department Staff by Years of Service with Department/Town

Stakeholder Feedback Summary

Stakeholder engagement revealed several consistent themes that helped shape the department's strategic priorities.

External Stakeholder Themes

Community stakeholders consistently identified the following expectations:

- Rapid and reliable emergency response
- Professional and highly trained personnel
- Strong community engagement
- Effective communication
- Continued organizational growth planning

Primary community concerns included:

- Long-term funding sustainability
- Staffing and workforce stability
- Growth outpacing service capacity
- Maintaining response effectiveness
- Future infrastructure needs

Community stakeholders also expressed strong confidence in the department's:

- Leadership
- Professionalism
- Operational effectiveness
- Community involvement
- Organizational reputation

Internal Stakeholder Themes

Department personnel identified several organizational priorities, including:

- Competitive compensation
- Improved communication and transparency
- Leadership consistency

- Training and professional development
- Organizational accountability
- Staffing growth
- Workforce retention

Personnel also recognized significant organizational strengths, including:

- Strong training culture
- Modern equipment and facilities
- Progressive leadership
- Positive organizational reputation
- Professional development opportunities

Several recurring opportunities for improvement were identified:

- Standardized accountability
- Clear organizational direction
- Staffing sustainability
- Leadership development
- Communication consistency
- Training alignment and performance expectations

The stakeholder feedback process played a critical role in shaping the department's strategic initiatives and long-term priorities.

Mission, Vision, and Core Values

The strategic planning team reviewed the department's Mission Statement, Vision Statement, and Core Values. Each was evaluated based on the department's current environment, stakeholder feedback, emerging risks, community expectations, and the organization's future direction. These foundational statements were reaffirmed and refined to ensure they accurately reflect who the department is today and where it intends to go in the future. The values represent organizational principles that are essential to fulfilling the department's mission and achieving its vision.

Together, the mission, vision, and core values provide the framework for this strategic plan. The mission defines why the department exists, the vision identifies what the department aspires to become, and the core values establish the behaviors and principles that guide decision-making, leadership, and service delivery. All goals, objectives, and initiatives contained within this strategic plan are intended to support and advance these foundational elements.

Mission Statement

MISSION STATEMENT

"The Kernersville Fire Rescue Department is an all-hazards organization dedicated to protecting life, property, and the environment for the citizens and visitors of the Town of Kernersville and the neighboring communities we serve."

The department's mission defines its purpose and commitment to the community. It reflects the department's responsibility to provide professional emergency services while adapting to the changing needs of the community and region.

Vision Statement

VISION STATEMENT

"The Kernersville Fire Rescue Department strives to be a high-performing organization that delivers exceptional service through disciplined, accountable leadership and a unified professional workforce—meeting our community's evolving needs."

The vision statement represents the department's desired future state and serves as the guiding direction for organizational growth, operational excellence, and workforce development over the next five years.

Core Values

The department's values establish the foundation for organizational culture, decision-making, leadership, and service delivery. These values reflect the expectations the department places upon itself and the standards the community expects from the organization.

TEAMWORK

- Professionalism in our team to prevent harm and mentor others.
- The department believes success depends on collaboration, trust, accountability, and the willingness to support one another both on and off emergency scenes.

RESPECT

- Building a culture of trust to foster a positive atmosphere within the community and the department.
- Respect is demonstrated through professionalism, communication, integrity, and valuing each individual's contributions.

UNITY

- We are committed and accountable to each other because our lives depend on it.
- Unity emphasizes organizational consistency, teamwork, shared expectations, and collective responsibility.

SERVICE

- With commitment, bravery, integrity, and compassion, when called upon by our community to perform our duties.
- The department exists to serve the community and remains committed to delivering exceptional service during every interaction.

TRADITION

- Continue to honor our legacy while we prepare for our future.
- The department values its history and traditions while remaining progressive and adaptable to future challenges and opportunities.

These values are more than aspirational statements; they are the principles that guide the department's daily actions, leadership practices, relationships, and service to the community. They serve as the cultural foundation of the organization and will remain critical to achieving the goals outlined in this strategic plan while preserving the trust and confidence of the citizens we serve.

SWOT Analysis

As part of the strategic planning process, the department conducted an analysis to evaluate organizational strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT). This assessment provided a foundational understanding of the department's current position and future challenges.

Strengths

The department identified several organizational strengths that position it for continued success:

Professional Training Culture

- Strong emphasis on training and professional development
- Modern training facility
- Internal recruit academy capabilities
- Leadership development opportunities
- Commitment to continuing education

Equipment and Facilities

- Modern apparatus and equipment
- Investment in station improvements
- Strong logistics support
- Apparatus replacement planning
- Improved station alerting systems

Leadership and Organizational Support

- Progressive leadership philosophy
- Strong support from town leadership
- Strategic planning focus
- Commitment to future readiness
- Strong regional partnerships

Community Reputation

- Strong public trust and confidence

- Positive community relationships
- Professional workforce
- High operational standards
- ISO Class 1 rating

Weaknesses

The department identified several internal challenges requiring organizational focus and improvement:

Communication and Organizational Consistency

- Inconsistent communication across ranks and shifts
- Varying operational expectations
- Organizational rumor concerns
- Need for improved transparency

Standards and Accountability

- Inconsistent accountability
- Performance management concerns
- Leadership consistency challenges
- Need for standardized expectations

Workforce Pressures

- Staffing shortages
- Increasing workload demands
- Mandatory overtime concerns
- Experience gaps due to retirements and attrition

Operational Strain

- Increased service demand
- Expanding operational complexity
- Equipment turnaround times
- Growing administrative responsibilities

Opportunities

The department identified several opportunities to improve services, operations, and organizational development.

Community Growth

- Increased community engagement opportunities
- Expanded public education initiatives
- Stronger regional partnerships
- Community risk reduction programs

Workforce Development

- Leadership development systems
- Recruitment expansion
- Career development pathways
- Succession planning

Service Delivery Enhancements

- EMS system improvements
- AVL dispatch integration
- Expanded fire prevention services
- Improved deployment strategies

Technology and Innovation

- Data-driven decision making
- Improved communication platforms
- Enhanced operational analytics
- Expanded use of modern technology

Threats

The department also identified several external threats that may impact future operations and organizational sustainability.

Population and Service Demand Growth

- Increasing call volume

- Expanding development
- Traffic congestion
- Higher operational demand

Workforce Challenges

- Recruitment competition
- Retention concerns
- Retirement projections
- Experience loss
- Staff Development

Financial Pressures

- Rising operational costs
- Capital replacement costs
- Equipment pricing increases
- Long-term funding sustainability

Evolving Emergency Service Risks

- Larger and more complex occupancies
- Increasing EMS demand
- Expanded rescue needs
- Greater operational complexity (coordination, hazards)

Strategic Initiatives

Following the SWOT analysis and stakeholder feedback review, the strategic planning team identified six strategic initiatives that will guide the department's priorities over the next five years.

2026 – 2031 Strategic Initiatives

These initiatives represent the department's primary areas of organizational focus and provide the framework for strategic goals, objectives, and implementation activities.

Strategic Initiative 1: Unified Direction

Initiative Overview

The Unified Direction initiative focuses on creating organizational consistency, strengthening accountability, improving communication, and reinforcing high-performance standards across all levels of the department.

Stakeholder feedback identified communication, accountability, and consistency as major organizational priorities. This initiative seeks to align operational expectations, training standards, leadership practices, and organizational culture throughout the department.

Strategic Initiative 1: Unified Direction

Goal #1: Organizational Consistency and Accountability

Goal Purpose:

Create a culture of consistency and promote high-performance standards that are aligned with both internal and external expectations.

Objective #1 - Standardize Operational Performance

Lead	Support
Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Operations Battalion Chiefs, Training Battalion Chief, and any other identified department/town staff

Critical Tasks:

- Reinforce department-wide commitment to Blue Card incident command principles
- Increase the use of hot washes, post-incident analyses, feedback sessions, and difficult conversations
- Ensure 100% of personnel are trained on updated SOGs and SOPs
- Achieve greater than 90% compliance during incidents and training evolutions

Desired Outcome: Reduction in operational variability across shifts and improved consistency during emergency operations.

Objective #2 – Training Meets Department-Wide Performance Expectations

Lead	Support
Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Training Battalion Chief, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff

Critical Tasks:

- Develop consistent department-wide training programs
- Implement standardized driver/operator development programs
- Establish rescue company competency programs
- Expand advanced firefighter training opportunities
- Conduct regular competency reviews and practical evaluations
- Ensure consistent implementation of training standards

Desired Outcome: All department personnel are trained and evaluated using the same operational expectations and standards.

Objective #3 - Department-Wide Accountability System

Lead	Support
Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Training Battalion Chief, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff

Critical Tasks:

- Conduct performance evaluation training for supervisors
- Establish standardized company performance expectations
- Develop structured corrective pathways for performance deficiencies
- Improve accountability consistency across all ranks

Desired Outcome: Consistent accountability standards throughout the organization with clear expectations for all personnel.

Strategic Initiative 2: Leadership

Initiative Overview

Leadership development emerged as one of the department's most important strategic priorities. This initiative focuses on creating a structured leadership development system that promotes accountability, communication, decision-making, followership, and organizational consistency.

The department recognizes that leadership exists at every level of the organization and that intentional investment in leadership development is essential for long-term organizational success.

Strategic Initiative 2: Leadership	
Goal #1: Establish a Structured Multi-Level Leadership Development System	
Goal Purpose: Develop a comprehensive leadership development framework that prepares personnel at all levels for future organizational responsibilities.	
Objective #1 - Build a tiered leadership development model for Entry (Firefighter), Emerging Leader (Senior FF/Driver), Company Officer, and Chief Officer.	
Lead	**Support**
Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Training Battalion Chief, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff

Critical Tasks:
• Define leadership competencies for each level in the following:
  ○ Communication
  ○ Accountability
  ○ Decision-making
  ○ Adaptability
  ○ Professionalism
• Implement mandatory development benchmarks prior to promotional eligibility
• Develop Individual Development Plans (IDPs) for personnel pursuing advancement	

Desired Outcome: Personnel understand and demonstrate effective followership behaviors that strengthen teamwork, accountability, trust, and operational effectiveness throughout the organization.	

Strategic Initiative 2: Leadership

Goal #2: Define and Institutionalize Followership as a Core Skill

Goal Purpose:
Establish effective followership as a foundational professional competency that strengthens leadership, teamwork, accountability, and organizational performance

Objective #1 - Formally define "effective followership" and incorporate it in training and evaluations.

Lead	Support
Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Training Battalion Chief, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff

Critical Tasks:

- Define "effective followership" expectations:
  - Initiative
  - Discipline under command
  - Constructive feedback upward
- Incorporate followership into:
  - Recruit academy
  - Training
- Develop scenario-based training where personnel must:
  - Execute orders under pressure
  - Adapt when leadership direction changes
- Evaluate personnel on:
  - Reliability
  - Crew contribution
  - Ability to support leadership decisions

Desired Outcome: Personnel consistently demonstrate effective followership through initiative, reliability, accountability, disciplined execution, constructive communication, and support of organizational and leadership decisions.

Strategic Initiative 2: Leadership	
Goal #3: Standardize Officer Expectations and Leadership Performance	
Objective #1 – Define clear expectations for company officers	
Lead	**Support**
Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Training Battalion Chief, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff

Critical Tasks:
• Define and communicate officer expectations for:
  ○ Decision-making authority
  ○ Crew development responsibilities
  ○ Accountability standards	

Desired Outcome: Company officers clearly understand their leadership responsibilities, authority, and accountability expectations, resulting in greater organizational consistency.	
Objective #2 – Establish Officer Accountability and Performance Evaluation Standards	
Lead	**Support**
Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Training Battalion Chief, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff
Critical Tasks: • Incorporate leadership expectations into officer evaluations • Develop performance review criteria tied to leadership behaviors • Establish coaching and corrective action pathways • Ensure accountability standards are consistently applied	
Desired Outcome: Officers are evaluated consistently using clearly defined leadership expectations and accountability standards.	
Objective #3 – Create a Company Officer Performance Framework	
Lead	**Support**
Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Training Battalion Chief, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff

Critical Tasks:
• Create a performance framework focused on:
  ○ Fireground leadership
  ○ Station leadership
  ○ Administrative responsibilities
  ○ Officer evaluations tied to leadership behaviors – not just tasks
  ○ Establish corrective pathways for underperforming officers	

Desired Outcome: A standardized officer performance framework promotes consistent leadership practices, crew development, and accountability across all shifts.	

Strategic Initiative 2: Leadership	
Goal #4: Align Leadership Development, Evaluation, and Accountability	
Objective #1 – Evaluate promotional processes for Engineer, Captain, and Battalion Chief Positions	
Lead	**Support**
Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Training Battalion Chief, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff

Critical Tasks:
• Ensure promotional processes assess:
  ○ Scenario-based assessments
  ○ Decision-making under stress
  ○ Communication and command presence	

Desired Outcome: Promotional processes consistently identify candidates with the leadership competencies needed to serve effectively in future positions.	
Objective #2 - Implement 360 feedback for emerging and current officers	
Lead	**Support**
Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Training Battalion Chief, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff

Critical Tasks:
• Implement 360 feedback for emerging and current officers to capture:
  ○ Leadership effectiveness
  ○ Communication with personnel
  ○ Crew impact
• Ensure training reflects real operational complexity, not ideal conditions
• Integrate leadership evaluation into after-action reviews
  ○ Assess decision-making and command performance
  ○ Reinforce learning in real incidents
• Establish a culture of continuous development
  ○ Training personnel to give and receive feedback professionally
  ○ Recognizing strong leadership and followership
  ○ Addressing performance gaps with clear corrective pathways	

Desired Outcome: Leadership performance is continuously evaluated and improved through structured feedback, professional development, and accountability systems.	

Strategic Initiative 3: Community Engagement

Initiative Overview

Community engagement remains essential to maintaining public trust, reducing community risk, and ensuring the department remains connected to the evolving needs of the community it serves.

Stakeholder feedback demonstrated strong public confidence in the department and identified opportunities to expand outreach, education, communication, and visibility throughout the community. This initiative focuses on strengthening relationships with residents, businesses, schools, partner agencies, and vulnerable populations through proactive engagement and education.

Strategic Initiative 3: Community Engagement	
Goal #1: Enhance Community Visibility and Communication	
Objective #1 - Continue to enhance a positive presence at local events	
Lead	**Support**
Fire Marshal	Fire and Life Division Staff, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff
Critical Tasks: • Continue participation in local events • Coordinate staffing for public outreach events • Develop informational materials for event distribution • Create benchmarks for community event participation based on event type	
Desired Outcome: Increased public awareness and positive interaction with the department.	
Objective #2 - Expand social media and website presence	
Lead	**Support**
Fire Marshal	Fire and Life Safety Division Staff, and any other identified department/town staff
Critical Tasks: • Evaluate social media policies and communication strategies • Explore additional communication platforms • Develop a diverse departmental social media team • Increase educational and informational posting frequency • Improve website content accuracy and frequency of updates	
Desired Outcome: Improved public communication, transparency, and community awareness.	
Objective #3 - Develop Quarterly Community Announcement Newsletter (CAN)	
Lead	**Support**
Fire Marshal	Fire and Life Safety Division Staff, Operations Battalion Chief(s), Logistics Battalion Chief, Training Battalion Chief, and any other identified department/town staff
Critical Tasks: • Develop a recurring external stakeholder newsletter • Provide updates on department initiatives, services, and community programs • Highlight organizational accomplishments and public safety information	
Desired Outcome: Improved stakeholder communication and increased community engagement.	

Strategic Initiative 3: Community Engagement	
Goal #2: Increase Community Education on Department Services and Capabilities	
Objective #1 – Formalize Department History Program	
Lead	**Support**
Department Historian	Fire Rescue Chief, Fire and Life Safety Educator, and any other identified department/town staff
Critical Tasks: • Create a department history calendar for sharing historical events (i.e., "This day in KFRD History") • Coordinate historical content with social media outreach • Develop succession planning for historical preservation • Maintain department historical records and displays	
Desired Outcome: Preservation of the department's history and increased community awareness of the organization's heritage.	
Objective #2 - Conduct Station Open Houses and Public Demonstrations	
Lead	**Support**
Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Fire and Life Safety Educator, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff

Critical Tasks:
• Conduct station tours and open houses
• Perform public demonstrations on department capabilities and equipment
• Educate the public on:
  ○ Hiring processes
  ○ Fire, rescue, and medical service delivery
  ○ Fire prevention
  ○ Fire extinguisher use
  ○ CPR	

Desired Outcome: Improved public understanding of department operations and increased community trust.	
Objective #3 - Develop an Annual Citizen Fire Rescue Academy	
Lead	**Support**
Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Fire and Life Safety Educator, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff
Critical Tasks: • Develop curriculum introducing department operations • Include classroom and hands-on training experiences • Provide public education on emergency response operations	
Desired Outcome: Expanded community understanding of emergency services and departmental operations.	

Strategic Initiative 3: Community Engagement	
Goal #3: Vulnerable Population Outreach	
Objective #1 - Identify High-Risk Groups throughout the Town of Kernersville and Contract Service Areas (i.e., Colfax Service District).	
Lead	**Support**
Fire Marshal	Fire and Life Safety Division Staff, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff

Critical Tasks:
• Identify high-risk occupancies and demographic groups
• Evaluate incident trends involving:
  ○ Elderly fall incidents
  ○ Residential fire risks
  ○ Low-income housing
  ○ Frequent service utilization
• Identify requests for home safety assessments and prevention services	

Desired Outcome: Improved understanding of community risk factors and the needs of vulnerable populations.	
Objective #2 – Develop and/or Enhance Current Outreach Programs for High-Risk Groups	
Lead	**Support**
Fire Marshal	Fire and Life Safety Division Staff, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff
Critical Tasks: • Develop/enhance fall prevention initiatives • Continue smoke detector canvassing programs in target areas • Create targeted home safety education programs • Establish partnerships with external organizations supporting vulnerable populations (i.e., Shepherd Center, Crisis Control) • Establish measurable reduction goals for each program	
Desired Outcome: Reduction in preventable incidents involving identified high-risk groups.	
Objective #3 – Implement Community Risk Reduction Programs for Identified High-Risk Groups	
Lead	**Support**
Fire Marshal	Fire and Life Safety Division Staff, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff
Critical Tasks: • Launch community outreach initiatives • Coordinate educational events and public safety campaigns • Evaluate program effectiveness using incident and participation data	
Desired Outcome: Expanded public education and measurable reduction in preventable emergencies.	

Strategic Initiative 4: Workforce Development and Sustainability

Initiative Overview

Recruitment and retention remain critical organizational priorities as the department prepares for future growth, increasing service demands, workforce transitions, and projected retirements.

This initiative focuses on attracting qualified personnel, improving workforce sustainability, enhancing employee wellness, and strengthening long-term retention efforts.

Strategic Initiative 4: Workforce Development and Sustainability	
Goal #1: Recruitment Efforts	
Objective #1 - Develop proactive recruitment strategies that expand applicant pools and attract high-quality personnel to the organization.	
Lead	**Support**
Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Fire and Life Safety Division Staff, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff
Critical Tasks: • Involve younger personnel in recruitment activities • Increase visibility in middle schools and high schools • Advertise educational assistance and training opportunities • Reevaluate and strengthen the Explorer Program • Broaden recruitment outreach into underserved areas • Increase participation at community recruitment events	
Desired Outcome: Expanded and diversified applicant pools with increased recruitment success.	

Strategic Initiative 4: Workforce Development and Sustainability	
Goal #2: Retention and Workforce Sustainability	
Objective #1 - Strengthen staff retention through wellness initiatives, compensation advocacy, professional development opportunities, and employee recognition.	
Lead	**Support**
Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Fire Marshal, Logistics Battalion Chief, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff
Critical Tasks: • Enhance wellness initiatives in coordination with town wellness programs • Advocate for public safety pay plan improvements • Research pay compression concerns • Research specialty assignment incentive pay • Evaluate certification incentive opportunities • Explore longevity recognition programs • Develop department employee appreciation initiatives (example: radio straps, helmet shields)	
Desired Outcome: Improved workforce satisfaction, retention, morale, and organizational stability.	
Objective #2 - Develop and implement a workforce succession planning program.	
Lead	**Support**
Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Fire Marshal, Logistics Battalion Chief, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff
Critical Tasks: • Develop succession planning initiatives • Identify future leadership candidates • Prepare personnel for future promotional opportunities • Reduce experience gaps through mentorship and training • Improve long-term workforce readiness • Develop workforce forecasts based on projected retirements and organizational growth.	
Desired Outcome: A sustainable workforce prepared to meet future operational and leadership needs.	

Strategic Initiative 5: Equipment and Facilities

Initiative Overview

Maintaining modern, reliable equipment and adequate facilities is essential for operational readiness, firefighter safety, and long-term organizational sustainability.

This initiative focuses on capital planning, equipment lifecycle management, and facility evaluation to ensure the department remains operationally prepared for future demands.

Strategic Initiative 5: Equipment and Facilities	
Goal #1: Maintain and Improve Apparatus and Equipment Readiness	
Objective #1 - Continue evaluating apparatus, equipment, PPE, SCBA, maintenance, and replacement.	
Lead	**Support**
Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Logistics Division Staff and any other identified department/town staff
Critical Tasks: • Evaluate options to improve apparatus maintenance turnaround times • Explore use of outside maintenance resources • Evaluate internal maintenance support capabilities • Improve preventative maintenance scheduling • Evaluate future SCBA replacement needs • Monitor evolving safety standards • Assess long-term PPE replacement schedules • Improve lifecycle forecasting for protective equipment	
Desired Outcome: Reduced apparatus and equipment downtime and improved operational readiness.	
Objective #2 - Expand Equipment Lifecycle Management and Tracking	
Lead	**Support**
Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Logistics Division Staff and any other identified department/town staff
Critical Tasks: • Develop formal equipment evaluation programs • Enhance preventative maintenance systems • Monitor NFPA compliance and industry standards • Improve long-term replacement forecasting • Coordinate with Public Services • Consolidate maintenance and repair records into a single tracking platform • Improve cost analysis and reporting capabilities	
Desired Outcome: Improved lifecycle management, reliability, fiscal stewardship, and long-term replacement planning for department equipment and assets.	

Strategic Initiative 5: Equipment and Facilities	
Goal #2: Evaluate Facility Needs for Current Operations and Future Growth	
Objective #1 - Assess current and future facility needs to support operational effectiveness and organizational growth	
Lead	**Support**
Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Logistics Division Staff and any other identified department/town staff
Critical Tasks: • Evaluate remodeling options • Assess rebuilding feasibility • Evaluate relocation opportunities • Consider long-term operational impacts	
Desired Outcome: Identification of the most effective long-term solution for Station 16 operations.	
Objective #2 - Improve Facility Maintenance Tracking	
Lead	**Support**
Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Logistics Division Staff and any other identified department/town staff
Critical Tasks: • Coordinate facility maintenance tracking with Public Services • Consolidate facility maintenance records • Improve cost analysis and long-term facility planning	
Desired Outcome: Improved facility management and infrastructure planning.	

Strategic Initiative 6: Services and Deployment

Initiative Overview

As the Town of Kernersville and surrounding service areas continue to grow, the department must continually evaluate emergency service delivery models, deployment strategies, staffing levels, and operational partnerships to ensure the organization remains capable of meeting current and future demands.

This initiative focuses on evaluating emergency medical services delivery, fire and life safety staffing, support services expansion, and regional deployment coordination to maintain effective and efficient service delivery.

Strategic Initiative 6: Services and Deployment	
Goal #1: Evaluate the Emergency Medical Service Delivery System	
Objective #1 - Evaluate future medical service capabilities with Forsyth and Guilford EMS agencies to ensure the department is prepared to meet increasing EMS demand and evolving patient care expectations.	
Lead	**Support**
Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff
Critical Tasks: • Review current EMS response data • Analyze projected call volume trends • Evaluate EMS response times and patient acuity data • Identify operational gaps and future service demands • Assess the feasibility of establishing a formal EMS branch structure in the department and evaluate leadership oversight needs • Explore advanced EMT hiring and staffing models	
Desired Outcome: An informed understanding of current and future EMS service needs, service delivery options, and recommendations for the department's service delivery in EMS systems.	
Objective #2 - Educate Stakeholders on EMS Service Demands	
Lead	**Support**
Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff
Critical Tasks: • Present data regarding EMS trends and increasing service demands • Educate stakeholders on operational impacts related to EMS response • Discuss opportunities to improve patient care delivery	
Desired Outcome: Improved stakeholder understanding of EMS service demands, operational challenges, future resource needs, and opportunities to enhance patient care delivery.	

Strategic Initiative 6: Services and Deployment	
Goal #2: Continue to Evaluate Services and Staffing	
Objective #1 - Evaluate current and future staffing and service delivery needs within the Fire and Life Safety Division to support community growth, increasing workload, and expanded prevention responsibilities.	
Lead	**Support**
Deputy Chief	Fire Marshal, and any other identified department/town staff
Critical Tasks: • Assess the impact of commercial growth and annexation • Assess inspection workload and staffing needs • Evaluate staffing needs related to increasing plan reviews • Develop long-term staffing recommendations • Evaluate future fire investigation coverage requirements (contract areas) • Evaluate consistency of prevention services across all response areas (contract areas) • Improve coordination between jurisdictions to include fire and life safety education efforts • Expand community risk reduction efforts – see Community Engagement Goals	
Desired Outcome: Fire and Life Safety staffing and service delivery are aligned with community growth, workload, and emerging prevention responsibilities, supported by a sustainable plan for consistent, effective services across all areas served.	
Objective #2 – Continue to assess Logistics Division staffing and service delivery needs to improve operational sustainability and logistical support capabilities.	
Lead	**Support**
Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Logistics Battalion Chief, and any other identified department/town staff
Critical Tasks: • Assess current logistical workload • Evaluate support apparatus operational requirements • Explore staffing models for logistical support personnel • Evaluate funding opportunities for additional support positions	
Desired Outcome: Improved logistical support capacity and operational sustainability.	

Strategic Initiative 6: Services and Deployment	
Goal #3: Continually Evaluate Resource Deployment	
Objective #1 - Continually assess resource deployment strategies to improve operational efficiency, response effectiveness, and regional coordination.	
Lead	**Support**
Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff
Critical Tasks: • Coordinate with neighboring fire departments on AVL response • Review mutual aid and automatic aid agreements • Evaluate regional staffing and apparatus support opportunities • Explore deployment efficiency improvements	
Desired Outcome: Enhanced regional coordination and improved emergency response effectiveness.	
Objective #2 – Continue to Monitor Deployment Performance	
Lead	**Support**
Deputy Chief	Assistant Chief, Operations Battalion Chief(s), and any other identified department/town staff
Critical Tasks: • Analyze response performance data • Monitor service demand trends • Evaluate unit utilization • Identify deployment gaps and future station needs	
Desired Outcome: Data-driven deployment strategies aligned with current and future service demands.	

Implementation, Accountability, and Continuous Evaluation

Strategic Plan Implementation

The success of this strategic plan depends not only on the quality of the planning process, but also on the department's commitment to implementation, accountability, and continuous evaluation.

The Kernersville Fire Rescue Department recognizes that a strategic plan must remain an active and living document that guides organizational decision-making, operational priorities, budgeting, workforce development, and service delivery.

Implementation of this plan will require commitment from personnel at every level of the organization.

The lead assigned to each objective will be responsible for facilitating meetings and discussions with the appropriate stakeholders, establishing timelines, coordinating the work required to advance the objective, and ensuring that progress is regularly evaluated and communicated.

While this plan serves as a roadmap for the department over the next five years, it is designed to address identified gaps and organizational needs while moving the department toward its vision. As objective leads, support personnel, and stakeholders begin this work, additional information, challenges, and opportunities, along with clearer direction, will inevitably emerge. As a result, critical tasks, timelines, stakeholders, and implementation strategies may need to be adjusted based on what is learned along the way.

The strategic direction should remain clear, but the path to achieving it must remain flexible. Like any roadmap, circumstances may require us to take an alternate route, adjust our pace, or reassess the path forward. Those adjustments should not be viewed as a departure from the plan, but as part of responsible strategic planning. The objective is to continue moving toward our shared destination in a deliberate, responsible, and sustainable manner, with the organization engaged in the journey.

Strategic Plan Review Process

To ensure the plan remains relevant and effective, the department will conduct regular reviews of implementation progress.

Annual Review

The department should:

- Evaluate progress toward strategic goals
- Update implementation timelines as necessary
- Identify barriers to progress
- Adjust objectives when operational conditions change

Mid-Plan Evaluation

A formal mid-plan review should occur during the third year of implementation to:

- Assess organizational progress
- Evaluate changing community needs
- Reprioritize initiatives if necessary
- Update long-term planning assumptions

Final Review

At the conclusion of the strategic plan cycle, the department should:

- Evaluate overall implementation success
- Measure organizational outcomes
- Identify lessons learned
- Begin development of the next strategic plan

Communication and Institutionalization

For the strategic plan to be successful, it must become integrated into the department's organizational culture and operational processes.

The department should:

- Include strategic plan orientation during onboarding
- Regularly communicate strategic priorities to personnel
- Incorporate goals into leadership discussions
- Align budget planning with strategic initiatives
- Maintain transparency regarding implementation progress

Conclusion

The Kernersville Fire Rescue Department Strategic Plan 2026–2031 provides a roadmap for navigating the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead. The department enters this planning period from a position of strength, supported by a highly dedicated workforce, strong community trust, progressive leadership, modern facilities and equipment, and a commitment to continuous improvement.

At the same time, the department recognizes that the future will require intentional planning and adaptation. Population growth, increased service demands, workforce transitions, evolving risks, technological advancements, and changing community expectations will continue to shape the environment in which emergency services are delivered. Successfully navigating these challenges will require disciplined leadership, organizational consistency, workforce development, fiscal responsibility, and a continued focus on service excellence.

A significant workforce transition is already underway. Over the next several years, the department will experience the retirement of experienced personnel while simultaneously developing the next generation of firefighters, officers, and organizational leaders. This strategic plan places a strong emphasis on leadership development, succession planning, recruitment, retention, accountability, and professional growth to ensure the department remains prepared for the future.

The six strategic initiatives outlined in this plan- Unified Direction, Leadership, Community Engagement, Recruitment and Retention, Equipment and Facilities, and Services and Deployment- represent the department's commitment to strengthening the organization while maintaining the high level of service our community expects and deserves. These initiatives are interconnected and collectively support the department's mission, vision, and core values.

This plan is intended to be a living document that guides decision-making, resource allocation, budgeting, operational planning, and organizational development. Progress will be evaluated regularly, and adjustments will be made as conditions change to ensure the department remains responsive to emerging challenges and opportunities.

Most importantly, this plan reflects a commitment to the citizens, businesses, visitors, and partner agencies we serve. Every initiative, goal, and objective contained within this document is ultimately focused on ensuring that the Kernersville Fire Rescue Department remains prepared to protect life, property, and the environment while providing exceptional service to our community.

The true measure of this plan's success will not be the completion of individual objectives, but the department's ability to develop future leaders, maintain operational excellence, and leave the organization stronger for those who will serve after us.

As we look toward the future, we remain committed to honoring the traditions that built this organization while embracing the innovation, leadership, and accountability necessary to meet tomorrow's challenges. By investing in our people, strengthening our organization, and proactively planning for future needs, the Kernersville Fire Rescue Department will continue to be a trusted, high-performing organization prepared to serve the community for generations to come.

Appendices

External Feedback Survey Results - Expectations

Survey Question: Expectations are the belief that something will or should occur, often based on performance or values. Please list, in priority order, up to five expectations you have of the department.

Executive-Level Summary

Weight	Predominant Theme
5	Response Performance
4	Service Delivery & Professional Competence
3	Training & Community Engagement
2	Public Education & Professional Conduct
1	Organizational Support & Future Readiness

Weight 5 – Predominant Theme: Response Performance

This theme clearly dominates the highest-weight category.

Repeated language includes:
- Quick response time / fast response
- Timely response
- Rapid arrival
- Immediate response
- Dependability to respond quickly
- Prompt response to emergencies
- Swift / lightning-fast response
- Expedient emergency response
- Response within minutes
- Closest unit dispatched quickly
- Effective multi-agency response

While general service expectations are present, speed and reliability of response overwhelmingly appear most frequently and with the strongest emphasis.

Conclusion:
The community's highest expectation is rapid, reliable emergency response, which serves as the primary benchmark for evaluating department performance.

Weight 4 – Predominant Theme: Service Delivery & Professional Competence

Weight 4 responses consistently center around:

- Fire suppression and emergency response
- Providing high-quality service
- Delivering expert care
- Protecting life and property
- Handling medical emergencies
- Technical rescue capability
- Consistent service delivery
- Being there when needed
- Minimizing damage
- High level of service to citizens

Training appears in this tier, but expectations around executing the job effectively and professionally are more consistently emphasized.

Conclusion:
The community expects competent, high-quality execution of core emergency services, reinforcing that performance outcomes are critical.

Weight 3 – Predominant Theme: Training & Community Engagement

This level shows high repetition of:

• Well-trained personnel
• Highly skilled firefighters and paramedics
• Ongoing training and preparedness
• Professional knowledge and expertise
• Community involvement
• Engagement with local organizations
• Partnerships with other agencies
• Visibility in the community
• Collaboration and communication externally

While training and engagement both appear strongly, they collectively reflect confidence-building factors tied to capability and presence.

Conclusion:
The community places strong value on trained personnel and active community engagement, reinforcing trust through both competence and visibility.

Weight 2 – Predominant Theme: Public Education & Professional Conduct

Weight 2 themes reflect:

- Fire prevention education
- Community safety programs
- Public awareness efforts
- School and community outreach
- Communication with residents
- Professional demeanor
- Compassion and courtesy
- Clear communication
- Service-oriented mindset

These reflect supportive expectations that enhance service delivery rather than define it.

Conclusion:
Public education and professional conduct are viewed as important supporting functions that strengthen community trust and risk reduction.

Weight 1 – Predominant Theme: Organizational Support & Future Readiness

Lower weight items include:

- Equipment and resources
- Staffing levels
- Fiscal responsibility
- Planning for growth
- Community preparedness
- Policy awareness (e.g., driving laws)
- Mental health support
- Service awareness and advertising

These appear infrequently and lack the emphasis of higher tiers.

Conclusion:

Foundational organizational elements are assumed expectations, with limited direct emphasis unless they impact core service delivery.

External Feedback Survey Results - Concerns

Survey Question: Concerns are matters of interest or importance to you that may cause worry or anxiety, even minimally. Concerns are about your department (concerns about something your department is or is not doing) or for your department (external, impacting concerns). Please list, in priority order, up to five concerns you have about or for the department.

Executive-Level Summary

Weight	Predominant Theme
5	Funding & Resource Sustainability
4	Staffing & Workforce Stability
3	Growth & Capacity
2	Operational Effectiveness Risks
1	Communication, Access & Secondary Issues

Weight 5 – Predominant Theme: Funding & Resource Sustainability

This theme clearly dominates the highest-concern category.

Repeated language includes:
- Adequate funding
- Budget limitations
- Funding for equipment and staffing
- Cost of operations
- Financial sustainability
- Facility funding needs
- Competitive pay concerns
- Resource availability
- Maintaining service levels through funding
- Capital replacement needs

While staffing is closely related, financial concerns appear more consistently as the root issue.

Conclusion:
The community's highest concern is whether sufficient funding exists to sustain operations, staffing, and equipment over time.

Weight 4 – Predominant Theme: Staffing & Workforce Stability

Weight 4 responses consistently center around:

- Adequate staffing levels
- Loss of experienced personnel
- Retirement of senior staff
- Retention challenges
- Recruitment difficulties
- Need for more personnel
- Staffing for a growing town
- Workforce capacity concerns
- Leadership succession

Although growth and equipment are present, staffing concerns are more frequent and directly tied to service capability.

Conclusion:
Workforce stability is a major concern, with emphasis on maintaining sufficient, experienced personnel to meet demand.

Weight 3 – Predominant Theme: Growth & Capacity

This level shows high repetition of:

- Rapid population growth
- Increased call volume
- Traffic congestion
- Need for additional stations
- Expanding service areas
- Infrastructure limitations
- Ability to scale with growth
- Demand exceeding capacity
- Development pressures

These concerns consistently reflect external growth pressures impacting internal capacity.

Conclusion:
Community growth is viewed as a significant stressor that may outpace the department's current infrastructure and capabilities.

Weight 2 – Predominant Theme: Operational Effectiveness Risks

Weight 2 themes reflect:

- Equipment needs and aging equipment
- Response time impacts
- Training adequacy
- Recruitment pipeline
- Safety concerns (response driving, incidents)
- Resource distribution
- Increased call complexity
- Operational readiness

These concerns relate to maintaining current performance levels under strain.

Conclusion:
Operational risks are recognized as emerging pressures that could affect service quality if not proactively managed.

Weight 1 – Predominant Theme: Communication, Access & Secondary Issues

Lower weight items include:

- Address/location issues
- Community awareness gaps
- Communication lapses
- Coverage concerns
- Political or regulatory comments
- Mental health awareness
- Isolated service concerns
- Individual experiences

These are scattered and lack consistency.

Conclusion:
Lower-tier concerns highlight isolated or situational issues rather than systemic challenges.

External Feedback Survey Results - Strengths

Survey Question: It is important for the department to understand what you perceive as its strengths or positive attributes. Please list any strengths or positive feedback you would like to share regarding the department. There is no need to place these in priority order.

Executive-Level Summary

(Strengths were not weight-ranked, so themes are ordered by frequency and intensity of repetition.)

Weight	Predominant Theme
Predominant	Leadership & Organizational Excellence
Secondary	Response Performance & Professionalism
Third	Community Trust & Engagement
Supporting	Resources, Infrastructure & Collaboration

Primary Theme – Predominant Theme: Leadership & Organizational Excellence

Repeated language includes:
- Strong leadership
- Well-run organization
- Strategic planning
- Professional department
- Organized and coordinated
- High standards
- ISO Class 1 rating
- Forward-thinking leadership

Conclusion:
Leadership is the most recognized strength, driving organizational performance and credibility.

Secondary Theme – Predominant Theme: Response Performance & Professionalism

Repeated language includes:
- Quick response times
- Reliable service
- Skilled responders

- Professional personnel
- High-quality service
- Effective emergency response

Conclusion:
Operational performance and professionalism are core strengths, reinforcing public trust.

Supporting Theme – Predominant Theme: Community Trust & Engagement

Repeated language includes:
- Community involvement
- Positive interactions
- Friendly personnel
- Visibility in the community
- Outreach programs
- Public trust and confidence

Conclusion:
Strong community relationships significantly enhance the department's reputation and support.

Additional Theme – Predominant Theme: Resources, Infrastructure & Collaboration

Repeated language includes:
- Good equipment
- Quality facilities
- Strong partnerships
- Interagency cooperation
- Investment in stations and tools

Conclusion:
The department is perceived as well-equipped and supported, contributing to overall effectiveness.

External Feedback Survey Results – Suggestions

Survey Question: Suggestions for improvement help the department identify opportunities to grow and better support its employees, community, and mission. Please list any suggestions you have for how the department could improve. There is no need to place these in priority order.

Executive-Level Summary

(Suggestions for improvements were not weight-ranked; themes are ordered by frequency, repetition, and intensity of emphasis.)

Rank	Theme
Predominant	Community Support & Satisfaction
Second	Outreach & Communication Expansion
Supporting	Growth Planning & Continuous Improvement
Supporting	Workforce, Training & Innovation

Ranked themes:

1. Appear most frequently across responses
2. Contain repeated phrasing (often verbatim repetition)
3. Show emotional intensity or urgency
4. Span multiple operational areas (culture, operations, leadership)
5. Surface consistently across other datasets (expectations, concerns, improvements)

They represent core system drivers — meaning if you address these, you materially shift organizational stability.

Supporting themes:

1. Appear repeatedly but less frequently
2. Are often more specific or tactical
3. May be contained to one operational lane (EMS, apparatus, benefits)
4. Do not dominate emotional tone
5. Tend to be solution-oriented rather than system-defining

They matter, but they are not driving overall organizational sentiment.

Primary Theme – Predominant Theme: Community Support & Satisfaction

Repeated language includes:
- Thank you for your service
- Trust and confidence
- Positive experiences
- Appreciation for responders
- Strong support for the department

Conclusion:
Community sentiment is overwhelmingly positive, reflecting strong trust and satisfaction.

Secondary Theme – Predominant Theme: Outreach & Communication Expansion

Repeated language includes:
- More community events
- School outreach
- Public education
- Increased visibility
- Better communication channels
- Media and newsletter suggestions

Conclusion:
There is a clear desire for expanded engagement and improved communication with the public.

Supporting Theme – Predominant Theme: Growth Planning & Continuous Improvement

Repeated language includes:
- Need for more stations
- Planning for population growth
- Maintaining service levels
- Strategic planning
- Infrastructure expansion

Conclusion:
The community expects proactive planning to sustain service levels as the town grows.

Additional Theme – Predominant Theme: Workforce, Training & Innovation

Repeated language includes:
• Recruitment and career promotion
• Continued training
• New technology
• Equipment improvements
• Joint training and partnerships

Conclusion:
Ongoing investment in personnel, training, and innovation is viewed as essential for future success.

Internal Feedback Survey Results - Expectations

Expectations are the belief that something will or should occur, often based on performance or values.

Please list, in priority order, up to five expectations you have of the department.

Executive-Level Summary

Weight	Predominant Theme
5	Pay & Compensation
4	Communication & Leadership Clarity
3	Training & Professional Growth
2	Organizational Structure & Support Systems
1	Culture & Personal Considerations

Weight 5 – Predominant Theme: Pay & Compensation

This theme clearly dominates the highest-importance category.

Repeated language includes:

- Competitive pay
- Fair pay / fair wages
- Pay increases
- Stay competitive with other cities
- Address pay compression
- Compensated appropriately
- Development pay lag
- Reward longevity
- Compensation alignment

While staffing, communication, accountability, and training are strongly represented at Weight 5, pay and compensation appear more frequently and more emphatically than any other category.

Conclusion:

The workforce's top priority is competitive, fair, and compression-adjusted compensation.

Weight 4 – Predominant Theme: Communication & Leadership Support

Weight 4 responses consistently center around:

- Communication (good and bad)
- Transparency
- Keeping staff informed
- Vision sharing
- Communication between branches
- Reassurance
- Decision fairness
- Respect

Although benefits and pay are also present at this level, the most consistent clustering is around communication quality and leadership clarity.

Conclusion:

Clear, transparent, and consistent leadership communication is the strongest secondary priority.

Weight 3 – Predominant Theme: Training & Growth

This level shows high repetition of:

- Quality training
- Outside schooling
- Skill development
- Career advancement
- Department growth
- Readiness
- Leadership visibility

Equipment also appears, but professional development and growth outnumber it.

Conclusion:

Professional development and training advancement are the primary mid-level priority.

Weight 2 – Predominant Theme: Organizational Support & Structure

Weight 2 themes tend to reflect:

- Follow-through
- Accountability structure
- Collaboration
- Rank structure
- Being kept informed
- Equipment/stations improvements
- Competitive pay (secondary emphasis)

These are important but not core emotional drivers. They are structural and procedural.

Conclusion:

Structural support systems and internal organizational consistency dominate this tier.

Weight 1 – Predominant Theme: Culture & Personal Consideration

Lower weight items include:

- Family considerations
- Show care for staff and family
- Relationships
- Station life
- Hard conversations
- Open feedback

These matter, but respondents did not rate them as urgent compared to pay, staffing, and communication.

Conclusion:

Personal-level culture and individual consideration themes appear lowest in prioritization.

Internal Feedback Survey Results – Concerns

Concerns are matters of interest or importance to you that may cause worry or anxiety, even minimally. Concerns are about your department (concerns about something your department is or is not doing) or for your department (external, impacting concerns).

Please list, in priority order, up to five concerns you have about or for the department.

Executive-Level Summary

Weight	Predominant Theme
5	Accountability & Leadership Integrity
4	Communication & Organizational Clarity
3	Culture Fragmentation & Morale Decline
2	Operational Strain & Structural Pressure
1	Administrative Friction & Secondary Issues

Weight 5 – Predominant Theme: Accountability & Leadership Integrity

This theme clearly dominates the highest-concern category.

Repeated language includes:

- Lack of accountability
- No discipline / inconsistent discipline
- Promotions of the wrong people
- Holding people responsible for wrong actions
- Inconsistent standards between shifts and battalions
- Employees treated unevenly
- Admin not enforcing policy
- Influence/politics impacting decisions
- Lack of trust in administration
- Accountability breakdown top-down and bottom-up
- Lack of respect for chain of command
- Leadership inconsistency

While staffing, pay, and equipment concerns appear at Weight 5, accountability and leadership credibility concerns appear more frequently and with greater emotional intensity than any other category.

Conclusion:
The workforce's highest-level concern is inconsistent accountability and erosion of leadership credibility.

Weight 4 – Predominant Theme: Communication & Organizational Clarity

Weight 4 responses consistently center around:

- Lack of communication between shifts and BCs
- Rumors / non-transparent communication
- Confusion about department direction
- Lack of expectations clarity
- Not being kept informed
- Communication breakdown across ranks
- Hard conversations not occurring
- Trust deficits
- Inconsistent policy interpretation
- Leadership not approachable

Although equipment and retention concerns are present at this level, communication gaps are the most consistent and repeated concern cluster.

Conclusion:
Unclear communication and inconsistent organizational messaging are the strongest secondary concerns.

Weight 3 – Predominant Theme: Culture Fragmentation & Morale Decline

This level shows high repetition of:

- Morale concerns
- "Three different departments" (shift division)
- Camaraderie fading
- Attitude problems
- Ego conflicts
- Complacency

- Employees paycheck-driven
- Difficulty working across shifts
- Leadership credibility at shift level
- Cultural inconsistency

Training and equipment concerns appear here, but cultural fragmentation and morale erosion appear more frequently.

Conclusion:
Cultural division and declining morale represent the primary mid-level organizational strain.

Weight 2 – Predominant Theme: Operational Strain & Structural Pressure

Weight 2 themes reflect:

- Spread thin operationally
- Too much on the plate
- Mandatory overtime / callbacks
- Equipment turnaround delays
- Rescue taskforce viability concerns
- Growth outpacing department capacity
- Resource distribution issues
- Micromanagement concerns
- Technology strain
- EMS expansion pressures

These reflect workload, growth, and operational capacity pressures rather than core cultural drivers.

Conclusion:
Operational overextension and structural strain are contributing stressors but are not viewed as root issues.

Weight 1 – Predominant Theme: Administrative Friction & Secondary Issues

Lower weight items include:

- Shift assignment concerns
- Officer development specifics
- Recruitment details

- Benefits comparisons
- Role clarity
- Policy enforcement nuances
- Time-off frustrations
- Minor cultural observations

These concerns are present but lack the urgency and emotional intensity seen at higher weights.

Conclusion:
Administrative and procedural issues exist but are not perceived as immediate threats to organizational stability.

Internal Feedback Survey Results - Strengths

It is important for the department to understand what you perceive as its strengths or positive attributes. Please list any strengths or positive feedback you would like to share regarding the department. There is no need to place these in priority order.

Executive-Level Summary

(Strengths were not weight-ranked, so themes are ordered by frequency and intensity of repetition.)

Rank	Theme
Predominant	Training Culture & Professional Development
Secondary	Equipment & Facilities Investment
Third	Supportive Leadership & Administrative Backing
Supporting	Compensation & Benefits Stability
Supporting	Positive Culture & Community Reputation

Ranked themes:

1. Appear most frequently across responses
2. Contain repeated phrasing (often verbatim repetition)
3. Show emotional intensity or urgency
4. Span multiple operational areas (culture, operations, leadership)
5. Surface consistently across other datasets (expectations, concerns, improvements)

They represent core system drivers — meaning if you address these, you materially shift organizational stability.

Supporting themes:

1. Appear repeatedly but less frequently
2. Are often more specific or tactical
3. May be contained to one operational lane (EMS, apparatus, benefits)
4. Do not dominate emotional tone
5. Tend to be solution-oriented rather than system-defining

They matter, but they are not driving overall organizational sentiment.

Predominant Theme: Training Culture & Professional Development

This theme clearly dominates the strengths category.

Repeated language includes:

- Training is a priority
- On-site training center
- Full-time academy / rookie school
- Quarterly and officer development training
- Outside schooling opportunities
- Willingness to pay for OT coverage for training
- Leadership training implementation
- Promotion structure with parameters
- Commitment to avoiding complacency
- Access to internal and external education
- Paid training travel
- Officer candidate school
- Professionalism and job understanding
- Opportunities for growth and advancement

Training references appear more frequently than any other topic, often paired with words like *priority*, *investment*, *opportunity*, and *growth*.

Conclusion:
The department's strongest identified asset is its culture of training, professional development, and long-term growth investment.

Second Theme: Equipment & Facilities Investment

This is the next most consistently mentioned strength.

Repeated language includes:

- Top of the line equipment
- Newest apparatus
- Up-to-date gear and PPE
- Good apparatus replacement planning
- Station upgrades
- Nice fire stations

- Updated facilities
- Quality tools and equipment
- Good front-line engines
- Strong logistics implementation
- Well-funded equipment purchases
- Best outfitted department in the region

The volume of responses referencing equipment and facilities shows strong satisfaction with capital investment and operational readiness.

Conclusion:
The department is widely perceived as well-equipped, modern, and properly resourced for operations.

Third Theme: Supportive Leadership & Administrative Backing

Significant positive clustering centers around leadership support.

Repeated language includes:

- Forward thinking leadership
- Progressive administration
- Listening leadership
- Open-minded command staff
- Administration pushes for greater good
- Support from higher command
- Freedom given by command staff
- Well thought-out decisions
- Leadership that genuinely cares
- Support from town manager and officials
- Clear command structure and roles
- Open door understanding

This cluster emphasizes trust, backing from administration, and perceived strategic direction.

Conclusion:
Leadership is largely viewed as supportive, progressive, and invested in both personnel and future vision.

Supporting Theme: Compensation & Benefits Stability

While not dominant, compensation remains a clear strength theme.

Repeated language includes:

- Competitive pay
- Fair wages
- Good pay / strong starting pay
- Pay structure
- Evaluating pay regularly
- Strong benefits
- Work-life balance
- Time off
- Town benefits
- Being well taken care of
- Stability

Although compensation was a major expectation and concern area elsewhere, it is still recognized here as a relative strength.

Conclusion:
Compensation and benefits are generally viewed as competitive and supportive, even if improvements are desired.

Supporting Theme: Positive Culture & Community Reputation

Cultural and relational themes appear consistently.

Repeated language includes:

- Family atmosphere
- Good morale
- Team focused department
- People care about the job
- Looks out for each other
- Strong community relationships
- Good public image
- Well respected by mutual aid departments

- Caring leadership
- Compassionate workforce
- Aggressive and professional responders
- Positive work environment
- Good place to work

This indicates that despite cultural concerns expressed elsewhere, many still view the department as collegial, community-focused, and reputable.

Conclusion:
The department maintains a strong sense of internal camaraderie and positive external reputation.

Internal Feedback Survey Results - Suggestions

Suggestions for improvement help the department identify opportunities to grow and better support its employees, community, and mission. Please list any suggestions you have for how the department could improve. There is no need to place these in priority order.

Executive-Level Summary

(Suggestions for improvements were not weight-ranked; themes are ordered by frequency, repetition, and intensity of emphasis.)

Rank	Theme
Predominant	Accountability & Performance Standards
Second	Communication, Transparency & Clarity of Direction
Third	Staffing, Growth Planning & Deployment Readiness
Fourth	Training Standards & Professional Development Alignment
Fifth	Compensation, Compression & Retention Incentives
Supporting	Leadership Empowerment & Cultural Alignment
Supporting	Equipment, Apparatus & Infrastructure Planning
Supporting	EMS & Community Service Strategy

Ranked themes:

1. Appear most frequently across responses
2. Contain repeated phrasing (often verbatim repetition)
3. Show emotional intensity or urgency
4. Span multiple operational areas (culture, operations, leadership)
5. Surface consistently across other datasets (expectations, concerns, improvements)

They represent core system drivers — meaning if you address these, you materially shift organizational stability.

Supporting themes:

1. Appear repeatedly but less frequently
2. Are often more specific or tactical
3. May be contained to one operational lane (EMS, apparatus, benefits)
4. Do not dominate emotional tone
5. Tend to be solution-oriented rather than system-defining

They matter, but they are not driving overall organizational sentiment.

Predominant Theme: Accountability & Performance Standards

This theme clearly dominates the improvement category.

Repeated language includes:

- Hold people accountable (frequent repetition)
- Discipline & accountability
- Stop allowing mediocre performance
- Enforce policies consistently
- Address deficiencies when observed
- Consistency and compliance
- Maintain high standards
- Hold BCs accountable
- Self-accountability ("including myself")
- Power over people at BC level
- No micro-managing but observing operations
- Consequences for poor performance
- Put the right people in the right places
- Ensure consistency between shifts
- Have difficult conversations
- Stay in your lane and do your job
- Standardized expectations

The frequency of "hold people accountable" — often verbatim — is stronger than any other repeated phrase across the entire dataset (including expectations and concerns).

Conclusion:
The most urgent improvement priority is restoring consistent, measurable accountability across all ranks — upward and downward.

Second Predominant Theme: Communication, Transparency & Unified Direction

Repeated language includes:

- Communication (across the board)
- Better communication between ranks
- Transparency
- Stop rumor mills
- Knowledge of what is coming
- Clear, concise direction
- Unified priorities
- Continue feedback opportunities
- Quarterly meetings
- Daily interaction from command staff
- Be open-minded
- Listen to all personnel
- Checking emails/responding
- Early release of workload plans
- Empower lower ranks to contribute

Communication appears persistently across operational, cultural, and leadership contexts.

Conclusion:
The organization seeks a more unified flow of information, clarity of direction, and visible leadership accessibility.

Third Predominant Theme: Staffing, Growth Planning & Deployment Readiness

Repeated language includes:

- Add six firefighters per year
- Increase minimum staffing
- 4–5 person companies
- Increase staffing per shift
- Cancel/reduce mandatory overtime
- Add additional ladder company
- Additional station for growth
- Properly staff Station 16
- Increase prevention staff

- Plan growth further in advance
- Stay ahead of the curve
- Focus retention more than recruitment
- Increase personnel per apparatus
- Add support positions

Staffing and structural growth planning appear consistently and often alongside safety concerns.

Conclusion:
The workforce wants proactive growth management to prevent operational strain and reactive staffing policies.

Fourth Predominant Theme: Training Standards & Professional Development Alignment

Repeated language includes:

- Back to the basics
- Unified training procedures
- Training with purpose
- More advanced opportunities
- Standardized pumping practical's
- Relief driver academy
- Officer development
- Promotional prep school
- Follow-up training after drills
- More outside training
- Training based on firefighter needs
- Seat time for FFs
- Measure outcomes
- Details of firefighting
- Stop "beating down" companies at training

Notably, this theme differs from the strength theme of training availability. Here, members want *standardization, purpose, fairness, and performance-based rigor.*

Conclusion:
Training quantity is strong; training consistency, relevance, and performance accountability need refinement.

Fifth Predominant Theme: Compensation, Compression & Retention Incentives

Repeated language includes:

- Pay
- Pay increase
- Pay compression
- Fix compression
- Higher separation between pay grades
- Retirement
- Separation pay
- Degree pay
- Paid baby leave
- Incentives for longevity
- Better benefits alignment with PD
- Cost of living adjustments
- Engineer/Captain salary increases
- Retention incentives

Compensation remains a recurring structural concern, though not as emotionally dominant here as in the expectations dataset.

Conclusion:
Compensation remains a retention and morale lever — specifically compression correction and incentive structure refinement.

Supporting Theme: Leadership Empowerment & Cultural Alignment

Repeated language includes:

- Empower BCs
- Empower Captains
- Allow officers to run companies
- Reduce admin overstep
- Put right people in right places
- Check egos
- Be nicer to each other
- Bridge generational gaps
- Let culture be organic

- Shine light on strengths and limitations
- Empower lower ranks to help drive culture

There is tension here: desire for accountability combined with desire for empowerment and trust.

Conclusion:
Members want structured accountability without micromanagement, and empowerment without ego-driven leadership.

Supporting Theme: Equipment, Apparatus & Infrastructure Planning

Repeated language includes:

- Ladder replacement
- Dependable ladder
- Station 16 upgrades
- Vehicle replacement plan
- Keep equipment in service
- Department with mechanics
- Continue investing in trucks
- Think ahead when purchasing
- Prioritize apparatus budget
- Do not neglect current assets

This suggests a strong desire for disciplined capital planning rather than expansion without sustainment.

Conclusion:
The workforce supports capital investment but wants sustainable lifecycle planning over reactive purchasing.

Supporting Theme: EMS & Community Strategy Alignment

Repeated language includes:

- Improve ALS access
- Implement ALS QRV
- Community medic
- Plan for EMS future
- Paramedic ambulances
- Public education programs
- Limit scope creep
- Focus on what we do well
- Agreements with other departments

This signals strategic uncertainty about EMS growth and service expansion.

Conclusion:
There is appetite for strategic EMS clarity: expansion must be purposeful, staffed, and sustainable.

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