

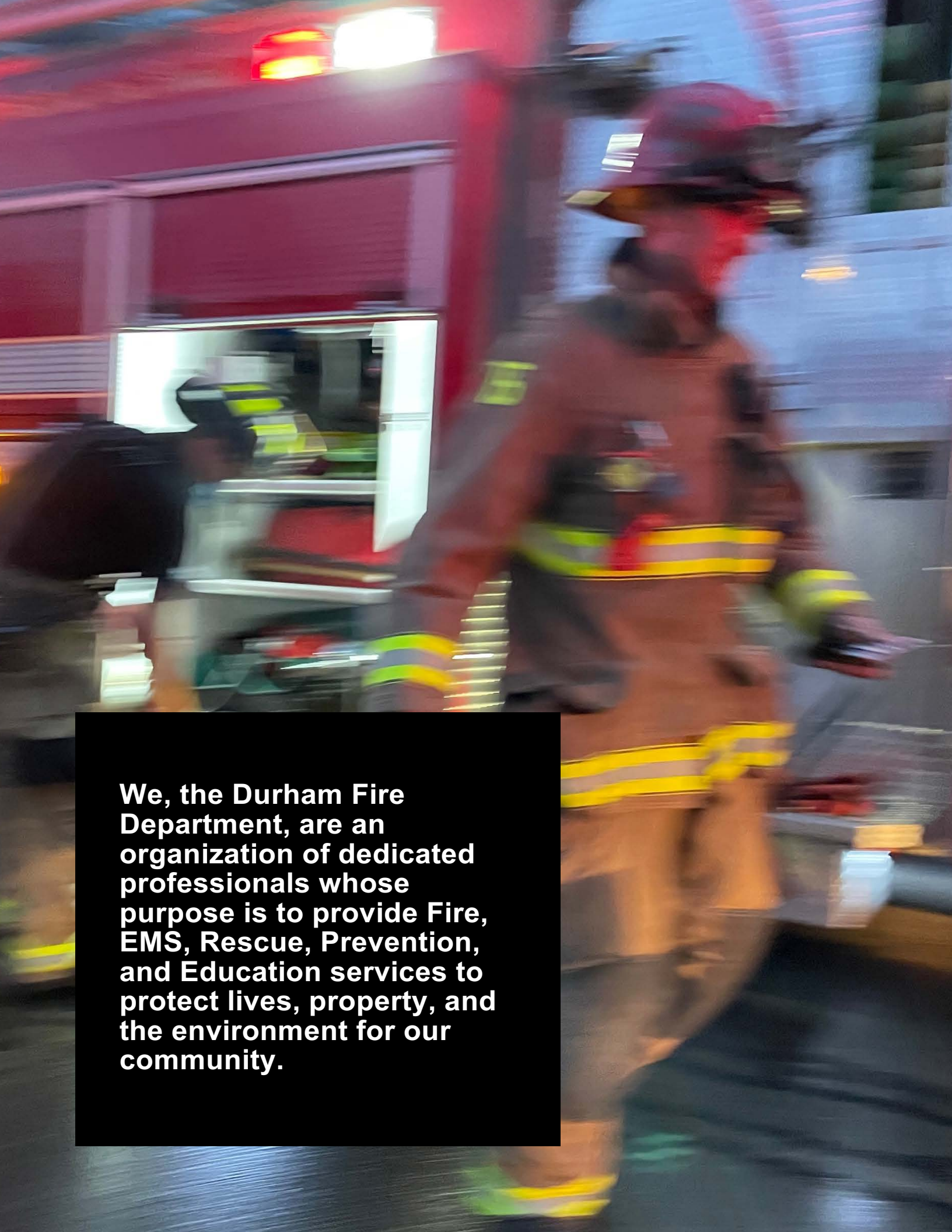


DURHAM FIRE DEPARTMENT

**Strategic Plan
2023-2026**

Our Family Protecting Your Family





We, the Durham Fire Department, are an organization of dedicated professionals whose purpose is to provide Fire, EMS, Rescue, Prevention, and Education services to protect lives, property, and the environment for our community.



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Message from the Chief



Durham Fire Department

51 College Road ■ Durham, New Hampshire 03824-3585

Phone 603-862-1426 ■ Fax 603-862-1513

durham.fire@unh.edu

Fire, Rescue and Emergency Medical Services



June 6, 2023

Dear Members of the Durham Fire Department Family and Community,

I am pleased to submit for your review a strategic planning document to guide and direct the focus and efforts of the fire department for the community. Prior to this document, the Durham Fire Department's most recent revision of the department's Strategic Plan was published in April 2001 under the direction of then Fire Chief Ronald O'Keefe. The legacy document is outdated and was created before the majority of the department's current employees had been hired by the Town of Durham.

During recent years, members of the fire department have expressed a desire for additional guidance with respect to the direction in which the organization is moving. As a department, we recognize the importance of such a guiding document and have collaborated with internal and external stakeholders to identify a path to lead the organization through a period of reflection on the past as well as preparation for the future.

I am grateful to have received the gift of feedback and direct input from our internal and external customers to help us revise our mission, values, and strategic goals for the future to address the constantly evolving challenges. As this strategic plan is a living document, we welcome additional feedback from internal and external stakeholders so we may continue to adjust our course as we move into the future to best serve the interests of our community.

Yours in Service,

David F. Emanuel, MPA, EFO, CFO
Fire Chief

Mission and Values

Mission Statement

We, the Durham Fire Department, are an organization of dedicated professionals whose purpose is to provide Fire, EMS, Rescue, Prevention, and Education services to protect lives, property, and the environment for our community.

Core Values

The Durham Fire Department consists of dedicated professionals who are committed to a team environment and creatively solving problems.

We believe in:

- Customer service as a priority.
- Family first.
- Being an inclusive and welcoming organization.
- Being an exemplary organization based on integrity, compassion, and teamwork.
- Innovation, safety, and training.
- The value of collaborations and partnerships to overcome challenges.



Organizational Overview

The Town of Durham is located in southeastern New Hampshire within Strafford County. The towns bordering Durham include Madbury and Dover to the north; Newmarket to the south; and Lee to the west. The east side of Durham is adjacent to Little Bay. Durham contains 22.4 square miles of land area and 2.4 square miles of inland water in addition to large stretches of shoreline along Great Bay and Little Bay.

Based on the 2021 Census estimate for Durham, the town services 15,539 residents, which ranked 20th among New Hampshire's incorporated cities and towns. (NH Employment Security, 2023) Durham is home to the University of New Hampshire (UNH), which was founded in 1866, and had a 2022 student enrollment of just over 14,000 degree-seeking students and approximately 4,000 employees. The institution offers over 200 degree programs and hosts approximately 50 research centers and

institutes, with a student population from 50 states and 81 countries and is an economic engine for the region. UNH maintains 18 Division 1 athletic teams, over 200 student-led organizations, 30 student residency halls, approximately 15% of students involved in fraternity and sorority life, and hosts approximately 160 public art performances and exhibits annually. Sizable campus events can attract up to 5,500 attendees for hockey games and 25,000 people for a homecoming weekend football game

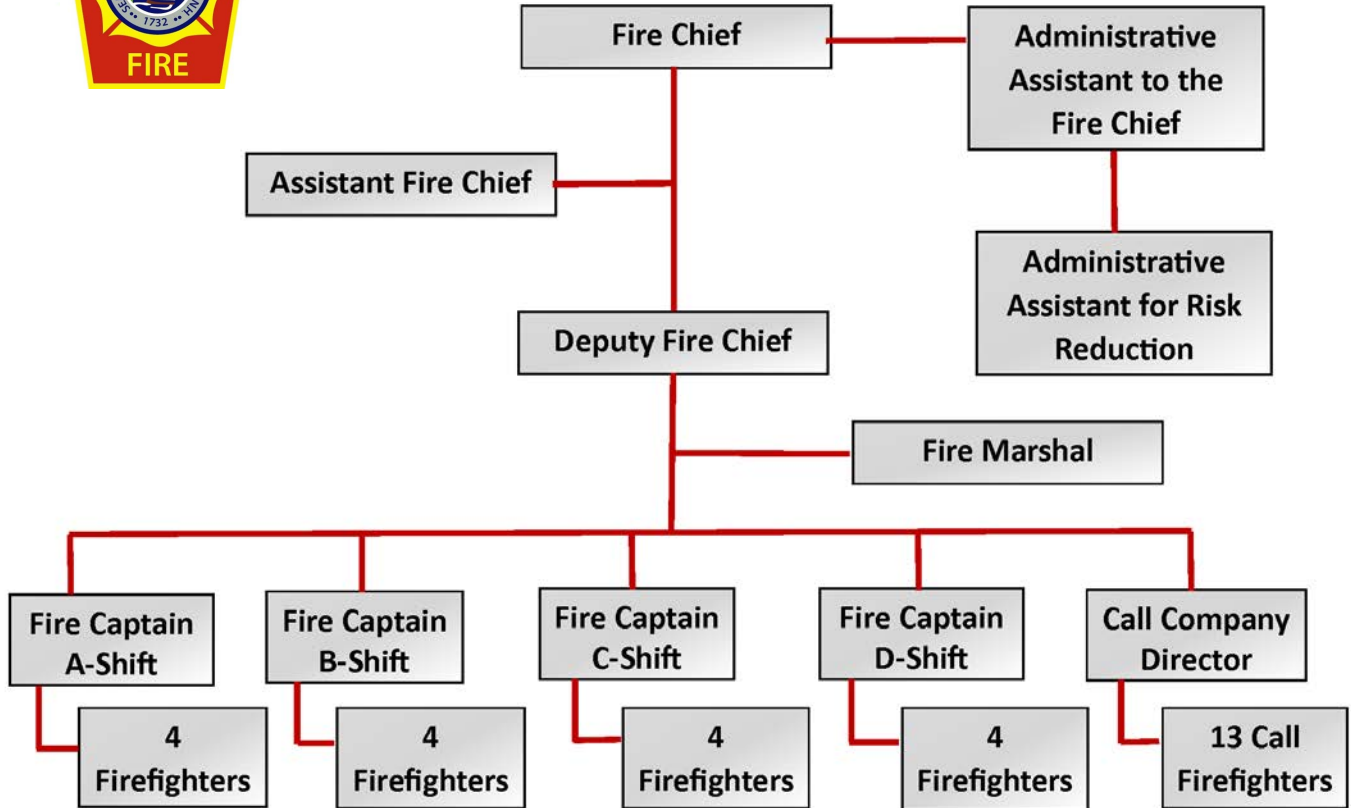
Durham has significant open space areas with nearly 30% of the land in the town in permanent conservation. Approximately 12% of the town's area is occupied by the University of New Hampshire. UNH has been a nucleus for development for many decades, giving Durham the quintessential "college town" feel. The residential uses are predominantly single-family detached homes found throughout Durham, with some concentrations near UNH. The UNH campus development is mostly large, institutional masonry buildings (dormitories, academic halls, etc.), recreational and service buildings, as well as transportation infrastructure that supports the UNH community.



The Durham Fire Department provides primary non-transport EMS response, fire suppression, rescue, community risk reduction, and public education for the Town of Durham and the University of New Hampshire campus. The department is an all-hazards organization comprised of 26 full-time and up to 13 part-time employees and responds to approximately 2,600 calls for service annually as well as being part of a regional mutual aid system comprised of the surrounding communities which stretch across two counties. The department is jointly funded (50%-50%) by the Town and University.



Organizational Chart





Plan Development

This strategic plan was in the research and development phase from 2020 through 2023. The plan is an evolving and living document which will be regularly reviewed, updated, and aligned with the desires of the community and the needs of the department. It is the culmination of a series of exercises designed to ensure that the vision, mission, and objectives of the agency are successfully achieved. The plan ensures that the elements within this document are understood, supported, and reflect the expectations of the community from its fire department. An outgrowth of this process is the enhanced ability to effectively manage resources, provide accountability through measured results, and efficiently adjust to change. Successful planning requires the fortitude to change course when opportunities present, and community demands arise. Ultimately, it is the planning process itself that keeps the agency focused on what the organization wishes to accomplish and the best route to ensure its success.

This exercise challenged the fire department's members to critically examine paradigms, values, philosophies, beliefs, and desires, and encouraged individuals to work in the best interest of the "team." It further provided department members an opportunity to actively participate in the development of the organization's long-term direction and focus. Internal and external stakeholders demonstrated commitment to this project and remain committed to organizational improvement.

Strategic Initiatives

The methodology utilized to construct this strategic plan consisted of several interrelated exercises.

SWOT Exercise

Defining the Strengths (S), Weaknesses (W), Opportunity (O), and Threats (T) from an internal perspective focuses on the most defining element of an organization, the employees. Several exercises were conducted to gain insight from employees about their recommendations, suggestions for improvement, and assessment of the management of the organization. It was a designed goal to engage employees to advance and ultimately determine what obstacles the agency faces to achieve the collective goals of the organization.

Fire Department stakeholders participating in the strategic planning session:

Dave Emanuel	Ken Lundberg	Artie Boutin
Randy Trull	Brendan O'Sullivan	Ryan McFadden
Jessica Plante	Devon Skerry	Evan Crafts
Kelley Fowler	Andrew Davis	Wes Smith
Aimee Routhier	Matt Hunt	Will Lenharth
Jason Best	Dan Brothwell	Phil Beaudoin
James Brown	Peter Leavitt	Lauren Blatchford
Nate Katz	Warren Kadden	Brian Raynes
Gary Kustra	David Blatchford	Tom Richardson
Scott Campbell	Barry Lavigne	Hunter Stevens

Leadership team stakeholders participating in the strategic planning sessions:

Todd Selig	Pete Leavitt	Gary Kustra
Dave Emanuel	Jason Best	Kelley Fowler
Randy Trull	James Brown	
Jessica Plante	Nate Katz	



Citizen Planning and Feedback:

A key element of the Durham Fire Department’s organizational philosophy is having a high level of commitment to the community and recognizing the importance of community satisfaction. The department invited community representatives to attend a citizen planning session to gain insight from a diverse group of community clients regarding the direction of the agency. Fifty-eight community members were invited and twenty-five attended the forum to provide feedback and input.

Community stakeholders participating in the strategic planning session:

Janice Aviza
Doug Bencks
Paul Berton
Mike Everngam
Jay Gooze
Louisa Harliss
Jim Hellen
Carly Hellen
Kenneth Holmes

Jim Lawson
Chris Lemelin
Bill Lenharth
Kitty Marple
Jay Michael
James Morse
Robin Mower
Mike Mullaney
Ted Mulligan

Pete Murphy
Paul Rasmussen
Todd Selig
Andy Smith
Marjorie Smith
Chris Sterndale
Frank Weeks

Setting goals and objectives for the agency converts the mission and values of the organization into action items which will pave the path for the department's future. The following strategic initiative goals were identified through the exercises conducted with internal and external stakeholders and are not listed in a particular order:

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE

Continue to provide high-quality services to the Town of Durham and University of New Hampshire community.

Goals

1. Enhance efficiency and effectiveness through collaboration with all public safety organizations operating within the community.
2. Enhance the department's Risk Reduction Program for a safe and sustainable community.
3. Enhance the use of science and data to shape department operations.
4. Improve and maintain a clear, consistent, effective, and efficient method for internal communication to ensure unity in the department's mission, vision, and goals.
5. Promote an inclusive culture, which values individual members, sharing information, empowerment, building trust, and accountability at all levels within the organization.
6. Develop and implement a comprehensive training program that provides continuous education and career preparation opportunities to all personnel.
7. Improve service delivery by improving the strategic location and design of fire department facilities.

Goals, Objectives, and Action Items

Objectives were developed for each goal and action items were created for each objective. This will allow the department to create an actionable work plan to facilitate continuous progress.

Goal 1: Enhance efficiency and effectiveness through collaboration with all public safety organizations operating within the community.

Objective 1A: Enhance collaboration with Durham and UNH Police Departments

Action Items

- Implement regularly scheduled meetings between fire department leadership and law enforcement leadership with a mutually agreed-upon agenda.
- Conduct a joint planning session that outlines service improvements over the next three years.
- Increase joint training opportunities for Durham Fire, Durham Police and UNH Police.
- Enhance the use of WEBEOC with public safety agencies.
- Increase preparedness for potential active shooter incidents through increased training, communication, and joint policies, including but not limited to unified command.

Objective 1B: Enhance collaboration with Durham Public Works

Action Items

- Implement regularly scheduled meetings between fire department leadership and Public Works leadership with a mutually agreed upon agenda.
- Enhance the use of WEBEOC.
- Enhance the level of communication between the agencies during significant weather events.

Objective 1C: Continuous Quality Improvement of Emergency Medical Services

Action Items

- Implement regularly scheduled monthly meetings between fire department leadership and McGregor leadership with a mutually agreed upon agenda.
- Conduct a joint planning session that outlines service plans for the next three years.
- Increase frequency of joint training opportunities for Durham Fire Department and McGregor personnel.
- Establish a working group to identify future EMS needs and required resources.

Objective 1D: Strengthen and define the role of the EMS Coordinator.

Action Items

- Conduct a brainstorming session to outline the priority functions of the position.
- Establish a position description for the EMS Coordinator.
- Fund annually based on the department's EMS needs.

Objective 1E: Update and maintain mutual aid agreements and revise department policies and procedures to ensure the most efficient use of mutual aid and potential shared services.

Action Items

- Review current mutual aid agreements and update as needed.
- Review policies and procedures pursuant to mutual aid response.
- Identify potential risks and benefits of using auto-aid partnerships.
- Enhance collaboration through shared services.

Goal 2: Enhance the Department’s Risk Reduction Program to improve Community safety and sustainability.

Objective 2A: Evaluate the effectiveness and useability of the department inspection programs and permitting process.

Action Items

- Investigate best practices being used by other departments in the state and review their programs for possible implementation within the Town of Durham.
- Establish working group to evaluate and streamline processes.
- Develop and implement an end-user voluntary compliance program.

Objective 2B: Enhance efficiency and effectiveness through collaboration with Town Building Code Enforcement, Planning, Zoning, and Permitting Services.

Action Items

- Initiate processes with partners to reduce redundancy, enhance efficiency, and improve customer and employee satisfaction.
- Meet with Town Building Code Enforcement, Planning, and Zoning staff on a regular basis to enhance collaboration.

Objective 2C: Investigate the further use of technologies to enhance the efficiency and user-interface of department processes.

Action Items

- Implement software for the next generation of productivity and information management. This should include inspections, permitting, NFIRS, EMS reporting, training, and department data management.
- Investigate opportunities for consolidating software platforms in use by the department to maximize benefit and minimize time duplicating efforts.
- Investigate potential opportunities for assistance in generating data input and output reports.



Goal 3: Enhance the use of science and data to shape department operations.

Objective 3A: Evaluate current data collection to ensure added value.

Action Items

- Implement Town GIS data into Record Management System (RMS) software for enhanced efficiency.
- Investigate data availability to support community risk reduction, fire, EMS, and training.
- Evaluate data for accuracy.

Objective 3B: Develop a new data collection and implementation plan.

Action Items

- Establish a data working group.
- Establish a data reporting structure.
- Investigate report-generating options to determine the data input and collection required.
- Prepare guidance documents and directives to collect the required data.

Objective 3C: Establish a data reporting method that depicts department activities.

Action Items

- Establish data-based reporting to show fire department metrics based on fire department credentialing standards.
- Report quarterly on metrics to the department and external stakeholders.

Objective 3D: Analyze data to assist in the decision-making process.

Action Items

- Utilize data analysis to create a community hazard risk assessment.
- Evaluate data to monitor response time trends and identify methods to increase response efficiency.
- Evaluate data to ensure that department programs are achieving the anticipated results and desired outcomes.





Goal 4: Improve and maintain a clear, consistent, effective, and efficient method for internal communication to ensure unity in the department’s mission, vision, and goals.

Objective 4A: Ensure department policies and procedures are up to date and consistent with industry standards.

Action Items

- Review and update department policies and procedures.
- Utilize the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) model as guidelines where appropriate.
- Develop a draft review process to allow for department wide input.
- Institute an annual review process to ensure policies and procedures remain up to date.

Objective 4B: Identify the most efficient and effective ways to communicate critical messages within the department.

Action Items

- Review and update department policies and procedures for communication.
- Poll members on effectiveness of communication plan.
- Incorporate existing and emerging technology and information systems as appropriate.

Goal 5: Promote an inclusive culture that values individual members, sharing information, empowerment, building trust, and accountability at all levels within the organization.

Objective 5A: Provide accurate information with a feedback loop to raise awareness pursuant to department initiatives, changes, and new services prior to implementation.

Action Items

- Utilize department message boards to display daily and weekly information.
- Work to utilize information technology systems to migrate from paper postings to online access and 24/7 availability.
- Utilize electronic surveys and polling instruments to solicit feedback when appropriate.

Objective 5B: Increase clarity of communications and transparency within the organization.

Action Items

- Captains conduct daily shift briefings.
- Deputy Chief conducts weekly shift meetings.
- Chief meets monthly with each shift.

Objective 5C: Encourage a family atmosphere within the organization to foster a work-life balance.

Action Items

- Recognize employee contributions to the organization.
- Model behaviors that encourage a nurturing, caring, supportive environment.
- Remain attuned to family culture within the fire department.
- Support opportunities to include family members in events at the fire station.
- Include family members in recognition programs.
- Communicate fire department support systems to family members at home.

Goal 6: Develop and implement a comprehensive training program that provides continuous education and career preparation opportunities.

Objective 6C: Establish department needs and priorities for training.

Action Items

- Create a training committee to evaluate training mission areas and to identify and evaluate training needs for all job functions.
- Utilize data from department surveys to prioritize training.
- Evaluate NFPA standards to align training needs.
- Evaluate and align training with Insurance Services Office (ISO) Fire Suppression Rating Schedule and the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) Fire and Emergency Service Self-Assessment Manual.



Objective 6D: Develop a plan to encourage and/or incentivize outside training for personnel.

Action Items

- Evaluate findings and recommendations from the training committee to identify training needs that may not be achieved locally.
- Prioritize the department's needs for training resources.
- Establish a list of members who are interested in attending training programs outside of the department.
- Review and align outside training opportunities, interested members, and available funding annually.

Objective 6E: Establish a long-term training schedule that allows for flexibility.

Action Items

- Update and implement an annual training plan.
- Build out the annual training plan with scheduling and instructors.
- Create a multi-year program to establish a reoccurring cycle to address training needs and requirements.

Objective 6F: Develop career path resources for members to use as a roadmap throughout their careers.

Action Items

- Establish a committee to assist with identifying career path resources.
- Fire Chief will meet with labor groups to determine the committee makeup.
- Fire Chief will review committee findings and recommendations.

Goal 7: Improve service delivery by improving the strategic location and design of fire department facilities.

Objective 7A: Establish a suitable location for a new fire facility.

Action Items

- Establish a Town, University, and internal stakeholder facility working group to review the fire department facilities and needs.
- Create awareness within the community of the need for a new site for the fire department and/or other public safety partners.
- Waterworks Road has been previously identified as a potential building site for the new facility. Validate building site, availability, and if necessary, identify other potential locations and development partners as they become available.

Objective 7B: Finalize a basic space needs assessment for the new fire station facility to determine a fire station program.

Action Items

- Utilize the Town, University, and internal stakeholder facility working group to review the previously conducted space needs assessment of the fire department facility.
- Revise the fire station program as necessary.

Objective 7C: Establish a proposed budget and funding strategy for a new fire facility.

Action Items

- Utilize the Town, University, and internal stakeholder facility working group to review comparable construction costs in the region for similar fire station projects.
- Establish a preliminary budget range for a comparable facility to meet the local needs.

Objective 7D: Establish a timeline for building and opening a new fire facility.

Action Items

- Utilize the Town, University, and internal stakeholder facility working group to investigate timelines for the process of constructing the fire department facility.
- Establish a plan.
- Identify shovel-ready benchmarks to position project for future grant-funding opportunities.





Success of the Strategic Plan

The department has developed and implemented a strategic plan by asking for and receiving input from the community and department members during the development stage of the planning process. This plan was developed with professional guidance to conduct a comprehensive strategic planning process. The success of this strategic plan will not only depend upon the implementation of the goals and related objectives but on support from the Town of Durham and the University of New Hampshire, department members, and the community-at-large.

Implementation of the strategic plan will provide a considerable opportunity to unify the department and community stakeholders through understanding of organizational direction to achieve the mission, goals, and vision of the organization.

To remain dynamic, relevant, accurate, and actionable, and to ensure the strategic plan meets the ongoing needs of the department and the community, the plan needs to be regularly reviewed and updated with new initiatives and action items.

As the culmination of the strategic planning process, the department will develop an implementation plan to serve as a roadmap for future improvement.