FAQs: City of Manassas Fire & Rescue Station #21

Site Selection

Why was the proposed site selected?

Over the past 20+ years, several public safety studies have determined the need for a new fire and rescue station in the southern side of the City. Several sites were considered prior to the selection of the proposed Fire & Rescue Station #21 site on Lee Manor Park. The most critical consideration for site selection is the ability to maximize the four-minute response time coverage across the City[1]. The site location must also be located to the South of the Norfolk Southern railroad tracks to ensure that emergency response is not delayed by the at-grade train crossing on Godwin Drive. For this reason, City-owned properties at the Gateway Business Park were considered but ultimately deemed unsuitable.

Based on these criteria, the ideal location for Station #21 is at the intersection of Hastings Drive and Cloverhill Road. The proposed Lee Manor Park location is the nearest available site that can provide the response time coverage needed to ensure the safety of residents. Attempts to purchase an alternative site were unsuccessful.

Following the community meeting on March 21, 2017 staff has staff has reviewed potential alternative locations for the location of the proposed fire and rescue stations. A technical memorandum has been posted to the Fire and Rescue Station #21 website.

Property Values, Taxes, and Insurance Rates

What is the impact of the proposed station on taxes, property values, and insurance rates?

On July 25, 2016, City Council authorized the General Obligation Public Improvement Bonds in the amount of $28 million. Station #21 is funded out of this bond issuance ($8.6 million) with debt service covered through the fire and rescue levy.

Limited research is available on the impact of fire and rescue services on property values. A 2016 paper[2] on the effect of fire, police, and emergency medical services in the State of Florida found both negative and positive effects on housing values driven by the home's distance from the facility. The site design and operating conditions for Station #21 are under development to mitigate negative impacts of the proposed station.

The Insurance Service Office (ISO) collects information on municipal fire protection efforts in communities throughout the US. In each community, ISO analyzes the relevant data using the Fire Suppression Rating System (FSRS) and then assigns a Public Protection Classification from **1 to 10**. Currently, the City of Manassas has an ISO rating of **4**. This rating has a direct impact on insurance premiums for residential and commercial properties. Response times are a component of the data used to determine the ISO ratings for communities and is compared to the national standard of 90% with the first emergency unit arriving on the scene within 4 minutes. Station #21 will assist us in reducing our response times to the Southeastern part of the city and will contribute to the overall reduction of response times within the City limits.

Site Design

What will be the extent of the tree clearing?

The site design minimizes required tree clearing and impervious surfaces by utilizing the footprint of the existing tennis courts and sharing access with Round Elementary School. The proposed site layout preserves a minimum 125-foot wide buffer between the site and the homes along Shannon Lane and Cedar Ridge Drive.

Can the site accommodate separate entrances for the school and Station #21?

The project engineer has developed a conceptual layout that separates the Station #21 entrance and exit from the access to Round Elementary School (figure on following page). While feasible, this layout will increase site development costs due the need for additional grading and will significantly decrease the buffer between the site and adjacent residential property.

[1] The 4-minute response time is calculated using ArcGIS Network Analyst. Additional information on this software can be found at: http://desktop.arcgis.com/en/arcmap/latest/extensions/network-analyst/service-area.htm

[2] Dronyk-Trosper, Trey, "Searching for Goldilocks: The Distance-Based Capitalization Effects of Local Public Services," https://treyldt.files.wordpress.com/2016/11/searching-for-goldilocks-ree.pdf

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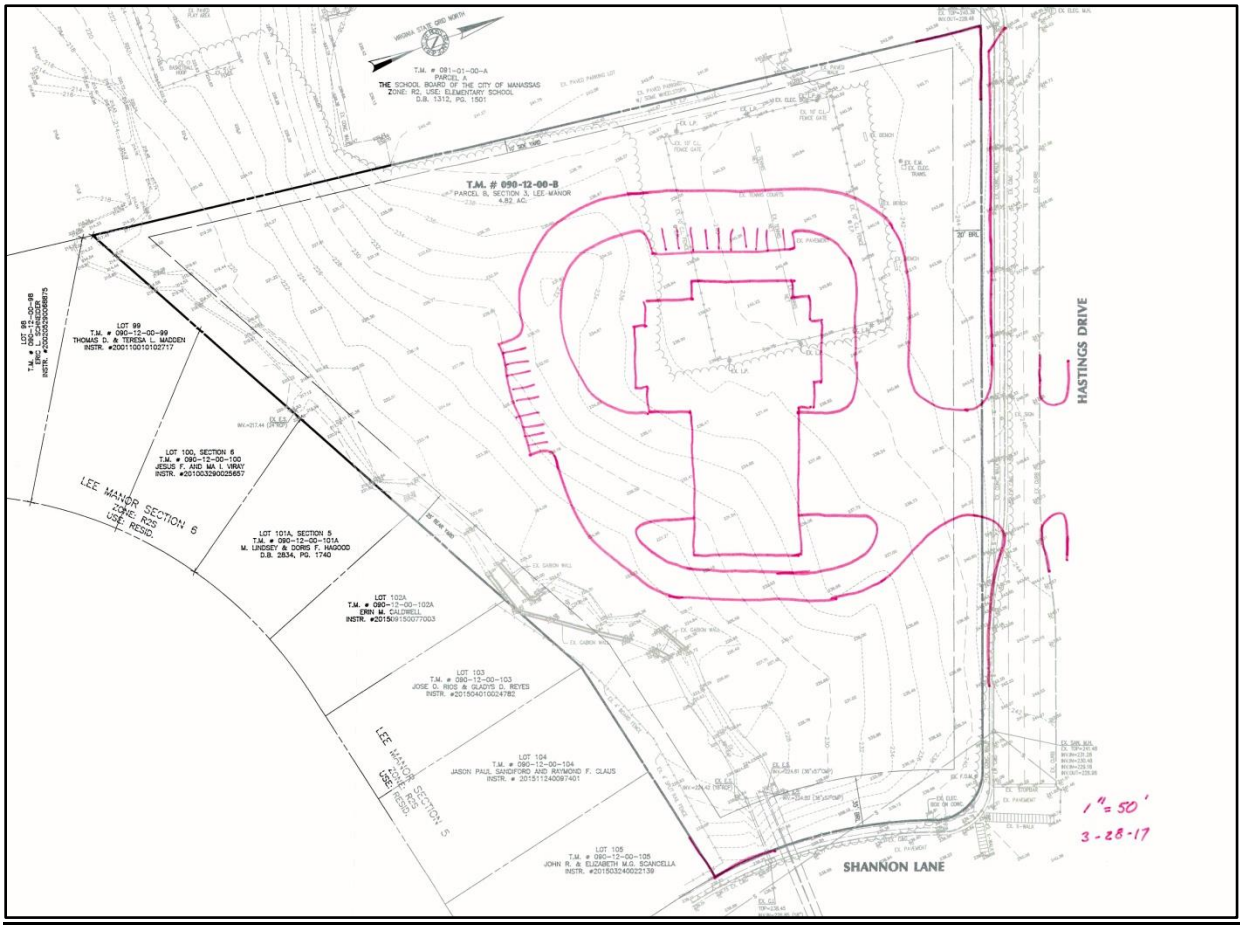

Figure 1. Station #21 with Stand-Alone Entrance Design

Can the project incorporate landscaping along Hastings Dr. to the Hastings and Shannon Lane intersection?

As part of Station #21 construction, the City will clean up existing vegetation along the Hastings Drive sidewalk and evaluate landscaping improvements to the adjacent City-owned property on the eastern side of Shannon Lane.

If the tennis courts are moved to the southwest side of Round Elementary School, how will they be accessed?

Access will be provided from the existing parking lot adjacent to Round Elementary School during non-school hours only. Access from Godwin Drive will consist of improvements to the existing trails with the potential for on-street parking.

Will Station #21 have a multi-purpose community room?

A multi-purpose community room is not proposed at Station #21. However, the Fire Department looks forward to being part of the community and partnering with the schools for tours and educational programs.

Station Operations

Can you provide an estimate based on current statistics on how many calls may be dispatched from Station #21?

A specific estimate for the new station is not available; however, the two existing stations had 4,268 calls within the City limits in FY16 and 1,353 calls to the area that will be served by Station #21.

Can you provide an estimate based on current statistics on how many calls may be dispatched from Station #21 to surrounding jurisdictions?

A specific estimate for the new station is not available; however, in 2016 approximately 30% of total call volume was from other jurisdictions including Prince William County, Manassas Park, and Fairfax County.

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Many children walk to and from school along Hastings Drive from the Lee Manor development. What will be done to ensure the safety of the children walking to and from school during an emergency call?

Fire stations have been successfully co-located with schools and other institutions in many jurisdictions. In Prince William County, Stonewall Jackson Volunteer Fire and Rescue Station is located immediately across from Sinclair Elementary and adjacent to a private preschool. The school has indicated that proximity to the station is an asset, providing an added layer of safety and security. Similarly, Station #21 intends to be a great neighbor to Round Elementary School and safety considerations for students and other pedestrians is of the utmost importance.

The safety of children arriving and departing from the school has been a key focus of the project design. Emergency vehicles dispatched to a call will use a dedicated exit that is separate from the access shared with Round Elementary School. This dedicated exit will be provided with appropriate traffic operational measures, such as pavement markings and an emergency advisory signal, to warn vehicles and pedestrians of the presence of emergency vehicles.

From an operations standpoint, our apparatus drivers have extensive training and experience in maneuvering safety. The City's existing rescue and fire stations are both located in the historic downtown, where pedestrians are constantly present and traffic volumes are more than five times greater than those on Hastings Drive, and have operated without incident. Extra precautions are taken in school zones, where our drivers comply with reduced speed limits to ensure safety.

Finally, education and outreach will help to avoid potential conflicts between the two uses. The station intends to partner with the school to provide safety outreach and training for students, staff, and parents, so that they will be aware of what to expect and how to react when the emergency advisory signal is activated.

What equipment will be assigned to Station #21?

The station will house Rescue Engine 521, Medic 521, and Battalion Chief 582, plus Ambulance or Medic 521 when the volunteers staff a unit on nights and weekends. This equipment will be re-assigned from the existing stations and will be the newest in our fleet.

What will be the noise, light, and exhaust impacts from the fire engine and equipment located at Station #21?

All of our apparatus drivers complete extensive Virginia Department of Fire Programs Emergency Vehicle Operator Training (EVOC) to include all three levels of course, complete Department internal training programs before being released as an emergency driver, and follow Code of Virginia 46.2-920 – Vehicle Exceptions. We also have internal policies that exceed the Code of Virginia 46.2-920. The Department policy mandates items such as: maximum response speed shall not exceed 15 mph above the posted speed limit, apparatus must come to a complete stop at all traffic signals that are reflection red in their direction of travel, maximum speed through any traffic-controlled intersection in which the vehicle has the right of way (green light, blinking yellow light, etc.) shall be the speed limit of the street involved, and vehicles must come to a complete stop when encountering a school bus with flashing red lights. Our drivers are well trained and maintain situational awareness when driving apparatus and adjust to the environment and conditions they face. Understanding they will be responding onto a roadway with a high presence of children will only heighten their safety during an emergency response.

Our drivers only use the siren and air horns when necessary. There are many instances where the audible warning systems are not warranted when pulling out of existing stations onto very busy roadways. When using emergency lighting the apparatus driver may use audible warning "as reasonably necessary".

All of our apparatus must follow current EPA regulations for exhaust. We also add DEF (Diesel Exhaust Fluid) with every fueling to lower the nitrogen oxides produced during combustion. This makes the engine burn cleaner, eliminating the "black smoke" coming out the exhaust from any or our apparatus. All of our apparatus follows current NFPA (National Fire Protection Association) standards for initial build, inspection, maintenance and testing. Our apparatus drivers do not leave the units sitting on the fire station ramp running. They perform their daily checkouts quickly and efficiently. They will be mindful of the time of day and limit the noise as much as possible.