

Fire Training Facility Narrative

3000 E. Belt Boulevard

Richmond, VA 23234

Background

The City of Richmond tasked Greeley and Hansen to relocate the City's aging Fire Training Facility at Richmond Airport in Henrico County and design a new facility that will be constructed at 3000 East Belt Boulevard in Richmond. The property is owned by the City of Richmond and only a portion of the property will be designated for the new facility. The proposed site is approximately 1.97 acres at the grounds of the Hickory Hill Community Center.

The site is bounded by the north and west by heavily wooded areas. The site can be access from East Belt Boulevard which bounds the east side of the site. Existing residences are located opposite of the proposed site across East Belt Boulevard. The existing Hickory Hill Community Center bounds the southern portion of the site. CSX/AMTRAK railroad is on the west side of the property just past the wooded area. The site is well screened by the wooded areas on the north and west side of the property.

The Fire Training Facility will consist of an approximately 1.17-acre concrete apron for fire trucks to maneuver, small training building, ornamental fence surrounding the site, site lighting, landscaping that includes tree and shrub planting, and required stormwater facilities.

Responses to Fire Safety Training Facility Meeting Notes (1/11/2023)

1. Why this site or location?

In December 2020, the City's Fire Department started reviewing City owned properties and selected 20 to ride by and look over. The Fire Department also reached out to the Virginia Port Authority and contacted Altria (Phillip Morris). In December 2021, the Fire Department shared and discussed all of the properties with the Fire Department's Executive Team. After multiple discussions, the list was then narrowed down to five for further consideration. The Fire Department will provide more detailed information for the sites reviewed for the UDC meeting.

2. Why now, what is the urgency?

The cost to keep the Fire Department Class 1 Insurance Rating, which affects every homeowner and business owner in the city, is approaching one million dollars a year to keep the existing training facility at the current location. The current burn building was deemed unsafe in 2022, and the tower was deemed unsafe over five years ago, by the state fire building inspectors.

Construction costs continue to escalate at a very high rate (over 10% for past two years). Delaying construction will cost the City thousands of dollars for every few months the project is delayed. Delaying will also jeopardize the grant that was obtained for the building.

3. How are we addressing noise concerns? How does that pair with our new Sound Ordinance?

We have included a decibel diagram showing the level of the sound at different distances from the training facility. A chainsaw (which will be used on the site for short durations) registers at 100 dBA. At 400 feet the sound of 100 dBA (chainsaw) will reduce to 58 dBA, which is close to average room noise. The trains on the railroad register at 85 dBA level. A lawn mower registers at 95 dBA. The chart shows that the sound from the Fire Training Facility will not register over 60 dBA which is typical to average office noise.

The Fire Department will provide a detailed summary of when the facility will be used and the approximate length of time for the training sessions.

4. How are we addressing, from a holistic standpoint, the adjacent potential future conservation area or the current Bird Sanctuary.

There are no design or construction restrictions required by the surrounding properties, including the property labeled as the Serene Wildlife Sanctuary. Peak stormwater flows will be decreased from the fire training site by the design of a detention pond. Noise levels will be about 55 dBA which is an average conversation (the trains going through the site are much louder).

5. How are we managing environmental concerns?

a. What is the Composition for the smoke?

Wood, straw, etc. Other times we use smoke candles that burn for two to three minutes during their training drills.

Smoke candles will be utilized for the training under the smoke conditions. The smoke candles are Superior® Smoke candles. The smoke candles residues would consist of the following: zinc chloride, carbon and water; slightly acidic; water soluble. Residues can be easily removed with soap and water.

b. What sustainable elements help us to get ahead of the concerns?

Permeable pavers are not suitable for this site since they cannot support the weight of a fire truck. No green stormwater management devices are practical for this site.

c. What can we do to enhance the environmental quality of the area?

A stormwater retention design will ensure that the peak stormwater flow from the site is reduced from the current flows. A figure shows the stormwater flows in the area will not increase as result of this construction. In addition, new trees are being planted to supplement existing landscaping.

6. What are impacts to traffic?

There are no traffic concerns. The training site is over 200 feet off of the roadway. Only fire vehicles will be entering the site.

7. Drainage for the railway?

The drainage will be managed on the site and will not affect the quantity of stormwater on the CSX property.

8. Incorporate Landscape architects.

The landscape plans have been updated to incorporate coniferous trees (evergreens) as requested by Urban Design Committee. The City's Urban Forestry will be reviewing the plans.

9. What is a burn tower? Address common misconceptions.

This is a training facility that is used for training fire fighters. The facility is needed to maintain a Class 1 ISO rating for the City of Richmond. The Fire Department will elaborate on this facility and its importance.

10. What community education or programming could be offered once project is complete?

This is an endless multiple opportunity question for the entire city to consider. Some of the training opportunities are the following:

- Citizen fire training academy.
- After school programs for high school students.

- Field trips for community groups.
- Girl/Boy scout field trips.

11. What are the adjacent property uses and how does this fit into master plan elements?

- Future subdivision could provide further buffer for existing residents.
- Site already has an active community center.
- Potential conservation area nearby.
- Railroad and roadway as existing separation lines.
- Elevations of site and surrounding area.

12. What prior or future community meetings can help to clarify messaging?

A Fire Department representative attended the Cherry Gardens, Cullenwood Civic Association, and Deerbourn Civic Association to discuss the proposal. The next week, fire companies canvassed all three neighborhoods and handed out/placed flyers. The following week Fire Department representatives attended the Southside District meeting. A copy of the flyer is included in the presentation. The Fire Department has since reached out to the community groups for future meetings as required.

13. Other pending items:

a. Do we have the State Air Control Permit?

No State Air permits are required based on the following Virginia Administrative Code.

9VAC5-130-40 Permissible burning – paragraph 2 states that “Training schools where permanent facilities are installed for firefighting instruction are exempt from this notification requirement.”

b. What are major project milestones? (Permits, Committee dates, Community Events, Design, Construction, etc.)

Preliminary Project Schedule:

- Acquire Permits and Approvals: Present through March 2023
- Bid and Award Project: April 2023 through June 2023
- Commence Construction: July 2023
- Project Completion: June 2024