



October 20, 2021

CASE #PL2021-186

## **Project Narrative: Bloomington Fire Station #4**

This project is for the replacement of the existing Bloomington Fire Station #4 at 4201 West 84<sup>th</sup> Street which sits at the southwest corner of West 84<sup>th</sup> Street and Irwin Road. The current fire station's structure has reached its life-expectancy, is significantly undersized, and does not meet a large array of current fire station design best practices, NFPA station design guidelines, or firefighter health features. Consequently, the building is being fully demolished and rebuilt to meet the current and future fire department needs including meeting today's fire station design standards.

In February 2021, City staff created a charter for the Fire Station 4 project. The charter identified the benefit of creating a communications and engagement team. The members on this team represent multiple departments engaged in the outreach work of the City. In the first meeting of this group, the question "What is our promise to the public/to our stakeholders?" created the following goals:

- Educating about the process
- Transparency
- Relaying the fiscal responsible actions taken
- City assets/tax money being used responsibly
- Providing the best fire safety for the community
- Sharing information in plain language
- Keeping the public informed about temporary fire station and services still available

With these goals in mind, staff created a Let's Talk Bloomington page where residents can find current information on the project, post comments, and find other resources. On the City website, there is a page dedicated to Fire Station 4 information and three letters have been sent to residents about the project. The project team reached out to the neighbors to the west and south of the project and received support for the project. There are articles in the Briefing, information in the One Weekly for Council updates, and there will be a future item in the Insider for City staff. Outreach also included a table at the Farmers Market recently and another one planned for October. In addition, there will be an information sharing event at Fire Station 4 during the annual Fire Station open houses in October.

The existing site is 39,942 square feet (0.92 acres) in total size and is situated on the southwest corner of the intersection of 84<sup>th</sup> Street West and Irwin Road. The site is zoned R-1 and is surrounded by single family residential properties to the south and west. Directly north of the site is Wanda Miller Park and additional single family residential properties on the edges of the park. The property to the east is a utility operation building for CenturyLink. Fire stations are an approved use within this R-1 zone.

The site includes apparatus circulation for both responding and returning vehicles as well as parking for the firefighters. There are 18 parking stalls for firefighters which meets the operational needs of this station.

Due to the location and size limitation of this district station there are no rooms that will be used by the public or city staff not associated with fire department business, consequently additional parking beyond firefighter use is not needed. The apparatus will respond to the north onto West 84<sup>th</sup> Street and return on the east off Irwin Road and enter the south bay doors. Responding paid-on-call firefighters will enter the site either from West 84<sup>th</sup> Street or the north enter only curb cut from Irwin Road, whichever is closest on their arrival direction. The east parking is angled along a one-way drive to minimize depth at this tight side of the site and also speed responding firefighter parking.

The parking lot pavement will be heavy duty concrete paving at apparatus circulation areas and asphalt paving at firefighter vehicle parking areas. The total site impervious surface is 34,432 square feet resulting in a coverage of 86% of the site which is allowed by the recent update to the city ordinance which does not limit impervious surface amounts for fire station facilities. The stormwater from the roof and pavement will be collected on site and directed to underground stormwater treatment and infiltration chambers which are designed to meet the applicable city and watershed district stormwater requirements prior to being routed into the city stormwater system.

All non-impervious site areas will be well landscaped including perennials, a large number of shrubs, and as many trees as could be positioned on site and maintain safe apparatus sightlines along West 84<sup>th</sup> Street. Additional site screening will be accomplished by low-maintenance solid fences along the south and west property lines which are adjacent to residential properties. Site lighting will be provided by pole mounted LED light fixtures with sharp cut-off and dark sky compliant design to minimize light levels at the residential property lines while providing a safe environment for firefighters arriving and responding in the middle of the night. Further, the exterior lighting will be timer controlled allowing it to be turned off (down) during the middle of the night and only come back on upon the station receiving an emergency response call. Other site features include retaining walls along the northwest and southwest corners of the site as required to maintain apparatus circulation grades as the site slopes up to the west. The raised west grade will also be retained by the new building along its west elevation reducing the apparent building height from this side.

The new fire station building will be one story at the west apparatus bays and two stories at the operations and residential portion to the east. There will also be a partial basement under the east side of the building. The building will contain a total of 21,023 gross square feet in the one- and two-story sections, plus 4,022 gross square feet of basement. The floor area ratio is not limited by ordinance for a fire station facility. The apparatus bay walls are 28'-11" high and the two-story portion of the building is a few feet taller at an average height of 34'-11". The hose drying tower and back stairwell are the highest elements on the building with a maximum height of 44'-6" for these minor elements.

The exterior building is a pleasing combination of high grade, long-lasting materials including brick and stone masonry veneers covering the majority of the exterior façade with similar aesthetics on all four sides of the station. The remaining surface is glass within the window system and attractive, durable four-fold apparatus bay doors. The building is further accented with metal composite panel trim facing the two street facades. Attached to the west side of the building will be a fully enclosed and roofed trash enclosure as well as a generator enclosure. Both items will have brick exterior walls to match the main building.

Signage is included in the design identifying the fire station and adding to the overall building aesthetic. These include the "Bloomington Fire Department" sign on the north elevation and a logo and "Station No. 4" at the main entrance on the east elevation. Finally, there is a ground sign within the landscaped area near the intersection of 84<sup>th</sup> Street West and Irwin Road providing an opportunity for the city to provide public service

announcements for those driving by the station. All signage has been designed to meet size and location requirements within this district and are positioned to face the street frontages rather than residential properties.

This project is submitted as a Planned Development to address several items where flexibility is necessary to address the unique needs of fire station operations and better serve the overall public benefit. As an essential public safety facility, it is critical that the station be strategically located within the community to minimize emergency response times to meet ISO standards with a target of a four-minute response time. The reuse of the existing Fire Station #4 site is key to maintaining these response times while using this city owned property to continue to meet the public safety needs of this region of the city providing significant public benefit. The following is a list of ordinance flexibility requested as part of the Planned Development submittal for this project as well as mitigating factors integrated into the project design when possible to minimize the impact on the neighboring community.

1. The first requested flexibility is regarding building setbacks as listed in Section 21.301.02(d)(2). The building, while meeting the required setback on the east side, the office/residential wing extends over the 50-foot setback on the north by about four feet. This portion of the building faces West 84<sup>th</sup> Street and the city park across the street resulting in negligible impact on the community. The west side of the apparatus bay is placed to meet the standard 20-foot side yard setback along this property line; however, it is short of the alternate setback of the 24'-6" building height on this side. In addition, there are two retaining walls taller than four feet and the trash / generator enclosure that extends into the setback. None of these west encroachments impact the neighboring residential properties as they are cut into the slope of the ground on this side of the site as well as screened by a six-foot solid decorative fence and additional landscaping. Further the generator placement cut into the hillside along with the specified significantly upgraded high noise reducing casing and masonry enclosure walls are all selected to minimize the sound of the generator within the neighborhood during its infrequent operation of a once-a-month daytime test run and the rare emergency backup function when power is lost to the fire station. While the adjacent trash enclosure will be roofed, the generator enclosure will not be as top crane access would be required to replace the generator if it was required in the future. Finally, the south side of the building meets the standard 30-foot rear yard setback by a significant amount.
2. Requirements for parking setbacks per Section 21.301.06(c)(2)(l) and minimum landscape yard listed in Section 21.301.15(c)(4) also require flexibility on the north and east sides of the property along the public streets. The parking setback requirement of 20 feet and the landscape yard requirement also of 20 feet on these two sides are encroached to allow for the necessary parking required by the firefighters. These sides were selected for the reduced pavement setback to keep the building and pavement further from the south and west residential properties. Landscaping has been provided in both north and east sides to the extent possible to soften the pavement's visual impact to these street frontages.
3. The one-way drive and angled parking along the north and east side of the building also requires design flexibility. This angled parking and one-way flow was selected to minimize the parking setback encroachment on this side of the property. It also has the benefit of allowing for quicker pull-in for paid-on-call firefighters arriving on site to respond to emergency calls and to meet the parking needs

for this fire station facility. There are other examples of this one-way lane drive and angled parking approved within the city where tight conditions warranted it.

4. The building height for this zone as referenced in Section 21.301.10(b)(1)(A) is limited to 40 feet which the majority of the building meets. However, the project is requesting PD flexibility for the stair and hose drying towers on the south side of the building which reach a height of 44'-6". The height of these features is set as part of their fire station function allowing for the hanging and drying of fire hose and the use of the tower for aerial ladder training requirements. As noted earlier, this portion of the building is setback as far as possible to minimize the impact of this taller portion of the building on the surrounding properties.
5. The south parking lot drive as it approaches Irwin Road tapers slightly to the south encroaching approximately 2 feet into the required 5-foot landscape yard for a rear lot line. This curb is matching the existing conditions and has been shown to be necessary to be able to turn onto and from Irwin Road southbound with the large apparatus. This minor encroachment represents a total of 12 square feet of area.
6. The minimum off-street parking requirements for the site under Section 21.301.03(d)(1) require a total of 22 parking spaces due to office, production, storage and dormitory factors. Placing 22 parking spaces on the site would impact other city requirements and operationally the fire department does not need this many parking spaces on site. However, utilizing an internal capture factor for the dormitories reducing the required amount by 50% would reduce the overall required off-street parking spaces down to 18 parking spaces. Flexibility is requested for this requirement to reduce from the 22 parking spaces down to 18 parking spaces using the internal capture factor to better meet operational needs as well as other city requirements.

In summary, the proposed replacement of Bloomington Fire Station #4 will provide for the continued protection of this portion of the City of Bloomington by the fire fighter and EMT operations occurring on this existing fire station site. The new facility provides an attractive, high-quality building designed to last many decades. This building will also include the operational and firefighter safety upgrades meeting the best practices for fire station design and operation today and well into the future.

Respectfully submitted,



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