



LOS ALTOS HILLS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 2015-2020 *Strategic Plan*

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Introduction

The Los Altos Hills County Fire District (LAHCFD), by contract, provides fire suppression, emergency medical services, basic and technical rescue, hazardous materials mitigation, fire prevention, fire inspection and investigation, public education, domestic preparedness planning, and response to the Town of Los Altos Hills and the unincorporated areas in Santa Clara County known as Loyola, Los Trancos Woods, and San Antonio Hills. Additionally, the District supports programs that manage the various contracts, provides greater domestic preparedness training within the community, and ensures that critical infrastructure is maintained. The District is consistently working to achieve and/or maintain the highest level of professionalism and efficiency on behalf of those it serves, and thus contracted with the Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE) to facilitate a method to document the agency's path into the future via a "Community-Driven Strategic Plan." The following strategic plan was written in accordance with the guidelines set forth in the CFAI *Fire & Emergency Service Self-Assessment Manual* 8th Ed., and is intended to guide the organization within established parameters set forth by the authority having jurisdiction.

The CPSE utilized the Community-Driven Strategic Planning process to go beyond just the development of a document. It challenged the Commissioners of the LAHCFD to critically examine paradigms, values, philosophies, beliefs and desires, and challenged individuals to work in the best interest of the District. Furthermore, it provided the Commissioners with an opportunity to participate in the development of their organization's long-term direction and focus. Members of the agency's external and internal stakeholders' groups demonstrated commitment to this important project and remain committed to the document's completion.

This strategic plan, with its foundation based in community and Commission input, revisits the agency's pillars (Mission, Values, and Vision) and sets forth a continuous improvement plan that offers a road map for a justifiable and sustainable future.



LOS ALTOS HILLS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT STRATEGIC PLAN

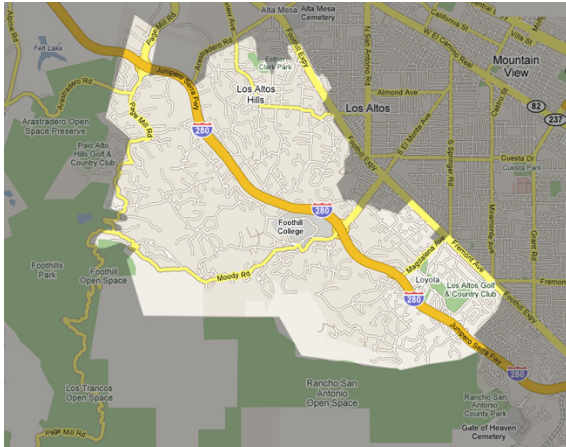
Table of Contents

Organizational Background.....	1
Organizational Structure	2
Definition of a Community-Driven Strategic Plan.....	2
Process and Acknowledgements.....	6
Community Group Findings	6
Community Priorities	7
Community Expectations.....	8
Areas of Community Concern	9
Positive Community Feedback.....	10
Other Thoughts and Comments.....	12
Internal Stakeholder Group Findings	13
Mission	13
Values	14
Programs and Services	14
S.W.O.T. Analysis	15
Strengths	15
Weaknesses.....	16
Opportunities	16
Threats	17
Critical Issues and Service Gaps	18
Strategic Initiatives	19
Goals and Objectives	19
Vision	26
Performance Measurement.....	26
The Success of the Strategic Plan	27
Glossary of Terms, Acronyms, Initialisms.....	28
Works Cited	30



LOS ALTOS HILLS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 2015-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

Organizational Background



The Los Altos Hills County Fire District was established in October 1939 with the mission of providing fire suppression and prevention to its jurisdictional community. Through its evolution, the district has maintained this function as well as ensuring that its community has reliable infrastructure to provide an adequate water supply for fire suppression. A seven-member commission consisting of a president, vice president, and five commissioners conducts the district's governance. Commissioners are appointed by the Santa Clara

County Board of Supervisors and serve four-year terms. A team of independent contractors consisting of a District Clerk, a Fire Consultant, Finance Consultant and Legal Counsel also supports the commission. Through contract with the Santa Clara County Fire Department and other contractors, the district provides for emergency and preventive programs ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the community.

The Town of Los Altos Hills County Fire District (LAHCFD) is located in Santa Clara County, California, in the San Francisco Bay area. The District includes the Town of Los Altos Hills as well as adjacent Unincorporated Areas; the jurisdictional population is currently about 13,000 residents. The District is primarily residential with no retail or manufacturing; it includes

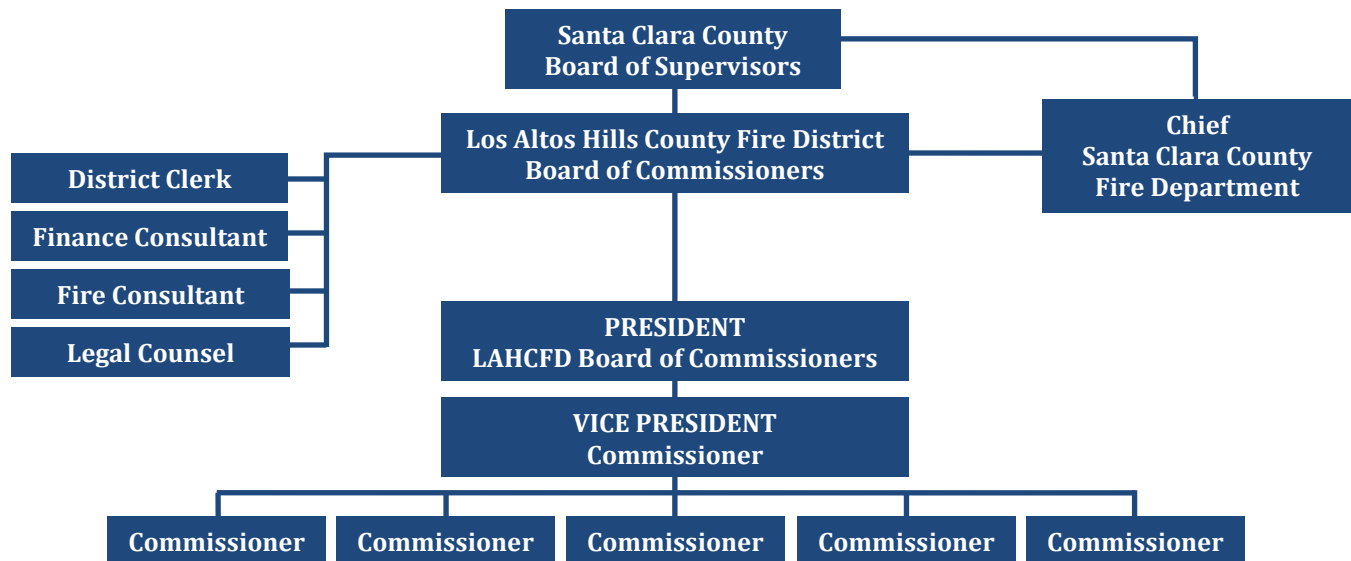


several schools, religious institutions and one country club. In order for the District to provide for the emergency and preventive programs, financing for the services comes by virtue of allocation of the county property taxes provided by the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors. Presently, this amounts to \$7.6 million of which, \$5.9 million covers the district's ongoing, annual expenses. Any unused fund balance may be used for special projects such as fire hydrant upgrades and tree or plant abatement.



LOS ALTOS HILLS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 2015-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

Organizational Structure



Definition of a Community-Driven Strategic Plan

The Los Altos Hills County Fire District recognizes the importance of meeting the public's demands for cost-effective services to meet the specific needs of the residents. The District recognizes that the appointed public and elected officials must provide accountability when entrusted with the use of public funds. Trends indicate that financial resources will continue to shrink as more pressure is applied by the public to use resources prudently and wisely. Demands will increase to be more effective and efficient.

In many cases, the public is demanding the accomplishment of specific goals, objectives, and services with less existing resources. To work more efficiently with available resources, organizations must establish their direction based on constructive efforts while eliminating programs that do not serve the community. To ensure that community needs were incorporated, the Community-Driven Strategic Planning process was used to develop this strategic plan. Businesses employ this type of process to identify market trends, allowing the service provider to focus resources while reducing risk and wasted effort.

What is a Strategic Plan?

It is a living management tool that:

- Provides short-term and long-term direction
- Builds a shared vision
- Sets goals and objectives
- Optimizes use of resources

"What we have to do today is to be ready for an uncertain tomorrow."

Peter F. Drucker,
Professor of Social Science and

Effective strategic planning benefits from a consistent and cohesively structured process employed across all levels of the organization. Planning is a continuous process, one with no clear beginning and no clear end. While plans can be developed on a regular basis, it is the



LOS ALTOS HILLS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 2015-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

process of planning that is important, not the publication of the plan itself. The planning process should be flexible and dynamic, with new information from community members, like-providers, and life changes factored in appropriately.

Community-Driven Strategic Planning creates a platform for a wide range of beginnings. The approach comes to life by being shared, debated, and implemented in the context of organizational realities. Successful organizations, from government agencies to Fortune 500 companies, have recognized that attaining community focus is essential. Aware of this necessity, public safety agencies must strategically plan how they will deliver high-quality services to the public through better, more efficient and less expensive programs.

Once their strategic goals are established, agency leaders must establish performance measures, for which they are fully accountable, to assess and ensure that their departments and agencies are, indeed, delivering on the promises made in their strategic plans. Goodstein, Nolan, & Pfeiffer define strategic planning as

*a continuous and systematic process
where the guiding members of an organization make decisions about its future,
develop the necessary procedures and operations to achieve that future, and
determine how success is to be measured.¹*

The U.S. Federal Consortium Benchmarking Study Team goes on to explain that to fully understand strategic planning, it is necessary to look at a few key words in the strategic planning definition:

- **continuous** refers to the view that strategic planning must be an ongoing process, not merely an event to produce a plan;
- **systematic** recognizes that strategic planning must be a structured and deliberate effort, not something that happens on its own;
- **process** recognizes that one of the benefits of strategic planning is to undertake thinking strategically about the future and how to get there, which is much more than production of a document (e.g., a strategic plan);
- **guiding members** identifies not only senior unit executives, but also employees. (It also considers stakeholders and customers who may not make these decisions, but who affect the decisions being made.);
- **procedures and operations** means the full spectrum of actions and activities from aligning the organization behind clear long-term goals to putting in place organizational and personal incentives, allocating resources, and developing the workforce to achieve the desired outcomes; and
- **how success is to be measured** recognizes that strategic planning must use appropriate measures to determine if the organization has achieved success.

¹ Federal Benchmarking Consortium. (1997, February). *Serving the American Public: Best Practices in Customer-Driven Strategic Planning*



LOS ALTOS HILLS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 2015-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

Most importantly, strategic planning can be an opportunity to unify the management, employees, and stakeholders through a common understanding of where the organization is going, how everyone involved can work to that common purpose, and how progress and levels will measure success.

Where Does the Community Fit into the Strategic Planning Process?

For many successful organizations, the voice of the community drives their operations and charts the course for their future. A "community-driven organization" is defined as one that

*maintains a focus on the needs and expectations, both spoken and unspoken,
of customers, both present and future,
in the creation and/or improvement of the product or service provided.²*

Again, it will be useful to use the U.S. Federal Consortium Benchmarking Study Team's definitions of the specific terms used in the above definition:

- **focus** means that the organization actively seeks to examine its products, services, and processes through the eyes of the customer;
- **needs and expectations** means that customers' preferences and requirements, as well as their standards for performance, timeliness, and cost, are all input to the planning for the products and services of the organization;
- **spoken and unspoken** means that not only must the expressed needs and expectations of the customers be listened to, but also that information developed independently "about" customers and their preferences, standards, and industry will be used as input to the organizational planning; and
- **present and future** recognizes that customers drive planning and operations, both to serve current customers and those who will be customers in the future.

Performance Assessment

Implied within every stage of the planning process is the ability to determine progress made toward the goals or targets set. This assessment ability is a monitoring function that simply tracks activities. It may be as simple as a "To Do List," or as complicated as a plan of action with milestones and performance measures. Also implied within the planning process is the ability to measure effectiveness of the actions taken in the conduct of the organization's business.

² Federal Benchmarking Consortium. (1997, February). *Serving the American Public: Best Practices in Customer-Driven Strategic Planning*



LOS ALTOS HILLS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 2015-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

The Community-Driven Strategic Planning Process Outline

The specific steps of the process are as follows:

1. Define the programs provided to the community.
2. Establish the community's service program priorities.
3. Establish the community's expectations of the organization.
4. Identify any concerns the community may have about the organization.
5. Identify the aspects of the organization that the community views positively.
6. Revise the Mission Statement, giving careful attention to the services and programs currently provided, and which logically can be provided in the future.
7. Revise the Values of the organization's membership.
8. Identify the Strengths of the organization.
9. Identify any Weaknesses of the organization.
10. Identify areas of Opportunity for the organization.
11. Identify potential Threats to the organization.
12. Identify the organization's critical issues.
13. Identify the organization's service gaps.
14. Determine strategic initiatives for organizational improvement.
15. Establish realistic goals and objectives for each initiative.
16. Identify implementation tasks for the accomplishment of each objective.
17. Determine the Vision of the future.
18. Develop organizational and community commitment to accomplishing the plan.



LOS ALTOS HILLS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 2015-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

Process and Acknowledgements

The Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE) acknowledges the Los Altos Hills County Fire District's external and internal stakeholders for their participation and input into the Community-Driven Strategic Planning Process.

Development of the LAHCFD's strategic plan took place in March 2015, during which time representatives from the CPSE and the LAHCFD held an open meeting where members of the public, or external stakeholders, were invited. Input received from the meeting revolved around community expectations, concerns, and other comments about the agency. The agency and the CPSE expresses a special 'thank you' to community members who contributed to the creation of this strategic plan, as it was truly a team effort. Those present at this meeting were as follows:

Table 1: Los Altos Hills County Fire District's External Stakeholders

Alex Atkins	Richard Blanchard	Janice Carr
Jitze Couperus	John Dukes	Allan Epstein
Nancy Green	Tia Jurvetson	Stephen Kitchens
Ineke Ligtenberg	Peter McSweeney	Jay Shideler
Tom Turner	Sue Welch	Walt Wilson



Picture 1 External Stakeholders Work Session



LOS ALTOS HILLS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 2015-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

Community Group Findings

A key element of the LAHCFD's organizational philosophy is having a high level of commitment to the community, as well as recognizing the importance of community satisfaction. Therefore, the agency invited community representatives to participate in a meeting focusing on the community's needs and expectations of the agency. Discussion centered on the present service programs provided, and on priorities for the future.

Community Priorities

In order to dedicate time, energy, and resources to services most desired by its community, the LAHCFD needs to understand what the customers consider to be their priorities. With that, the external stakeholders were asked to prioritize the programs offered by the agency through a process of direct comparison.

Table 2: Community Service Program Priorities of the Los Altos Hills County Fire District

PROGRAMS	RANKING	SCORE
Medical Emergency Response	1	100
Fire Suppression	2	99
Technical Rescue Response	3	68
Fire Prevention	4	67
Disaster Preparedness – Skilled Training, Organization, Response	5	38
Fire Investigation	6	35
Disaster Preparedness Training – Wider Residential Population	7	33
Community Outreach	8	8



LOS ALTOS HILLS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 2015-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

Community Expectations

Understanding what the community expects of its fire and emergency services organization is critically important to developing a long-range perspective. With this knowledge, internal emphasis may need to be changed or bolstered to fulfill the community needs. In certain areas, education on the level of service that is already available may be all that is needed. Following are the expectations of the community's external stakeholders:

Table 3: Community Expectations of the Los Altos Hills County Fire District (verbatim, in priority order)

1. Timely, qualified response to fire, medical and disaster emergencies.
2. Training of the community for fire prevention and CERT. Providing training and information that allows residents of the District to be prepared for and reach emergency events.
3. Fire prevention - the programs involved are very important. Proactive efforts at fire prevention.
4. Professional. Professionalism in all aspects of organization/services.
5. Training for staff for state-of-the-art response and equipment. Well-trained firefighters to handle many types of incidents.
6. Necessary equipment and material to perform expected duties including fire and emergency responses plus medical responses.
7. Provide programs and services in a cost effective manner. Use tax dollars in legal and cost effective way.
8. Performance comparable or better than all applicable standards.
9. Efficient, fast coordination with the sheriff, ambulance, and medevac.
10. Property loss mitigation.
11. Response must be effective.
12. Hydrant maintenance.
13. Proper prior planning for disaster response.
14. Taking action for any fire hazards that exist within the community.
15. Efficiency during a call. Willing assistance and a friendly face.
16. Public outreach - the public is woefully ignorant of what may happen in a real disaster.
17. Provide professional development opportunities for staff at all levels.
18. Stay up-to-date on procedures, protocols, and equipment.
19. Sufficient funding.
20. Tree removal and chipping.
21. Regular training to include simulations and performance evaluations to assure competency.
22. Provide medium and long-term direction for residents of the district with regards to emergency events.
23. Disaster preparedness training throughout the year.
24. Neighborhood contact in emergency.
25. Involvement with schools.
26. Adequate water supply.
27. Established coordination with other agencies to assure comprehensive coverage.
28. Provide technology leadership in ways to be prepared for emergency events.
29. Follow hiring laws - expect to run like a good business.



LOS ALTOS HILLS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 2015-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

Areas of Community Concern

The Community-Driven Strategic Planning Process would be incomplete without an expression from the community regarding concerns about the agency. Some areas of concern may in fact be a weakness within the delivery system, while some weaknesses may also be misperceptions based upon a lack of information or incorrect information.

**Table 4: Areas of Community Concern about the Los Altos Hills County Fire District
(verbatim, in no particular order)**

• Maintaining budget.
• Full understanding of fire department role.
• Different political views.
• Filling vacancies.
• Amount of time needed to complete all goals and commitments – basically a volunteer organization.
• None beyond adequate funding.
• Make sure all neighborhood water systems area up-to-date for supply.
• I don't have any concerns.
• Continuity of programs.
• Home fire prevention such as vegetation/tree clearing is often not done when residents resist such procedures. Such issues need to be enforced often beyond objections of the owner.
• LAH presents many challenges for quick response – narrow, winding roads, homes on hilltops, homes surrounded by clumps of trees. Staff needs to identify problem streets, areas, and train in these areas.
• The fire prevention program is very popular in LAH – but LAHCFD projects a discouraging message: “we are too busy and backlogged.” Sometimes they communicate a wait time of one year to remove a dead or dangerous tree. This is unacceptable. The district should get more cost-effective contracts with several tree services and coordinate with the Town of LAH to keep on top of this.
• Although the LAHCFD has a great team of firefighters and staff, and great programs, it does a poor job of promoting and educating the residents. It should sponsor a quarterly newsletter/outreach piece to educate all residents old and new (75 people become new residents each quarter). Further, many people don't know the LAHCFD pays for many of these programs.
• Would like to see an update sheet once a year providing emergency information like phone numbers.
• Do not know how a fire in the [undetermined] would be dealt with.
• Has an earthquake response plan been developed dealing with bridge collapses, etc.?
• Not aggressive enough in fire load reduction.
• Response time inadequate.
• More door-to-door education needed.
• Town versus fire district tax allocation.
• Flexibility and nimbleness versus bureaucratic sluggishness and inflexibility.
• Smooth interaction with other agencies (Palo Alto Fire, CalFire, Air Evac, etc.). (Both tactical planning and operational as well as strategic planning).



LOS ALTOS HILLS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 2015-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

- Would like more information about LAHCFD activities and services. I suspect they do much more than the public is aware of. Operations are somewhat a mystery. Website could be expanded to include more information (such as resources for public, service calls made – general not specific).
- Composition of the fire board (weighted toward the town) may push their priorities toward the town and away from the unincorporated areas.
- Choosing an excellent emergency services coordinator. Mike Sanders will be very difficult to replace.
- Providing training for PEP and CERT...financially supporting these programs.
- We have a very small number of firefighters to service approximately 10,000 people in our area so supporting the firefighters is vitally important.
- Budget issues.
- My biggest concern is a firestorm in case of an earthquake. How can the fire department warn residents of a roadblock by fire when people want to escape? Can helicopters survey for blockage? Many residents in the hills have only a few routes for escape and want to drive the correct evacuation route.
- More education about all your services – i.e. few people know you will come and lift a person into bed who cannot get up and their wife is unable to lift them.
- Division of responsibility with town, county, fire and water districts relative to disaster planning, execution and water supply.
- Adequacy of firefighting water flows under all conditions – assurance.
- Use and allocation of funds to tree removal on private property and hydrant upgrades – spending exceeds revenue last 5 years.
- Contract expiration with SCCFD.
- Equity of cost sharing with other agencies.

Positive Community Feedback

The CPSE promotes the belief that, for a strategic plan to be valid, the community's view on the agency's strengths must be established. Needless efforts are often put forth in over-developing areas that are already successful. However, proper utilization and promotion of the strengths may often help the organization overcome or offset some of the identified weaknesses.

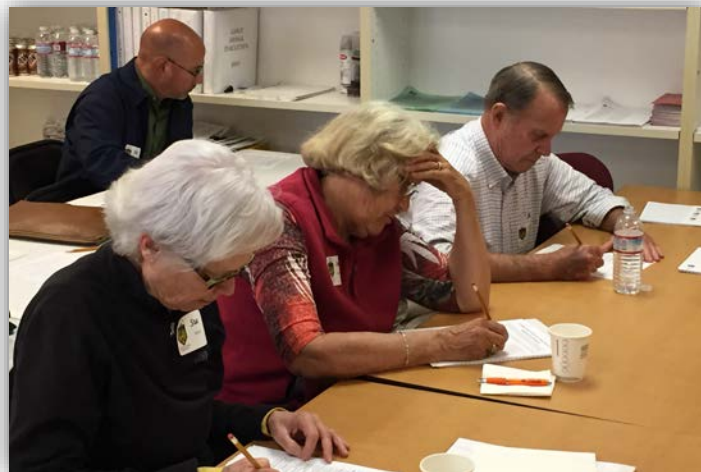
**Table 5: Positive Community Comments about the Los Altos Hills County Fire District
(verbatim, in no particular order)**

• Few fires.
• Prompt, expert response, professional.
• Your fire department staff did an exceptionally efficient and empathetic response when my husband had a heart attack. Though they were unable to bring my husband's heart back, they handled the situation with compassion and with the utmost effort.
• Excellent firefighters that are helpful in almost every situation.
• Very good relationship between the district and SCCFD.
• Board members who are open to public input.



LOS ALTOS HILLS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 2015-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

- Excellent reputation–medical response as well as limiting damage caused by firefighting operations.
- Very high confidence by community.
- CERT program.
- Inclusiveness – rely on community members – team approach.
- Fire load chipping program – monthly collections.
- Professional approach.
- Involvement with the community of LAH, i.e. CERT, this strategic forum.
- Perceived excellence of the fire department by the LAH community.
- Excellent response times.
- Prevention programs very positive.
- Impressive leadership of the commission.
- I do like the brush-chipping program. Especially the one that comes to your house to chip.
- Dead tree removal is also a good program. Maybe it can be changed so a homeowner or neighbor can request tree removal.
- I think we have the best in the bay area.
- FHDA has had only positive interaction.
- Very organized.
- Highly intelligent group.
- Very committed.
- Works well together.
- Good leadership (meaning President).
- Close to areas being served.
- Chipping and removal programs – gets at source of problem.
- PEP and CERT programs.
- Excellent, well-prepared emergency team; most are very friendly and helpful.
- Excellent CERT and PEP programs.
- Offers many helpful fire prevention programs.



Picture 2 External Stakeholders Work Session



LOS ALTOS HILLS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 2015-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

Other Thoughts and Comments

The Community was asked to share any other comments they had about LAHCFD or its services. The following written comments were received:

**Table 6: Other Community Comments about the Los Altos Hills County Fire District
(verbatim, in no particular order)**

• Effectiveness is a combination, it seems, of speed of response and competence, all of which is a combination of staff, equipment, and training. I don't know how to evaluate one against the other. I have a strong sense that LAH is very well served in most ways. I have enormous gratitude for the chipping, eucalyptus removal, etc. programs – having had no need for any emergency services (yet!). If pushed for specific recommendations I might hope that medical response, i.e. ambulance response could be expedited although – again – the fire department services seem very effective in that regard. I don't know how unique the chipping, tree removal, etc. services is for our community – it seems unique – but I think it is of singular importance for our type of environment.
• Is district properly staffed?
• Does district have or should have fire marshal responsibilities/ordinances?
• Does district have appropriate insurance/reserves?
• How should district address concerns raised by grand jury and other reports?
• Has the district studied the outcome from Oakland Hills fire and taken appropriate actions to prepare (lessons learned)?
• My main worry is being trapped in a fire in case of an earthquake.
• Telephone poles are a big hazard in the hills to block roads – a fallen telephone pole can trap people from escaping.
• Keep it up! Many thanks!
• Drought has magnified fire load. District needs to be more proactive.
• I am unaware of mutual aid program design and implementation.
• I am very happy with the fire department. Especially the very positive and friendly tone of the firefighters.
• Good exercise.
• District should prioritize services.
• Priorities should be broken up into manageable groups (perhaps org chart).
• Will fire personnel inspect houses for fire preparedness?
• Thanks for listening to the community.



LOS ALTOS HILLS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 2015-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

Internal Stakeholder Group Findings

The internal stakeholder work sessions were conducted over the course of three days. These sessions served to discuss the agency's approach to Community-Driven Strategic Planning, with focus on LAHCFD's Mission, Values, Core Programs and Support Services, as well as the agency's perceived Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. The work sessions involved participation by agency representation in attendance, as named below.

Table 7: Los Altos Hills County Fire District's Internal Stakeholders (Board Members)

Debbie Dexter <i>Commissioner</i>	Berin Frank <i>Commissioner</i>	Bob Johnson <i>Commissioner</i>
Dorothy Duffy Price <i>President</i>	Melvin Vaughn <i>Vice President</i>	Gary Waldeck <i>Commissioner</i>

Table 8: Los Altos Hills County Fire District's Internal Stakeholders (Public Observation and Contribution)

Jitze Couperus <i>Public</i>	Allan Epstein <i>Public</i>	Jeanne Evilsizer <i>District Clerk</i>	Stu Farwell <i>Fire Consultant</i>
Richard Green <i>CERT</i>	John Harpootlian <i>Public</i>	Shanna Kuempel <i>SCCFD</i>	Kendall Pearson <i>SCCFD</i>
Mike Sanders <i>Emergency Services Coordinator</i>		Dan Siegel <i>District Counsel</i>	

Mission

The purpose of the Mission is to answer the questions:

- Who are we?
- Why do we exist?
- What do we do?
- Why do we do it?
- For whom?

A work group of LAHCFD's internal stakeholders met to review the existing Mission and collectively agreed to the following.

Table 9: Mission of the Los Altos Hills County Fire District

The Mission of the Los Altos Hills County Fire District is to protect the lives, property, and environment within the district it serves from fires, disasters, medical emergencies, or other incidents through education, prevention, and emergency response services, and be responsible for the financial stewardship of district tax payers' funds.



LOS ALTOS HILLS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 2015-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

Values

Establishing values and associated statements embraced by all members of an organization is extremely important. They recognize those features and considerations that make up the personality of the organization. LAHCFD's internal stakeholders agreed to the following values.

Table 10: Values of the Los Altos Hills County Fire District

Los Altos Hills County Fire District values:
Organizational integrity, dedication, and trust.
Leadership actively seeks input from our community to adapt to their changing needs.
Providing essential services to the community served.
Cooperation with regional and local partners, agencies, and entities to ensure critical infrastructure is in place.

The Mission and Values are the foundation of this agency. Thus, every effort will be made to keep these current and meaningful so that the individuals who make up the Los Altos Hills County Fire District are well guided by them in the accomplishment of the goals, objectives, and day-to-day tasks.

Programs and Services

The LAHCFD internal stakeholders identified the following core programs provided to the community, as well as the services that enable the agency to deliver those programs:

Table 11: Core Programs of the Los Altos Hills County Fire District

• Medical Emergency Response	• Fire Suppression
• Technical Rescue Response	• Fire Prevention
• Disaster Preparedness – Skilled Training, Organization, & Response	• Disaster Preparedness Training – Wider Residential Population
• Fire Investigation	• Community Outreach
• Contract Development and Management	• Ensuring Critical Infrastructure

Table 12: Internal and External Supporting Services of the Los Altos Hills County Fire District

• Water purveyors	• Consultants	• Professional services
• Contractors	• Municipal agencies	• Foothill Community College
• Utility agencies	• Green Waste	• Law Enforcement
• Public Works	• Open Space District	



LOS ALTOS HILLS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 2015-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

S.W.O.T. Analysis

The Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis is designed to have an agency candidly identify its positive and less-than-desirable attributes. The LAHCFD participated in this activity to record their strengths and weaknesses, as well as the possible opportunities and potential threats.

Strengths

It is important for any organization to identify its strengths in order to assure that it is capable of providing the services requested by the community and to ensure that strengths are consistent with the issues facing the organization. Often, identification of organizational strengths leads to the channeling of efforts toward primary community needs that match those strengths. Programs that do not match organizational strengths, or the primary function of the organization, should be seriously reviewed to evaluate the rate of return on staff time and allocated funds. Through a consensus process, the internal stakeholders identified the strengths of the LAHCFD as follows:

Table 13: Strengths of the Los Altos Hills County Fire District

Adequate funding	Managing costs through contracting
Experienced board and staff	Manageable size district
Delegated scope of authority – total control	Dedicated members and active participants
Strong leadership	Agile, nimble and responsive to unique local needs



Picture 3 Internal Stakeholders Work Session



LOS ALTOS HILLS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 2015-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

Weaknesses

Performance or lack of performance within an organization depends greatly on the identification of weaknesses and how they are confronted. While it is not unusual for these issues to be at the heart of the organization's overall concerns, it is unusual for organizations to be able to identify and deal with these issues effectively on their own.

For any organization to either begin or to continue to move progressively forward, it must not only be able to identify its strengths, but also those areas where it functions poorly or not at all. These areas of needed enhancements are not the same as threats to be identified later in this document, but rather those day-to-day issues and concerns that may slow or inhibit progress. The following items were identified by the internal stakeholders as weaknesses:

Table 14: Weaknesses of the Los Altos Hills County Fire District

Internal district communications	Budgeting and planning discipline (improving)
Definition of financial reserves	Contract management (no staff to manage)
Time commitment required to complete tasks	Working knowledge of the fire department (SCCFD)
Vacancies on the board – slow to fill	No organizational chart – define responsibilities
No fire district bylaws, SOPs, process	Liability coverage of the board
Lack of succession planning and board member turnover	Limited communications with District residents; specifically Unincorporated Area
Lack of a district general manager	Lack of a strategic plan

Opportunities

The opportunities for an organization depend on the identification of strengths and weaknesses and how they can be enhanced. The focus of opportunities is not solely on existing service, but on expanding and developing new possibilities both inside and beyond the traditional service area. The internal stakeholders identified the following potential opportunities:

Table 15: Opportunities for the Los Altos Hills County Fire District

Staff succession	Leverage technology	Optimize contracts through upcoming contract negotiations
Regional initiatives	Road services initiatives	



LOS ALTOS HILLS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 2015-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

Threats

To draw strength and gain full benefit of any opportunity, the threats to the organization, with their new risks and challenges, must also be identified in the strategic planning process. By recognizing possible threats, an organization can greatly reduce the potential for loss. Fundamental to the success of any strategic plan is the understanding that threats are not completely and/or directly controlled by the organization. Some of the current and potential threats identified by the internal stakeholders were as follows:

Table 16: Threats to the Los Altos Hills County Fire District

Drought	Liability	Inadequate fire suppression water supply
Disasters (WUI, seismic)	Terrorism (targets)	Sustainability of reserves
Uninformed citizens	District reorganization	Lack of public understanding
Ensure adequate hazard and risk assessment		Renewal of the Santa Clara County Fire Department contract



Picture 4 Internal Stakeholders Work Session



LOS ALTOS HILLS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 2015-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

Critical Issues and Service Gaps

After reviewing the LAHCFD's core programs and support services, and identifying internal strengths and weaknesses along with external opportunities and threats, the internal stakeholders identified their primary critical issues and service gaps as the foundation for the development of goals and objectives in order to meet their future vision.

Table 17: Critical Issues and Service Gap Issues Identified

Organizational Chart and Areas of Responsibility	Liability Insurance
Contract Management and Development	Community Outreach
Succession Planning	Policies and Procedures
Reserve and Financial Management Plan	Risk Management Plan
Water Supply	Wildland Urban Interface
District Management Plan	Leveraging of Technology
Methods for Issue Identification and Discussion	Salary Analysis for Consultants



Picture 5 Internal Stakeholders Work Session



LOS ALTOS HILLS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 2015-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

Strategic Initiatives

Having reviewed the agency's critical issues and service gaps, the following strategic initiatives were identified to guide the agency in establishing the goals and objectives.

Table 18: Strategic Initiatives of the Los Altos Hills County Fire District

Personnel Management	District Administration
Financial Management	Hazard and Risk Management
Leverage Technology	

Goals and Objectives

The Community-Driven Strategic Planning Process, to this point, has dealt with establishing the Mission, Values, S.W.O.T., Critical Issues and Service Gaps, and Strategic Initiatives of the LAHCFD. In order to achieve the mission of the LAHCFD, realistic goals and objectives must be established to enhance strengths, address identified weaknesses, provide individual members with clear direction, and address the concerns of the community. The internal stakeholders met for several hours to complete this critical phase of the planning process.

The internal stakeholders set timelines for completion of objectives supporting the goals. Leadership of the LAHCFD should establish work groups to meet periodically to review progress toward these goals and objectives and adjust timelines as needs and the environment change. Once the work groups are established and have had the opportunity to meet and review the goals and objectives, they should report back to the LAHCFD leadership with a plan on how the goals are to be achieved.

***"If you don't keep score,
you're only practicing."***

Vince Lombardi,
American Football Coach and Motivator

As goals and objectives are management tools, they should be updated on an on-going basis to identify what has been accomplished and to note changes within the organization and the community. The attainment of a performance target should be recognized and celebrated to provide a sense of organizational accomplishment.

The goals and objectives should now become the focus of the efforts of the agency. By following these goals and objectives carefully, the agency can be directed into its desired future while having reduced the obstacles and distractions along the way.



LOS ALTOS HILLS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 2015-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

Goal 1		Develop a comprehensive personnel management system.	
Objective 1A	Identify the roles and responsibilities of the organization.		
Timeframe	6 months	Assigned to:	
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analyze all positions (commissioners, staff, and consultants).• Develop an organizational chart.• Develop and publish a personnel manual.• Determine a timeframe by which to review the personnel manual.		
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:	
Objective 1B	Develop job descriptions.		
Timeframe	1 year	Assigned to:	
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify all experience, knowledge, skills, and abilities for each position.• Identify all requirements for each position.• Develop and write job descriptions for each identified position.• Publish all job descriptions.		
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:	
Objective 1C	Perform a comprehensive compensation analysis.		
Timeframe	12 – 18 months	Assigned to:	
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review resolutions of compensation.• Conduct a salary analysis of similar positions (comparable positions).• Compare current salaries to comparable positions.• Review any proposed changes in salaries.• Submit for official approval.		
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:	
Objective 1D	Develop a succession plan.		
Timeframe	6 – 18 months	Assigned to:	
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review current members’ terms.• Document expiration of terms.• Include references to parent documents – i.e. term limits, Santa Clara County policies.• Create a calendar to notify district of term expirations.• Develop a recruitment plan.• Develop an internal promotional plan.		
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:	



LOS ALTOS HILLS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 2015-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

Goal 2		Establish an effective district administration.	
Objective 2A	Identify current policies, procedures, and gaps.		
Timeframe	1 month	Assigned to:	
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collect any and all available information and documents, both historical and legislative.• Read and categorize the information and documents.• Organize and file the information and documents.		
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:	
Objective 2B	Review and analyze policies and procedures of other districts/agencies.		
Timeframe	1 month	Assigned to:	
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify benchmark agencies and districts.• Acquire policies and procedures from the identified agencies and districts.• Determine and choose the most appropriate policies and procedures.• Conduct the analysis of the chosen policies and procedures of applicability to the district.• Report on findings.		
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:	
Objective 2C	Develop necessary policies/procedures in accordance with best practices.		
Timeframe	1 month	Assigned to:	
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Compare the district’s policies and procedures with the chosen ones under the best practices.• Identify any further gaps that exist.• Write/amend/improve the necessary policies.• Review and approve/adopt the new and revised policies in a formal commission meeting.		
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:	
Objective 2D	Produce an organizational chart.		
Timeframe	2 weeks	Assigned to:	
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collect all information needed to develop an organizational chart.• Develop the chart as a draft.• Formally, evaluate the proposed chart and revise if needed.• Formally, adopt the organizational chart.		
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:	



LOS ALTOS HILLS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 2015-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

Objective 2E	Implement a communication plan to inform the community of service and benefits of the district.		
Timeframe	3 months	Assigned to:	
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine what information is to be provided to the community. • Investigate and identify the various means available to the district. • Develop the materials and other information to be distributed. • Implement and distribute the information. • Measure the effectiveness of the information delivery using various instruments (surveys, bounce back). 		
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:	

Objective 2F	Periodic review and update of the administrative policies and procedures.		
Timeframe	1 month and ongoing	Assigned to:	
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish frequency of the review process. • Assign a committee to handle the review process. • Establish the review parameters. • Conduct the review as established. • Report findings to the commission. • Make any revisions as needed. 		
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:	



LOS ALTOS HILLS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 2015-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

Goal 3	Provide sound financial and contract management plans and practices that are understandable by the community.		
Objective 3A	Identify existing plans, practices, liabilities, and impacts.		
Timeframe	3 months	Assigned to:	
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collect all existing plans and other supporting documentation.• Organizing all collected information for review.• Conduct a review of all collected information.• Report findings.		
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:	
Objective 3B	Compare with best practices and identify any gaps and needs.		
Timeframe	1 month	Assigned to:	
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collect information on relevant best practices.• Analyze where the district compares to the best practices to identify gaps.• Determine any needs in order to bridge the identified gaps.		
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:	
Objective 3C	Develop financial and contract management policies and procedures.		
Timeframe	3 months	Assigned to:	
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collect information relevant to the development of financial and contract management policies and procedures.• Analyze and identify opportunities for development.• Determine the needs of the district relevant to the proposed policies and procedures.• Develop the plan, policies, and procedures.		
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:	
Objective 3D	Develop a five-year financial plan.		
Timeframe	3 months	Assigned to:	
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify the requirements and needs relevant to a financial plan.• Project district revenue and expenditures for the time period.• Conduct an assessment of the financial reserves.• Develop a financial plan relevant to all financial information gathered.• Review the proposed plan and submit it for approval and adoption by the commission.		
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:	
Objective 3E	Established a process of periodic review of all elements.		
Timeframe	1 month and ongoing	Assigned to:	
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work through process of the annual budget, financial audit, and CAFR as part of the review.• Update the five-year plan.• Review the proposed update.• Submit the update of the plan for approval and adoption by the commission.		
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:	





LOS ALTOS HILLS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 2015-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

Goal 4	Develop a plan to identify hazards and risks in order to reduce, eliminate, and mitigate them.		
Objective 4A	Conduct a hazard and risk assessment of the district.		
Timeframe	3 months	Assigned to:	
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluate the adequacy of current fire flow capability for the district.• Evaluate the access and egress capability of the road network.• Review the current wildfire risk plan (WUI).• Evaluate the seismic potential within the district.• Report the findings from the evaluations.		
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:	

Objective 4B	Evaluate gaps between the districts capabilities and things identified in the assessment.		
Timeframe	3 months	Assigned to:	
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Document the needed fire flow and compare it to available fire flows within the water supply system.• Document areas where access and egress and evacuation problems are identified.• Report all findings for future action by the commission.		
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:	

Objective 4C	Research and coordinate with partnering agencies.		
Timeframe	3 months	Assigned to:	
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Obtain regular updates from all partner agencies.• Define the scope of all contracts.• Identify agencies to assist plans and enter into contractual agreements.• Develop and implement a plan to deal with the risks and hazards identified.• Review, approve, and adopt the plan.		
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:	

Objective 4D	Established a process for periodic review and update.		
Timeframe	4 months and ongoing	Assigned to:	
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review and update the hazard and risk assessment.• Review current capabilities assessment.• Take appropriate follow up action based on the findings in the review.		
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:	



LOS ALTOS HILLS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 2015-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

Goal 5

Maintain awareness of current and future knowledge of technologies that affect the district's mission.

Objective 5A	Identify major areas that technology affects the district - i.e. operations, finance, planning, and logistics.		
Timeframe	6 months	Assigned to:	
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate current communications. • Receive regular updates on emerging technology. • Document items in regular minutes. • Archive proposals received. 		
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:	

Objective 5B	Research the use of social media and marketing for community outreach.		
Timeframe	6 months	Assigned to:	
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect information on options available. • Research best practices. • Decide on the best option(s). • Write policies on access and use. • Determine and assign oversight of the system. • Implement the systems and maintain. 		
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:	

Objective 5C	Develop a communications plan both emergency and non-emergency.		
Timeframe	3 months	Assigned to:	
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify all potential audiences. • Identify all available methods of contact. • Identify various message contents based on emergency or non-emergency communications. • Develop and adopt a communications plan. • Implement the plan. • Evaluate the effectiveness of the plan on a regular, established basis. 		
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:	



LOS ALTOS HILLS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 2015-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

Vision

On the final day of the process, the CPSE presented the agency a vision of where it will be in the future if the strategic plan is accomplished. This vision provides a target of excellence that the agency will strive toward, as well as a basis for its goals and objectives.

Table 19: Strategic Planning Period Vision of the Los Altos Hills County Fire District

The vision of the Los Altos Hills County Fire District is that, by 2020, the district will be further recognized as a trusted leader focused on providing quality services to our community. Through the pursuit of our initiatives and with greater input from our district residents, we will demonstrate continuous improvement through cooperation and partnerships that benefit the community and exemplifies quality financial management.

We recognize the importance of greater connection to those we serve, while remaining good stewards of what our community entrusts us to manage. Our strengthened systems through plan implementation will prove our unified commitment to meet or exceed our community's expectations, while we hold one another accountable for carrying out our mission, living our values, and ensuring this vision becomes reality.

Performance Measurement

"Managing for Results"

As output measurement can be challenging, the organization must focus on the assessment of progress toward achieving improved output. Collins states, "What matters is not finding the perfect indicator, but settling upon a *consistent and intelligent* method of assessing your output results, and then tracking your trajectory with rigor."³ They must further be prepared to revisit and revise their goals, objectives, and performance measures to keep up with accomplishments and environmental changes. It has been stated that:

...successful strategic planning requires continuing review of actual accomplishments in comparison with the plan...periodic or continuous environmental scanning to assure that unforeseen developments do not sabotage the adopted plan or that emerging opportunities are not overlooked.⁴

Why Measure Performance?

It has been said that:

- *If you don't measure the results of your plan, you can't tell success from failure.*
- *If you can't see success, you can't reward it.*
- *If you can't reward success, you're probably rewarding failure.*
- *If you can't see success, you can't learn from it.*
- *If you can't recognize failure, you can't correct it.*
- *If you can demonstrate results, you can win public support.*

Reinventing Government
David Osborn and Ted Gaebler

³ Collins Good to Great and the Social Sectors. Boulder, 2009

⁴ Sorkin, Ferris and Hudak. Strategies for Cities and Counties. Public Technology, 1984.



LOS ALTOS HILLS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 2015-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

In order to establish that the LAHCFD's Strategic Plan is achieving results, performance measurement data will be implemented and integrated as part of the plan. An integrated process, known as "Managing for Results," will be utilized, based upon the following:

- The identification of strategic goals and objectives;
- The determination of resources necessary to achieve them;
- The analyzing and evaluation of performance data; and
- The use of that data to drive continuous improvement in the organization.

A "family of measures" that is typically utilized to indicate and measure performance includes the following:

- **Inputs:** Value of resource used to produce an output.
- **Outputs:** Quantity or number of units produced which are activity-oriented and measurable.
- **Efficiency:** Inputs used per output (or outputs per input).
- **Service Quality:** The degree to which customers are satisfied with a program, or how accurately or timely a service is provided.
- **Outcome:** Qualitative consequences associated with a program/service; i.e., the ultimate benefit to the customer. Outcome focuses on the ultimate "why" of providing a service.

The Success of the Strategic Plan

LAHCFD has approached its desire to develop and implement a strategic plan by asking for and receiving input from the community and members of the agency during the development stage of the planning process. The agency utilized professional guidance and the Community-Driven Strategic Planning Process to compile this document. The success of the LAHCFD's strategic plan will not depend upon implementation of the goals and their related objectives, but from support received from the appointing authority having jurisdiction and the community at-large.

Provided the community-driven strategic planning process is kept dynamic and supported by effective leadership and active participation, it will be a

"No matter how much you have achieved, you will always be merely good relative to what you can become. Greatness is an inherently dynamic process, not an end point."

Good to Great and the Social Sectors
Jim Collins

considerable opportunity to unify internal and external stakeholders through a jointly developed understanding of organizational direction; how all vested parties will work to achieve the mission, goals, and vision; and how the organization will measure and be accountable for its progress and successes.⁵

⁵ Matthews (2005). *Strategic Planning and Management for Library Managers*



LOS ALTOS HILLS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 2015-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

Glossary of Terms, Acronyms, Initialisms

For the purposes of the Community-Driven Strategic Planning, the following terms and acronyms have the meanings set forth below:

Air Evac	Aviation based emergency medical transport
CalFire	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
CERT	Community Emergency Response Team
CFAI	Commission on Fire Accreditation International
CPSE	Center for Public Safety Excellence
Customer(s)	The person or group who establishes the requirement of a process and receives or uses the outputs of that process; or the person or entity directly served by the department or agency.
Efficiency	A performance indication where inputs are measured per unit of output (or vice versa).
Environment	Circumstances and conditions that interact with and affect an organization. These can include economic, political, cultural, and physical conditions inside or outside the boundaries of the organization.
FHDA	Foothill De Anza Community College District
Input	A performance indication where the value of resources are used to produce an output.
IT/IM	Information Technology / Information Management
LAH	Los Altos Hills
LAHCFD	Los Altos Hills County Fire District
Mission	An enduring statement of purpose; the organization's reason for existence. Describes what the organization does, for whom it does it, and how it does it.
Outcome	A performance indication where qualitative consequences are associated with a program/service; i.e., the ultimate benefit to the customer.
Output	A performance indication where a quality or number of units produced is identified.
PEP	Personal Emergency Preparedness
Performance Measure	A specific measurable result for each goal and/or program that indicates achievement.
SCCFD	Santa Clara County Fire Department
Stakeholder	Any person, group, or organization that can place a claim on, or influence the organization's resources or outputs, is affected by those outputs, or has an interest in or expectation of the organization.



LOS ALTOS HILLS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 2015-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

Strategic Goal	A broad target that defines how the agency will carry out its mission over a specific period of time. An aim; the final result of action. Something to accomplish in assisting the agency to move forward.
Strategic Objective	A specific, measurable accomplishment required to realize the successful completion of a strategic goal.
Strategic Plan	A long-range planning document that defines the mission of the agency and broadly identifies how it will be accomplished, and that provides the framework for more detailed annual and operational plans.
Strategic Planning	The continuous and systematic process whereby guiding members of an organization make decisions about its future, develop the necessary procedures and operations to achieve that future, and determine how success is to be measured.
Strategy	A description of how a strategic objective will be achieved. A possibility. A plan or methodology for achieving a goal.
Vision	An idealized view of a desirable and potentially achievable future state - where or what an organization would like to be in the future.



LOS ALTOS HILLS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 2015-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

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