

WINSTON-SALEM FIRE DEPARTMENT

2023-2028 STRATEGIC PLAN





Winston-Salem Fire Department
725 N. Cherry St. Winston-Salem, N.C. 27101
CityofWSFire.org

CITY OF WINSTON-SALEM

Allen Joines, Mayor

CITY COUNCIL

Denise D. Adams, Mayor Pro Tempore, North Ward; Barbara Hanes Burke, Northeast Ward;
Robert C. Clark, West Ward; John C. Larson, South Ward; Jeff MacIntosh, Northwest Ward;
Kevin Mundy, Southwest Ward; Annette Scippio, East Ward; James Taylor, Jr., Southeast Ward

Johnnie Taylor, Interim City Manager



2023-2028 STRATEGIC PLAN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 2..... Message from the Chief
- 3..... Department Description
- 4..... Stakeholder Input
- 6..... Mission, Vision and Values
- 7..... Strengths, Weaknesses,
Opportunities and Challenges
- 10..... Department Goals



MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF



On behalf of the entire City of Winston-Salem Fire Department, I am excited to present the Department's 2023-2028 Strategic Plan. The plan, developed in accordance with guidelines contained in the Fire Service Accreditation Model, is a major step toward the pursuit of accredited agency status. The strategic planning process challenged internal and external stakeholders to be critical and straightforward in assessing the Department's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The effort helped the Department update its mission, vision, and values, and outlines the strategy for continuous improvement in all service areas for the next five years.

The plan will be reviewed and revised annually as progress is made, to account for refinements in priorities, and to reflect the latest economic forecasts. Fire service accreditation is a process, not a project, and the Fire Department has to be flexible and ready to take advantage of improvement opportunities when they present themselves.

I wish to express my sincerest appreciation to all those who have been involved in the development of this Plan, from meeting organizers, data analyzers, writers, and stakeholders. Thank you, reader, for taking the time to review the plan. Finally, thanks to members of all the Fire Department's branches, who I am certain look forward to continuing the hard work of meeting the evolving needs of customers and the community.

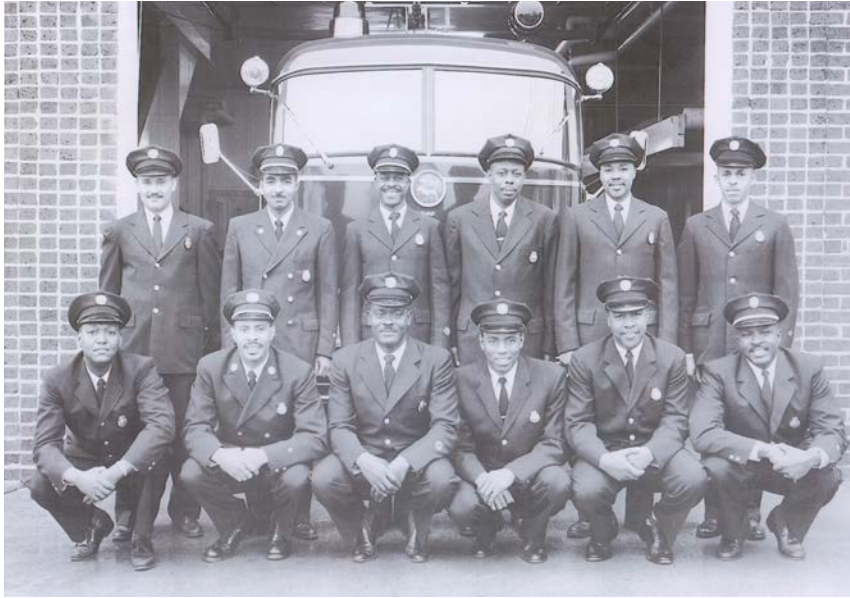
Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "W. L. Mayo, III".

W. L. Mayo, III
Fire Chief



ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION



The Winston-Salem Fire Department has a rich history filled with achievement and progress. The city of Winston-Salem story begins when two towns, Salem, founded in 1766 and Winston, established in 1849, consolidated on May 9, 1913 to become Winston-Salem.

Winston-Salem is the fifth largest city in North Carolina and the home of Wake Forest University (1834), Salem College (1772), Winston-Salem State University (1892), Forsyth Technical Community College (1960), North Carolina School of the Arts (1963), and Carolina University (1945).

The Winston-Salem Fire Department's lineage of innovation and progressiveness dates back to 1785. Throughout its history, the department has made many great historic and technological strides, from having one of the first colonial water systems to having the first paid African-American firefighters in the South. The department progression has continued to meet the dynamic changes and risks associated with our growing city. Twenty strategically located fire stations serves as the conduits for the department to deliver services throughout its response area.

Since its inception, the Winston-Salem Fire Department has aimed to provide the stakeholders of Winston-Salem with the best services for increasing property conservation and minimizing risk of life. The department remains steadfast with continuous improvement to meet the evolving needs of those who live in and visit Winston-Salem.



STAKEHOLDER INPUT

As part of the department's community outreach effort while drafting the strategic plan, the Winston-Salem Fire Department distributed and collected surveys at various events and meetings within city limits the month of June 2023. The results from the 50 surveys completed are listed below.

Stakeholder Questionnaire

1. What best describes your affiliation with the City of Winston-Salem?

- A. Resident Home-Owner: 22
 - B. Resident Renter: 24
 - C. City of WS Employee: 4
-

2. Select below which most accurately describes your expectations of Winston-Salem Fire Department personnel.

- Trained and educated: 45
 - Professional and respectful: 42
 - Caring and Compassionate: 41
 - Proactive and progressive: 40
 - Diverse and Inclusive: 36
-

3. Currently, our goal is to arrive at the address of a call for service within 9 minutes, starting when the dispatch center answers the phone and ending upon our arrival at the address of incident. Is this an acceptable time frame?

Meets expectation: 39 Needs improvement: 6 Undecided: 5

4. Prioritize the services provided by Winston-Salem Fire Department in order of importance to you using numbers (1) through (8) eight with one (1) being the most important and eight (8) being the least important.

RANKINGS:

1. Fire Suppression
2. Emergency Services
3. Technical Rescue
4. Hazardous Material Response
5. State Water Rescue Team
6. B.E.A.R. Team (Mental Health Response)
7. Public Education
8. Fire Prevention



STAKEHOLDER INPUT

5. From a SWOC analysis completed within the department, below are some of the challenges that are identified. Prioritize the challenges facing the Winston-Salem Fire Department in order of importance to you using the numbers one (1) through eight (8), with one (1) being most important and eight (8) being least important.

RANKINGS:

1. Response travel time to emergencies
2. Improving Community Services/Risk reduction
3. Being more visible in community
4. Improving youth engagement
5. Improving the fire department’s community cardiac arrest save rate.
6. Lack of training staff and facilities
7. Increasing minority recruitment
8. Improving the Department’s Insurance Services Office (ISO) score

6. What is one word that best fits Winston-Salem Fire Department?

- Great (7)
- Excellent (2)
- Competent (1)
- Dedicated (4)
- Good (2)
- Cute (1)
- Hero (4)
- Important (2)
- Fairness (1)
- Professional (3)
- Responsive (2)
- Necessary (1)
- Committed (2)
- Awesome (1)
- Needed (1)
- Competent (2)
- Caring (1)
- Number One (1)
- Dependable (2)
- Communication (1)
- Vital (1)



VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES

Vision

The Winston-Salem Fire Department strives to be a beacon of excellence in fire and emergency services, committed to safeguarding and enhancing the quality of life for the community we proudly serve.

Our vision is to be recognized as an innovative and forward-thinking fire department, dedicated to delivering exceptional emergency response, fire prevention, and community education programs. We envision a future where every resident, business, and visitor in Winston-Salem feels safe knowing that they can rely on our highly skilled and compassionate firefighters. All while fostering and growing a department that embraces diversity, fosters a culture of inclusion, and celebrates the unique strengths and perspectives of our members.

Mission

To protect life and property through data-driven decisions in the deployment and delivery of fire and emergency services and community risk reduction.

Values

Customer Service: We will deliver the best customer service to citizens and visitors to our community.

Integrity: We will maintain positive customer service, we will always do what is right, so our integrity is never questioned.

Accountability: We will promote a culture of accountability through ownership and responsibility to ourselves, our team, and the community we serve.

Professionalism: We will display and demonstrate our professionalism through training, education, and professional development of our firefighters.

Diversity: We will foster a culturally diverse environment that is inclusive and empowering in our workplace. We listen to and engage and interact with our diverse communities through educational opportunities and programs.

Teamwork: We will value the power of inclusive teamwork and opportunities afforded through creativity, efficiency, and increased sense of belonging.



STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

A SWOC analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Challenges) is a simple but useful framework for helping an organization identify build a strategic plan to meet goals and improve operations. The analysis of positive and less-than-desirable attributes (strengths and weaknesses) identifies internal factors that the Fire Department can address with its own resources. The analysis of opportunities and challenges focuses on external factors that essentially are beyond the department's control, but which could affect it nonetheless.

As part of its strategic planning effort, the Winston-Salem Fire Department conducted a SWOC analysis with both Fire Department and community members (internal and external stakeholders). All Fire Department employees participated in the internal analysis. The community analysis was conducted through a stakeholder meeting and surveys.

These complementary SWOC analyses provided a clear picture from all viewpoints of what the Winston-Salem Fire Department does and does not do well. It also identified advantages and obstacles as the department strives to improve. This essentially gives the department a roadmap in our continuous improvement process.

Significantly, community input showed that stakeholder expectations are vastly different from the department's internal expectations. This is normal and expected, and it identified additional areas that the department needs to focus on. The entire process with the community ensures that the Fire Department stays relevant and evolves with the community.



STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Strengths

- Excellent customer service
- Improved training program
- Competitive pay
- Updates to equipment
- More staff in maintenance department
- Work schedule
- Diversity
- Upgraded computers and software
- Competency in providing EMS care
- Local government retirement system
- Professionalism
- Incident Response Time
- Manpower on scene
- Career development
- Public education programs
- Good working relations with other city/county departments
- Special operations teams including Technical Rescue, Water Rescue, Hazmat

Weaknesses

- Overuse of committees
- Micromanagement
- Lack of dedicated trained department staff and facilities
- Inconsistency from one shift to another
- Young department
- Lack of officer development training internally
- Recruitment and retention
- Communication within the department
- Individual equipment request forms
- New apparatus design be improved upon
- Reactive instead of proactive
- Lack of career ladder
- Wellness program
- Incident command training
- Station maintenance
- Community involvement
- Low morale
- Poorly spec'd turnout gear
- Failure to support committee recommendations
- Clear promotional guidelines
- Age of front-line trucks
- Fire department is 2nd priority at the dispatch center
- Out of date policies and procedures



STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Opportunities

- Accreditation
- Improve ISO score
- Public relations
- Growth
- Work with local colleges to offer flip flop classes
- Grant funding opportunities
- ARFF Training
- Mutual Aid Training
- Community outreach programs
- Positively impact others in a time of need
- FEMA resource deployment
- Other Fire Departments offering Career Ladders



Challenges

- Declining economy could impact revenue
- Conflict resolution
- Acts of terrorism
- Political Pressures
- Bid process for purchasing
- Lobbyist influences negatively impact the statutes, laws, regulations and codes that provide effectiveness and that impact our capabilities
- Relationship with FCEMS
- Mutual Aid
- Technology
- Disproportionate benefits and support structures as compared to our WSPD partners
- Building construction
- Community Growth
- Lack of funding
- Other agencies can offer pay, benefits, and opportunities that reduce our recruitment capabilities and pull away our new-hires as well as our experienced personnel



DEPARTMENT GOALS

The department goals outlined in this strategic plan are the result of a four-fold process that involved Fire Department personnel at every level of the organization as well as input from our community stakeholders.

Specifically:

- Assistant chiefs provided long-range needs of their respective branches.
- The fire chief and administrative staff identified the biggest challenges facing the future of the department.
- Input from every member of the department was gathered through the internal SWOC analysis.
- A stakeholder meeting and surveys collected input as to what Winston-Salem residents want and expect from the department.

Based on this input, the department identified 12 overarching goals, along with specific objectives and critical tasks that must be accomplished to meet these goals.

GOAL 1: Through data-driven decisions, improve the delivery of suppression staff and services.

Objective 1A: Strengthen the delivery of fire suppression services. (2-4 Years)

Critical Tasks:

- Implement revisions to the officer development program.
- Revise and update standard operating guidelines.
- Revise and update the pre-fire planning operational procedure and process.
- Revise and update operational procedure for incident reporting and FireWorks software.
- Evaluate and update the acting officer program for battalion chief and captain.
- Conduct formal/documented appraisals to determine the effectiveness of the fire suppression program and its impact on meeting the department's goals and objectives.
- Implementation of Blue Card Command training for all officers.
- Identify risks outside of the scope of the department to mitigate and develop mitigation strategies.

Assigned to: Assistant Chief of Operations



DEPARTMENT GOALS

Objective 1B: Ensure effective deployment of resources and total response times. (12-18 Months)

Critical Tasks:

- Work collaboratively with Forsyth County Emergency Services Communications to reduce call processing times.
- Develop process to access accurate response data.
- Formally analyze, evaluate and document total response times for deployment annually on meeting response goals and objectives.
- Evaluate the installation of countdown times in the fire stations to include funding necessary for procurement and installation of timers.

Assigned to: Assistant Chief of Operations

GOAL 2: Provide safe, reliable, and well-placed resources to protect our community.

Objective 2A: Evaluate fleet improvements for apparatus readiness. (1-2 Years)

Critical Tasks:

- Rebuild the fire maintenance shop to a more updated working area and conditions, to include land purchase.
- Analyze the current fire department fleet data and review the current replacement plan to ensure response sustainability.

Assigned to: Assistant Chief of Logistics

Objective 2B: Enhance the support for fire stations and personnel. (12-18 Months)

Critical Tasks:

- Review and ensure a level of standardization in the equipment purchased, issued, and assigned within the Winston-Salem Fire Department.
- Turnout gear – Continue to update the process of monitoring and purchases of turnout gear.
- Work with the fire chief and establish a process and trigger mechanisms for the building of new and/or remodeling of fire stations and apparatus.

Assigned to: Assistant Chief of Logistics



DEPARTMENT GOALS

GOAL 3: Invest in diversity, equity, & inclusion (DEI) infrastructure.

Objective 3A: Create a culture of DEI awareness through ongoing DEI trainings/professional development, and internal DEI team. (6-12 Months)

Critical Tasks:

- Create a departmental survey to assist with core DEI values.
- Develop a core DEI team of all ranks.
- Send personnel to DEI conferences.
- Communicate cultural trainings to department staff.
- DEI training for senior and command staff.
- During onboarding process, new hires will have training on DEI and DEI Awareness.

Assigned to: Assistant Chief of Safety & Training Branch

GOAL 4: Ensure an inclusive work environment where all employees feel their voices, ideas, and concerns are heard and addressed, and where all employees are engaged.

Objective 4A: Build a culture of inclusion with existing and new employees. (12-18 Months)

Critical Tasks:

- Create venues for communication internally.
- Establish an anonymous idea and concern box.

Assigned to: Assistant Chief of Safety & Training Branch



DEPARTMENT GOALS

GOAL 5: Culturally inclusive recruitment partnered with DEI training with department leadership and staff addressing coaching and mentoring to increase retention of staff.

Objective 5A: Recruit and retain employees through more inclusive and culturally competent practices. (12-18 Months)

Critical Tasks:

- Reach out and recruit to established, inclusive organizations and agencies that serve under-represented demographics.
- Advertise with media that target and reach diverse groups.
- Leadership staff will attend cultural competency/DEI trainings to gain knowledge and skills for working with and supporting a diverse workgroup.
- Leadership staff will provide coaching and mentorship to ensure existing employees and new hires are receiving the support they need to be successful and to feel a sense of belonging.

Assigned to: Assistant Chief of Safety & Training Branch

GOAL 6: Deliver a higher quality of fire code enforcement through improved levels of efficiency and effectiveness.

Objective 6A: Evaluate the current processes and procedures used in fire code enforcement work, then identify gaps and opportunities for improvement. (12-18 Months)

Critical Tasks:

- Analyze the inspection and plan review workload assigned to each individual.
- Assess current staffing levels using NFPA 1730 methodologies.
- Compare current processes/resources with those used by comparable agencies.

Assigned to: Fire Marshal



DEPARTMENT GOALS

Objective 6B: Develop and implement procedural changes that address identified gaps and produce greater success in reducing community risks. (18-24 Months)

Critical Tasks:

- Adjust job assignments for Fire & Life Safety staff to obtain maximum efficiency.
- Request and fill additional positions as necessary to meet current/anticipated demand.
- Revise policies and guidelines to meet the needs of the department and customers.
- Initiate a quality assurance system of reviewing inspection reports and citations for thoroughness, compliance, and effectiveness.
- Submit revisions to city ordinances that support enhanced community risk reduction efforts.

Assigned to: Deputy Fire Marshals

Objective 6C: Evaluate and implement technological resources that increase effectiveness and streamline processes. (12-18 Months)

Critical Tasks:

- Consider the use of GIS tools to reduce travel time between inspections.
- Continue refining the department's records management system to be more user-friendly and potent in its capabilities.
- Develop a fully electronic means of issuing notices of violation/citations.
- Employ tablets and related peripheral devices for field based inspection work.
- Consider the use of automated reporting measures to ensure compliance inspections are conducted in a timely fashion, problematic locations are rapidly identified, and compliance/violation trends are readily recognizable.
- Establish improved means for reviewing permit applications and issuing permits, such as through the electronic plan review portal.

Assigned to: Fire Marshal



DEPARTMENT GOALS

GOAL 7: Make fire investigation a more effective part of the department's community risk reduction efforts.

Objective 7A: Improve the capabilities of operations staff in conducting preliminary investigations in compliance with industry standards, best practices, and statutory requirements. (12-18 Months)

Critical Tasks:

- Develop in-house training programs that teach operations staff about the basics of investigation using the scientific method.
- Provide guidance and resources (such as job aids) to be used during preliminary investigations.
- Offer shadowing programs for operations staff to obtain experience and thus qualify for investigation related certifications.

Assigned to: Deputy Fire Marshals

Objective 7B: Transition from an on-call investigator staffing model to a shift investigator staffing model so the reliability of investigation casework is increased. (12-18 Months)

Critical Tasks:

- Identify options for implementing a shift investigator model that maintain or improve the capacity to complete fire code enforcement work.
- Request and fill additional positions as needed.
- Identify and establish facilities where shift investigators may be housed.
- Supply required equipment and resources.
- Establish guidelines on the dispatching of shift investigators and the duties they will be conducting when not actively involved in investigation work.
- Implement measures to allow non-shift personnel the means to maintain their fire investigation certifications.

Assigned to: Fire Marshal



DEPARTMENT GOALS

Objective 7C: Make more effective use of fire investigation data in the risk reduction process. (3-5 Years)

Critical Tasks:

- Consider implementing alternative forms of investigation data collection, such as ATF's Bomb and Arson Tracking System (BATS).
- Identify and implement tools such as trend analysis.
- Research methods that identify common links between investigation cases, including links between cases within our jurisdiction and in neighboring jurisdictions.
- Compile case closure rates and other statistical data as part of program appraisal.

Assigned to: Deputy Fire Marshals

GOAL 8: Generate measurable reductions in loss and risk throughout the community by emphasizing and bolstering public education and community relations efforts and by making them a priority for the department.

Objective 8A: Employ outreach and educational programs that achieve defined benchmarks for community risk reduction using data from the community risk assessment. (18-24 Months)

Critical Tasks:

- Develop programs and programming schedules in line with the community risk reduction plan's intent.
- Train, qualify, and mobilize a pool of risk reduction educators and support staff.
- Compile resources, materials, and supplies.
- Use in-activity and follow-up evaluative tools to measure impact.
- Analyze changes in response trends and other datasets to assess overall effectiveness.
- Revise and refocus programs as necessary to achieve desired outcomes.

Assigned to: Community Risk Reduction Specialist



DEPARTMENT GOALS

GOAL 9: Continue to enhance Safety and Training Branch efforts to minimize preventable accidents and injuries.

Objective 9A: Work with city of Winston-Salem Employee Safety, NC Department of Labor, and operations branch to ensure safety in fire stations and other workplaces. (Ongoing)

Critical Tasks:

- Work with NC Department of Labor to continue the Safety and Health Achievement and Recognition Program (SHARP).
- Work with city of Winston-Salem Employee Safety to inspect all workplaces and address needs.
- Encourage training opportunities for safety and training officers (STO) to enhance safety officer responsibilities.

Assigned to: Assistant Chief of Safety & Training Branch

GOAL 10: Develop a fire/rescue training site within the city limits.

Objective 10A: Identify resources for the project. (6-12 Months)

Critical Tasks:

- Work with senior administration to track budget progress for the project.
- Confirm the availability of recently purchased property for the project.

Assigned to: Assistant Chief of Safety & Training Branch

Objective 10B: Develop specifications for the department training facility. (12-18 Months)

Critical Tasks:

- Solicit input from all stakeholders.
- Develop initial space planning document.
- Develop initial site plan.
- Document development/phase priorities.

Assigned to: Assistant Chief of Safety & Training Branch



DEPARTMENT GOALS

GOAL 11: Formalize training requirements and job description for Safety Training Officer (STO).

Objective 11A: Create a thorough and valid job description for the STO position. (12 Months)

Critical Tasks:

- Review the proposed job description for validity.
- Survey other metro departments for similar position's job descriptions.
- Write an updated job description and submit it for senior administration and city staff approval.

Assigned to: Assistant Chief of Safety & Training Branch

Objective 11B: Update the STO task book and create a Relief STO credential in Target Solutions. (6-12 Months)

Critical Tasks:

- Review the current task book for updating.
- Publish the updated task book as a hard copy and electronically.
- Create a relief STO credential in Target Solutions and have all captains currently approved to relieve STOs complete the credential.

Assigned to: Assistant Chief of Safety & Training Branch

GOAL 12: Develop a comprehensive but flexible annual department training plan to include staffing and budget needs.

Objective 12A: Develop an updated Annual Training Plan for the fire department. (3-6 Months)

Critical Tasks:

- Meet with subject matter experts to create a plan including a firefighter, driver, officer, EMT, specialty, wellness/fitness, and professional development needs.
- Create a plan that enhances department performance for the citizens and meets all credentialing and regulatory requirements while maximizing Insurance Services Office training credit.

Assigned to: Assistant Chief of Safety & Training Branch



DEPARTMENT GOALS

Objective 12B: Develop a 2024-2025 Safety & Training Branch budget distinct from other branches' needs. (3-6 Months)

Critical Tasks:

- Identify improvements needed for the wellness/fitness facility in the Beaty Center.
- Identify equipment needs for the Beaty Center wellness/fitness space.
- Create a plan to phase in appropriate equipment for fire stations over three budget years.
- Identify training supplies, equipment, and props to enhance training for the Operations Branch.
- Identify safety training, supplies, and equipment that will enhance safety department-wide.

Assigned to: Assistant Chief of Safety & Training Branch

Objective 12C: Develop a staffing model for the Safety & Training Branch that will improve the delivery of the assigned functions. (12-18 Months)

Critical Tasks:

- Plan for temporarily assigned personnel to ensure instructional continuity for drill ground months. (short-term)
- Create job descriptions and justify needed positions for the branch.
- Develop a model to encourage Operations Branch personnel to consider Safety & Training positions.
- Work on succession planning for critical positions- Live Burn Instructors, Technical Rescue Instructors, Station Safety Inspections, etc.

Assigned to: Assistant Chief of Safety & Training Branch





**Winston-Salem Fire Department:
Strategic Plan 2023-2028**