



# Cascade Township Fire Department





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## — Acknowledgements —

The Cascade Township Fire Department would like to acknowledge the Strategic Planning Steering Committee for its active participation in this planning process. We would also like to thank and acknowledge the citizens who contributed time, talent, and expertise to the Citizens' Input Committee process. Their energy, interest, and support were apparent and appreciated.

### **Strategic Planning Committee**

Chief Adam Magers  
Deputy Chief Todd Stevenson  
Lieutenant Andy Albright  
Firefighter Lance Korhorn  
Firefighter Austin Litchfield  
Firefighter Heather Newkirk  
Firefighter Charlie True

### **Citizen Input Committee**

Becky Spratke	Andy Biermacher
Scott VanSolkema	Scott Kingsland
Reggie Harris	Jan Folkertsma Schichtel
Brian Harris	Matt Groesser
Jeff Simon	Carol Tiemeyer
Steve Stephan	Ken Vanderkolk
Scott Vogel	



## — Executive Summary —

There are several documents that a professional fire department should develop and maintain. These docs include a set of adopted standard operating guidelines/procedures (SOGs), an annual report, a “Standard of Cover”, and a Strategic Plan.

Cascade Fire follows an extensive set of SOGs, submits an annual report, and has developed a Standard of Cover document. With the 4-year Township Board cycle starting this year, it was appropriate timing to develop a fire department strategic plan.

This strategic plan is a document that the Fire Department and Township Board of Trustees will use as a foundation or guide for the next 3-4 years. It was developed in cooperation with Township management, Township Board, fire department personnel, and citizen input. This plan consists of the following components.

- Department background
- Mission Statement
- Vision
- Guiding Principles
- SWOT Analysis (Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats)
- Citizen Input
- Goals and Objectives

This plan began in earnest starting in November of 2024 after the election process. Chief Adam Magers and Township Manager Jade Smith met consistently throughout the year to assure the timeline, objectives were met, and the process was followed.

The internal planning committee consisted of a representative from all three shifts, paid on-call, and administration. The committee established our Mission Statement: *“Cascade Fire Department is committed to protecting life and property, safeguarding our community with pride and dedication through emergency preparedness, proactive prevention and effective response.”*

It succinctly identified our vision, and highlighted our guiding principles, Professionalism, Partnership, and Preparedness. The comprehensive SWOT analysis identified the department’s strengths and weaknesses, identified numerous opportunities to explore, and several threats to be aware of.

The Citizen Input committee met several times to review the department’s operations, capabilities, budget, compliance mandates, limitations, and analyzed some short- and long-term forecasting. They provided insight and feedback on all areas covered. The citizen input committee consisted of long-term Cascade residents, business owners, and subject matter experts in related fields.



The Township Board-Public Safety Advisory Committee met several times and provided guidance and insight into this process as well.

The following goals and objectives were identified in this process:

- Professional Development and Training opportunities
- Strengthen our Community Risk Reduction program
- Increase paid on-call recruiting/retention efforts. Promote diversity
- Explore growth opportunities like BLS Transport. (Non-Emergency Ambulance)
- Emergency Weather Siren coverage
- Hotel Safety and Compliance
- Station 2 maintenance and upgrades

This plan provides a roadmap or guide for the next 3-4 years. The development of this document is only a first step. It will need to be adopted by the Township Board and used to evaluate performance and progress.





## — Background of the Department —

The department operates under the authority of the Cascade Township Board of Trustees. The Board delegates administration of the Township's affairs to its Township Manager, whom it appoints. The Fire Chief, one of eight appointed department heads, is appointed and supervised by the Township Manager.

Cascade is a Charter Township which was established in 1848. It is in Kent County, Michigan, east of the City of Grand Rapids, and comprises 35.5 square miles. The Thornapple River bisects the Township from south to north, and Interstate 96 bisects it from northwest to southeast. The Gerald R. Ford International Airport is in the southwest quadrant of the Township.

The Department staff has the following positions: Fire Chief, Deputy Chief, Fire Marshal, Inspector, three Captains, three Lieutenants, twelve Firefighters, and twelve Paid on-Call firefighters.





## — Mission Statement —

A mission statement is essential to ensure that the general theme and principles for which an organization stands are descriptive of its collective purpose. After identifying a vision of the future, critical issues, strengths, critical customer needs, important functions/services, and important tools/means of meeting customer needs, it is time to revisit the mission statement to ensure it remains an accurate reflection of the organization's vision.

The Department's existing mission was reviewed. After a discussion and consensus process, the organization identified a new department mission as follows:

### **Cascade Charter Township Fire Department Mission Statement**



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Cascade Fire Department is committed to protecting life and property, safeguarding our community with pride and dedication through emergency preparedness, proactive prevention and effective response.

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## — Department **Vision and Guiding Principles** —

In addition to knowing who it is and understanding its beliefs, a successful organization needs to define where it expects to be in the future. After having established the organization's mission, the next step is to establish a vision of what the department should be in the future. Vision statements provide targets of excellence that the organization will strive toward and provide the basis for its goals and objectives. After utilizing a consensus process, the following vision statement was developed for the department.

Establishing guiding principles embraced by all members of an organization is extremely important. All members should constantly strive to live the values.



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We are dedicated to maintaining a safe, equitable, and respectful working environment that upholds the dignity of all individuals and fosters professionalism at every level. We will strive for high levels of proficiency and the pursuit of modern progressive techniques and skills through on-going training and education.

### — **Guiding Principles** —

- **Professionalism** – As representatives of Cascade Township, we will maintain a standard of professionalism in all we do.
- **Partnership** – We value the relationships and trust we have built and maintain to achieve success in protecting our Township and its citizens.
- **Preparedness** – We understand that we do not rise to the occasion but fall to the level of our training. We must always train and prepare as if lives depend on it - because they do!



# — SWOT Analysis —

(Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)

The fire department strategic plan committee conducted an in-depth SWOT analysis this year, focusing on department strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. It is important to identify these attributes and use them as a guide when analyzing and vetting any opportunities and threats. This guide will assist with the development of lines of emphasis or goals to focus on for the plan’s timeline. In this case, through 2028.

## Organizational Strengths:

- Community Relations
- Level of Care
- Training Opportunities
- Firefighter Health and Wellness
- Leadership
- Funding
- Facilities/Equipment
- Program Compliance
- Mutual Aid
- Prevention/Investigation Team



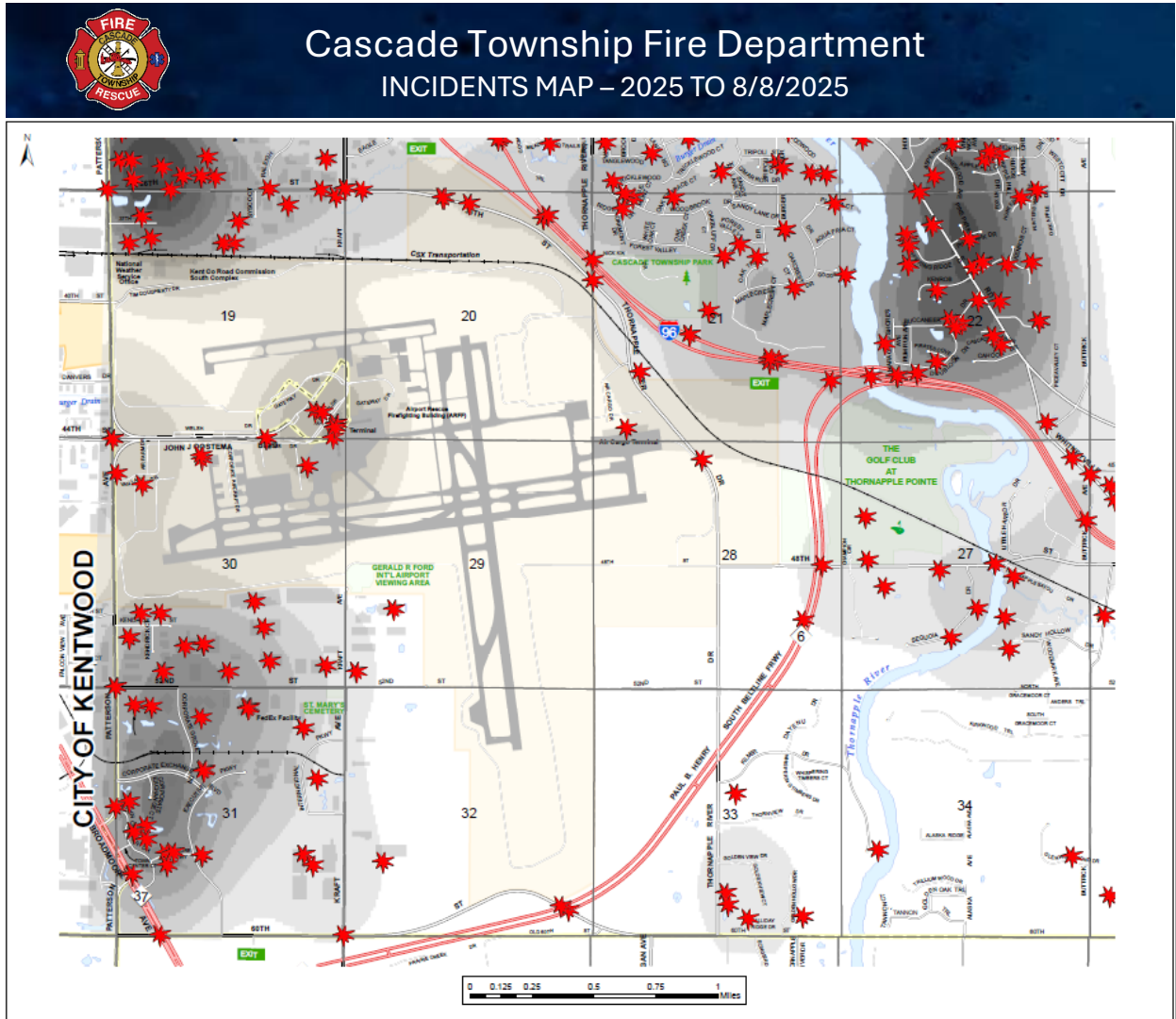
Prevention/Investigation Team  
From left to right: FF. David Lintemuth,  
DC. Todd Stevenson, FM Todd Pell, and  
Insp. Brett Boonenberg





## Organizational Weaknesses:

- Paid on-Call Firefighter Retention
- Response Coverage Southwest of Airport



- Consistency between 3 Shifts
- Monthly Training (can get stale)
- Budget vs. Cost Increase Trends
- Paid on-Call Black Helmet Certification Process (too cumbersome)
- Diversity
- Low Frequency, High Risk Emergencies (tech rescue, high rise fires, etc.)



## Organizational Opportunities:

- Personnel Professional Development
- Explore partnership with Airport Fire Dept. Combo station in Southwest
- Paid on-Call recruitment (benefits, explorer program, streamline certification)
- Training improvements (Committee, POC Black Helmet, Medical)
- Alternative financial sources (BLS Transfer, Building dept., recovery fees)
- Community Outreach, CRR
- Specialized Training (tech rescue, hazmat, ARFF)



## Organizational Threats:

- Industry wide cost increases vs. budget
- Roster turnover (retirements, retention, succession planning)
- Call volume growth
- Paid on-Call sustainability/cost
- Morale, work life balance considerations with new programs or growth
- Litigation
- Future Boards unknown support
- Essential equipment costs and availability.



## — Citizen Input Committee —

The group of citizens that came together this year and volunteered their time to help in this process were made up of long-term residents, business owners, subject matter experts, and involved community members. They met several times to review the department's operations, budget, statistics, and analyzed both long term and short-term issues that are being forecasted. Areas covered and discussed included:

- Strategic Plan Process
- Cascade Township demographics, infrastructure, growth, history
- Fire Dept overview
- Staffing
- Equipment, Apparatus
- Budget
- Current Capabilities
- Dept. Response Statistics
- Licensure, Requirements, Standards
- Coverage Areas
- Limitations, Deficiencies
- Mutual Aid
- Long Term Forecasting
- Short Term Focus



Citizen Input Committee Meeting

### Areas of Citizen Concern:

- Senior Living Facilities and Hotel emergency services demands.
- Coverage gaps on the outskirts of the Township and south of airport
- Dept lack of diversity
- Succession Planning for leadership
- Cost of Paid on-Call staff, retention issues
- Station 2 maintenance
- Apparatus hit on highway
- Safety around hotels
- Minimum staffing issues
- Too comprehensive? At risk of biting off more than we can chew.
- Mass notification for storms



## Areas of Citizen Concern: (continued)

- Non-emergency medical response
- Township growth



New - Meadow Brooke Apartment Development

## Positive Citizen Feedback:

- Excellent apparatus, Station 1
- Budget management
- Good coverage
- Community Involvement
- Leadership
- Well organized
- Forward thinking
- Small town feel, but highly capable
- Trained/prepared
- Good relationship with Board and Community
- Equipment replacement plan
- Prevention team well-staffed/trained



New Station 1 and New Engine 2





## Citizen Advice/Input:

- Explore BLS transport idea
- More community involvement
- Mass notification improvements
- Explore a 3<sup>rd</sup> station south of airport or partner with neighboring depts.
- Utilize new technology (drones/AI/etc.)
- Continuing work with Township on Hotels
- Maintain/update Station 2
- Develop succession plan for aging leadership
- Explore possible “blocker vehicle/attenuator” for highway calls
- Expand Community Risk Reduction Programs
- Explore solutions for the 4 senior facilities response demands



CPR TRAINING



Cascade Fire Department Drone Team



Forest Hills Presbyterian Preschool Class



# — Goals and Objectives —

## Line of Effort 1 – Roster Development

### Goal 1: Streamline Black Helmet process for POC

The Black Helmet probationary program was identified in the SWOT analysis as being cumbersome and inefficient for new paid on-call firefighters. The goal is to establish a structured “academy” for new firefighters. The dept will focus on revamping the Black Helmet program to include scheduled trainings with all probationary firefighters until training is completed.

### Goal 2: Officer Development Program

Firefighters wishing to be promoted in their career can benefit from the department having an organized program to help members organize and guide their professional development goals. The department’s goal is to provide clarity and a formal guide on promotional process and expectations.



### Goal 3: Training Improvements

The SWOT analysis identified that monthly department training can get “stale” or boring. Planning team also identified some weaknesses in high risk/low frequency emergencies like tech rescue that can be rectified with training. The department will focus on utilizing different instructors/methods/schedule to accomplish required training while maintaining interest and motivation.

### Goal 4: Paid on-Call Recruiting/Retention

Paid on-Call recruiting and retention issues are not unique to Cascade Fire. The dept will focus on finding improvements in this area. Opportunities include benefits, diversity promotion, revamping policies/procedures, and exploring promotion with local high schools.





## **Line of Effort 2 – Community Involvement**

### **Goal 1: Hotel Safety and Compliance**

Cascade Fire Prevention and Community Risk Reduction teams will coordinate with Township personnel and County Deputies to ensure Hotels comply with Township policies and licensing, as well as all life safety regulations.

### **Goal 2: Community Visibility**

The Fire Dept CRR Team will coordinate efforts to increase dept visibility in the community. Put programs like wellness/blood pressure checks, CPR training, extinguisher training, at the front of this effort.



## **Line of Effort 3 – Infrastructure**

### **Goal 1: Fire Station 2 maintenance**

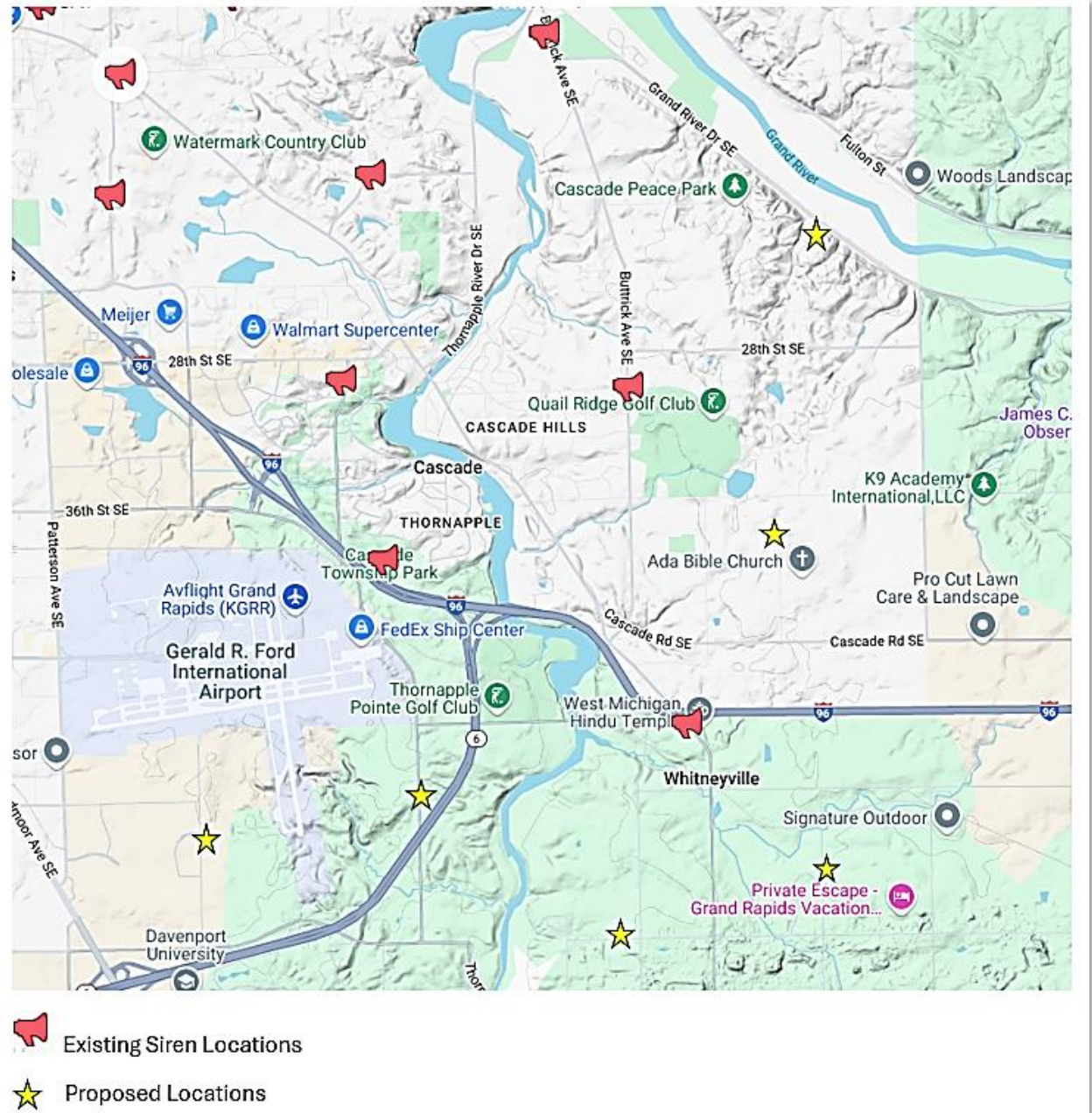
Station 2 was built in the mid-1990s and many of the original systems are at the end of their expected life. (Generator, siding, doors, etc.) Station 2 is staffed 24/7 with 2 personnel and is also used for community activities like voting, yard waste dumpsters, parks/facilities etc.





## Goal 2: Emergency Weather Siren Coverage

SWOT Analysis identified several areas in the Township that are not covered by emergency weather sirens, as well as current computer equipment at the end of useful life.



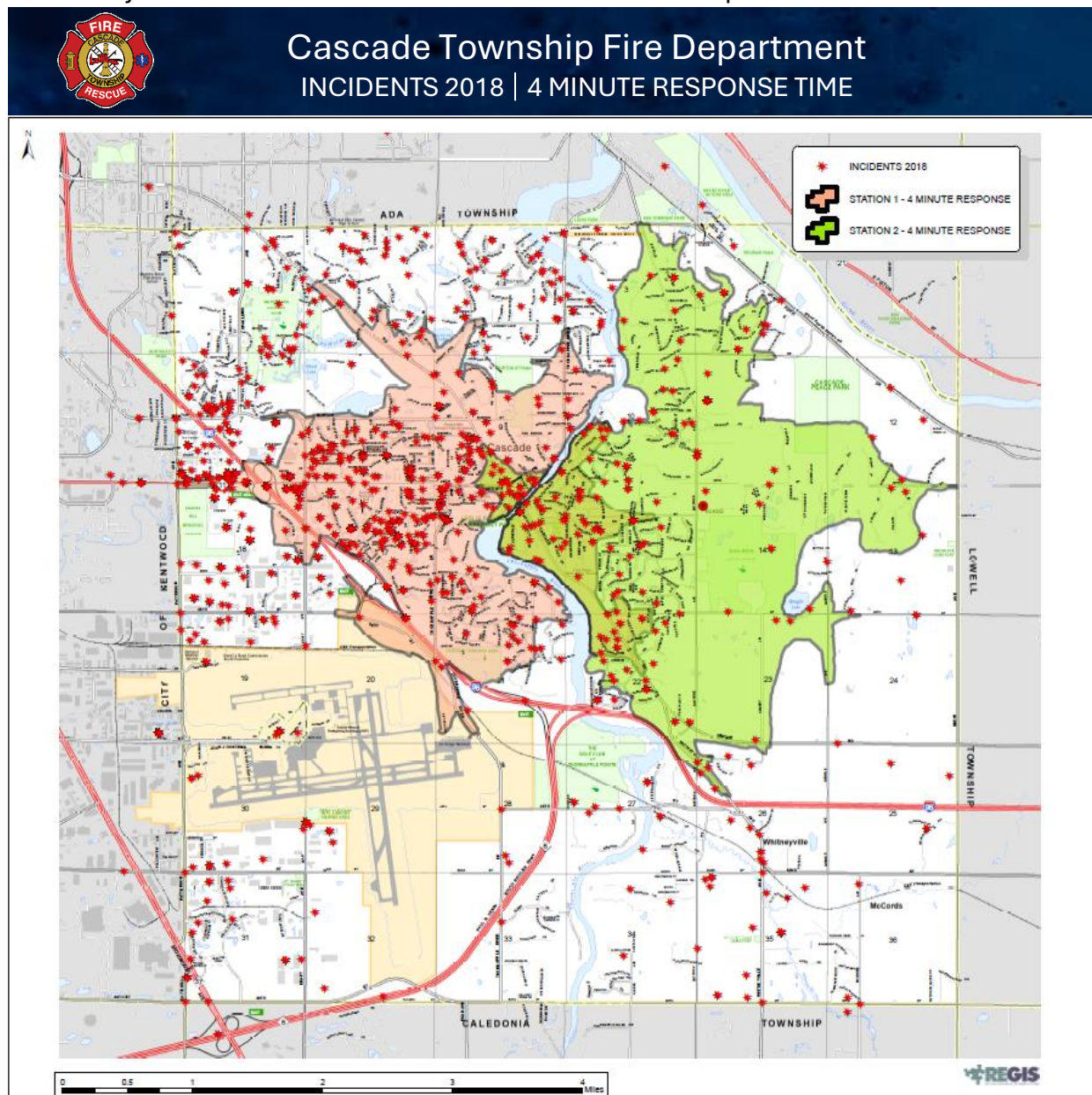


### Goal 3: Modernize and replace select gas powered equipment with battery power

Several equipment sets like jaws of life and saws are several decades old and in need of replacement. Industry is trending in battery powered versions due to cost and efficiency. Goal is to phase in these replacements over several years.

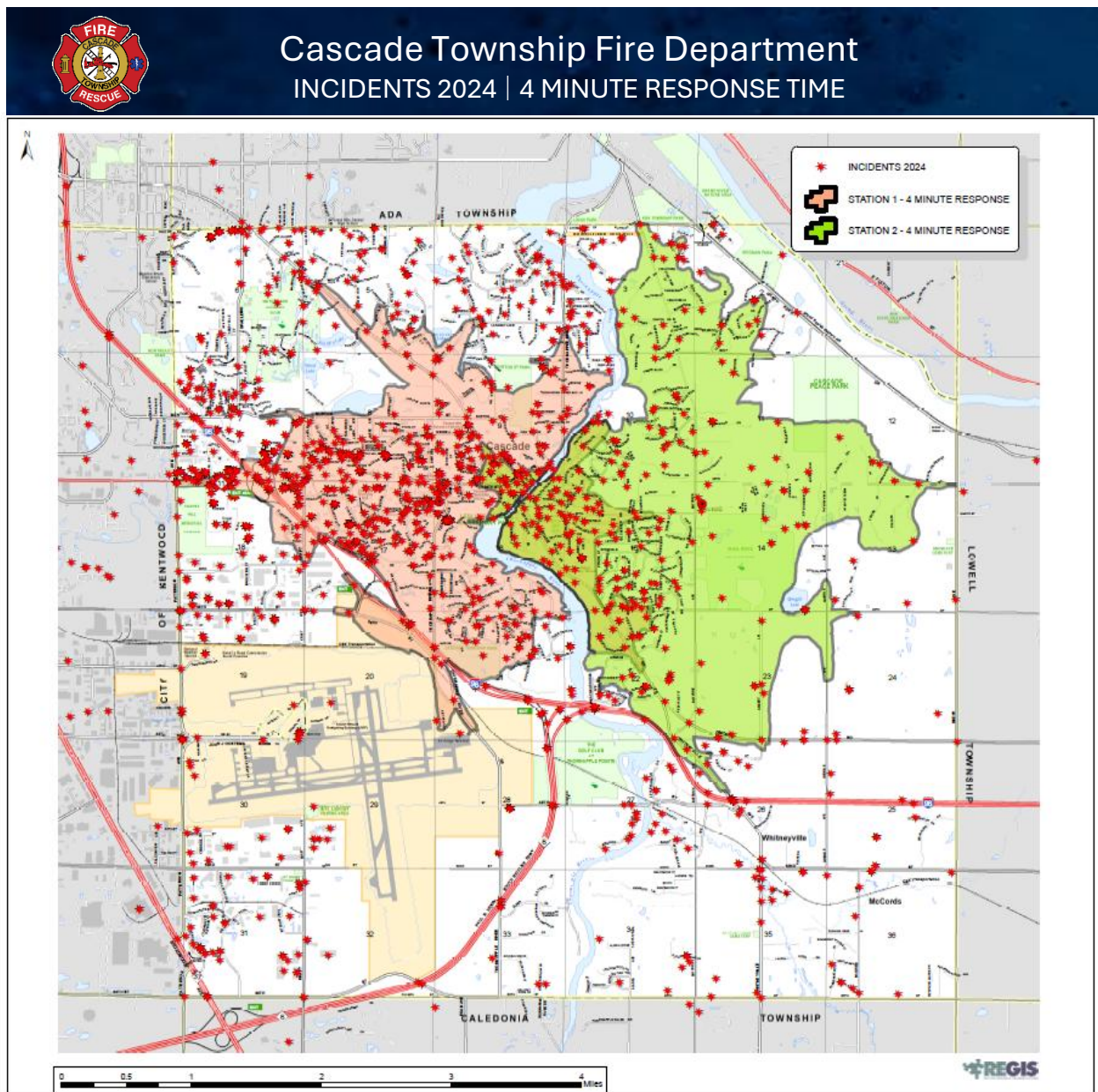
### Goal 4: Conduct Station Location Analysis

Track and analyze Township growth, and emergency call response data. Is a third fire station in the future necessary? A formal study in 3-4 years will likely be recommended before any actionable decisions are made from the township board.





### Goal 4: Conduct Station Location Analysis (continued)





## **Line of Effort 4 – Growth Opportunity**

### **Goal 1: Beta test Fire Dept BLS Ambulatory service in Cascade Twp.**

The SWOT Analysis identified that Cascade Fire operates most efficiently with 6 personnel on duty. 2 firefighters on a Medic unit, 2 firefighters on Engine 1, and 2 firefighters on Engine 2. Firefighters on PTO can drop staffing to 5 personnel on duty. Cascade Fire runs just under 1000 non-emergency medical calls yearly. Operating a BLS non-emergency transport ambulance would generate revenue to offset personnel costs to assure 6 firefighters on duty.

### **Goal 2: Maximize efficiency and explore opportunities with Township depts.**

Cascade Fire Prevention staff currently covers the Township Building Dept’s fire suppression inspections. This generates offsetting revenue to support our prevention team that consists of a Deputy Chief, Fire Marshal, and Fire Inspector. Can the Prevention Team assist the Planning/Zoning/Code compliance teams with Hotels? The assessing Team with business occupancies? The Clerks with voting? Parks and Facilities with programs?



## **CASCADE TOWNSHIP FIRE DEPARTMENT**



## *Dedicated to Serving You*

### *Station 1*

*2865 Thornhills Ave. SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49546  
616.949.1320 (Non-Emergency)*

### *Station 2*

*2990 Buttrick Ave. SE  
Ada, MI 49301  
616.259.7020 (Non-Emergency)*