

Ferndale
Fire Protection District

Municipal Service Review

January 2008



HUMBOLDT
Local Agency Formation Commission

Prepared for Development of the District Sphere of Influence Report

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LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION AUTHORITY

Latent Powers, Enabling Legislation and Empowered Services

The fundamental role of the Local Agency Formation Commission is to implement the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act (The Act) consistent with local conditions and circumstances. The Act guides LAFCo's decisions. The major goals of LAFCo as established by The Act are to:

- Encourage orderly growth and development;
- Promote orderly development;
- Discourage urban sprawl;
- Preserve open-space and prime agricultural lands by guiding minimizing resource loss;
- Exercise its authority to ensure that affected populations receive efficient services;
- Promote logical formation and boundary modifications that direct the burdens and benefits of additional growth to those local agencies that are best suited to provide services;
- Make studies and obtain and furnish information which will contribute to the logical and reasonable development of local agencies to provide for present and future needs;
- Establish priorities by assessing and balancing community service needs with financial resources available to secure and provide community services and to encourage government structures that reflect local circumstances, conditions and financial resources;
- Determine whether new or existing agencies can feasibly provide needed services in a more efficient or accountable manner and, where deemed necessary,

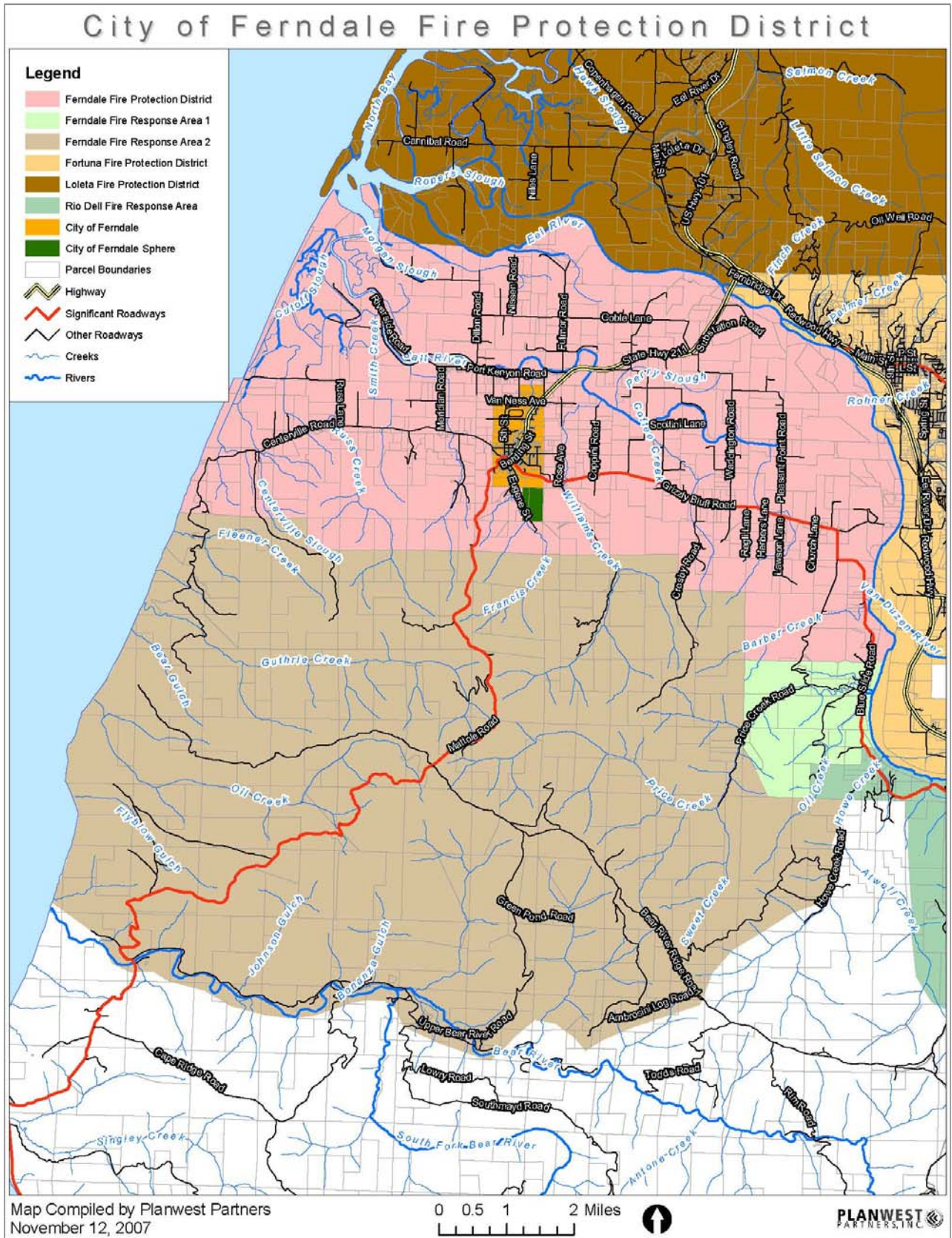
As set fourth in Section 56425 (g) of The Act, on or before January 1, 2008, and every five years thereafter, Humboldt LAFCo shall review and update each Sphere of Influence (SOI).

Additionally, an MSR shall be conducted with, or in conjunction with the action to establish or to update a SOI pursuant to The Act. Together, the SOI and MSR documents analyze the District's ability to serve existing and future residents.

In order to prepare and to update Spheres of Influence in accordance with Section 56425, Humboldt LAFCo shall conduct a service review of the municipal services provided in the Ferndale Fire Protection District (FPD). The commission shall include in the area designated for service review any other geographic area as is appropriate for an analysis of the services to be reviewed, and shall prepare a written statement of its determinations with respect to each of the following:

- (1) Infrastructure needs or deficiencies;
- (2) Growth and population projections for the affected area;
- (3) Financing constraints and opportunities;
- (4) Cost avoidance opportunities;
- (5) Opportunities for rate restructuring;
- (6) Opportunities for shared facilities;
- (7) Government structure options;
- (8) Evaluation of management efficiencies; and
- (9) Local accountability and governance.

Figure 1. Ferndale FPD Map-District Boundary and Sphere of Influence



AGENCY PROFILE

Figure 1 (above) shows the district service boundary, sphere of influence, response areas and existing boundaries and infrastructure for other service providers that are near the Ferndale FPD.

The Ferndale FPD is responsible for providing fire protection services, through the Ferndale VFD, to the City of Ferndale, and unincorporated communities of Grizzly Bluff, Arlynda Corners, Centerville, Port Kenyon, Wildcat Ridge, and the remainder of the Eel River bottoms south of the Eel River. The City of Ferndale, known as the Victorian Village, is a well known visitor destination and draws thousands of tourists during the summer months. The largest facilities within the Ferndale FPD include the commercial downtown, the Humboldt County Fairgrounds, and Ferndale's Elementary and High Schools.¹

Map 1 includes a general illustration of the District's Land use, Existing Boundaries and Infrastructure. The Ferndale FPD has a district boundary of 44.2 square miles and a total response area of 115.7 miles. Ferndale is located along Highway 101. The district's current boundaries encompass the area from the Pacific Ocean on the west to the Eel River on the north and east, and to Upper Bear River Road on the southern boarder.

The District has 12 volunteers trained for Firefighter 1 and Wildland fires, 4 first responders, 10 EMTs, and 4 volunteers trained for Hazardous Materials. Mutual Aid agreements with nearby districts allow the district to draw on nearby facilities.

The District has mutual aid agreements with similar nearby districts. These mutual aid agreements allow the districts to enter into agreements for services, including emergencies which have the potential to overwhelm the resource capabilities within a single district. This enables the district to maintain preparedness for a disaster beyond their capacity, without the need to expand and create an additional facility.

Formation

Founded in 1897, the Ferndale Volunteer Fire Department is responsible for the preservation and protection of life and property for the City of Ferndale, and the surrounding rural area. The Ferndale Fire Protection District was formed in 1934 and was subsequently reorganized under the provisions of the California Health and Safety Code in January 1964.

Current Infrastructure & Facilities

The Ferndale Fire Protection District has one fire station, to serve the entire district, located at 436 Brown Street in Ferndale, and has recently acquired an additional building across the street from the existing station to be used as storage for actively used equipment. The district currently has three engine companies, one medical company two tender, and one utility vehicle.

Water wells serving the Ferndale Fire Protection District are owned by a private water company, and within the Ferndale FPD water resources have not been identified as deficient. No major infrastructure deficiencies have been identified within the Ferndale FPD; however, County has suggested that the district is in need of additional volunteers. Fire hydrants, apparatuses and other fire equipment is periodically serviced by the Ferndale Fire Protection District.

Enabling Legislation

The Ferndale Fire Protection District is an independent single purpose special district. The District's five-member Board of Directors is elected by residents within the district.

Planned Improvements

The building across the street from the existing fire department, which has recently been acquired, will be upgraded to for storage of active equipment. The close proximity of the newly acquired building is optimal, as it serves as an extension to the existing facility.

GROWTH AND POPULATION

Demographics

According to the 2000 Census, the total population in Humboldt County was 126,518. The Building Communities Report for the Humboldt County General Plan Update includes a complete discussion of County Population Trends. According to the report: "Between 1985 and 1990, the County grew by about 8,000 people (7.3 percent), with an average annual increase of 1.4 percent." The US Census projects population growth in Humboldt County to increase to 135,600 by 2010 and 143,100 by 2025.

Because birthrates continue to fall, Humboldt County's median age is projected to rise from 36 to 41 over the next 25 years, while the median age in California is expected to remain stable at 33-34. Humboldt County's population is largely white, though one with a notable Native American population on three reservations, four Rancherias (including one in the Trinidad area), and other scattered lands. However, all minority racial and ethnic groups have been growing consistently in population share.

A total of 55,912 housing units existed in Humboldt County in 2000, with an average of 2.39 persons per household. The number of households in the county has grown 10.4 percent since 1990, compared to the population increase of 6.2 percent. Consequently, the average number of persons per household has declined 6.3 percent from 2.55 in 1980. Based on population projections, the Building Communities report projects the demand for housing units over the next 25 years to be 5,961 units in all of Humboldt County, with 3,220 units to be located in the unincorporated areas.

District Population

The 2000 Census estimated that approximately 1,388 people live within one square mile of City limits; however, the Fire District Boundary extends well beyond this radius. The last Sphere of Influence Report projected the District population to be approximately 3,100 in 2000.²

FIRE SERVICES

The active powers of the Ferndale Fire Protection District include structural fire protection and suppression, rescue, and emergency medical services. Latent powers include water supply and storage for fire suppression purposes. Other service providers within the Ferndale FPD include:

- The City of Ferndale, which provides urban-type services within a portion of the District;
- Private water companies include the Riverside Water Company, Waddington Water Works, and Del Oro Water Co. Inc, which provide potable water throughout the District.

The Ferndale Fire Protection District is an independent single-purpose special district. The District's five-member Board of Directors is elected by residents within the district.

Fire Protection Services

The Ferndale Fire Protection District has an ISO rating of 5 for urban areas and 8 for wildland areas. While the Ferndale FPD is responsible for structural fire protection and emergency medical responses, CDF retains responsibility for grass and forest fires. Ferndale FPD has joint responsibility for grass and forest fires within the District through a mutual aid agreement with CDF. There are also mutual aid agreements with the Loleta and Fortuna Fire Protection Districts.

The District received 162 calls in 2006, almost 60 percent of which were medical related. The district currently has one fire station, three engine companies, one medical company, two water tenders, and one utility vehicle. Other equipment includes about 20 self contained breathing apparatuses, 38 structural and 10 wildland personal protective equipment for the firefighters, and one thermal imaging camera. Additionally, the district has 15 radios, one GPS system, and one computer with internet.

FINANCING CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The District has the ability to maintain an ISO rating of 5, providing its residents with adequate services. The 2007/2008 approved budget demonstrates the districts balanced financial planning capabilities resulting in a positive balance of \$111,784.

Revenues and Expenditures

Revenues. The district is funded by a combination of property taxes, special assessments, and by local fundraising. Fees for the Fire Protection District are collected by the County tax auditor from district members' property taxes. Estimated revenue for the 2007/2008 approved district budget was \$138,000.

Expenditures. Major expenditures as listed in the Ferndale Fire Protection District 2007/2008 budget were workers compensation (\$15,600), wages (\$12,000), insurance (\$12,000), and equipment (\$15,000). Total Expenditures added up to \$215,000.00.

Budget

Table 1. 2007/2008 Ferndale Fire Protection District Approved Budget figures³

Beginning Balance	Revenues	Expenditures	Balance
\$197,784.00	\$138,000.00	\$224,000.00	\$111,784.00

Estimated revenue and expenditure calculations indicate that the District had a 2007/2008 approved budget balance of \$111,784. However, the district currently has two loans they are paying off: one is for the fire truck that was purchased in the past and is paid off by an assessment district, and the other is for the additional storage facility the District has recent acquired.

The District owes a balance for an E-II engine, which is paid quarterly in the amount of \$11,000 through an assessment district that is collected prior to payment. The district owes a loan balance of approximately \$23,000, which is scheduled to be paid off in the next two quarters. The assessment allows the district to repay the debt without having to withdraw funds from the adopted budget.

There is a remaining balance of approximately \$70,000 for the Nelson property, which the district has recently acquired for equipment storage; the payments for the newly acquired property are in the amount of \$600 per month.

Cost Avoidance Opportunities

The District already has a mutual aid agreement with CDF, Loleta and Fortuna, which allows services to be distributed to call areas in the most efficient manner. Current expenditures are on fire protection equipment and personnel. With a remaining budget balance of \$111,784.00, the Ferndale FPD has sufficient budgeting practices, and does not have an immediate need to reduce costs.

LOCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Contact Information

Ferndale Fire Protection District	
Contact:	Chief Rich Leonardo
Mailing Address:	PO Box 412, Ferndale, CA 95536
Site Address:	436 Brown Street, Ferndale, CA 95536
Phone Number:	786-9909
Email/ Website:	Web: www.ferndalefire.org
Types of Services:	Fire Protection and Suppression Services & Medical Response
Population Served:	Between 1,388 and 3,100 people
Size of Service Area (Acres):	44.2 square miles
Date of Formation:	1934 (Reorganized in January 1964)
Staff and Facilities	
Number of Paid Staff	None 38 Volunteer personnel

Volunteer Fire Department Board Meeting Times and Locations. The members of the Ferndale Volunteer Fire Department meet regularly at least twice a month. The first Thursday of the month the department meets at the Fire Hall to go over business matters and review the previous month's fire and medical calls. The third Thursday of the month the department holds drills on various topics such as driving, fire fighting, pump operations and medical response skills. If there is a fifth Thursday in the month, there is a special drill that concentrates on medical call issues. All meetings and drills are held at 7:00pm at the Fire Hall.⁴ This information is also available on the Ferndale Fire Department's website.

Fire Protection District Board Meeting Times and Locations: The Governing Board of district has five representatives, and meets every other even month on the fourth Thursday at the Fire Hall. Meeting times and locations are posted on the Internet at www.ferndalefire.org.

MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW DETERMINATIONS

Infrastructure

The district's fire station, engines, and other utility vehicles are all in operable condition. The district has recently acquired an additional building for equipment storage, and plans to upgrade the new facility to meet the needs of the district.

Growth and Population

The Ferndale VFPD has approximately 1,382 people within the Service District Boundary. Currently, the District has adequate infrastructure to serve the existing population. However, the Ferndale FPD could use additional volunteers increase the service capacity of the district.

Financing Constraints and Opportunities

The Ferndale VFPD has been successful at acquiring funding to provide infrastructure and equipment, which has supplemented the property tax apportionment that is allocated to the district annually. The District has a budget balance of \$111,784.00. Increasing insurance costs, equipment replacement costs, and training costs are financial constraints for the Ferndale VRPD.

Rate Restructuring

The current budget and funding mechanisms reflect a healthy fire district. Since funding constraints have not been identified, there is no need to apply a rate restructure at this time. Like Rio Dell, the District should periodically review and if necessary adjust assessments to cover capital and operating costs.

Cost Avoidance Opportunities

The Ferndale FPD conducts all of its business, meetings and training from a single facility. The District's largest expenditures are on workers compensation, insurance, and equipment. These costs are essential to the district, and are not items that can be considered for elimination.

Opportunities for Shared Facilities

With only one fire station, and a storage building, none of the existing facilities are duplicative. The district is located away from other similar districts, and is not in a position where they could share administrative facilities with a neighboring district or service provider.

The Ferndale FPD is a relatively large district, with fewer volunteers and facilities than other similar sized districts in the county. All of the District's staff is based out of a single location. Nearby Districts include Fortuna and Loleta. There are shared facilities through mutual aid agreements. There could be opportunities for expanded facility and service sharing through additional mutual aid agreements.

Government Structure Options

The district is run by a total of 38 volunteer staff members. There are no developed areas within the district that do not receive services; however, the District may extend services outside of the service area boundary to honor a mutual aid agreement with neighboring districts. Mutual Aid agreements with nearby districts allow the Ferndale FPD to draw on nearby facilities for assistance when an emergency is beyond the capacity of the district. There may be future opportunities for entering into aid agreements with a larger number of Districts and service providers.

Evaluation of Management Efficiencies

Residents within the Ferndale FPD have adequate fire protection services provided to them. Based on present and projected demand for fire protection services, the district has the ability to meet the level of demand for at least the next five years of projected growth within its boundaries. Services are distributed efficiently, no service gaps or underserved areas have been identified within the District.

Overall, the District currently functions efficiently. There are enough revenues to sustain district. The largest issue within the District includes the lack of volunteer personnel. The Ferndale VFPD should implement a program to recruit and retain additional volunteers for the district.

Local Accountability

The Ferndale FPD meets regularly, and has meeting times posted on their website. All District board meetings comply with the provisions of the Brown Act.

¹ Humboldt County General Plan Update. Community Infrastructure and Services Technical Report, Preliminary Draft, October 2007. <http://co.humboldt.ca.us/planning/gp/gpdemo/GPU-TOC-Demo3.htm#ch7>

² Sphere of Influence Report. Ferndale Fire Protection District. Humboldt County Local Agency Formation Commission. October 1984.

³ Ferndale Fire Protection District 2007/2008 Approved Budget. Mike Moreland, Tim Crinsell, Ben Liu.

⁴ Ferndale Volunteer Fire Department. About FVFD. <http://www.ferndalefire.org/about-fvfd.html>. December 2, 2007.