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## **Manhattan Fire Protection District to Sell Fire Station to Manhattan Park District**

February 15, 2023

The Manhattan Park District and Manhattan Fire Protection District are demonstrating intergovernmental cooperation to improve public safety, increase recreational opportunities, and enhance the quality of life in Manhattan through a unique intergovernmental agreement.

Through a Community Risk Assessment, and a 20-year planning process, the Manhattan Fire Protection District evaluated response data and has identified that the current location of Manhattan Fire Station 81 does not best serve the growing community of Manhattan.

“With the help of the Village of Manhattan and Will County Geographic Information Systems (GIS), we have identified during our extensive two-year planning process, that the current location of Manhattan Fire Station 81 is not in the ideal location,” said Fire Chief Steve Malone. “The area of Eastern Avenue and Smith Road would better serve our community by reducing response times in the northeastern parts of our District, while maintaining our current response time to the downtown area and eliminating the need to build multiple fire stations to achieve the same goal.”

The relocation of MFPD Station 81, the Fire Districts Administrative Headquarters, will help meet the National Fire Protection Associations’ (NFPA) Standard 1710 by ensuring that firefighters arrive on scene of an incident within 6 minutes and 20 seconds from the time of the initial call to 911, 90% of the time.

“We will continuously strive to meet the fire district's mission, which is to respond to our customers’ needs by providing fire suppression, emergency medical services, fire prevention and education and other specialized services in a safe, effective manner,” stated Chief Malone. “Through the collaborative relationship between the Fire District, School District, Village and Park District, all four organizations have worked together to better serve the community.”

Simultaneously, through a similar master planning process, the Park District was studying its own options for much-needed covered fleet and equipment storage, additional indoor program space, and administrative space to better serve the

community. The Park District and Fire Protection District began discussions on how Station 81 could better serve the community as a Park District facility. The Park District identified an approximately nine-acre underutilized parcel of Park District property contiguous to the newly purchased land that will be used for the new firehouse and will provide room for future growth. Both districts agreed to transfer that land to the Fire Protection District as part of the sale of Station 81.

Station 81 is ideally located to fulfill the Park District's vision of creating a downtown Central Park Campus of contiguous parkland including the Hansen Community Center, Gustafson Grove, and Central Park. In place of building additional new storage and fleet maintenance facilities, the Park District will now utilize an existing up-to-date public facility to house and maintain vehicles and equipment that will protect equipment from the elements. In addition, the Park District will be able to use the additional space in the fire station to increase programming and other services offered to the community.

"As the Park District continues to progress and meet the growing needs of our community, the addition of the firehouse will check a lot of boxes toward current and future needs. This, along with providing a cornerstone to the vision of the Central Park Campus, will complement the Hansen Community Center perfectly and the location couldn't be better," said Park District Executive Director Jay Kelly. While the sale will be finalized this spring, the partnering districts have agreed as part of the sale that the Fire Protection District will remain in operation in Station 81 until the new station is completed.

"I couldn't be prouder of the efforts of the Park District and Fire District staff and boards. This transaction is the perfect example of how communication, teamwork, and intergovernmental cooperation are supposed to work. With these agencies working together, both will benefit by bettering their operations and services to our community, but most importantly, lessen the financial impact to the residents," said Manhattan Park Board President Bridget Hope.

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