

Section VII: Plan for Maintaining and Improving Response Capabilities

Factors Driving the Need for Change

BFR considered the current and emerging trends that have implications for the future of emergency response. These include the following:

Aging population (more seniors) – Boulder’s population is aging, and the county population of age 60 and over is expected to nearly double by 2020. In 2008, 12 percent of Boulder County’s residents were over the age of 60. In 2020, that age group is expected to reach 21 percent.

Increase in population – The City of Boulder’s 2016 population is 108,090, with projections indicating an increase to 114,000 by 2035. This figure could be even higher as the University of Colorado - with a current enrollment of approximately 30,000 - projects an additional 11,000 students by 2030.

Increase in EMS calls – With Boulder’s population and employment projections, EMS incidents are expected to increase, particularly in areas being redeveloped. BFR experienced an increase of 11 percent in EMS calls between 2015 and 2017.

Year-round wildfire risk – As highlighted in the 2012 Fire-Rescue Master Plan, the city is surrounded by open space, which increases the risk of wildfires. Due to changes in climate, the wildfire risk has expanded from one season to all year. The city has recent experience with wildland/urban interface fires outside the historic fire season. Several of these fires have been significant events requiring intensive application of both internal and external resources.

Movement towards a more urban form – Areas of the city are becoming less suburban and more urban. In the last 10 years, 3,270 dwelling units have been constructed, and more than 5 million square feet of commercial and industrial space have been built, while not significantly expanding the city limits.

Housing Unit Density - Current trends and projections indicate that most new housing units will be in higher density multi-unit developments, and Boulder will continue to serve as a regional employment center. In some sections of the city, this creates new challenges for Fire and EMS service delivery because of impacts like increased population density, changes to street size and grid, and public areas designed for pedestrians, not large vehicles⁴⁹.

⁴⁹ City of Boulder, 2014