



**City of Riviera Beach
Fire Station 86
Frequently Asked Questions**

FAQs

September 13, 2021

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Purpose & Location

1. Why is the City trying to construct a new fire station 86?

Fire Station 86, which is on Singer Island, has reached the end of its useful life. As the City's elected officials and staff assess the needs of redeveloping many older facilities in the community, public safety facilities were also assessed to improve the health, safety, and welfare of fire-rescue personnel and improve the dispatch of public safety services throughout the community.

Fire Station 86 is in deplorable condition ([See Attachment #1](#)). In years past, it was temporarily vacated by fire rescue personnel due to water damage and the appearance of mold and mildew. Hundreds of thousands of dollars were spent repairing many of the facility's issues, but these efforts are not a final solution. The fire station was built in the 1970s and is in a constant state of disrepair. The City seeks to replace Fire Station 86 with a state-of-the-art facility to maintain service continuity and improve emergency service delivery.

2. Where is the current fire station located and where is the proposed location for it?

The current fire station is located at 5010 N. Ocean Drive. The proposed location is on S. Ocean Avenue, north of the Ocean Walk ([See Attachment #2](#)).

3. Has a final decision been reached for this proposed plan?

No. At this moment, City staff is engaging the community and collecting feedback on this proposal. We are still considering all possible options. After compiling feedback, it will be presented to the City Council at the September 15, 2021 City Council Meeting, so the Board could provide City staff with the direction of how it wishes to proceed.

City Park & Amenities

4. Is the City partnering with private investors to sell all or a portion of the park?

No, the City does not intend to sell the park in any way. Pursuant to the City Charter Article VII. Section 2, the City cannot sell, lease, or rent the property.

5. What are the environmental impacts of the new fire station and park redevelopment in relationship to the ecosystem (the beach, waterways, etc.)?

The proposed project will not have a negative impact on the ecosystem or natural systems. The location being redeveloped is already disturbed and is mostly impervious. As part of the site plan approval process, the City Council will review the proposed landscape plan as well as the plan for the infrastructure (building, utilities, etc.). There will be no impact to the beach from the development of Fire Station 86 if it is built at the proposed site.

6. How will the development impact park amenities?

Park amenities will remain and we will upgrade them with additional amenities on the site. For instance, we will relocate the existing tennis courts and the tot lot to the south end of the park and add two new pickleball courts near the tennis courts. Additionally, there will be restrooms, picnic shelters, and other changes to existing structures to improve aesthetics. We intend to have these adjustments completed and ready to use before or when the station is complete, if this site is selected. Furthermore, the lifeguard building, east of the open sands area, will be renovated and will house the Community Redevelopment Agency's Ambassadors. Ambassadors assist with beautifying the ocean walk, greeting guests, and work alongside law enforcement to provide an additional layer of safety and security. To view the conceptual layout of the proposed site, [See Attachment #2](#).

Placement & Property Value

7. Will the placement of the fire station at the proposed location decrease the value of nearby properties?

The City consulted with the Palm Beach County (PBC) Property Appraiser's Office and based on their experience, they have stated that they do not believe that the fire station will have a negative impact on market values for surrounding properties – rather it may slightly increase the market values and possibly have a positive impact on reducing insurance premiums. In addition, the City engaged a third party entity named Anderson & Carr, Inc., that completed an independent Impact Study on the market value to The Ritz-Carlton Residences ([See Attachment #3](#)). The conclusion of the study is that the fire station will not have a negative impact on market values for The Ritz-Carlton Residences.

8. Why can't the new station be built on the site of the existing station?

The size of the existing parcel does not accommodate the current standards to develop the necessary improvements for a new fire station. In addition, the principal issue that poses the greatest challenge to building a station on the current site is the flood plain. Anything built at the current site must meet development regulations as it relates to the flood plain. The existing site was constructed in the 1970s, and the current elevation, climate, and sea levels pose a challenge to providing fire suppression services and emergency medical services in the 21st century. Due to this issue, the existing fire station experiences flooding where water has entered the building on many occasions, especially during king tides. The building, ramps, and entrances would have to be raised one foot above the expected flooding level to meet development regulations. Unfortunately, the existing parcel is too small to make these adjustments.

9. **What about expanding the current site into the surrounding properties to create more room?**

The surrounding properties are wetlands, which are protected areas that are not ideal and it is a costly and sensitive proposition.

10. **Will the City consider using eminent domain to acquire property for the construction of Fire Station 86?**

Eminent domain is the power of the United States government, states, and municipalities to take private property for public use, following the payment of just compensation. In light of this, it is also an expensive and lengthy legal process. In addition, if the City was granted eminent domain, there would be an additional expense of acquiring the property at market value, which can be dramatically high given the current real estate trend in Florida, especially in a coastal community. Eminent domain is the least preferred method for any public agency due to the challenges that it poses. The City intends to assess land options that are feasible and most reasonable under current economic conditions, public safety needs, local and state regulations, and other factors.

11. **Does building the Fire Station at the proposed site violate the City's zoning regulations and city charter as it relates to the use of the property and the potential prohibition of building a fire station there?**

City Charter, Article VII., Section 2, titled Municipal Beach Area, is the provision of the Charter that states the following: *"That portion of the property known as the "Sand Beach and Swimming Area" and more particularly described as follows: Commencing at the point of intersection of the north line of lot 384 and the southerly projection of the centerline of State Road No. 703, according to the plat of Palm Beach Shores, recorded in Plat Book 23, page 30, Public Records of Palm Beach County, Florida; thence east along the north line of lots 383, 382, 381, 380 and 379, a distance of 458.27 feet to the point of beginning and the southwest corner of the herein described parcel of land; thence north 0° 47' 40" east along a line a distance of 999.05 feet, to a point of intersection with the north line of Palm Beach Shores extended easterly; thence east along said north line of Palm Beach Shores extended easterly to the waters of the Atlantic Ocean; thence southerly, meandering the waters of the Atlantic Ocean, to a point of intersection with the north line of lot 631, Palm Beach Shores; thence west along the north line of said lot 631 and its westerly extension to the point of beginning.*

The bearings used in this description are assumed. They shall be reserved for and perpetually used as a municipal beach and shall not be sold, leased, or rented."

Explanation: "They" means the "Sand and Beach Swimming Area." The City is not "selling, leasing, or renting" this area. This leaves the question of the permitted uses for the

"municipal beach" and/or the "Sand and Beach Swimming Area." The Charter defines the boundaries in this section but not the usage. They are undefined terms in the Charter as it relates to usage. Therefore, nothing in the Charter prohibits or authorizes the placement of a fire station on the tennis court parcel. **Zoning:** The zoning supports the use of placing a fire station in the proposed area. The property is zoned as Community Facilities. The uses permitted in the Community Facility District include municipal services and accessory buildings and structures, including but not limited to: fire stations, police stations, libraries, and municipally owned and operated parks and recreation areas. The purpose of the charter provision is to make sure the beach remains for the citizens and does not fall into private hands or private use. Currently, the parcel contains municipal owned and operated recreation areas; a municipal service building, such as the lifeguard stations; and other ancillary services. A fire station provides emergency medical responses and treatment (i.e., health, safety, and welfare of beachgoers) and is consistent with a municipal beach use.

12. Would the need for the fire station at the proposed site be necessary since a Palm Beach Shores fire station is located in that region?

The City of Riviera Beach does not receive municipal services from the Town of Palm Beach Shores, including Fire Rescue Services. The City is fully responsible for providing such services to its residents.

13. Were other properties considered/assessed?

Yes, the City has embarked on an exhaustive search since 2018, immediately after the existing fire station was closed due to water intrusion and appearance of mold and mildew. When considering opportunities on North Ocean Drive, there are not many viable options left that meet the needs of a new fire station except for the proposed site. The proposed site is City-owned and would remove the additional cost of land acquisition, projected to be anywhere between \$3 million-\$10 million. Using City-owned property will allow us to be fiscally prudent by using funds strictly towards construction so that it contains all necessary elements that will make it a state-of-the-art facility.

The City looked at the following areas:

- a. **The PNC Bank:** this parcel does not have enough space to accommodate a new fire station. To add more room, we would have to attempt purchasing the residential properties around it. Previously, the site had a purchase price of \$3 million-\$5 million, but now it is acquired and the seller wants \$10 million.
- b. **2525 Lake Drive:** The owner is asking for \$20 million. That is an exorbitant sum of money. However we are in a seller's market whereby costs to purchase properties have increased significantly since the COVID-19 pandemic began. In addition to the purchase cost, the City would have to spend additional funds for the

development of a new fire station on that property, which will increase the final construction costs significantly.

- c. **Palm Beach County Parks on Singer Island:** All county parks (such as Phil Foster Park and Ocean Reef Park) are county-owned and operated. The City would have to receive permission to build a station on those sites. At this moment, we believe that consent is highly unlikely since the new fire station would take away parking spaces on those sites. County ordinances obligate the County to maintain sufficient parking for its parks.

Finance

14. Why have we decided to borrow money to fund the fire station instead of using tax revenue?

The City operates on a year-to-year basis. Each year, raised funds are to fund only the current year's operations. As such, the City's annual property tax assessment (ad valorem) and other non-tax revenues are in an amount equal to one year of operations. Funding for future years occurs in the future budget years. Therefore, what the City receives, it spends. Suppose there are remaining funds after a fiscal year. In that case, it is available for re-appropriation into a future fiscal year (FY) budget. The City does have reserves, but not to a level necessary to fund a \$15 million fire station, hence, the need to borrow.

Borrowing for large capital projects is typical for government entities to spread costs across generations of those who benefit from the project. Therefore, the City issued Public Improvement Revenues Bonds, Series 2021, through a competitive process. The City accepted bids on August 26, 2021, and received twelve competitive bids. The lowest True Interest Cost was the bid offered by KeyBanc Capital Markets at 1.994069%. The bond structure defers the first debt service payment until FY 2024. It includes the provision of capitalizing interest during the construction period. Annual debt service will be just shy of \$2.3 million beginning in FY 2024 and continuing through FY 2042.

Security for the bonds consists of all non-ad valorem revenue received by the City's General Fund. Most municipalities raise property taxes to fund capital projects; however, the City did not take that path. The City is using zero property taxes for the construction of two fire stations, which are station 88 and 86. The City believes and continues to pursue what it finds to be a more equitable methodology to fund the Fire Department's capital needs. Therefore, the City has studied the implementation of a Fire Assessment Fee since 2011. The Fire Assessment Fee means that all properties of a like or similar nature pay the same rate, and property value is not a determining factor in establishing the annual rate. The process of implementing the fee will begin in the first or second quarter of 2022.

Noise

15. How will noise be managed?

The Fire Department will implement a silent response technique whereby the sirens and audible devices will not be activated until it reaches the intersection of N. Ocean Drive after exiting N. Ocean Avenue. In addition, during certain hours of the day, such as midnight - 2:00 a.m. when traffic is not present, and as long as the traffic light is green, sirens will not be activated as fire trucks travel through N. Ocean Drive. The Fire Department currently does this as a courteous gesture for the community and will continue this at the proposed site. Lastly, the Fire Department will look to implement other noise reduction alternatives for equipment, such as battery-powered chain saws.

Traffic Issues & Pedestrian Safety

16. How will you manage traffic, the departure of fire trucks, and pedestrian safety?

The City engaged the Palm Beach County Traffic Division, the Florida Department of Transportation, and the City Engineer to determine the best course of action to address traffic issues. Therefore, arm gates and a preemption lighting system will be installed along Ocean Avenue Road and at the intersection of N. Ocean Avenue. It will warn pedestrians and drivers when a fire truck will soon depart and temporarily block off traffic to allow for a clean flow of movement.

Impact on Service Delivery/Performance

17. How will the relocation of the fire station affect response time?

If the fire station is constructed at the proposed site, the response time will improve significantly. Currently, the southern section of the island experiences a higher call volume than the northern area. Therefore, the existing station is not optimal for response time since it is located north of the island. Please [See Attachment #4](#) to understand the difference in response between the north and south stations. One of the highest priorities of the Fire Department is to shave off as many seconds on the response time to save as many lives as possible.