

## COMMUNITY SERVICES, PUBLIC SAFETY

Community facilities include those buildings that house essential governmental functions like utilities, public works, municipal court, the police department, fire department and the City Hall, as well as those that enhance the Community's quality of life such as recreational centers, public libraries, pools, and other public spaces. Such facilities provide space for key governmental functions for public safety and service provision, but also serve to enhance the quality of life and sense of civic pride for a community. When located together in a "civic center," they can provide a focal point that enhances the sense of community. The City of Falfurrias has historically not enjoyed such a focal point, although the consolidation of the Municipal Building and the Public Works Building represents key first steps. Located at 625 N. St. Mary's, these departments represent a nucleus to support other community facilities. The Town Core identified in the Master Plan calls for a centralized City Hall where all departments are in a single facility. Partnering with other entities and co-locating facilities when feasible is a strategy that may increase accessibility to public facilities and services.

Furthermore, leveraging technology to provide access through the internet would also increase accessibility to key services.

### EDUCATION

INSERT INFORMATION ON QUALITY OF K-12 EDUCATION SYSTEM.

### PUBLIC LIBRARY, CONFERENCE CENTER, RECREATION CENTER AND POOL

An integral part of the community is the Ed Rachel Golf Course. The Club underwent an extensive renovation in 1996 (City of Falfurrias, 2010). It is under the authority of the City, in partnership with the Falfurrias Golfer's Association (FGOA). The golf course was funded by the Ed Rachal Foundation and was deeded to the City. The FGOA provides much needed volunteer hours that minimize the operational costs for the golf course. The 9-hole golf course operates in a sustainable fashion. The need for capital improvements has been expressed by the FGOA.

At this time, the City does not have a public pool, or recreational facilities for the general public. The City is considering plans to re-develop such public amenities as they are important in supporting an increased quality of life. Proximity to the City Center area should be set considered to locate such facilities. This will help to create a town core and provide a focal point for the community. These projects are to be included in the long-term Capital Improvements Plan.

The standard for planning public facilities is based on projecting the service population (proportion of resident and non-resident population using the facilities) 20 years into the future. An outdoor pool and associated facilities would require an estimated 1.3 acres while a typical municipal indoor pool would need slightly more

acreage at approximately 1.85 acres. A Community Center of approximately 40,000 square feet would require just under an acre, while a larger recreation center of 80,000 square feet would require approximately 1.85 acres. Co-locating these facilities could reduce space requirements for parking, utility easements, and other similar on-site functional areas as well as providing a community destination point. Detailed planning would be required for all such facilities.

## POLICE DEPARTMENT

The City of Falfurrias police department currently employs 22 sworn police officer positions and two civilian positions. They have jurisdiction over the City of Falfurrias. Between 2006 and 2013, City of Falfurrias nearly doubled its law enforcement staff from 10 to 19, with 17 of the 19 employees serving as police officers. At approximately 1.26 officers per 1,000 citizens, the size of the City's force is much smaller than the Texas state average of 2.17 officers per 1,000 citizens. However, the crime index for City of Falfurrias (as of 2004) is 134.8—substantially smaller than that of the U.S. national average of 319.2 (City-Data.com, 2010). The City of Falfurrias Police Department currently resides in the public safety facility on Allen Street. This building was most recently shared with the City administration offices. However, the need for space prompted the City to temporarily relocate to the Public Works building. The utilities department continues to share the building with the police department but plans are being made for the centralizing City operations allowing for the building to be purposed solely for public safety.

The City's goals are to have citizen's voice satisfaction with public safety services and an increased sense of security and safety. A desire for increased security lighting in public parks is also an objective of public safety in addition to neighborhoods that may be significantly under-lighted. The population for Falfurrias is not expected to grow in its 20 year forecast. However, if the population increases additional police officers, support staff, and equipment will be required to support the same level of service.

## FIRE DEPARTMENT

The local fire department falls under the jurisdiction of the Falfurrias Volunteer Fire Department, with a station located within City of Falfurrias on Lasater Ave. They currently operate out of one fire station, but have plans to build a new fire station. Property was donated to the Falfurrias Volunteer Fire Department in late 2013 on South St. Mary's Street by a commercial mortgage broker where plans once existed for a McDonald's. This donation will facilitate the development of the new fire station by eliminating the need for land acquisition. The Fire Department has plans to apply for grant funding with the support of City and County officials.

The fire department is staffed on an entirely volunteer basis (City of Falfurrias Fire Department, 2010).

The national rating system for classifying a community's level of service for insurance rating purposes is known as the Public Protection Classification system. In 1998, the State of Texas adopted this system in lieu of the former "key rating" system. The Insurance Service Office (ISO) evaluates key community characteristics such

as water distribution system; fire department station location, equipment and manpower; communication system; fire alarm facilities; and enforcement of building and fire codes. Based on statistical analysis of fire mitigation capacity resulting from public investments, a rating of 1-10 is determined for most communities, with a rating of 1 indicating superior fire protection. The City's ISO current rating is 5/9 meaning that the fire damage mitigation is rated as a 5 in some areas and a 9 in areas without available fire hydrants. Individual properties may achieve different ISO ratings based on their on-site fire protection investments. As commercial and higher density mixed use development occurs within the City, careful attention to key fire protection service elements such as hydrant placement and water distribution system storage and pressure should be addressed. Ideally, fire stations with response capabilities are located within 5 miles of developed areas. A key consideration for businesses as they evaluate potential sites is fire protection. As part of its overall economic development and public safety strategies, the City should continue to coordinate with the district to ensure that satellite stations are built as part of a long-term fire protection and station expansion plan.

The City of Falfurrias Utilities intends to collaborate closely with the Falfurrias Volunteer Fire Department on mapping fire hydrants using Geographic Information System (GIS) technology. Improving the City's ISO rating is a major factor in lowering the home insurance costs for citizens of Falfurrias.

## EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

Emergency Medical Services are provided to the City through Brooks County. Currently, the City has no plans to provide such services directly, but will continue to coordinate with the district to ensure adequate service provision as the community grows.