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Tribune

EAST VALLEY • SCOTTSDALE

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Mesa plans for lifesaving fire stations

By Mike Sakal
Tribune



SUBMITTED PHOTO



Mesa City Councilman Scott Somers, left, and Mesa Fire Department Deputy Chief Mike Dunn stand in the vacant lot on the southwest corner of Main and 58th streets in Mesa, which will be the site for a new fire station.

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In an effort to improve emergency response times in parts of east Mesa that are more than twice as long as the national average, the fire department plans to relocate an existing fire station and build two new ones.

Construction of a \$7.1 million station at Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport is scheduled to begin in July. The groundbreaking for a station on the northeast corner of Signal Butte and Elliot roads is scheduled for September, and a new station planned for Main and 58th streets would be completed by 2010. The city also is planning to build a station near Mesa Riverview on the city's west side at Alma School Road and Eighth Street, with groundbreaking this month.

Financing for the three east Mesa stations was made possible in November when voters passed two bond issues that provide \$170 million for public safety and street projects, including \$58.3 million for 11 projects benefiting the police and fire departments.

The station at Main and 58th streets in the southeast part of the city also would be built with the help of federal stimulus money, said Mesa City Councilman Scott Somers. That station is estimated to cost \$2.8 million. The price comes with a significant savings of up to 60 percent thanks to a recession that has brought down construction

costs in the bidding process, said Somers, who also is a Mesa firefighter.

The station is badly needed because it would serve the areas around Banner Baywood Medical Center, nursing homes near the hospital and retirement neighborhoods, including Sunland Village, Somers said.

“There’s a large hole out there that’s not being covered,” he said. “Our goal is to reduce response times. By building a station out there, it will definitely save lives and property.”

The national standard to respond to a fire or emergency is four to six minutes 90 percent of the time, which is recommended by the National Fire Protection Association. The size of a fire doubles nearly every minute, and irreversible brain damage begins after about seven minutes, Somers said.

Gary Bradbury, assistant Mesa fire chief, said that the city’s average response time is four minutes about 60 percent of the time, but in the area of Signal Butte and Elliot, response times are four minutes only 40 percent of the time.

“Hopefully, by building these stations, this will get our response times up to four minutes about 50 to 60 percent of the time. Right now, we’re about five stations behind where we need to be.”

As a councilman, Somers serves District 6, which covers a large swath of east and southeast Mesa. In the area where the station at Signal Butte and Elliot will be built, emergency response times can be as long as 10 minutes, according to Somers. The emergency response times in the area of 58th and Main are running about six to eight minutes, he said.

“I’ve been pushing for (the station at Signal Butte and Elliot) since I’ve been in office,” Somers said. “We’re getting the project moving faster.”

Construction on the Signal Butte station originally had not been planned to begin until early next year.


The station at Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport, which is currently at Sossaman Road and Texas Avenue, will be relocated to 63535 Cargo Way, closer to the control tower. The new station will replace an existing one built in the early 1950s and will serve the airport, Arizona State University’s nearby facilities and residential areas outside the airport, Bradbury said.

That station also will have longer bay areas, fire prevention offices and battalion chief offices, he said.

“These stations are way overdue,” Bradbury said.

Planned Mesa fire stations



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