



# Frequently Asked Questions

## Proposed North Acton Fire Station August 2019

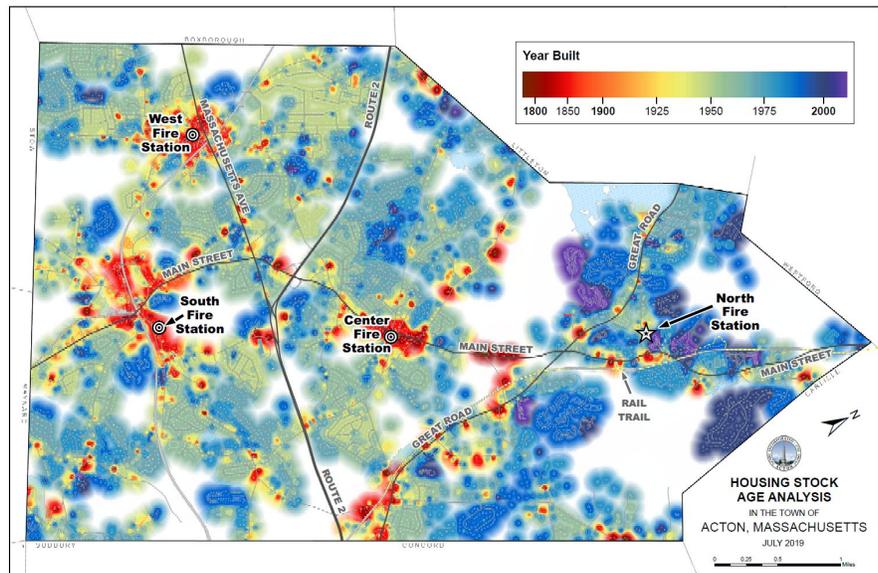
### Where is the proposed fire station site?

The proposed site is 66-68 Harris Street which is the former Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife office. This site was chosen due its centralized location within the North Acton district and because it is a property already owned by the town.

### Why do we need to build a North Acton Fire Station?

North Acton is faced with extended response times as a result of our current fire station locations.

The town has recognized the need for a station in North Acton since the 1970's. As shown in the map, titled Housing Stock Age Analysis dated July 2019 much of the recent growth in residential population has occurred in North Acton.



### What is the expected construction timeline?

With a successful vote at a Special Town Meeting and Special Town Election scheduled for December 2019, the project will break ground in early summer of 2020. It is estimated the project will take approximately 14 months to complete and will open in late summer/early fall 2021.

### What are the sustainability goals for the project?

A sustainability goal of Net Zero or Net Zero Ready is being sought. Mechanical systems designed for the new station are being evaluated in order to assess initial and life-cycle costs and sustainability. It is also a goal of the design team to construct a new station without connecting the property to natural gas.

### What is the potential taxpayer impact?

The final cost estimates will be presented this fall leading up to the Special Town Meeting scheduled for December 10, 2019. The proposed financing plan for this project is borrow long-term and to seek a debt exclusion vote to pay for the debt. This requires a Town Meeting approval and then a ballot vote approval at the Special Town Election scheduled for December 17, 2019. The preliminary estimates of taxpayer impact which are subject to change reflect a tax increase of between \$65 and \$85 for an average single family home in Acton.

**Has the cost estimate for the proposed fire station increased since the design for the project as approved in April of 2018?**

Yes. Our findings thus far are that construction costs continue to go up due to the busy construction environment, and a good economy. This requires us to include additional escalation costs to cover us into the bid cycle, which we are expecting to be in spring of 2020. We are also attempting to design the building in accordance with Acton’s Environmental Sustainability Policy which was not adopted when the project was initially envisioned. We are planning to present the preliminary construction cost estimate during the week of September 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Have any cost cutting measures been taken so far?**

We have committed to a single story structure saving the construction and maintenance costs associated with an elevator. Initially we envisioned approximately 2,000 square feet of central administration space. To reduce the cost of the project this portion of the building was removed.

**How many garage bays will there be? What will the exterior design look like?**

The design includes three garage bays. The exterior design was developed in collaboration with the Design Review Board and based on feedback received during multiple public forums and Board of Selectmen meetings. The Design Review Board submitted comments on the preferred design scheme which may be viewed on the project website.



**What are the environmental constraints of the site?**

The current site design will meet the requirements of the Massachusetts Wetland Protection Act and the Town of Acton Wetland Protection Bylaw.

**What happens if the project is not approved?**

The Town will continue to have longer than recommended fire and ambulance response times in North Acton. As determined by multiple studies, a North Acton Fire Station would reduce response times to North Acton residents. The most recent study conducted by Municipal Resources Inc. is available to be viewed online at <http://www.actonma.gov/firestation>

**How will the new fire station impact the wild animals of the Harris Street area?**

Acton Natural Resources Director, Tom Tidman states: The natural habitat at 68 Harris Street with the greatest value for wildlife would be the bordering vegetated wetlands and adjacent buffer zone. The “draft” fire station design I have seen protects all of the on-site wetlands and a significant portion of the associated buffer zone habitat. In post-development these natural travel corridors for larger mammals essentially remain intact.

**Harris Street is narrow and winding at some points. Will the fire apparatus be able to navigate the street safely?**

Yes. Our fire apparatus frequently travel up and down Harris Street and on many other much narrower windier roads without any issues. A traffic study will be conducted as part of the fire station design process to identify any potential traffic concerns on Harris Street related to the construction of the fire station.

**Will we have to buy new fire trucks for this new station?**

No. Existing fire trucks will be repositioned to this new station.

**Will we have to hire more firefighters to staff the new station?**

No. Existing fire personnel will be reassigned from other stations to staff this new station. The Fire Department has expressed a need to increase staffing but it will not be necessary to hire more firefighters to staff this new station.

**How may I find answers to additional questions that were not answered here?**

If you have any questions or comments, please email the [manager@actonma.gov](mailto:manager@actonma.gov) or you can fill out the online comment form on located on the [North Acton Fire Station Project web page](#).