

October 14, 2025

Variance Justification – Brookings Main Fire Station Replacement

Background

The effort to replace the Brookings Main Fire Station began several years ago as part of a joint facility concept with the Police Department. Over the course of this planning process, as many as seventeen (17) potential locations were evaluated. None of these sites proved suitable for a combined facility due to operational, logistical, and site constraints. Ultimately, it was determined that the Fire Station and Police Station projects should proceed independently as separate facilities.

Need for Variance

The need for a variance stems from the unique operational and geographic requirements of a fire station. To maintain the emergency response coverage currently provided to the northwestern portion of Brookings, the new station must remain within a small, defined area. Relocating the facility any further south would place it across the railroad tracks, creating potential response delays to the northwest sections of the city.

Unfortunately, there are no available vacant parcels in close proximity to the existing station that would meet both spatial and response coverage needs. The proposed site—currently used for police and fire staff parking and storage of police vehicles—is directly across the alley from the existing Main Fire Station. This location ensures continuity of service while maintaining compatibility with the existing neighborhood, which is already accustomed to the fire station's presence and activity.

Design Considerations

To minimize impacts and accommodate the department's essential functions within the limited lot size, the proposed station has been thoughtfully designed:

- The structure includes **two stories** of operational and support space.
- The number of **truck bays has been reduced from six to five** to minimize building footprint while maintaining necessary response capacity.

- The building height is **kept below 30 feet**, with the two-story section separated from the apparatus bay area.

Any further reduction in building footprint would compromise the station's functionality. Placing all apparatus bays on the ground floor with all support space above would negatively affect response times. Firefighters would be required to ascend stairs to retrieve gear, then return to the apparatus floor to respond—adding an estimated **2–3 minutes to emergency response time**, which is unacceptable for life-safety operations. Additionally, such a design would increase the overall building height to **over 40 feet**, making it more intrusive to neighboring properties.

Operational and Health Necessities

The new fire station will provide critical facilities not available in the current building. Firefighters face significantly higher rates of cancer compared to the general population, primarily due to exposure to carcinogens during firefighting operations. The new design includes:

- **Dedicated decontamination rooms** for turnout gear and equipment.
- **Segregated showers and changing areas** to prevent contamination from being brought home.

Currently, Brookings firefighters must take contaminated clothing home for washing and use their family showers following fire responses. This poses health risks not only to firefighters but also to their families. The proposed design directly addresses these occupational health and safety concerns.

Conclusion

The requested variances are essential to allow construction of a modern, safe, and properly functioning fire station within the only feasible location that preserves emergency response times for the community. The proposed project is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood, provides critical health and safety improvements for Brookings firefighters, and ensures continued high-quality fire protection for the residents of Brookings.

Respectfully submitted,



Troy Hughes
Fire Chief
Brookings Fire Department



250212 Brookings Fire Department

Curb Cut Variance Request - Exhibit

October 14th, 2025

Variance Request and Needs Assessment:

JLG and the Brookings Fire Department is seeking a variance to extend the allowable width of the driveway/curb cut at Front Street to 100 feet. Sec. 94-343 states that Access Drives shall have a maximum width of 30 feet.

The need for this variance request is to improve the safety and well-being of the Brookings community. As shown in the turning radius plan attached, the width of the driveway is aligned with the width of the engine apparatus bays (5 total). Many of these apparatuses are large, with some as long as 47 feet, and all not only need to back in but also be able to maneuver out quickly when called upon. By extending the curb cut, this allows for a ready response, usable access, and maneuverability of the apparatus.

Below you will find precedence of the curb cut width at the four existing fire stations in the City of Brookings.



Brookings Fire Department – East Station: approximately 33' apron width and 52' curb cut (with flared approach).



Brookings Fire Department - 22nd Station; approximately 34' apron and curb cut.



Brookings Fire Department - Main Station: approximately 88' apron with 98' flared curb cut approach.



Brookings South Fire Station – approximately 74’ apron width, 84’ curb flared cut

Thank you for considering this request.



250212 Brookings Fire Department

Front Yard Setback Variance Request - Exhibit

October 14th, 2025

Variance Request and Needs Assessment:

JLG and the Brookings Fire Department is seeking a variance to build beyond the West, front yard, setback. The current building footprint extends roughly 17 feet beyond the West setback.

The need for this variance request is to provide the Brookings Fire Department with the proper resources and support for their apparatus. The site is limited in size and the need for additional width, beyond the West setback, is driven by the apparatus bays and the department's essential functions.

Where possible, the design has accommodated support spaces and functions in a two story design. The spaces that require immediate adjacency to the apparatus bays have been placed on first floor, while functions that are required to be adjacent to the support spaces have been placed on a future second floor build out. There are also critical spaces like dedicated decontamination rooms and segregated shower and changing areas located on the main floor adjacent to the apparatus bay that provide operational health and safety to the firefighters. Spaces such as this that if moved to a second story configuration rather than on the main floor would decrease and hinder the response time of firefighters, thus determining the overall footprint of the building.

Please see attached site plan for reference.

Thank you for considering this request.

LEGEND

HIGH DEGREE

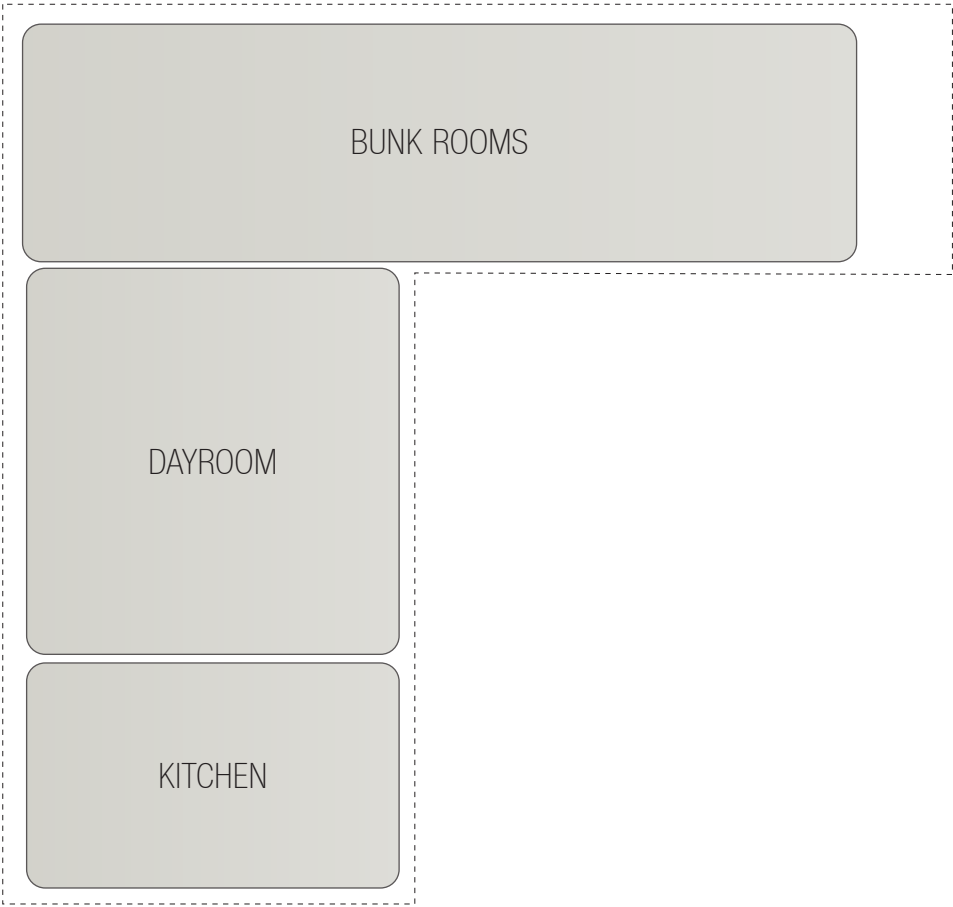
MODERATE TO HIGH DEGREE

TRANSITION ZONE - REDUCE/REMOVE

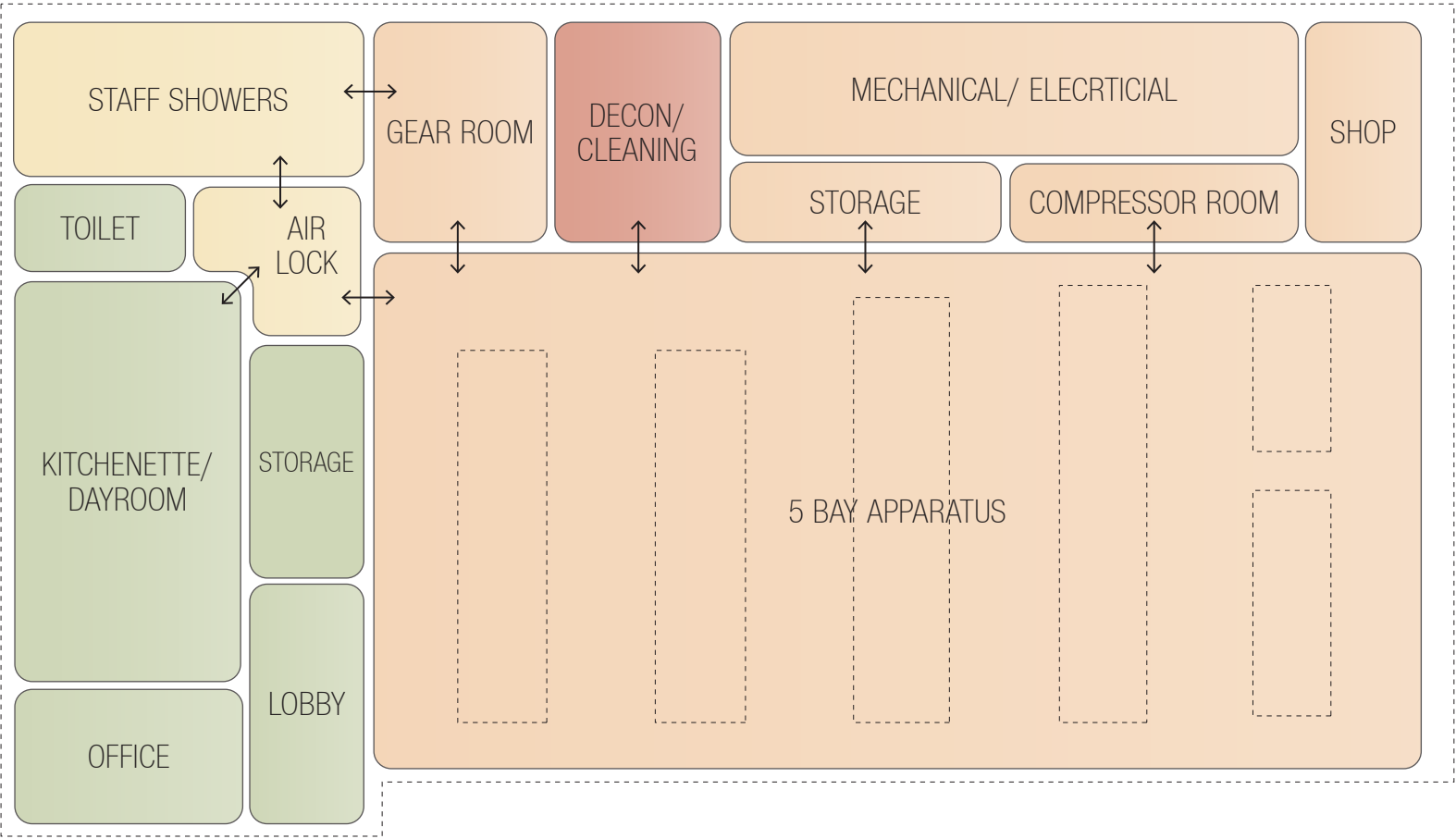
CLEAN/ LOW DEGREE

FUTUTRE GROWTH SPACE

↔ OPERATIONAL ADJACENCY



FUTURE SECOND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR



250212 Brookings Fire Department

Buffer yard Screening Variance Request - Exhibit

October 14th, 2025

Variance Request and Needs Assessment:

JLG and the Brookings Fire Department is seeking a variance to build a screening device within the North buffer yard. The screening device would extend from the generator at the East side of the building to the end of the exterior patio on the West side of the building.

The need for this variance request is to provide a safe and private area of refuge for the Brookings Fire Department. Not only will the proposed screening provide privacy and security to the Brookings first responders, but it will also serve as a sound and visual privacy separation in addition to the landscape and planting within the buffer yard for the neighbor to the North. Please see attached site plan, site photos, and screening examples for your reference.

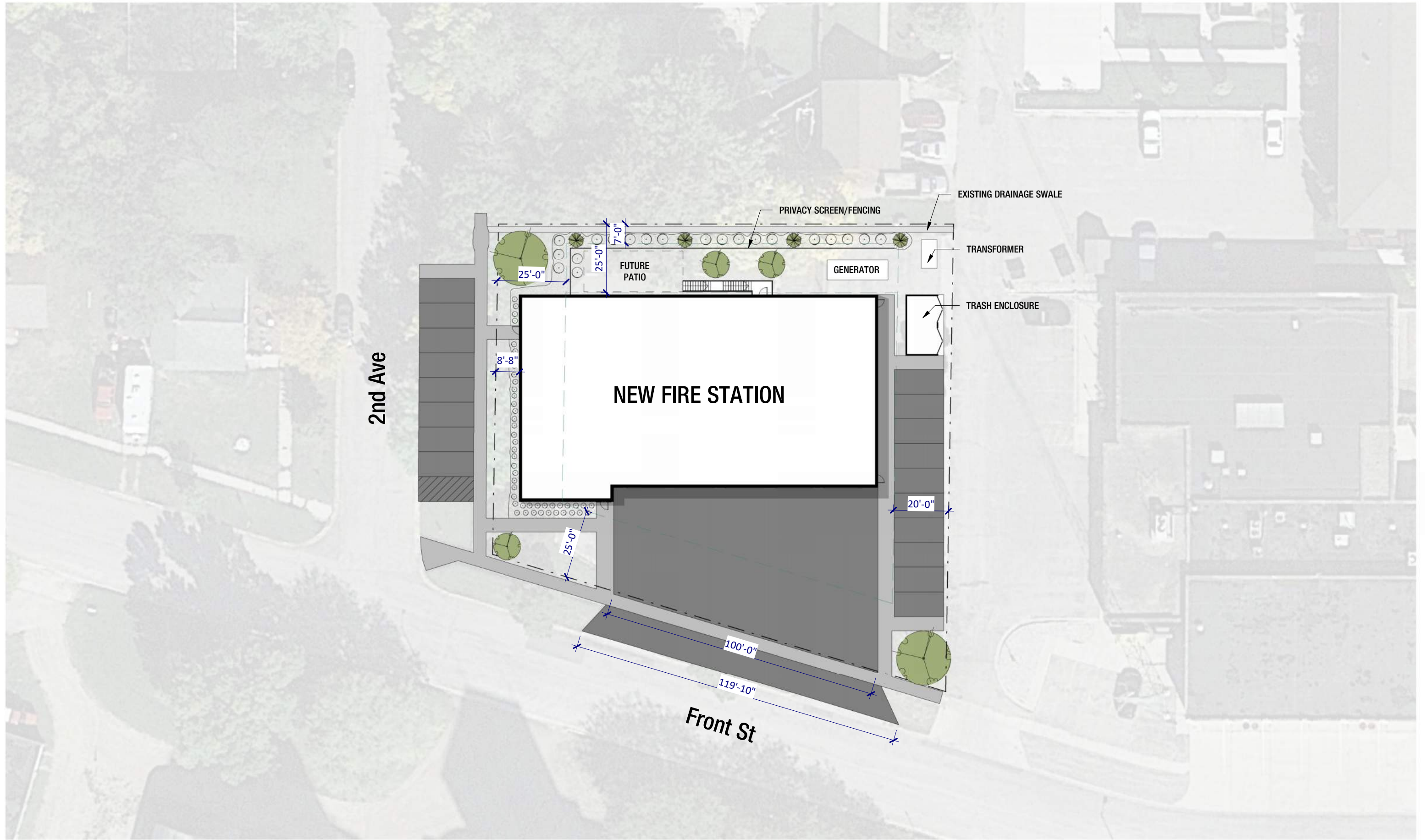
Thank you for considering this request.



Example of privacy fence with landscape buffer.



Example of privacy fence with landscape buffer.



BROOKINGS FIRE DEPARTMENT
SETBACK PLAN

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APPARATUS SIZE 2025

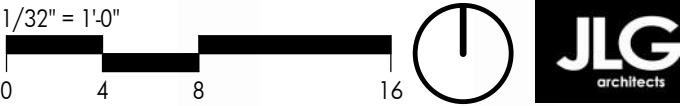


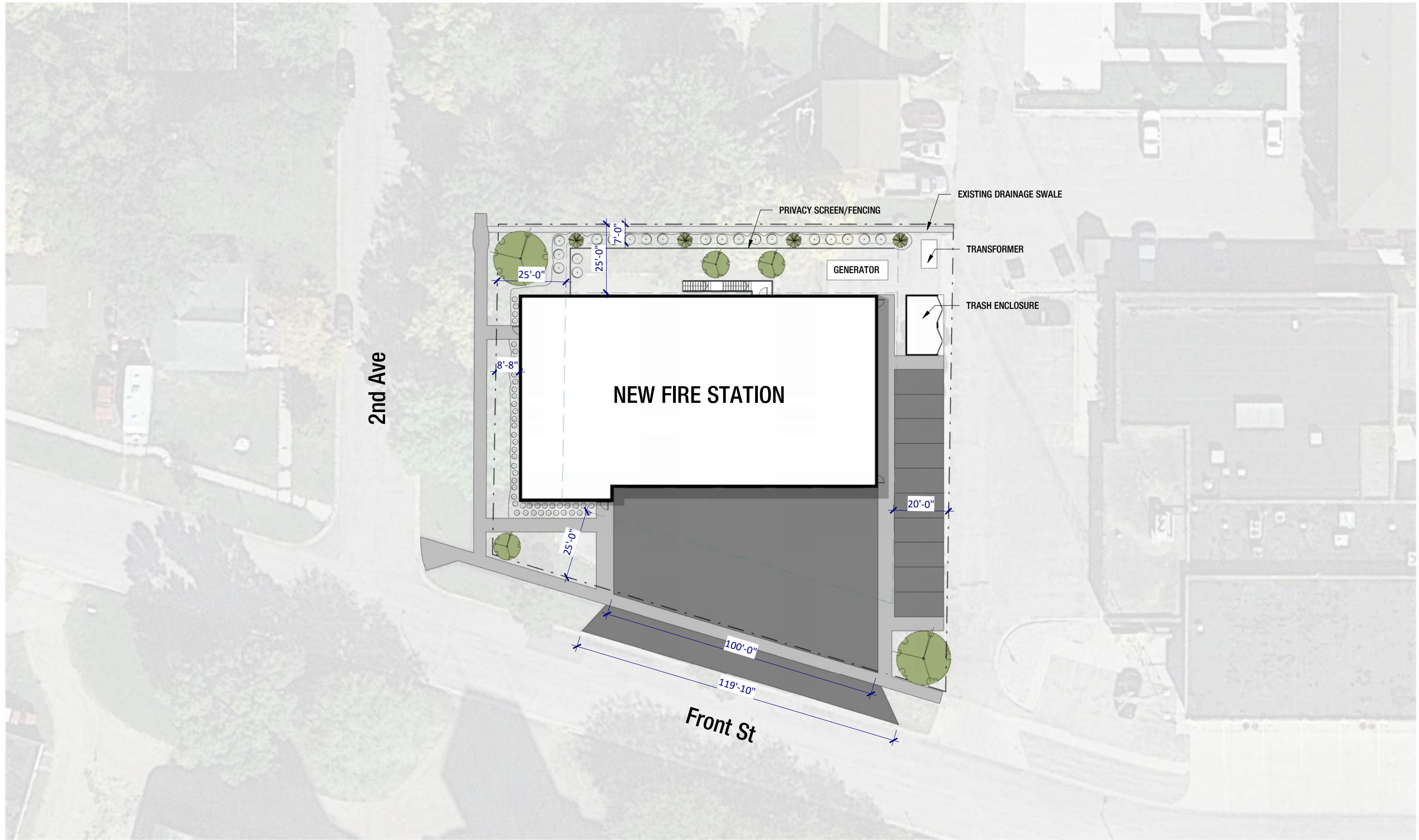
APPARATUS SIZE 1960

BROOKINGS FIRE DEPARTMENT

APPARATUS TURNING RADIUS

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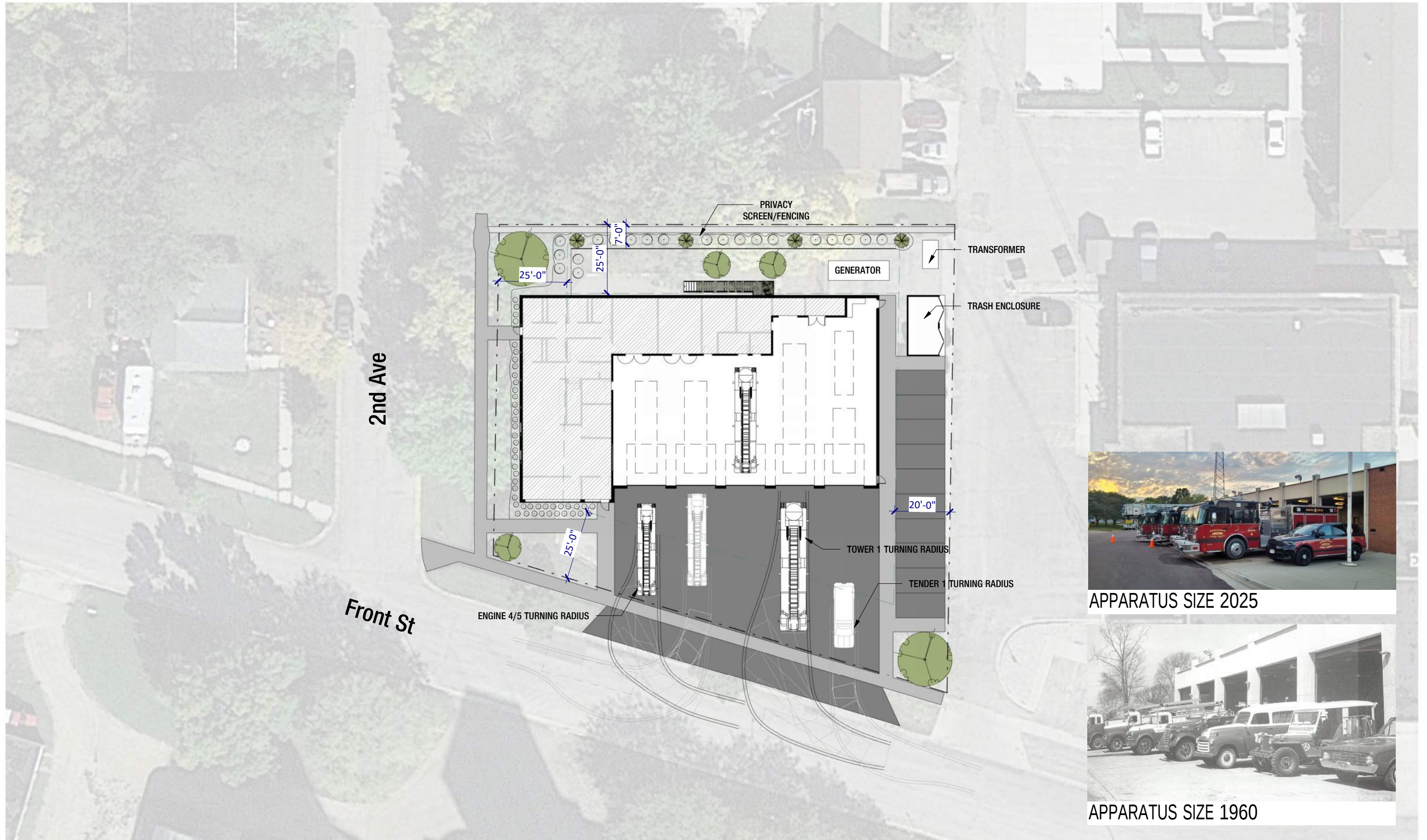




BROOKINGS FIRE DEPARTMENT
SETBACK PLAN

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BROOKINGS FIRE DEPARTMENT

APPARATUS TURNING RADIUS

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1/32" = 1'-0"

0 4 8 16

