

From the Elgin Courier News

Plans drawn for St. Charles west-side station

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Folks living in the St. Charles and Countryside Fire Protection District now can get a glimpse at what they might be buying in a few weeks.

Officials recently released concept plans for the proposed west-side fire station, on Route 64 just east of Burlington Road.



"We think ultimately, the structure will look a lot like this," District President Ed Malek said. "We do expect changes" in appearance, he said.

The 8,000-square-foot structure will cost taxpayers about \$1.5 million, according to estimates. It would sit on as much as 2 acres of land — worth about \$1 million, officials said — expected to be donated by Central Development Corp.

The building would have 2½ drive-through bays and enough room to sleep five firefighters, according to a news release. The plans also include geothermal heating and cooling. It would serve about 6,600 homes on the district's west side.

The district serves more than 20,000 residents in a 34-square-mile area.

On the April 7 ballot, residents within the district can vote on a pair of referendum questions asking for permission to sell bonds and to raise property taxes by 14 cents per \$100 of assessed value — an increase of about \$13 a month on a \$350,000 home. The money would be used to finance the construction of the new station and cut down on what many residents and officials have called unacceptably long response times.

"I'm always the eternal optimist," Malek said about the chance of success of the ballot measures. "But I know we're in tough economic times. It (the project) is not a tough sell, but it's hard to say 'yes' when people are losing their jobs," he said. "But I'm fairly confident that people understand that the need is now."

Residents can see the plans and get more information at www.sccfpd.org.