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Police & Fire

'Not Just Moving, Moving Forward': Ground Broken on New City of Summit Firehouse



The dirt begins to fly: It is expected to take 18 months to complete the \$15+ million project.
Greg Elliott / TAPinto Summit

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SUMMIT, NJ - Under a bright blue sky with not a cloud to be seen -- on 'National First Responders Day' no less -- City of Summit Fire Department leaders and firefighters, elected officials, members of the project team and members of the Hilltop City community gathered as ground was broken on the Department's new Firehouse at 301 Broad Street.

Prior to remarks from Summit Mayor Nora Radest, City of Summit Fire Chief Eric Evers, the Rev. Dr. Denison D. Harrield, Jr., Pastor of Wallace Chapel AME Zion Church in Summit, led those assembled in a prayer. Radest then took to the

podium and told the crowd that, "The Summit Fire Department is not just physically moving to a new location a few blocks away on Broad Street. The Summit Fire Department is moving forward. The new building will enable them to expand resources and educational opportunities, ensuring the department is stronger and better prepared as we move into the future."

The Mayor added, "Imagine what it takes to put on that heavy coat, and helmet, and override the natural human instinct for self-preservation, and run into danger as others are running away; to literally walk through fire to try and save someone else. We are so thankful to you that you are willing to do that for us."

Evers lauded the modern-day firefighting upgrades that will part of the Department's new home, saying, "Our new fire headquarters will be constructed on this site with many features that are essential in a modern-day fire station. Today, fires burn hotter, faster and are more dangerous than ever. Having the ability to train on site with training props incorporated into the building design, will give our firefighters the flexibility to pursue training activities that are geared towards successfully handling and surviving those challenges."

Then it was shovels in the ground time, with City Administrator Michael Rogers, Harrield, Jr., Common Council Health and Safety Committee Member Greg Vartan, Common Council Health and Safety Committee Chair Susan Hairston, Mayor Radest, Deputy Fire Chief Paul Imbimbo, Fire Chief Evers, Lieutenant Brian Harnois, Rob Russo (contractor), Christopher Kehde (architect), former Fire Chief Christopher Cotter, and former Fire Chief Joseph Houck all using golden shovels -- with the event and the date stamped into their handles -- to turn over the first clods of dirt.

The \$15+ million project is expected to take 18 months to complete. On September 21, the City of Summit Common Council [awarded the construction contract](#) to Wayne-based Brahma Construction Corp. Council had officially [approved the project nearly three weeks prior](#) on September 1.

The current Summit Firehouse has the current fire headquarters has been in service for 100 years and no longer meets the needs of a modern fire department. According to Evers, the process that led to today's groundbreaking began in the early 2000s when vision for this project was first conceived by former Fire Chief Cotter.

Designed by LeMay Erickson Wilcox Architects (LEW) of Reston, VA, [the new building](#) will allow all department vehicles to be parked indoors, with exits in two directions. It will have its own fuel station.

According to Kehde, principal at LEW, the [building uses "hot zone" design to isolate areas most likely to be exposed to contamination](#). Kehde used the catchphrase "shower within the hour," explaining that firefighters will be able to shower and change clothes as soon as they return from a call. This will help prevent contamination from being spread to other parts of the firehouse.

The mezzanine level will accommodate training space, while the upper level holds bunk suites, other living space, and administrative offices.