

View of new public entrance on North Street

Health & Safety Concerns

Q: Why can't firefighters just keep using the current station?

A: The current station is decades old and was never designed for the demands of modern firefighting. The layout allows carcinogens and diesel exhaust to spread into living areas, there is insufficient space for equipment, and the building lacks proper decontamination facilities. Continuing to use it without updates puts firefighters' health at risk and limits their ability to protect the community due to **taking apparatus out of service for the winter**.

Q: What's wrong with the air in the current station?

A: Older stations were not built with specialized ventilation systems to remove diesel exhaust and other contaminants from trucks. These fumes infiltrate sleeping quarters, offices, and kitchens, leaving firefighters exposed for hours each day. Modern standards call for systems that capture and remove exhaust directly from vehicles, reducing long-term cancer risks.

Q: Why do firefighters need more than one shower?

A: After returning from a fire, crews are often covered in smoke, soot, and carcinogens. With only one shower, firefighters must wait their turn, leaving harmful chemicals on their skin for extended periods. Multiple showers ensure that everyone can decontaminate quickly, protecting both their health and their families when they return home.

Q: Why are separate sinks for decontamination important?

A: Firefighters return from calls with toxins on their gear, hands, and equipment. Washing contaminated items in the same sinks used for food preparation or hygiene risks spreading harmful residues into everyday living spaces. Dedicated decon sinks ensure a clear separation, keeping living areas safe and reducing exposure to carcinogens.

Q: Why do firefighters need separate bedrooms?

A: Shared dormitory-style sleeping areas lead to interrupted rest from snoring, radio calls, or firefighters moving in and out at different times. Poor rest directly affects alertness, decision-making, and safety on the fireground. Private sleeping rooms give firefighters the restorative sleep they need to be sharp and effective in emergencies.

Community Protection

Q: How does renovating the station make the community safer?

A: A modern station improves firefighter health, reduces response delays, and allows proper storage and maintenance of life-saving equipment. When firefighters are rested, healthy, and well-equipped, they can provide faster and more effective service to the community. Renovations directly translate into a safer, better-protected town.

Q: Why does a fire station need space for modern equipment?

A: Today's fire engines, ladder trucks, and ambulances are much larger than those from 30–40 years ago. Many older stations simply don't have bay doors wide or tall enough to house them safely. Expanding the station ensures that all apparatus fits properly, is ready to roll at a moment's notice, and can carry the latest technology needed to save lives.

Q: How will an updated station improve emergency response?

A: Modern stations are designed with efficient layouts so firefighters can get from their living quarters to apparatus bays quickly. Wider doors, clear hallways, and better storage eliminate delays. This saves precious minutes during emergencies, where faster response can mean the difference between life and death.

Q: Isn't this just for the firefighters' benefit?

A: While firefighters will benefit from a safer workplace, the real winners are the residents. Healthy, well-rested firefighters can respond faster and perform at their best, which directly impacts the safety of families, homes, and businesses in the community. Protecting firefighters ultimately protects everyone.

Q: What happens if we don't renovate?

A: If nothing is done, problems will continue to compound. Response times could be delayed, equipment may fail from outside storage, and firefighter illness rates will climb — leading to increased healthcare costs for the town. In time, the building may be deemed unsafe, forcing expensive emergency repairs or even closure.

Financial Questions

Q: Why spend taxpayer money on a renovation?

A: Investing now prevents greater costs down the road. Renovations will extend the life of the existing building, reduce energy and repair expenses, and prevent the need for a costly new station in the near future. Taxpayers will ultimately save money while improving safety.

Q: Is renovating cheaper than building a new station?

A: Yes, renovation is far more cost-effective. It uses the existing structure as a foundation, which avoids the millions of dollars required for land acquisition and new construction. By combining an addition with renovations, the town gets modern safety standards without the price tag of starting from scratch.

Q: How will this affect my taxes?

A: The cost will be carefully managed through phased construction and potential grant funding. The slight increase in taxes is a small price to pay compared to the financial burden of firefighter illnesses, increased insurance premiums for the town, or catastrophic building failures. Investing in prevention saves money in the long run.

Q: Can't firefighters just adapt instead of building?

A: They have been adapting for years, often at the expense of their health and efficiency. Crews work around cramped spaces, unsafe sleeping quarters, and inadequate decontamination areas. Renovation provides a lasting solution instead of continuing to patch problems with short-term fixes that waste money.

Q: How do we know this won't go over budget?

A: The project will be managed by professional architects and construction managers with built-in cost controls. Value engineering, transparent budgeting, and community oversight will keep spending accountable. Every dollar will be planned and reported so taxpayers know exactly how funds are used.

Quality of Life for Firefighters & Families

Q: Why does it matter if firefighters get better sleep?

A: Fatigue is one of the leading causes of firefighter injuries and mistakes. Interrupted or poor-quality sleep makes it harder for firefighters to think clearly and react quickly during emergencies. Private sleeping rooms allow true rest, which translates directly into safer and more effective service for the community.

Q: Why do firefighters need modern bathrooms and showers?

A: Firefighters spend 24 hours or more at the station. Outdated bathrooms not only impact their health and comfort but also slow down decontamination after fires. Modern, clean facilities ensure they can maintain proper hygiene, recover after difficult calls, and stay ready for the next emergency.

Q: Why should we care if firefighters are exposed to toxins?

A: Exposure to carcinogens has made cancer the leading cause of firefighter line-of-duty deaths. These illnesses shorten careers, devastate families, and cost towns significant amounts in healthcare and retirement benefits. Protecting firefighters from toxins is both a moral responsibility and a smart financial decision for taxpayers.

Q: Can't firefighters just shower at home?

A: No, because contaminants must be removed before leaving the station. Otherwise, dangerous carcinogens travel home with firefighters, exposing their families and personal spaces. Multiple showers at the station ensure firefighters are clean before ever stepping into their cars.

Q: Why do firefighters need fitness or wellness space?

A: Firefighting is physically demanding, requiring strength, stamina, and endurance. Heart attacks remain one of the leading causes of firefighter fatalities. Onsite wellness space allows firefighters to maintain their health and fitness, which directly reduces injury rates and ensures they can perform at peak ability during emergencies.

Future & Sustainability

Q: Why build now instead of waiting?

A: Construction costs rise every year — delaying the project means paying significantly more in the future. At the same time, safety issues will worsen, creating higher health and repair costs. Acting now is the fiscally responsible choice.

Q: Won't we outgrow the renovated station soon?

A: No, the addition and renovation are being designed with future growth in mind. Plans will accommodate larger apparatus, advanced technology, and potential staffing increases. This ensures the station will serve the community for decades.

Q: What about sustainability and efficiency?

A: Renovations will include modern heating, cooling, and electrical systems that are far more energy-efficient than the current setup. This lowers utility bills and reduces the station's environmental impact. Over time, the savings from efficiency will offset part of the construction cost.

Q: Can't we just rent space elsewhere?

A: Renting space spreads resources thin and pulls firefighters away from the central hub where they need to be to respond quickly. Emergencies demand immediate action, and even a few extra minutes of travel from another location can cost lives. Renovation keeps firefighters close to the people they serve.

Q: How does this renovation compare to what other towns are doing?

A: Communities across the region have already renovated or built new fire stations to meet today's safety standards. If we don't keep up, our department risks falling behind in both staffing recruitment and emergency readiness. Renovating ensures we remain competitive, capable, and aligned with modern fire service standards.

Quick Facts

- Cancer is the leading cause of firefighter deaths.
- Current station lacks proper exhaust removal.
- Only one shower for entire crew.
- No private bedrooms for proper rest.
- Renovation and addition combination is far cheaper than building new.
- Modern systems save energy and reduce costs.
- Safer firefighters = safer community.