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Ground broken on new Fort Myers fire station

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By Ty Russell, Reporter [CONNECT](#)

Ground was broken Thursday morning at the site of a new fire station in Fort Myers that'll carry a \$7.5 million price tag.

The new station is being built across the street from the existing one along MLK Boulevard and Central Avenue. Fire Chief Trenton Bowen says a bigger fire station is needed to help a growing midtown area safe.

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"As the city grows, each department has to grow with it," Bowen said. "We ran into some hard times financially so that held up some of the stuff."

City leaders also hope to have a bigger staff before the new station opens, if they get a federal grant to rehire 21 laid-off firefighters.

The city originally budgeted \$15 million for a new station when it was first proposed nine years ago, but was forced to scale back designs over a tight budget. The older station was sold for \$850,000 six years ago, though the city pays about \$125,000 a year for the lease - meaning nearly all the sales proceeds have been used.

The new station is being funded as a capital project, which means taxpayers will eventually pay back the money.

City leaders are paying for the fire station as a capital project. That means taxpayers will pay the money back later.

A business owner near the construction site is relieved the city is building the station after a delay that's lasted nearly 10 years.

"I'm really excited," said Susan McCurdy. "I know I'll feel a lot safer. Fort Myers deserves a bigger and more up to date fire department."

The fire chief says there will be more space for fire trucks and more rooms available for CPR training. Construction is scheduled to be completed at the end of next year.