

Major Renovation to Augusta (ME) Fire Department's Hartford Fire Station



The city of Augusta, Maine, had WBRC Architects Engineers and Mitchell Architects design an addition and perform a major renovation of its historic Hartford Fire Station. (Photos courtesy of Mitchell Associates Architects.)

By [Alan M. Petrillo](#)

The Hartford Fire Station was Augusta, Maine's oldest of five fire stations, being built on a hilltop overlooking the downtown in the early part of the 20th century when firefighters were still using horse-drawn water pumps. But, the station's infrastructure was failing under the weight of modern fire engines that barely fit through the apparatus bay doors. In 2016, city voters approved \$6 million to renovate and add onto the station to bring it up to modern standards.



“We did a study that determined the station was in the right location for proper coverage,” says Roger Audette, Augusta Fire Department’s chief. “So, the decision was made to renovate the Hartford station and increase its footprint with an addition. The biggest need we had was for two large truck bays to hold our newer apparatus. A previous ladder tower had to be moved to another station because of the inadequate floor at the Hartford station.”

The city hired WBRC Architects Engineers and Mitchell Associates Architects to design a 11,325-square-foot addition, as well as to perform a major renovation of the original 8,800-square-foot Classical Revival style structure. Robert Mitchell, principal architect at Mitchell Associates Architects, says, “The new two-story expansion provides a six-vehicle, drive-through apparatus bay with a tail-pipe exhaust system, decontamination area, and rigorous hot zone/cold zone separation. Above, the living quarters offer a roomy kitchen/day room, fitness room, six individual firefighter bunk rooms, one officer bunk room, three unisex bathrooms, a personal laundry, and dedicated storage, all isolated from, yet quickly accessible to, the new apparatus bays through a fire pole and front and back stairways.”



The addition to Hartford Fire Station added six bays to the firehouse, two of them double-deep drive-through bays.

Mitchell notes that the renovation of the 1920 portion of the building was threatened by the cost of foundation reinforcements required to meet essential facility standards for an existing fire station. “So, the team reconfigured the design and put all critical uses into the new addition, technically a separate building, allowing Tier II standards in the 1920 wing of the facility,” he says. “The renovated original structure still provides many important functions, including four apparatus bays for backup equipment and the station’s antique fire truck. Its second floor has administrative offices, a training room with kitchenette, unisex restrooms, conference room, and display space for historic memorabilia.”



The kitchen/dining/day room in the addition to the station.

Scope of work included a complete rebuild of the apparatus bay floor and all new mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems, Mitchell adds. “The entire site and parking lot were also reconfigured, adding parking and a secure back entrance,” he says.



The original Classical Revival style structure underwent a major renovation, which turned its four apparatus bays into backup apparatus storage and its second floor with administrative offices, a training room, conference room, and display space for historic memorabilia.

Hartford Fire Station sits on a parcel given by George Huntington Hartford (1833-1917), an Augusta native and owner of the Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company, better known as the A&P grocery store chain. He was also a fire buff, and reputedly named his company after Augusta's Great Atlantic and Pacific Fire Company. Mitchell notes the original 1920 building was designed by Augusta architecture firm Bunker & Savage (no longer in business) as one of its first projects. "At the time, both horse and gas-powered vehicles were in use, and while their design provided space for horse stalls, hay, and manure, the living quarters were not sealed off from the apparatus bay's vehicle fumes," he says. "Those designers could not have anticipated that fire engines would grow into the large vehicles they are today."



The training room on the second floor of the original station building.

Audette points out that another main objective for the new facility was increased safety for Hartford Fire Station's firefighters and EMS personnel, as well as the addition of drive-through apparatus bays. "Another concern for the city was to maintain a common theme across the front of the new structure to match the old doors," he says, "which was accomplished by contrasting the brick a little bit, but maintaining the same details around the doors, to reflect the historic feeling of the old station."

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