

*Updated February 2022*

## **BUILDING COMMUNITY, BUILDING A CITY SAFETY COMPLEX**

The City is investing \$63.7 million to transform the former St. Mary's Hospital campus in North Knoxville into a new complex for the Police and Fire Departments, E911, Pension System offices and City Court operations. That includes funding \$6.5 million to raze the obsolete buildings on the north end of the vacated hospital site to make space for future private redevelopment.

To update neighbors and stakeholders about progress with the project, the City Communications Department is maintaining a Safety Complex Updates blog. Visit [www.knoxvilletn.gov/safetycomplex](http://www.knoxvilletn.gov/safetycomplex) for the latest information, photos and videos.

The new Public Safety Complex is scheduled to be finished by late 2022.

Here are some Frequently Asked Questions about the project:

### **Why is the Public Safety Complex necessary, and why is it being built in North Knoxville?**

The first question is an easy one: The Police Department has simply outgrown the 51-year-old Safety Building at 800 Howard Baker Jr. Avenue. The building is obsolete and falling apart.

Built to accommodate 219 officers and civilian employees, KPD now numbers 500 employees.

There's water damage in the existing building that can't be repaired. Plug in a computer, and anticipate a fuse blowing. The antiquated original boiler system requires almost daily restarts, and the backup system is defunct.

Click here – <https://bit.ly/2wmDCe2> – to read a 2018 City Blog post and to see photos of the old building.

The Fire Department moved out years ago to ease the space crunch, forcing KPD and KFD to spend about \$250,000 a year to lease outside space.

Fire Chief Stan Sharp favors a move into a combined Police and Fire headquarters building.

“A combined facility with KPD will provide many efficiencies, including improving collaboration and communication with KPD staff,” Sharp said.

Answering the second question – why North Knoxville? – has everything to do with strengthening neighborhoods.

Rather than let a vacated hospital campus remain empty and deteriorate, the City chose to rejuvenate the site by razing outdated older buildings and creating opportunity for a mix of new private and public reinvestment.

### **What else will be on the site? Is there room for private redevelopment?**

Already, Lincoln Memorial University has acquired the Magdalen Clarke Tower and is renovating it to use for its nursing, business and criminal justice schools. LMU began offering nursing classes inside the tower in early 2021.

LMU has eventual plans to build out the tower, bring in hundreds of additional students and create a landscaped public quadrangle-type green space.

The City is investing an additional \$6.5 million to clear the northern end of the former hospital campus to be marketed for private redevelopment. The historic 1929 Building – the original St. Mary’s – has been safeguarded and preserved and will anchor that redevelopment.

In fact, one unexpected surprise was the sudden re-emergence of the elegant 1929 Building. For decades, the stately marble-accented icon, parapets and all, had been unintentionally hidden from view by the addition of

the non-descript hospital wings. It's now free-standing and once again a community asset.

In coming years, the City and Knox County will be collaborating to jointly convert the 25,000-square-foot former St. Mary's Ambulatory Surgery Center on the south end of the site into an urgent care and behavioral health facility.

### **Will historic bricks from the hospital be available as keepsakes?**

Yes. Stay tuned for more details to come. The plan from Day 1 was to salvage approximately 1,000 red bricks, clean them and make them available to people who have fond memories of St. Mary's and have inquired about the availability of the bricks.

In addition, the contractor team has collected and will restore memorials that have been placed on the hospital campus over the years.

### **Will there be road detours? How about dust or noise?**

Few if any road closures were needed to accommodate the demolition and construction that started last year.

No blasting occurred, either, and the contractor has been taking steps to limit noise and to water down the site as needed to cut down on dust.

### **When will the project be finished?**

Check out this January 2022 blog post and video:

<https://knoxvilletn.gov/blog/One.aspx?portalId=16502544&postId=18289471&portletAction=viewpost>

The Public Safety Complex in North Knoxville is on pace to open on schedule late this year. In fact, the construction team has recently hit two big milestones.

First, crews in January 2022 logged their 100th week on the site, so the project is two-thirds of the way done.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> milestone: The new City Court building is going vertical. Steel columns are now in place.

It's becoming increasingly easy to visualize the vacated hospital campus in its second chapter - as a future mix of government offices, college classrooms, private redevelopment and public green space.