

Ohio

Community Facilities | Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant Program

Rural Ohio Community Celebrates New Public Works Complex



Washington Township, Ohio, community leaders cut the ribbon to open its new Fire Station, Road Department, and Administrative Office Complex. USDA Photo.

Washington Township, Ohio, rests among rolling hills and farmlands just off I-71 near Mansfield. Like most rural communities, it excels at getting the most out of its resources, which included the nearly 75-year-old building for its Road and Fire Departments.

It expanded several times to meet the needs of these two critical departments, but a few years ago Township Trustees decided it was time to change.

“We needed an upgrade, because we kept adding on to the original building and we just ran out of room,” said Andy Romoser, Washington Township’s Road Supervisor and Assistant Fire Chief.

But funding a project like this is challenging for a small community which is why in 2021 the township connected with Ohio’s USDA Rural Development (RD) team to learn about potential options and eventually secured a Community Facilities Direct Loan.

“We chose USDA because they offered a longer term, lower interest loan with lower payments per month so our residents would not have to absorb the cost,” said Jack Butler, chairperson of the Washington Township Trustees. “We were determined to make it work and because of this we were able to lessen the tax burden on our residents.”

Construction started in 2022, and two years later the community gathered to cut the ribbon at its new, state-of-the-art Township Complex featuring a 19,000 square foot Fire Station and Township Administration building and an 8,300 square foot Road Department administration and storage facility.

“This features a more modern and safer facility for our fire fighters, more space for the road department, and a nicer office for the township,” said Washington Township’s Fire Chief David Compton. “It takes the fire station out of a busy intersection and gives us much easier egress which means quicker response times.”

The fire station includes five bays for trucks and equipment storage and a modern living space for fire fighters complete with sleeping quarters for eight, showers, laundry facilities, work and study areas, and a fitness facility.

CF - Washington Township Public Safety Complex

More open bays provide for better ventilation that mitigates potential hazards from vehicle exhaust, and it has a separate area where firefighters can take off and clean their equipment after returning from a fire to contain potential contaminants.

“This is a much cleaner environment now for firefighters,” said Butler.

Not to be outdone, the Road Department, which maintains public spaces and the township’s 56-mile road network, has a new home with five drive through storage bays for its trucks, a heated storage area, a welding and fabrication shop, and administrative offices for staff members.



Larger, more open vehicle bays are one of the many key features of Washington Township’s new fire station. USDA Photo.



One of the Washington Township, Ohio, multi-purpose trucks inside the more open bays at the new Road Department facility. USDA Photo.

“It’s now a lot better working environment both inside and outside,” said Romoser. “Our equipment is located in one place, and we nearly tripled our space, and it’s an overall better environment for health and safety.”

And with additional space and land, the township now has capacity to expand the complex to meet future community needs.

“This is not just a celebration of a building,” said Jennifer Wagner from Richland Area Chamber and Economic Development. “It is a commitment to the future safety and strength of our community.”

Obligation Amount: \$9,622,000

Obligation Date: September 23, 2021

Congressional: U.S. Rep. Jim Jordan (OH-04); U.S. Senators Sherrod Brown and J.D. Vance

Impact: Improved capacity to serve the community; safer work environment for township employees.