

# Why Does Portland Need The "Portland Firefighter Memorial Plaza?"

The David Campbell Memorial Association (DCMA), in partnership with Portland Fire & Rescue, has embarked on a project to renovate the existing David Campbell Memorial site and re-imagine the triangle in which it sits. Located between SW Alder Street, 19th Avenue, and 18th Avenue, this heritage site has been a Portland landmark for the past 94 years.

The plan to create the Portland Firefighter Memorial Plaza on this heritage site will be presented to Portland City Council in the next month. While the DCMA's wishes are well known to Portland Commissioners, that can easily be written off as what is expected from a special interest group. However, we believe the interest and support in this project extends to the entire community of Portland, the County of Multnomah, the State of Oregon, and beyond.

## We need your help...

If you support or appreciate this project and believe it should be built, we need your help. The DCMA is asking you to communicate your belief in this project to the Portland City Commissioners. They have an opportunity to allocate funding, but it likely will not happen unless they recognize a wide range of support.

Between now and October 1st, our ask is for you to send a letter or e-mail to the leaders of Portland and state your support for this project. There are many reasons it is important. A few are listed below:

- As A Heritage Site
- As A Tribute To Portland Citizen And Fire Chief, David Campbell
- As An Architectural Achievement Site
- As A Proper Memorial To Portland's 75 Fallen Firefighters
- As A Community Gathering Place
- As A Statement Of Support For Portland's Working Firefighters

We ask that you use your own voice to describe the importance of the Portland Firefighter Memorial Plaza. That said, more detail on each of the bulleted points are offered below. But please don't consider this the end of the list. Every citizen may have a reason to see this project to completion. Most urgent is communicating the importance to City Hall.

We have until October 2022 to make clear our sentiment and need for the Portland Firefighter Memorial Plaza. Please go to the end of this letter to find how and where you can send your comments to the decision makers of Portland. It does make a difference. If you are a business or community leader, please use letterhead to make clear the depth of your voice.

Together, we can do this. Please join me in helping Portland city leaders understand why this project must be done.

## Why The Portland Firefighter Memorial Plaza Is Needed...

The reasons for creating the Portland Firefighter Memorial Plaza are numerous. In fact, it can carry different meaning to different citizens of Portland.

- **A Heritage Site** - The community dedicated the David Campbell Memorial to Fire Chief and citizen David Campbell, in tribute to his line of duty death and great citizenship.

In the wake of Chief Campbell's death on June 26, 1911, the citizens of Portland fell into mourning. This reached its peak during Chief Campbell's funeral procession, which traveled from the downtown Portland Elks Lodge, through the streets of Portland, to arrive at Chief Campbell's grave site in Riverview Cemetery. It is estimated that 150,000 citizens of Portland lined the path to bid farewell to the man they called "Our Dave." No civic gathering of this attendance has been recorded before or since.

Within days, discussions began about how to pay tribute to David Campbell. A fund was started with discussion about a physical memorial and about a beneficiary fund for injured firefighters. It was decided a memorial was in order. Over the following 17 years, funds, property, and plans were brought together to create the David Campbell Memorial in the traffic triangle between SW Alder Street, 18th Avenue. and 19th Avenue. It was a gift from the citizens of Portland, not the Firefighters of Portland. It is a community asset, created by the community, gifted by the community, and existing for the community, since 1928.

- **An Architectural Achievement** - The David Campbell Memorial was created by internationally known architect Paul Cret and is special in its design and heritage.

The David Campbell Memorial was not just an average piece of stonework assembled to pay tribute. It was thoughtfully envisioned as an architectural gift to the citizens and as a fitting tribute to Chief Campbell. The chosen architect for the job was a man named Paul Cret.

The importance of Paul Cret as a significant figure in the architectural history of the twentieth century is evidenced by the renowned buildings and monuments he designed, the respect he commanded in his field as a frequent competitor in, and juror of, architectural competitions, and his role as an influential teacher. His prolific career brought him much recognition in his lifetime, and he was generally considered one of the most prominent architects of his era. He was profoundly concerned with the expression of beauty, which he saw in terms of classical architectural forms.

Cret's design for the David Campbell Memorial is situated firmly in the Beaux-Arts tradition. The memorial embodies Cret's signature understated classicism, in which a simple but bold statement is made within the parameters of Beaux-Arts traditionalism.

Clearly, this was not a casual endeavor. The David Campbell Memorial is special in both content and design.

- **A Proper Memorial to Portland's Fallen Firefighters** - No proper memorial exists to recognize the 75 Portland Firefighters who have died while serving the citizens of Portland. This is shameful and must be remedied.

While David Campbell may be the most notable Portland Firefighter to give his life in service, he was not the first. In fact, five other Portland Firefighters would die in the line of duty before Campbell.

After Chief Campbell's death, discussion, fundraising, and planning would take 17 years to result in the David Campbell Memorial. During that time, 12 other Portland Firefighters would lose their lives in service to the citizens of Portland. At the time the David Campbell Memorial was dedicated, 18 Portland Firefighters shared the distinction of "death in the line of duty" yet no proper place of remembrance or tribute had been produced.

Even with this pattern of loss, the David Campbell Memorial was built to only honor Chief Campbell. At a point not recorded in history, other names were added to the David Campbell Memorial. Brass plates were created and affixed to the floor of the David Campbell Memorial, directly in front of the fountain bowl. Sadly, these lacked interpretive signage and in current day, are routinely covered in dirt, windblown trash, and during the winter, standing water. This was a poor effort to honor Portland's Fallen Firefighters, who in 2022 number 75. This must be remedied.

- **A Community Gathering Place** - The David Campbell Memorial site has become an unattractive place surrounded by busy streets and often left dirty and unkempt. This needs to change. Through the creation of the Portland Firefighter Memorial Plaza, the site will be transformed into a place of tribute, remembrance, and education for Portland Firefighters and the citizens of Portland by sharing the stories of sacrifice made by members of Portland Fire & Rescue. But it will also serve as a place for neighbors and community to gather for other purposes. The activation of the site for more than once-a-year services will bring history to life, and life to the history.
- **A Statement Of Support To Portland's Working Firefighters** - Portland Firefighters have served faithfully during one of the most difficult time periods in Portland history. They deserve to have their professional heritage embraced by the community and honored by all of Portland. To do so extends a vote of confidence to these dedicated public servants during a time when it is needed more than ever. Consider the following points called out by a citizens group:

The humanitarian crisis in Portland weighs heavily on Portland Firefighters who have witnessed so many citizens experiencing houselessness, mental health issues, and drug addiction. Tents, tarps, and other temporary dwellings aren't equipped with smoke alarms or sprinkler systems and the unhoused community is experiencing a surge in fire-related burns, injuries, and death while simply seeking to stay warm.

The Covid pandemic has impacted Portland Firefighters particularly hard. Like many, they too have lost loved ones to the pandemic. But unlike many who can work from home, Portland Firefighters show up for their duty shift, in-person, every day, putting themselves and their families in harm's way. And while Portland residents wore masks when indoors and in public venues, Portland Firefighters wore masks all day, every day while working 24 hour work shifts, even when in the fire station while carrying out daily activities. The anxiety and losses from Covid felt by many is amplified for Portland Firefighters. Covid fatigue is real.

Last year, Portland Firefighters witnessed an increased number of civilian deaths in spite of putting their lives and training on the line to save others. Portland Firefighters experienced 15 fire-related civilian deaths in 2021, tying a record set in 1994. Survival rates for victims of cardiac arrest in Multnomah County have dropped notably for the fifth straight year. Traffic deaths have reached their highest number in three decades. These take a toll on Portland Firefighters, who are first responders to it all.

Portland Firefighters are responding to increasingly dangerous situations as Portland experiences a record increase in gun violence and homicides. Portland Firefighters are often the first to arrive at these incidents, putting them at high risk for emotional trauma, injury, or worse.

As unsettling as the endless string of protests in the city were for many, Portland Firefighters dutifully arrived to protect the city from conflagration, tend to the injured, and protect city assets.

Portland Firefighters have a normal work week of 50.5 hours/week. Now, mandatory overtime is keeping Portland Firefighters from leaving work to be with their families, often for 48 hours or more at a time. Work weeks can reach 90+ hours. Failure to yield to the mandatory overtime results in disciplinary actions against the Firefighter. This is not sustainable.

The development of Portland Firefighter Memorial Plaza is an opportunity to extend the life of a Portland Heritage site, embrace an architectural gift to the citizens of Portland, provide a proper remembrance for firefighters who have lost their lives in service to the citizens of Portland, develop a community gathering place, and simply say "Thank You" to the dedication and professionalism of Portland Firefighters. Help us create this valuable community space.

**How To Advocate For The Portland Firefighter Memorial Plaza** - Please direct letters or e-mails to one or all of the following:

**Electronic Correspondence**

- **Mayor Ted Wheeler** - [MayorWheeler@PortlandOregon.gov](mailto:MayorWheeler@PortlandOregon.gov)
- **Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty** - [JoAnn@PortlandOregon.gov](mailto:JoAnn@PortlandOregon.gov)
- **Commissioner Carmen Rubio** - [Comm.Rubio@PortlandOregon.gov](mailto:Comm.Rubio@PortlandOregon.gov)
- **Commissioner Mingus Mapps** - [MappsOffice@PortlandOregon.gov](mailto:MappsOffice@PortlandOregon.gov)
- **Commissioner Dan Ryan** - [CommissionerRyanOffice@PortlandOregon.gov](mailto:CommissionerRyanOffice@PortlandOregon.gov)

**Mailed Correspondance**

**NAME OF PORTLAND OFFICIAL  
Portland City Hall  
1121 SW 4th Avenue  
Portland OR 97204**

**It is important that your voice be heard before OCTOBER 1, 2022**

If you feel inclined, please copy the DCMA with your communication so we can understand our advocates and support when we address the City Council in October.

**DCMA  
330 S. Curry Street  
Portland OR 97239  
or  
[Info@DavidCampbellMemorial.org](mailto:Info@DavidCampbellMemorial.org)**

Thank you. If you have questions, please feel free to contact me for more clarification.

Don Porth  
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