



# Brooklyn Center Public Works Garage requires updates

Brooklyn Center's Public Works garage, after 50 years of heavy use, no longer meets the demands of modern public works operations. Its outdated size and design force staff to work in cramped, often unsafe conditions, limiting the City's ability to invest in essential equipment like an electrified vehicle fleet.



## Challenges



The Brooklyn Center Public Works garage faces two main challenges: its outdated size and design hinder the safe, efficient operation of large, modern equipment, such as heavy-duty snowplows, and any minor building upgrade triggers required ADA improvements. Some other specific challenges include:

### Undignified work space



The garage lacks separate meeting rooms, personal spaces, and workspaces. For example, to create a lactation room, required by law (Minnesota Statutes 181.939) staff had to create a sign-out system in a shared office space. This led to workflow inefficiencies, and does not provide a dignified private area. This created workflow inefficiencies and did not provide a dignified private area for a new mother.

### Unsafe traffic patterns



Modern snowplows, which provide the level of service our residents have come to expect, are large. The tight quarters in our garage mean that every time it snows, Public Works employees must back up trucks within inches of each other before exiting the building. This can put staff in an unsafe position and risk damage to vehicles and surrounding equipment.



### Why not renovate?

A 2023 facility condition assessment found \$3.5 million in deferred maintenance, including \$1 million to replace the original leaking roof from the 1970s. However, given the operational and safety challenges, investing in such an outdated structure is not a wise use of taxpayer dollars. Past efforts to improve areas like the aging lunchroom have improved those spaces but triggered costly ADA requirements. Making significant and critical renovations is cost-prohibitive and fails to meet the City's needs, given the building's size.



## Lack of storage areas

As Brooklyn Center staff have worked to modernize our operations, we need more storage space. For example, we upgraded street salting operations by switching over to liquid salt application. However, this switchover requires large tanks to store and mix the liquids, straining our limited storage space. Similarly, the tight main aisle where the public works fleet is parked, does not have space for charging equipment needed to support an electrified fleet.



## Essential to the City and the Region

Public Works operations are essential to the City and the region. Public Works employees are the first responders when disasters strike, clearing streets of trees and debris after tornados and storms. Public Works employees ensure daily functions, like safe commutes regardless of the weather. City crews handle snow and ice, maintaining access to regional shopping centers like Shingle Creek Crossing. With nearly half of Brooklyn Center's 33,000 residents commuting outside the City for work, Public Works is critical to keeping the regional workforce moving. Furthermore, almost 50% of Brooklyn Center's workforce is in essential sectors like healthcare.

## Costs and funding

Early conceptual cost estimates show that a new public works garage will cost roughly \$38 - 45 million. While historic investments have been made in transportation at the federal and state levels, there are no funding opportunities for public works maintenance facilities. Cities can build roads and bridges, but have no support in upgrading and replacing public works facilities necessary to keep them working.



Brooklyn Center staff have already received buy-in from the Public Facilities Authority (PFA) to use the PFA's credit enhancement program to help reduce the cost of borrowing to build the facility. However, much work still needs to be done to find funding for this critical project. Brooklyn Center staff plan to continue to seek funding for the project while making progress on design and engineering plans.