

## DPA firehouse based on historical building

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It's sure to be a favorite haunt of boys, old and young, visiting Discovery Park of America. The firehouse located in Freedom Square will serve as home to a 1926 American LaFrance-type 75 fire truck that will feed dreams of brave firefighters racing dramatically through the city to put out blazes that threaten the populace. The building itself is based on a structure that occupies an important place in American history. The firehouse in Harper's Ferry, Va., was the site of abolitionist John Brown's armed slave revolt in 1859. Accompanied by 20 supporters, Brown attempted a dramatic statement about slavery that ended in defeat. He and his men failed to accomplish their goal, although the effort itself won them a page in history books and had influence on the attitude of the populace with regard to slavery at the time. Ultimately the band was defeated and captured by troops under the command of Gen. Robert E. Lee and Capt. Jeb Stuart, who would become military heroes of the Confederacy only a few years later.

The DPA structure will be very similar to that edifice but will have windows and doors on different sides of the building. It will also include detailing that has local significance.

A wrought-iron staircase that allowed shoppers and employees of the former Verhine Store, plus clients seeking the services of a local attorney and those who wanted to access the popular YMCA, to move from floor to floor in the 1890s in a downtown Union City structure has been donated and will be displayed in the firehouse.

The staircase has also been owned by the family of the late Hardy Graham, who was a former mayor of Union City, and most recently was in the possession of the Robert Wood family, who donated it to DPA. It has been carefully restored and will be a functional aspect of the building, which has a very distinctive brick exterior, as well.

The firehouse is expected to be a popular venue when DPA opens its doors to area residents and visitors from across the nation later this fall. The multi-million dollar 50-acre complex on Union City's northwest side will draw thousands of people interested in educational exhibits and entertainment each year, according to a professional assessment. Major monthly events and many smaller programs are planned to provide a constantly changing source of learning and fun. Exhibits are taking shape within the distinctive Discovery Center that is the centerpiece of the site, and passers-by on Everett Boulevard can already easily see the many exterior features that will attract attention on the DPA grounds, as well.

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