

Northbridge Fire Department

Northbridge, MA

TGAS
THE GALANTE ARCHITECTURE STUDIO

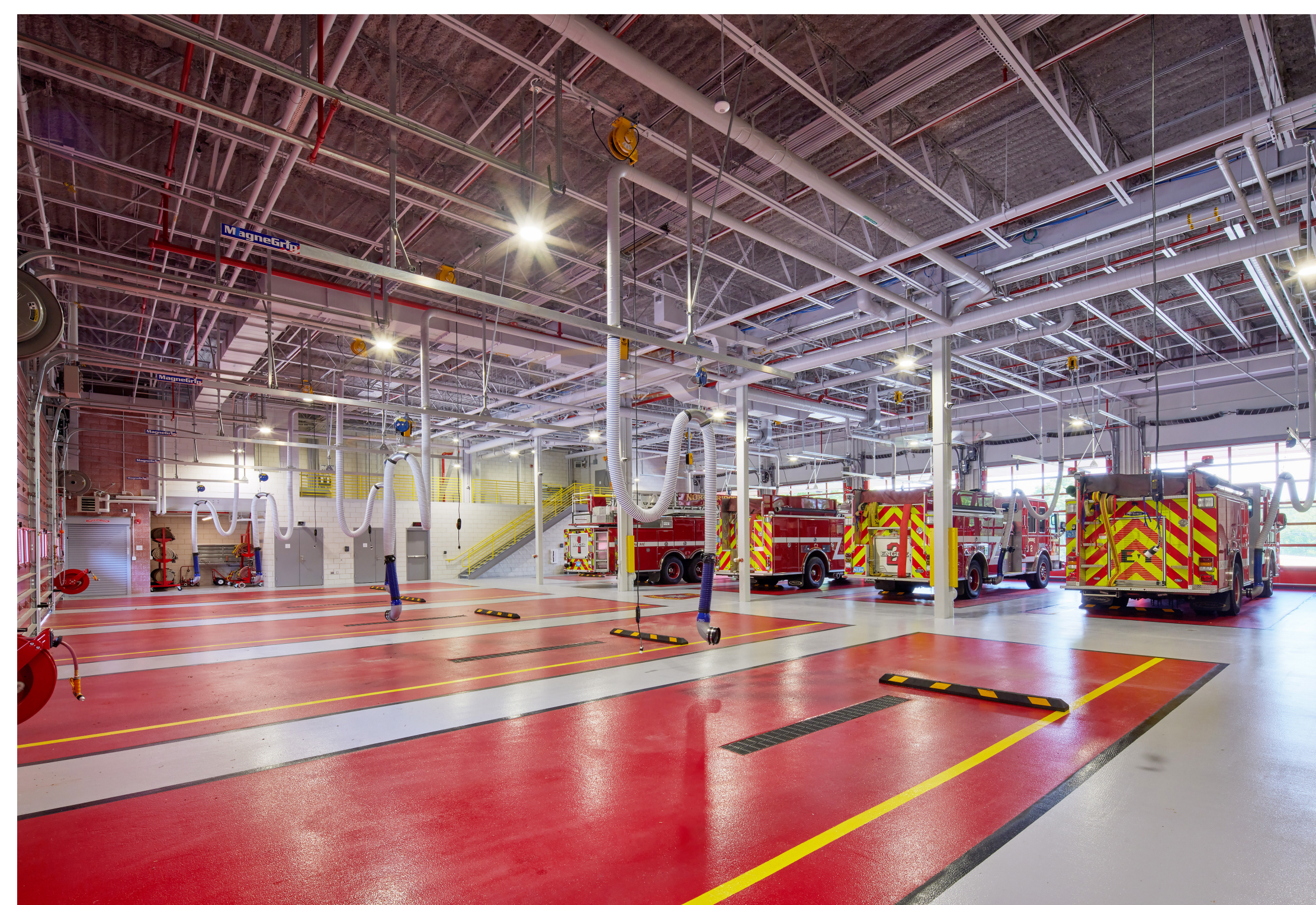
For decades, the Northbridge Fire Department fought fires without a formal fire station, functioning as a private unit of the town's major employer, Whittin Machine Works, to protect its textile factory along the Mumford River. The factory's eventual closure forced the fire department to serve the town out of crumbling mill buildings too small for modern firetrucks, and unhealthy for first responders. Northbridge's first official fire station merges 21st-century design with mill-town history.

A glowing sign hovers above the five double-deep apparatus bays, which stations ten fire and EMS vehicles. A four-story corner tower provides hose storage and firefighter training space. The southwestern portion has offices for municipal clerks and managers. A rear outbuilding shelters five emergency vehicles. Pathfinding tools guide firefighters through the building. A shared driveway prevents daily traffic from impeding fire operations.

Artifacts from the town's firefighting history decorate the station. The fire department's first wooden firehose cart hangs in the lobby from repurposed timber salvaged from the Northbridge Fire Chief's first blaze. A shelf displays trophies, memorials, and other fire department memorabilia.

The new facility's innovative decontamination design protects staff from toxins brought in from fires by directing them from the apparatus bay (Hot Zone) to a decontamination room where they leave their firefighting equipment in a state-of-the-art extractor. They then move into a shower to clean themselves (Warm Zone), dress in clean clothes, and enter a hallway with heavy protection against carcinogens (Cold Zone).

Insulated metal exterior panels conserve energy and require little upkeep. Terracotta rainscreen, zinc panel accents, and brick walls fortify the station against harsh weather conditions. The brick and terracotta reference Northbridge's mill-town heritage, while the glass and metal reflect contemporary times. The interior is durable and maintenance-free with fire suppression and ramp-alerting systems.



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