

THE CITY OF SUMMIT

N E W J E R S E Y

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News Release

For immediate release

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The Hunt Is On at City Hall: Former Mayor Whitman Returns to Complete a Mission Decades in the Making

SUMMIT, NJ, July 25, 2025 – A decades-old mission brought a familiar face back to Summit City Hall this week, as former Mayor Janet Whitman (1988 to 1995) returned to complete a heartfelt chapter of the city's history, one she began during the construction of City Hall 30 years ago.

Whitman, the first woman ever elected mayor of Summit, was instrumental in the planning and development of the current City Hall building, which opened in 1996. But she didn't just help build a government center. She planted the seeds for future generations of civic leaders.

"I knew I had to finish this project," she said with a laugh, as she sat down at her old desk in the Mayor's office, pulling out the stationery. "It's been on my mind that these letters have to get written."

As part of her original vision, Whitman had two time capsules created during construction. They are scheduled to be opened in 2049 and 2099, marking the 150th and 200th anniversaries of Summit's incorporation as a city. Tucked inside each are scavenger hunts designed by Whitman to lead future mayors and council members to a hidden gift and personal letter from her.

This week, joined by former Common Council member Phyllis Sank, Whitman returned to City Hall to complete those letters, adding a final, personal touch to a visionary project she began more than a generation ago.

Now a resident of Austin, Texas, Whitman says Summit will always be home. During her visit, she toured the City Hall building she helped bring to life, including the Janet Whitman Community Room, which is currently undergoing a facelift after 30 years of service. She also spent time in the law library, rekindling memories of her time in office.

Current Mayor Elizabeth Fagan presented Whitman with a ceremonial key to the city in recognition of her lasting impact, not only as a leader but as a trailblazer. Whitman's historic election as Summit's first female mayor set a precedent that continues today. Three of the five mayors who followed her have also been women.

"Mayor Whitman didn't just shape our city in the 1990s. She ensured her influence would echo through the 21st century and beyond," said Mayor Fagan. "Thanks to her, future leaders will not only discover her gifts but be reminded of the responsibility and inspiration that comes with public service."

As Summit looks ahead to its next 75 years, Janet Whitman has ensured its future leaders will be connected to their city's past.

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