

# THE CITY OF SUMMIT

N E W J E R S E Y

CITY HALL 512 SPRINGFIELD AVENUE SUMMIT, NJ 07901

## News Release

For immediate release

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### **Summit NJ Mayor Elizabeth Fagan State of the City Address on January 7, 2025**

SUMMIT, NJ, January 8, 2025 – The 2025 Organization Meeting of the Summit Common Council was held on Tuesday, January 7, at City Hall. New councilmembers Michelle Kalmanson and Claire Toth were sworn in, and Mayor Elizabeth Fagan, MD, presented her State of the City Address, the transcript for which is provided below. The full meeting can be viewed on the city [YouTube channel](#).

#### **Mayor Fagan State of the City Address 2025**

Good evening, Summit!

It is an honor to be here tonight as we reflect on the past year and look forward to the future of Summit in 2025.

First, congratulations and welcome to our incoming councilmembers, Michelle Kalmanson and Claire Toth. I'm excited to work alongside you as we continue to serve and uplift our city and its residents. I would also like to extend a heartfelt thank you to our outgoing councilmembers, Andy Minegar, who served for three years, and Greg Vartan, who served for six years, including a year as Council President. Your dedication has made Summit a better place. I would also like to recognize Lisa Allen for her exceptional service as both Councilmember and Council President. It has been a pleasure working with each of you and I'm grateful for your valuable insights, leadership, and service.

As I reflect on my first year as Mayor, I am both proud of what we have accomplished and eager for what lies ahead. Over the past year, we have tackled significant challenges, but we have also celebrated meaningful wins. Summit is a vibrant community, and that is thanks to the collective efforts of our city staff, elected officials, volunteers and residents, all working together to make Summit a better place to live and work. I look forward to continuing these efforts into 2025.

#### **Public Safety and Quality of Life: Protecting Our Residents and Community**

Our 2023 election demonstrated that voters overwhelmingly felt that Summit faced significant safety, over development and quality of life issues. Beginning at our first meeting of 2024 your elected officials acted swiftly to address each of these bipartisan concerns, among other challenges.

Ensuring the safety and well-being of Summit's residents is my highest priority. This year, we have made notable strides in enhancing our public safety efforts, beginning with the [Resident Protection Ordinance](#). This initiative strengthens protections for residents and provides additional resources to combat local crimes, such as motor vehicle theft and burglary.

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We have also expanded our police department's table of organization by adding two new officers to our team. This strategic enhancement reinforces our commitment to maintaining safe, well-patrolled neighborhoods and ensuring the security of our community.

These efforts are making an impact. Police Chief Zagorski's [end-of-year report](#), available on our [website](#), shows a reduction in overall crime in 2024, with a particular decline in property crime—one of the top concerns for residents.

Downtown parking is also a top concern. Increased enforcement improves parking availability and quality of life for our residents and businesses. With our new Director of [Parking](#), who was promoted from within the city, we have increased parking enforcement. Additionally, the Summit Police Department issued double the number of parking summonses in 2024 compared to 2023.

But there's more work ahead. This year, we will focus on improving parking, driving, and pedestrian safety, including addressing the rising concerns around e-bikes and e-scooters. We are looking to other cities that have successfully implemented safety measures to protect both riders and pedestrians. And, as a physician, I urge everyone to remember that helmets aren't just for kids—wearing one is the best way to protect yourself when riding a bike, scooter, or any other open-air transportation.

Consistent with our focus on safety and quality of life, our ongoing work to address homelessness continues to make a noticeable difference for our visitors and residents. By partnering with local organizations, the Mayor's Task Force on Homelessness has helped eight individuals experiencing homelessness find housing, employment, or access to rehabilitation care. We remain committed to providing stable housing solutions and supporting those in need.

Summit is a wonderful shopping and dining destination, and we are committed to ensuring that everyone who visits or spends time downtown feels safe and welcome.

## **Engagement and Transparency: Connecting with the Community**

Engagement and transparency are cornerstones of this administration. When residents are informed and involved, our community thrives. In 2025, we will continue to prioritize accessibility and open communication. Whether addressing issues like flooding or noise in your neighborhood or walking through areas like the Salt Brook to hear your concerns directly, we remain committed to a hands-on approach. I am available to meet with you at your convenience, and I encourage you to [reach out to me](#) or contact the [city clerk](#) to schedule a time to discuss your concerns.

We are also working hard to keep you informed. Every two weeks, our police department publishes the [Police Blotter](#), offering important public safety updates. In addition, we provide several [notification systems](#), including [Nixle](#) and [Smart911](#), that keep you updated on everything from emergency alerts to community news. I encourage everyone to [sign up on our website](#) to stay connected. We are active on social media as well, with live streamed meetings on our [YouTube channel](#) and daily posts on [Facebook](#) including a Mondays with the Mayor segment and a recently initiated weekly neighborhood news update for our busier residents. Later this year, we'll be introducing a digital newsletter to delve deeper into key city issues and initiatives. Through town halls, listening sessions, and one-on-one meetings, we are ensuring our residents are informed and involved in the decisions that shape our city.

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## **Education**

When it comes to excellence, I am fully dedicated to ensuring that our [public schools](#) rank among the top in the state. Achieving this means collaborating closely with our school board to strengthen policies around core subjects, particularly in STEAM, to maintain our academic competitiveness. It is equally vital that we keep parents informed and actively engaged in their children's education. By fostering a culture of teamwork and transparency, we can build lasting trust with families, retain students in our public schools, and continue to raise the bar for educational excellence.

The recent construction of state-of-the-art STEAM facilities across all schools in the district underscores the Board of Education's commitment to enhancing the academic experience at every grade level. Likewise, the new turf at the lower high school field, along with the proposed improvements to Anderson Field House, reflect our ongoing dedication to extracurricular excellence.

Ultimately, shaping a budget and policies that not only preserve our exceptional academic and extracurricular programs but actively improve them, is a fundamental responsibility of the Board of Education.

## **Playgrounds and Parks: Spaces for Our Families**

We continue to invest in our playgrounds and public spaces, creating environments that are safe and welcoming for all community members. I am excited to announce that [Mabie Playground](#) is ready to go out to bid, and we hope to have it completed by the summer. Thanks to careful budgeting, grants and community support, we will soon have Summit's first ADA-accessible, sensory-friendly and intergenerational playground, designed to serve everyone in our community. Thank you to the [Department of Community Programs](#) staff and the advisory board members for engaging neighbors and residents and incorporating their input into the final design!

One of our major goals for 2025 is to work with Union County to ensure the completion of the long-awaited Briant Pond renovation. The county is committed to finishing the project, and we are eager to see this important space revitalized. In fact, I received an update from the county stating that they will go out to bid tomorrow and expect to award a bid this quarter.

The Park Line Project is also positioning Summit as a leader in protecting, beautifying and enhancing our environment. Through close collaboration with the Park Line Foundation and adjacent neighbors, we will continue to create this beautiful linear pedestrian park along the abandoned railroad.

On January 14th, we will hold [three sessions](#) here in the Council Chamber to gather residents' feedback on the [Tatlock lighting proposal](#). It is by working together that we make our city shine. That is why we are working hard to ensure frequent dialogue with our residents regarding the issues you care about. I encourage you to attend and share your thoughts with us during one of the evening sessions.

## **Promoting Community Wellness**

I am also proud to announce the successful completion of our first year of the [Mayors Wellness Campaign](#). This initiative not only promotes healthy habits but also focuses on creating safer environments for outdoor activities like walking and biking. In September, we hosted our [Bike and](#)

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[Pedestrian Safety Rodeo](#) in partnership with Avenues in Motion. Residents had the opportunity to get their bikes adjusted at no cost and received free helmets if needed, while also learning important safety rules through an engaging challenge course. Additionally, the wellness campaign has teamed up with the Wait Until 8th movement, which encourages limiting social media and device use until at least 8th grade. I will continue to promote wellness year-round, making our community healthier and safer for all.

## **Development: Responsible Growth for Our Future**

As Summit grows, we remain committed to responsible development that serves the community's best interests. In 2024, we took significant steps with the creation of the [Morris Broad Crossroads overlay zone](#), a strategic zoning change designed to ensure Summit receives the highest and best use of key properties such as the old firehouse site, the Chestnut Street parking lot, and 7 Cedar Street. This zoning allows for creative, correctly scaled development to potentially include housing, both market and affordable units, and retail space while maintaining the character and values of our community, ensuring we preserve open space and enhance quality of life.

Responsible growth also means utilizing our resources to address issues as they arise. Our [Department of Community Services](#), which oversees our [trash and recycling](#) services, the [Transfer Station](#), and our [See Click Fix service](#), responded to more than 4,000 tickets submitted this year. Thank you to our community for alerting us when you have an issue.

Our transfer station continues to be a crown jewel of the community with the [Summit Free Market](#) which keeps gently used items in circulation and our recycling center, which keeps recyclable items out of the landfill. The total amount of materials recycled in 2024 at the Transfer Station was more than 343 tons.

## **Affordable Housing**

Affordable housing remains a priority in Summit, and in 2025, we will continue to advance creative, thoughtful solutions that reflect the needs of our community. Collaboration with local nonprofits, landlords, and organizations such as *Our House* will remain at the heart of our strategy. By utilizing affordable housing trust funds, we are focused on improving existing properties, including a group home currently owned by *Our House*, while also fostering the development of new housing opportunities to serve our residents.

Summit's diverse character is one of our greatest strengths, and we are committed to maintaining that while addressing the growing need for affordable housing. Unlike the overdevelopment seen in some neighboring communities, Summit is dedicated to responsible growth that preserves the integrity of our infrastructure and neighborhoods. Rather than concentrating large, all-affordable housing units in one location, we are committed to an approach that was first set in motion a decade ago that distributes affordable units across the city, incorporating them into the fabric of our community rather than concentrating affordable housing in solitary locations.

In 2025, this balanced, sustainable approach will help ensure that Summit continues to be a welcoming, thriving community for all while addressing our affordable housing objectives.

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## **Firehouse and Emergency Operations Center**

One of the most visible accomplishments this year was the completion of our [new firehouse](#), which also serves as an emergency operations center. This facility is critical, especially with Summit's unique location, flanked by two major highways and serving our daily population and twenty-four-hour employers like Overlook Hospital and Bristol Myers-Squibb. It is vital that we are prepared for any situation, 24/7.

The new building includes a decontamination area, designed to protect our firefighters from the long-term health risks they face, particularly exposure to harmful chemicals. This ensures they can continue to serve our community with excellence for years to come.

## **Positive Morale and Community Growth**

As we enter 2025, there is a renewed sense of optimism across our community. We are excited about the progress we have made and are committed to building on that momentum. Working with Summit Downtown, Inc., we plan to make our downtown even more vibrant, with improvements like a new permanent fence and enhanced landscaping near the farmers market.

At City Hall, we are fostering a positive work environment and promoting internal talent. To that end, this evening, we are proud to appoint our CFO, Tammie Baldwin, as City Administrator. Tammie, whose great-great-grandfather, George Baldwin, was Summit's second Mayor, is an outstanding leader, and we are thrilled to have her in this important role. We have welcomed new team members, including our Chief Communications Officer, ensuring that we continue to choose the best for Summit's future. Numerous candidates sought these and other positions with the city, giving us the opportunity to select the very best fit for our city. Summit continues to be a place people not only want to live but also to work and serve.

Thank you, Summit, for being a part of this journey. Thank you to all of the volunteers, both retiring and currently serving on our many boards and committees. Without you, Summit would not be the incredibly special city we call home.

Please make use of the many resources the city provides to keep you informed. This speech, along with links to corresponding data, will be posted on our website. There, you can also find ample information on our many city services. And, as always, our doors are open to listen to your comments and concerns.

We are proud of what we have accomplished so far—from strengthening public safety to fostering responsible development to addressing affordable housing. As we kick off 2025, we are filled with excitement for what lies ahead. Together, we will continue to build a Summit that is safe, thriving, and full of promise for the future.

Thank you.

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