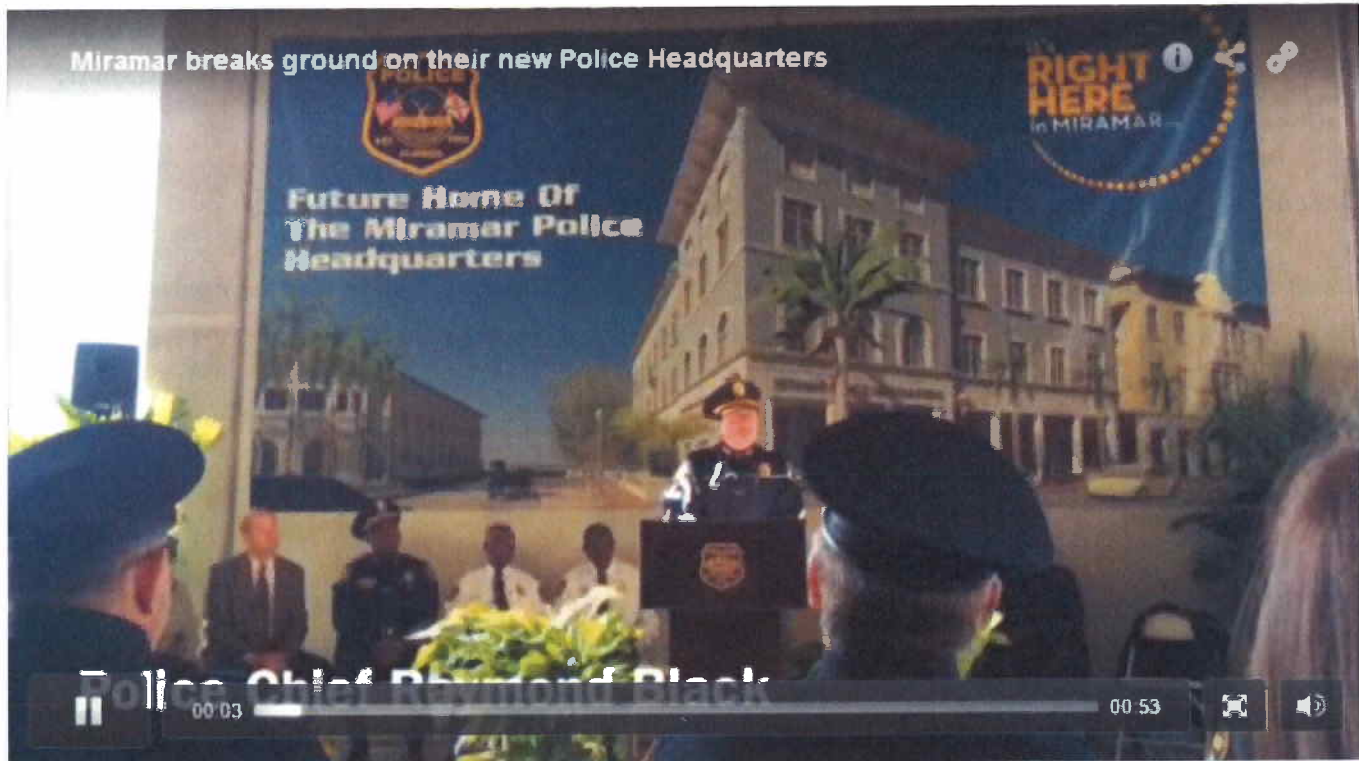


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Miramar breaks ground on new police headquarters



Officials broke ground on the new 65,000 square foot Miramar Police Headquarters being built directly in front of City Hall.

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Hampered by fiscal and other challenges, the city finally broke ground for a new police headquarters in the Town Center to replace the decades-old facility rendered useless by Hurricane Wilma.

"Hang on, we're coming," quipped Police Chief Raymond Black during the groundbreaking ceremony, hoisting a cup of coffee from a **Dunkin' Donuts** shop within walking distance.

Black described the former building as having a style similar to a fortress, but the new 65,000-square-foot facility will have a Mediterranean design that will compliment the architecture of the Town Center. The building will be state-of-the-art and also more inviting to the public than the previous one. It will also house the city's Emergency Operations Center, he said.

The three-story building, which will cost approximately \$23 million, will house most of the department's 270 employees. It will partially wrap around the existing parking garage located just left

of the front of City Hall, and will have some mixed use on the first floor, to include retail shops and restaurants.

"Today is an incredible day for us, it's been an interesting couple of years," said Mayor Lori Moseley, speaking before a crowd of about 80 people attending the groundbreaking.

"I cannot wait for this building to be built ... this is part of the vision we had in the city of Miramar," she added.

City subcontractors and vendors will be a part of the construction, about 20 percent.

The contract to build almost didn't get approval from the Commission. When it came up for a vote in April, there was a dispute over how many local and small businesses general contractor Pirtle Construction should use.

The headquarters is scheduled for completion by January 2016 and should be "move-in ready" by March 2016. A time capsule will be put in the lobby.

"There were a series of moving parts ... lots of sleepless nights," said City Manager Kathleen Woods-Richardson, describing the process leading up to the groundbreaking. "This is what we worked so hard for."

The department has been mostly operating out of a strip-mall facility since Hurricane Wilma tore a hole in the roof of the former headquarters in 2005. The city pays \$268,000 a year to lease the facility.

The new building will have full backup power and will be Category 5 hurricane rated.

The strip mall accommodations aren't built to withstand storms and must be evacuated during tropical storm warnings. The criminal investigations division lacks sufficient office space, interview room space, and rooms for victim's advocates to do their work.

For years, the city was wrangling with FEMA and insurance companies over how much it would collect, and since 2011, commissioners and residents were divided over where the building should go.

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