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LOCAL

Portsmouth mixed-use development at church to serve 'sacred good'

Jeff McMenemy, Portsmouth Herald

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Key Points

- A new redevelopment project in Portsmouth will create 44 below-market-rate apartments.
- The project is a partnership between several groups, including the Portsmouth Housing Authority and the Episcopal Church of New Hampshire.
- In addition to housing, the site will include a new headquarters for the nonprofit Haven and preserve the African Burying Ground.
- The Episcopal Church of New Hampshire is providing the land through a no-cost, 98-year lease.

PORTSMOUTH — After several years in the making, officials broke ground June 8 on a major redevelopment project that will create 44 below-market-rate apartments and a new headquarters for Haven.

Several hundred people turned out to celebrate the partnership between Episcopal Church of New Hampshire, Christ Church Portsmouth, the Portsmouth Housing Authority, Haven (which serves people affected by domestic and sexual violence) and the Black Heritage Trail of New Hampshire.

A groundbreaking ceremony for a multi-use project at the property of Christ Episcopal Church in Portsmouth June 8, 2026 includes, from left, the Rev. A. Robert Hirschfeld, Haven Executive Director Kathy Beebe, Black Heritage Trail of New Hampshire Executive Director JerriAnne Boggis, Portsmouth Housing Authority Executive Director Craig Welch, the Rev. Steve Falci and Portsmouth Mayor Deaglan McEachern. *Deb Cram/Seacoastonline*

The diocese is making the church-owned property at 1035 Lafayette Road available for the redevelopment through a no-cost 98-year lease, officials said. The redevelopment site is located among a busy stretch of businesses and restaurants along Route 1.

Project is about housing and much more

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A new building with 44 affordable housing units is planned at 1035 Lafayette Road in Portsmouth on Christ Episcopal Church property as part of a mixed-use development. *Rendering Provided By Barbara MacLeod*

In addition to the 44 housing units, the project when completed will include a seven-unit transitional housing facility for Haven, continued worship space for Christ Church and the protection and stewardship of the African Burying Ground at Langdon Farm, officials said during the ceremony.

Craig Welch, PHA's executive director, called the project an "ambitious and powerful collaboration" between all the groups and agencies involved.

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He stated the redevelopment of the high-profile site is "designed to protect and renew and energize all who will live here, work here and reflect here.

"The PHA is honored to be entrusted with developing this land," Welch added. "We're going to preserve and highlight the African Burial Ground at Langdon Farm ... and our future goal is to have an early childhood education center in the building behind me."

Church leader says project will have big impact

The Rev. A. Robert Hirschfeld, who is bishop of the Episcopal Church of New Hampshire, speaks June 8, 2026 at a groundbreaking ceremony in Portsmouth. *Deb Cram/Seacoastonline*

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The Rev. A. Robert Hirschfeld, bishop of the Episcopal Church of New Hampshire, said he believes “those who have gone before us are still here, and looking down upon us, surrounding us with their presence. Today marks far more than the beginning of construction. It marks the beginning of a new chapter for this land, for Christ Church and for the wider Portsmouth community."

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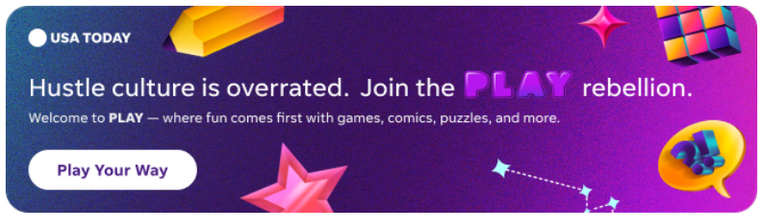
He said, "This property is being reimagined for housing, healing, worship and long-term community care. At a time when communities everywhere are struggling with housing affordability, safety, belonging, and the future of faith-owned spaces, this partnership offers something rare and hopeful, a concrete example of land being used not simply for one institution’s needs, but for a common and I must say sacred good. This project will be God’s love made visible here, even on Lafayette Road."

Bishop Rob Hirschfeld and the Rev. Steve Falci embrace during the multi-use project groundbreaking ceremony in Portsmouth June 8, 2026. *Deb Cram/Seacoastonline*

The Rev. Steve Falci of Christ Church pointed out “that for nearly a century and a half Christ Episcopal Church has stood as a part of Portsmouth’s spiritual and civic fabric.”

“Since our founding in the 1880s, we’ve served generations of working families, immigrants and neighbors, always striving to be a place of welcome, worship, and compassion,” Falci said.



Falci explained that “Christ Church is embarking on an exciting new chapter,” in its history, while stressing the church has always been more than a building.

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A church, Falci said, is “people in service to community.”

He credited the current church parishioners “who generously agreed to have their beloved church building repurposed for the essential work Haven provides for the Seacoast community,”

Portsmouth Housing Authority Executive Director Craig Welch expresses gratitude June 8, 2026 for a new multi-use project with Christ Episcopal Church. *Deb Cram/Seacoastonline*

Falci talked about their efforts to “build a new community here on these grounds, a Portsmouth partnership for housing, healing, worship and the common good.”

Haven finds a new forever home

Kathy Beebe, the executive director of Haven, called the project “really exciting.”

She explained that “Haven began looking for a new home over eight years ago.”

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“We were looking for a home in Portsmouth, because we’ve been in Portsmouth since we began,” she said. “We needed a place where we could grow our programs and services, bring together shelter, education programs, further our reach, expand our impact and better serve the needs of domestic and sexual assault survivors.”

Bishop Rob Hirschfeld, Haven Executive Director Kathy Beebe and Black Heritage Trail of New Hampshire Executive Director JerriAnne Boggis pass hard hats for a groundbreaking ceremony June 8, 2026. *Deb Cram/Seacoastonline*

Beebe added that “words cannot express the gratitude that Haven has … for this gift of our forever home.”

She announced Haven “is embarking on our first capital campaign to secure the funds needed to build our new home.”

The campaign is called “Haven’s Building Dignity Capital Campaign,” she said, and is intended “to make sure that we can build a permanent purpose driven home where survivors can find hope and healing in a building that’s designed with intention.”

'This land holds memories'

JerriAnne Boggis, the executive director of the Black Heritage Trail of New Hampshire, referenced the sacred burial ground on the property.

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She invited the several hundred people attending the event “to acknowledge what already exists here.”

“This land holds memories, it holds history, it holds the sacred presence of people whose lives helped shape Portsmouth, helped shape New Hampshire and this nation,” she said. “Yet many of those stories were too often left untold.

“Today as we gather for this groundbreaking, we do so with the understanding that development and preservation need not stand in opposition to one another,” Boggis said.

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Mayor Deaglan McEachern, one of many Portsmouth city officials who attended the event, pointed to the workforce apartments, along with "a home for Haven, and a respectful place for the Africans who were buried on this property."

"Giving homes to people who need them is the work of God and it should be the work of all of us in the community," he added.

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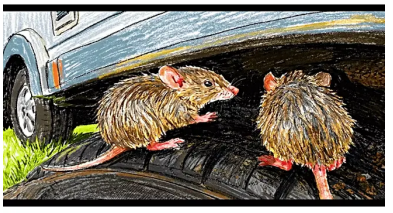

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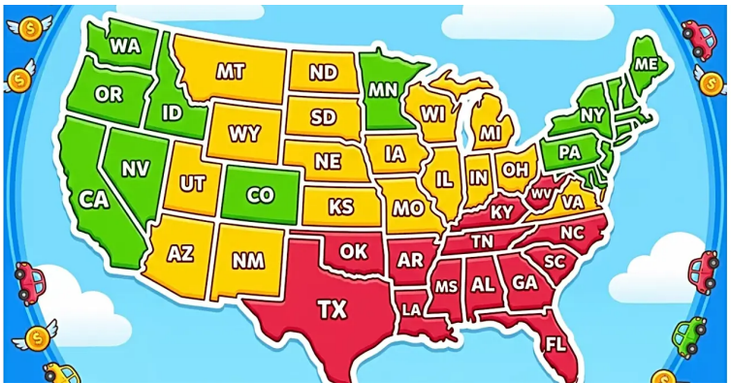

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