



MAYOR GINA-LOUISE SCIARRA

City of Northampton
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Mayor Signs Agreement to Purchase Former First Baptist Church Building for Community Resilience Hub

NORTHAMPTON - Today, Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra announced that she signed an agreement to purchase the former First Baptist Church building located at 298 Main Street to house the much-anticipated Community Resilience Hub. Together with its partner, Community Action Pioneer Valley (CAPV) the city is excited to have secured a location for this critical community space. The city purchased the building from local businessman Eric Suher.

"I am incredibly proud to reach this milestone for the City of Northampton. We have great plans for this space, and for the services it will provide to our entire community and especially our most vulnerable members," shared Mayor Sciarra, "I am profoundly grateful to everyone who worked hard for years to make this acquisition a reality."

The idea for a Community Resilience Hub began in 2019 as a key recommendation from the report "[A Downtown Northampton for Everyone: Residents, Visitors, Merchants, and People At-Risk.](#)" Planning was accelerated during the early spring of 2020 as the COVID-19 pandemic laid bare the profound need for this critical resource. The Mayor's Office and the Office of Planning & Sustainability convened meetings with architects, local and regional stakeholders, and service providers. Community Action Pioneer Valley enthusiastically committed to being the lead operational partner for the Hub and to collaborate on the support services it will ultimately provide. Thus began work to secure funding sources and a location.

"We've all been eagerly waiting for this day, and I'm thrilled that we've reached the phase where we can roll up our sleeves and build this critical resource," said Clare Higgins, Executive Director of CAPV.

In addition to housing the Resilience Hub on the first floor, the building will also serve as headquarters for the Department of Health and Human Services Division of Community Care. There will also be space for community use, and the building will serve as an emergency shelter. The city has already engaged an engineering firm to explore the feasibility of geothermal heating for the building, with a goal of bringing that online very soon.

The First Baptist Church has approximately 14,500 square feet of space and is located between Forbes Library and downtown, near the intersection of Main and West Streets. It was built in 1904 by the First Baptist Church of Northampton to replace a church that had been destroyed by fire in 1863. In 1988, the First Baptist Church congregation merged with the First Congregational Church to create First Churches of Northampton. The building has been vacant since 1993 when it was purchased by developer and Iron Horse Entertainment Group owner Eric Suher with the intention of turning it into a music venue and catering facility.

The final purchase price, once all due diligence was completed, settled at \$3.175 million.

For more information, please visit the city's [Community Resilience Hub](#) page, or contact the Mayor's Office at 413-587-1249 or mayor@northamptonma.gov.

Tax-deductible contributions to help coordinate the programming and improvements needed before the building can be used as a Community Resilience Hub can be sent to City of Northampton, % Planning & Sustainability, 210 Main St, Northampton, MA 01060, or online [here](#).