

UMW's Eagle Village gets off the Ground

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The University of Mary Washington spruced up the vacant Roses store the best it could yesterday for Eagle Village's groundbreaking ceremony.

"Our goal is to improve and enhance this lovely hill," Kathleen Mehfoud, vice president of UMW's private foundation, said at the event.

UMW employees set up a podium with a U.S. flag to its left and a Virginia flag to its right outside the former discount store off U.S. 1.

The Eagle Pipe Band, which consisted of a drummer and two bagpipers, walked out of Roses in kilts and played for an audience seated under a large tent.

Another band member, UMW junior Becca Sargeant, held over her head a silver shovel that was used to break ground for Willard Hall--the school's first building--in 1909.

"This shovel is now part of the special collection archives at Simpson Library but we have drafted it today to signify the importance of this community event," said UMW Rector Nanalou Sauder. Sauder was the last of seven speakers, who included UMW President Judy Hample and Fredericksburg Mayor Tom Tomzak.

UMW's board of visitors and some others lined up after the remarks to turn shovels full of dirt in the parking lot. A chain-link fence now separates the former Roses building from the rest of the shopping center.

"It represents the very essence of urban renewal," said Jeff Rountree, CEO of the foundation. The pipe band ended the ceremony with a procession past several stores in Eagle Village--formerly Park & Shop--and stopped at another vacant store near Giant.

Inside, guests snacked on appetizers, sipped wine and listened to a three-piece band. Clusters of balloons filled the room. Passers-by slowed down to hear the bagpipers, who continued to play as people filed into the party room.

"That was the longest procession ever!" Sargeant said. The Free Lance-Star Publishing Company.

In December 2007, UMW's foundation bought the 21-acre Park & Shop shopping center--now known as Eagle Village--for \$18.75 million. The school plans to demolish the Roses store early next month to make room for student apartments, a parking garage and retail and office space. The estimated price for phase one of the mixed-use development is \$115 million. It's expected to open in summer 2010.