Frequently Asked Questions

Dr. Phillips Charities Eatonville Initiative

THE INITIATIVE

What is the Eatonville Initiative?

Led by Dr. Phillips Charities, the Eatonville Initiative is centered on the historic Hungerford site in Eatonville, Florida. Its mission is to honor and safeguard Eatonville's legacy and Black culture. The Initiative supports a thriving, empowered community and promotes economic vitality for all generations.

The Initiative's work includes an early learning center, a community healthcare hub, a heritage campus and museum, and housing opportunities. Preserving Eatonville's past and creating opportunities for its future are not competing goals. They must happen together.

What is happening with the Hungerford property now?

A Purchase and Sale Agreement between Orange County Public Schools and Dr. Phillips Charities was approved in January 2026. Dr. Phillips Charities expects to close on the property in October 2026.

The Initiative is a long-term effort that brings together historic preservation, community priorities, economic opportunity, and responsible stewardship of the property.

WHY DR. PHILLIPS CHARITIES

Why is Dr. Phillips Charities leading this effort, and what does DPC gain from it?

Dr. Phillips Charities is a Central Florida philanthropic organization. Its legacy is rooted in generosity, community investment, and the belief that giving can build a stronger future for generations.

The organization traces its roots to Dr. Philip Phillips, a businessman, philanthropist, and longtime Central Florida resident. His approach to giving was deeply personal. He believed in helping people and communities thrive. That legacy continues today through Dr. Phillips, Inc. and The Dr. P. Phillips Foundation.

For decades, Dr. Phillips Charities has invested in organizations across Central Florida in children and youth, education, healthcare, arts and culture, and social services. To date, the organization has invested more than $270 million in the Central Florida community.

Dr. Phillips Charities has a long history of championing initiatives that strengthen Central Florida communities. We believe Eatonville's history is worth preserving and that preservation should create opportunity, not limit it, for future generations.

THE LAND & ITS HISTORY

What is the history of the Hungerford property, and how did Dr. Phillips Charities come to acquire it?

The Hungerford property is deeply connected to Eatonville's history and the community's longstanding commitment to education, self-determination, and opportunity.

The property was originally home to Robert Hungerford Normal and Industrial School, which was established in 1897 to provide educational and vocational opportunities for Black students at a time when access to quality education was severely limited. Modeled after Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute, the school became an important center of education and Black achievement in Central Florida.

In 1951, Orange County Public Schools acquired the property through a court-approved transfer from the Hungerford trustees. The property was subject to restrictions limiting its use to educating Black children. OCPS operated schools on the site for decades. Through a series of agreements, these restrictions were removed.

The property was later divided, partly because of the construction of Interstate 4, and portions of the original Hungerford property were sold over the years. The remaining school site eventually became the home of Robert Hungerford Preparatory High School, which closed in 2009. The remaining school building was demolished in 2020.

The Town of Eatonville entered into a purchase-and-sale agreement with OCPS to acquire the property in 2010. Ultimately, the Town of Eatonville and OCPS did not finalize the proposed agreement. Subsequently, a plan was made for a potential private development of the property. OCPS sent out RFPs and selected a for-profit developer. That developer requested amendments to planning requirements from the Town of Eatonville. The Town of Eatonville rejected the amendment requests, and the developer withdrew their purchase offer with OCPS.

In 2026, Orange County Public Schools approved an agreement to sell the remaining Hungerford property to Dr. Phillips Charities. DPC is acquiring the property with a long-term vision centered on preserving Eatonville's history and creating opportunities for the community's future, including cultural preservation, education, health, economic opportunity, and other community priorities.

The acquisition provides an opportunity to begin a new chapter for a property that has played an important role in Eatonville for more than a century. Dr. Phillips Charities believes the future of the property should honor the significance of what came before it while creating opportunities for generations to come.

COMMUNITY VOICES / COMMUNITY ROLE

What role do Eatonville residents, historians, and legacy descendants have in the Eatonville Initiative?

Dr. Phillips Charities' responsibility is to listen and learn from the people who know Eatonville's history, culture, and community firsthand, and to create meaningful opportunities for those voices to help inform the initiative.

We will continue creating opportunities for residents and community stakeholders to participate through community conversations, events, outreach, and other engagement efforts. Dr. Phillips Charities and members of the Advisory Committee will also attend community events and gatherings throughout Eatonville to meet people where they are, build relationships, and hear directly from residents who may not participate in formal meetings or Town events.

As planning progresses, resident input will help inform how Eatonville's history and culture are represented, how the property is experienced, and how the broader vision can best serve the community. Not every suggestion will be incorporated, but every voice should have an opportunity to be heard and considered.

How can I stay involved & informed?

Dr. Phillips Charities will continue to provide opportunities for residents and community stakeholders to learn about the Initiative, ask questions, share ideas, and provide feedback. These opportunities will include community conversations, outreach, events, and other engagement efforts. Stay up to date and learn more at drphillips.org/Eatonville-inititiave.

TOWN GOVERNMENT RELATIONSHIP

How is Dr. Phillips Charities coordinating with the Town of Eatonville's government and its development plans?

Dr. Phillips Charities is coordinating with the Town of Eatonville and ensuring the Initiative's development projects comply with existing Master Plan requirements, among other requirements. Dr. Phillips Charities meets with Town of Eatonville staff on essential initiative items and presents ongoing updates to the Town of Eatonville Town Council.

THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Who serves on the Eatonville Initiative Advisory Committee, and what is its role?

The Advisory Committee includes people with longstanding and meaningful connections to Eatonville, as well as individuals who bring relevant professional and institutional expertise.

Community Residents & Legacy Descendant Members

Michelle Fort | Buyer, Orange County Government, Eatonville Legacy Descendant

Joyce Irby | Eatonville Legacy Descendant

Mr. Theo McWhite | Eatonville Legacy Descendant

Bruce Mount Jr., Esq. | Partner, Nejame Law Firm; Eatonville Business Owner & Legacy Descendant; son of a past Eatonville Mayor

Dr. Candace Finley | Founder & Executive Director, eSteamed Learning; Eatonville Business Owner, Resident, and Legacy Descendant

Bea Hatler | Ex Officio, Hungerford Family Descendant

Committed Stakeholder Members

Dr. Bahíyyah Maroon | Eatonville Initiative Advisory Committee Chair

Mrs. Carol Buford | Property & Asset Manager, Macedonia CDC of Eatonville; Eatonville Faith Community

Simmon Reed | SVP, Corporate Responsibility & Labor Management, Travel + Leisure Co.

Stephanie Vanos | Ex Officio, OCPS School Board Member, District 6

The Advisory Committee represents a diversity of Eatonville voices, and voices of those who care about Eatonville. Its role is to stay engaged with Eatonville residents, listen to what residents want, ask and answer hard questions, identify concerns and sticking points, and bring those issues back to the broader planning process.

GENTRIFICATION & DISPLACEMENT

How will the initiative prevent displacement & protect residents from rising costs?

A pillar of the Eatonville Initiative is to actively seek to prevent the displacement of Eatonville residents.

The goal is to create meaningful opportunities for existing residents, not make it harder for them to remain and participate in the community's future.

PRESERVATION & ARCHAEOLOGY

How will the Eatonville Initiative address concerns about archaeological studies and site preservation?

Dr. Phillips Charities conducted in-depth reviews of the site's archaeological studies in the due diligence process.

COMMUNITY BENEFITS

What economic and community benefits will Eatonville see as a result of the Initiative?

Creating meaningful economic opportunity for Eatonville residents is central to the vision. The first phases of the Initiative are expected to create approximately 300 to 400 construction jobs and 109 permanent jobs.

Dr. Phillips Charities will explore ways to connect Eatonville residents with these opportunities through workforce development, job fairs, training, and partnerships with local organizations and employers. While we cannot guarantee that every position will go to an Eatonville resident, we are committed to creating meaningful pathways for residents to participate in and benefit from the jobs and economic activity the Initiative generates.

THE LAWSUIT

How is Dr. Phillips involved in the lawsuit between Orange County Public Schools and the SPLC?

Dr. Phillips Charities is not a party to the lawsuit.