

NEWS

‘Anything to revitalize Warner’: Town celebrates grand opening of new community center



by Emilia Wisniewski

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Residents and community members stand outside the entrance of MainStreet Warner Lodge on Saturday, Aug. 22,





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About 2 Minutes

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Ron Piroso stepped into the old church off Warner’s Main Street and was dazzled by what he saw: a bright foyer with warm light fixtures, a stainless steel kitchen and lush green landscaping. It wasn’t quite like that when he became a Freemason in 2004.

The Freemasons took ownership of the building on 17 Church St. in 1964, meeting in their tuxedos and promoting brotherhood and charity. Before then, residents, like Piroso’s wife, came for services when it was the First Baptist Church starting in 1833.

“I was raised in this room as a Mason,” Piroso said. “It means a lot to me and my wife ... a lot of memories.”



Ron Piroso grabs dessert made by Warner's Cafe One East during the grand opening of MainStreet Warner Lodge on Saturday, Aug. 22, 2026. Credit: EMILIA WISNIEWSKI / Monitor

In its new life, the **MainStreet Warner Lodge** will now serve as the **town's community center**. Residents, local businesses and Freemason members joined in the grand opening on Saturday to celebrate the new downtown fixture.

The main room, where guests roamed around with stacks of food on their plates and cold sparkling lemonade in their hands, will be home to local meetings and events, open for anyone to utilize.

Employees from Table, a Concord bakery and farm-to-table eatery, came in and out of the industrial kitchen to serve small plates. Soon enough, that kitchen will be used to host cooking classes and hold fresh produce from local farmers.

“We’re really excited,” said Willa Vaughn, a board member of nonprofit MainStreet Warner, which owns the Lodge. “It’s been a long process to get this phase one project done, for this new room and this kitchen, and just being able to have people see the progress is incredible.”



Willa Vaughn, right, chats with Chelsea Annett, center, and Grace Poirier, left, from Concord's Table in the industrial kitchen at MainStreet Warner Lodge on Saturday, Aug. 22, 2026. Credit: EMILIA WISNIEWSKI / Monitor

Beyond both rooms is the work-in-progress concert hall that once held church services and Freemason gatherings. The hall, fitted with a working organ and stained glass windows, will hold performances for Simonds Elementary School. However, it will need an additional \$275,000 to renovate before opening to the public.

Rob Ronayne and Paige Kelly, the owners of Cafe One East across the street from the Lodge, provided blueberry cobbler for the event. Ronayne said he is looking forward to another expansion of Warner's Main Street.

"The space is beautiful and anything to revitalize Warner is a good thing," he said.

A crowd gathers outside MainStreet Warner Lodge to hear the remarks by nonprofit member before the ribbon-cutting ceremony. Credit: EMILIA WISNIEWSKI / Monitor

An official ribbon-cutting ceremony took place outside the lodge, with a handmade sign by **local woodworker Jim McLaughlin** hanging just above the attendees. Board member Tom Heise spoke on all the progress made toward the building since MainStreet Warner purchased it in 2020.

“Today we celebrate the opening of this wonderful new space,” Heise said to a crowd of over 70 community members. “Yet we are also, perhaps even more importantly, celebrating the best of our community, the willingness of people to lend a hand in whatever way they are able to make Warner, our home, a better place for everyone.”

Molly Sanders grabs a small plate prepared by Concord's Table during the grand opening of MainStreet Warner Lodge in
Aug. 22, 2026. Credit: EMILIA WISNIEWSKI / Monitor