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Valley of the Temples holds ground-breaking for makeover of historic building

By Andrew Gomes
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Valley of the Temples Memorial Park held a ceremonial groundbreaking Monday for a new mortuary and chapel to be created by expanding a historic main building at the Kaneohe cemetery.

The event included a blessing by the Rev. Stephanie Borabora followed by members of the project team using o'o, or digging sticks, to turn a mound of dirt placed in the courtyard of the existing building.

"Today kind of marks the end of one journey and the beginning of another," Mark Gilmore, a regional vice president of Valley of the Temples owner NorthStar Memorial Group, said in an interview after the ceremony.

The construction will add 4,285 square feet to the existing 5,751-square-foot building, largely by enclosing a central courtyard, and produce a new chapel with seating for more than 200 people plus a covered lanai.

Significant architectural features of the existing building from 1965, including a lava rock platform under the building and a tower-like portico designed to reflect elements of heiau, or ancient Hawaiian place of worship, will be preserved.

Gilmore said a survey that examined options for adding the desired spaces led to new understanding of the design of the original building by noted Hawaii architect, George "Pete" Wimberly.

"We got our story back," he said.

Fung Associates is the architectural firm for the project. Historic Hawaii Foundation assisted with the preservation plan. Lyon Associates is the project's engineer, and the general contractor is Arita Poulson. Construction is slated to be done in fall 2018.



The expansion of the main building at Valley of the Temples Memorial Park will include a new chapel. A rendering of the proposed update is shown above.