

Diverse and boasting a rich legacy, the Near East Side continues as a center of cultural excellence



The Near East Side has a rich legacy as a cultural center of the Black experience. Like many Black communities nationwide, the once vibrant neighborhood has been underinvested and underserved for decades due to factors including redlining, lack of accessible and affordable health care and other forms of systemic racism.

“ I have the audacity to believe that people everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds and dignity, equality, and freedom for their spirits. ”

- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

The neighborhood is home to institutions including the Lincoln Theatre, King Arts Complex, Martin Luther King Jr. Library and Maroon Arts Group BoxPark. The community also has the oldest Black faith congregation in Columbus and boasts five community gardens. However, the Near East Side is disproportionately impacted by higher rates of obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure. Through access to healthy food and education around cooking and nutrition, the Healthy Community Center is focused on addressing high incidences of chronic health concerns that are prevalent in the Near East Side.

PARTNERS

Learn more about the partners helping to build the Healthy Community Center. Together, we are addressing health concerns affecting the Near East Side. Partners and philanthropic investors are making this facility a reality.



JOIN THE CAUSE

Visit go.osu.edu/hcc to learn about opportunities for community engagement.

Learn about volunteer opportunities, give feedback and donate to champion positivity, health and wellness in the Near East Side.

Healthy Community Center



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

WEXNER MEDICAL CENTER



Making a Difference on Columbus's Near East Side

The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center will open a healthy community center in the spring of 2023 on Columbus's Near East Side. The Healthy Community Center will be located at the site of the former Columbus Metropolitan Library Martin Luther King Jr. branch at 1600 E. Long St.

By working together with residents and the local community, the center will offer a teaching kitchen, a healthy café, wellness activities and conference rooms for community gatherings.

“Providing equal access to health is the goal. Health begins at home. The Healthy Community Center is a step toward providing access to health and advancing health equity.”

- Joshua J. Joseph, M.D., M.P.H., Wexner Medical Center

Designed with the Community, for the Community

Community engagement sessions have brought together stakeholders and members of the community in planning the Healthy Community Center.

These sessions have provided opportunities to gather feedback and ideas on the center's design, services and programming. This collaborative planning will make the Healthy Community Center a hub and resource center for health and wellness, based on the real wants and needs of the community.



In January 2019, The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center purchased the former Martin Luther King Jr. Library near East Hospital in alignment with the **Partners Achieving Community Transformation (PACT) Blueprint**. The site is now in the planning stages for renovation and will become the Healthy Community Center.

The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center is making an investment of \$3.75 million.

The existing one-story building is a former library with approximately 8,900 square feet. The location offers access to seven COTA bus lines.

“Eliminating the disparities that exist within our health and healthcare system demands that we approach the problem through a lens that prioritizes race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status. The Healthy Community Center aims to be the bridge that connects our unique culture with the specific health care needs of our community in an effort to address these disparities head on.”

- Shayla D. Favor, PACT Executive Director

The Healthy Community Center is intended to provide education and teaching skills, build knowledge and offer support and encouragement.

“This is a place where people can come to engage and learn. Having an understanding of healthy foods and nutrition is one thing, but obtaining skills around wellness and healthy habits is invaluable. People can find both here.”

- Mary Howard D.N.P., Executive Director, East Hospital

Amenities

• Teaching Kitchen

A demonstration kitchen will be used for food presentations and demonstrations for up to 30 people in interactive sessions and up to 50 people in food demonstration sessions.

Educational demonstrations will cover nutritional topics related to chronic health conditions including diabetes, cancer, heart disease and obesity.

• Café

Through partnerships with independent restaurant entrepreneurs, the café will offer a variety of culinary options. There will be food and beverage options for residents of the Near East Side to enjoy while using the center as a gathering space with indoor and outdoor seating.

• Gathering Space

There will be three conference rooms that can easily be scaled for larger meetings/events or catered events. These spaces will also be available to community members, local businesses, organizations and nonprofits. Conference rooms will accommodate 40 attendees per room and can hold up to 120 attendees in total.

• Healthy Foods

Educational opportunities will teach residents about the importance of healthy foods for disease prevention. There will be fun social events centered around healthy eating and exercise.