

# Choice Neighborhoods

monthly news about transforming housing, people, & neighborhoods

Issue 131 | February 2024

## GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT

### Kansas City Reaches the Finish Line with a Healthy Living Community

#### Introduction:

As part of the FY14/15 Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grant cohort, the Housing Authority of Kansas City (HAKC) and City of Kansas City, Missouri were awarded a \$30,000,000 grant for the largescale revitalization of the Paseo Gateway District and the redevelopment of Chouteau Courts. The 134-unit, 7-acre Chouteau Courts site was functionally obsolete, in severe physical distress, and completely isolated due to the construction of a 6-lane interstate highway system during the 1960s that bordered it to the north and west. In addition, the site was built on top of a hillside and former landfill which caused settling and major structural issues.



HAKC selected Brinshore Development to be their Housing implementation Entity, responsible for implementing the redevelopment plan for Chouteau Courts, identifying locations for off-site construction, securing financing, providing completion and long-term operating guarantees, and performing ongoing asset management activities. HAKC and Brinshore developed a seven-phase housing plan to replace 134 original housing units with 308 new mixed-income units, building on the vision of a Transformation Plan developed through a FY10 Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant.

The Transformation Plan achieved the Choice Neighborhoods goal of using housing development as a catalyst for broader neighborhood revitalization. Brinshore and HAKC focused on eliminating blight by clustering housing developments around nodes of amenities to trigger private development and stabilize the neighborhood. The addition of new affordable housing units (along with replacement housing for the original Choteau Courts residents) has served as a hedge against gentrification and protected residents from rising housing costs.

Nearly nine years after the initial award, HAKC is now completing lease-up for their final phase and capstone development, Sam Rodgers Place. Representing a full circle moment for the team, the site is

located adjacent to the Samuel U. Rodgers Health Center, the exact location where former Secretary Julián Castro initially announced the grant award in 2015. Now, Secretary Fudge and HUD staff are celebrating at the Samuel U. Rodgers Health Center once again as the Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grant reaches the finish line.

*Secretary Fudge pictured at the Samuel U. Rodgers Health Center*



### **Developing a Healthy Living Community:**

The planning process showed that many residents lacked primary healthcare providers or other preventive care. Instead, when sick, they would access healthcare through emergency rooms, or in some cases, not access healthcare at all. In response to this need, for its 7<sup>th</sup> and final phase, Brinshore and HAKC joined forces with the Sam Rodgers Health Center, located in the target neighborhood.

The Sam Rodgers Health Center was established in 1968, by a prominent African American doctor, Dr. Samuel U. Rodgers, whose mission was to ensure families received care where they needed it, in the heart of their community. Located at the former Wayne Miner public housing community, as the first federally recognized community health center in Missouri, it brought quality healthcare directly to public housing residents. As a Federally Qualified Health Center, the Sam Rodgers Health Center offers full service medical care to the community. They hire outreach workers, referred to as health navigators, who work with families within the community to enroll them in healthcare programs that offer primary and preventive care. The health center accepts Medicaid, private insurance, and works with those with no insurance. These efforts aim to reduce the instances in which the emergency room is viewed as the only source of medical care.



The Sam Rodgers Health Center was an early supporter of the Choice Neighborhoods project and from the onset partnered with HAKC to coordinate care for residents, conduct health care assessments, and patient navigator services. The partnership with the Sam Rodgers Health Center continued to grow with the development team's acquisition of a parcel of land owned by the Center. The Center's sale was key to the success of the final phase because buildable vacant land was in short supply to develop housing within the neighborhood. Through this partnership with

the Sam Rodgers Health Center HAKC, the City, and Brinshore demonstrated responsiveness and

commitment to residents by continuing Dr. Rodgers' vision to connect the public housing community with quality, affordable healthcare, and fully integrate health within the community.

Construction is now complete on Sam Rodgers Place, providing a variety of affordable and mixed income housing choices for residents next to the Sam Rodgers Health Center. The building offers a blend of 1–5-bedroom units, and includes 27 replacement units for former Chouteau Court residents, 15 affordable units, and 20 unrestricted units. Residents can take advantage of a fitness room, playground, abundant off-street parking, in-unit washers and dryers, and supportive services from the Sam Rodgers Health Center.



In addition, a new community center, the Propeller Building, will soon be opening on the site. The Sam Rodgers Health Center will oversee the state-of-the-art center which will serve as an event space, small business incubator, and a hub for services and neighborhood nonprofits. The Center owns the Propeller Building, which was built on land leased to the project from HAKC. The Center is also planning on adding a beautiful park space on their property for residents to enjoy. HAKC demonstrated commitment to Choice Neighborhoods goals by creating opportunities for economic development, a community gathering space, and a small business anchor for the Paseo Gateway Choice Neighborhood.



In addition to the high-quality healthcare services offered to Choice Neighborhood residents, HAKC has leveraged neighborhood assets for its residents. Sam Rodgers Place is located near a public school that offers an early childhood learning program. The school also offers an employment assistance program for immigrant families with children who attend the school. Known as Kansas City's Ellis Island, the Paseo Gateway neighborhood is extremely diverse, with over 25 languages spoken at the local grade school. The site is also within two blocks of a grocery store.

### **Concluding Thoughts on Health and Housing Partnerships**

Reflecting on their success, John Monroe, Director of Planning and Development of HAKC and Todd Lieberman and David Brint, from Brinshore shared the following advice for other grantees hoping to create a healthy living community within their Choice Neighborhoods revitalization strategy:

- Focus communications with individual residents on their healthcare needs to gain a picture of the community's needs at large. Use surveys or other, less formal avenues for data collection and use the information to drive the types of services that should be provided.
- While HAKC was lucky that they had a Federally Qualified Health Center in their backyard, other grantees may not be as fortunate. Consider partnering with any community health center or similar health focused nonprofit. Look at them as more than just a service provider – use them as a vehicle to expand your mission to meet the needs of your community.
- Establish relationships as early in the revitalization process as possible. Define expectations upfront and prepare to be flexible. It's a long journey and plans can easily fluctuate.

They also jointly offer the sentiment that the Choice Neighborhoods Program not only provides affordable and mixed-income housing, but more importantly, it facilitates reaching out to the neighborhood and creating connections with neighbors and with the institutions located in the neighborhood. This is exactly what Kansas City has shown us through their successful Choice Neighborhoods revitalization effort for the Paseo Gateway District.

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