

# West Dayton to get ‘pharmacy-style’ healthy food market

DAYTON



*Jennifer Heapy, CEO of Greater Dayton Premier Management, speaks at an event Friday at the site of the new Healthy Family Market in West Dayton.*  
**CORNELIUS FROLIK / STAFF**



*A rendering of a proposed healthy family market at 2118 Germantown St., down the road from the DeSoto Bass public housing development.*

*CONTRIBUTED*



*Robbie Brandon, director of the new Healthy Family Market, and co-director Alexandra Carpenter, at an event Friday at the project site on the 2100 block of Germantown Street in West Dayton.*

*CORNELIUS FROLIK / STAFF*

BY CORNELIUS FROLIK - STAFF WRITER

Local partners hope to begin construction on a new healthy family market in West Dayton about a year from now that leaders hope will help further shrink a local food desert, which until recently was among the worst in the nation.

The \$1.2 million project will result in the construction of a roughly 5,000-squarefoot “pharmacy-style” market and adjoining smoothie and coffee shop.

The market will offer affordable produce and healthy food options that people will order online or at kiosks. That food will be prepared in the back of the store by workers, many of whom will be youth, said Robbie Brandon, the director of the Healthy Family Market.

“We want people to come in and conveniently get what they need on a daily basis,” she said. “We’re going to teach economic development and workforce development at the same time.”

The market is a new social enterprise that was founded by Sunlight Village, a nonprofit focused on improving the mental health and wellbeing of young people and their families.

The family- and kidfriendly market will have produce and educational information in the front of the store, while the back will have goods and supplies, and the space next door will have wifi and places for people to meet and talk, Brandon said.

The new space will host educational sessions some evenings focused on topics like mental health and parenting, she said.

The new market and smoothie and coffee shop, located on the 2100 block of Germantown Street, will be constructed on the site of a former laundry business that was recently torn down.

Local partners have raised about half of the funding needed for the project and they hope to raise the rest within the next eight to 12 months.

The size of the project could increase since the partners were able to acquire an adjacent piece of land from the Montgomery County Land Bank.

The market site is just blocks from DeSoto Bass, one of the oldest and largest public housing developments in Dayton.

The Healthy Family Market project was developed after two years of community planning efforts that were resident-driven, said Jennifer Heapy, CEO of Greater Dayton Premier Management, the local public housing authority "It's so exciting to see ... this community's vision come to fruition," said Heapy, noting that federal funding helped pay for the planning work. "For communities and our families to be successful, they need neighborhoods with good amenities and access to services."

Dayton used to have the largest food desert in the nation, east of the Mississippi River, said Ambassador Tony Hall, with the Hall Hunger Initiative.

But the opening of the Gem City Market last year means the community no longer holds that unwanted distinction, he said.

The Gem City Market food cooperative was just the beginning, Hall said,

adding that this new market is another step toward ensuring that people have the food they need, which he says should be a basic “human right.”

“We’re going to do everything we can to make this a success,” he said.

A couple of speakers on Friday said they or their relatives remember a time when that area was thriving and full of shops and businesses.

Brandon said she grew up in DeSoto Bass and the area used to be home to grocery stores, barber shops, record stores, pharmacies, recreation centers and many other destinations.

“There was something everywhere – we need to bring that back,” she said.

“I am counting on this market to be a launching point ... the market is just a piece of that vision.”

Project partners include GDPM, the city of Dayton, Montgomery County, City-Wide, Sunlight Village, Fifth Third Bank, the Hall Hunger Initiative and Co-op Dayton.

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