

East End agency gets zoning OK to start \$6M campus plan

Xenia Avenue anti-poverty group raising funds, to more than double its footprint to provide services.



East End Community Services at 624 Xenia Ave. in the Twin Towers neighborhood has been granted a variance it needed for its nearly \$6.4 million campus expansion and improvement project, which is expected to get underway next year.

CORNELIUS FROLIK / STAFF



Two warehouse buildings on the 600 block of Xenia Avenue will undergo millions in renovations to become East End Community Services' new home. East End is in the Twin Towers neighborhood.

BY CORNELIUS FROLIK - STAFF WRITER

DAYTON

East End Community Services has been granted a variance it needed for its nearly \$6.4 million campus expansion and improvement project, which is expected to get underway next year.

East End's project and other investments will benefit the Twin Towers neighborhood, which has been plagued with generational poverty but is finally turning the corner, said Leslie Sheward, who has lived in the neighborhood for 66 years.

"I've seen this neighborhood at its best, I've seen it at its worst, and now I'm seeing it coming back ... hopefully the continuation of its best," she said.

East End, located at 624 Xenia Ave., plans to renovate two interconnected warehouse buildings at 606 and 608 Xenia Ave. that belonged to Light Fantastic Inc.

East End will turn the buildings into its new Whole Family Services Hub, featuring classrooms, offices, programming spaces, meeting rooms, a peer support area, a computer room, flex spaces and more.

The nonprofit's current headquarters is just east of those buildings.

East End, which has been in East Dayton for 25 years, has 19 programs, and staff are housed in three separate, deteriorating buildings, occupying spaces that were never intended to be used for service delivery, said Jan Lepore-Jentleson, executive director of East End Community Services.

Phase 1 of the project, which cost about \$5 million, will help create the East End Whole Family Services Hub.

The warehouse buildings will offer 17,000 square feet of offices and meeting rooms and will help accommodate at least three other

agencies that will provide services in partnership with East End, Lepore-Jentleson said.

This project will more than double East End's current footprint.

The two-story warehouses will get a significant facelift, and there will be an attractive new entrance, and East End also plans to remove a smaller

building east of one of the warehouses.

Phase 2 of the project will convert East End's current facility into a family wellness hub, which will have an improved youth development center and a new teaching kitchen.

East End is looking at demolishing some sections of the current facility if they are too expensive to rehab.

East End expects to go out to bid in January 2023 for phase 1 and hopes that construction will begin in the spring and wrap up by the end of the year.

East End has raised \$3.7 million for the two-part project, but it increased its fundraising goal by nearly \$1 million to account for higher costs due to inflation, Lepore-Jentleson said. She added that East End needs to get to \$4.96 million before seeking \$1.4 million in New Market Tax Credits to cover completion of the project.

East End expects to serve about 6,000 people each year after the expansion, or 20% more than what it serves currently.

East End's current space is very cramped, and the expansion primarily will help the nonprofit dedicate more space to existing programs, said Kate Ervin, design professional with App Architecture, a firm that has helped design the expansion project.

"East End Community Services has been providing quality social programs for children, families and seniors for over two decades," she said.

East End recently was approved for a variance by the Dayton Board of Zoning Appeals to reduce the number of parking spots it is required to provide.

East End is a community anchor, and Twin Towers would be a mess without it, said Sheward, a longtime resident and head of the Twin Towers Neighborhood Association.

But she said East End's project is one of multiple planned investments in the area.

In spring 2023, Xenia Avenue will be repaved, with new curb ramps to be

added and sidewalks to be repaired.

The city plans to install dedicated bike lanes on Xenia Avenue, and a new connection will be made to the Steve Whalen Bike Path.

Also in Twin Towers, Miami Valley Child Development Centers is consolidating four of its locations into a new \$11 million center, less than half a mile from East End, on Nassau Street. The Lincoln Hill Child and Family Center will serve about 200 children.

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