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Cleveland nonprofit stakes out East Side presence with \$18M development

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A Cleveland nonprofit has increased its geographic foothold through a new campus development on the city's East Side that, once completed, will represent a \$18 million investment.

Providence House, a crisis nursery organization dedicated to family preservation and foster care prevention, established an East Side campus in the Buckeye-Shaker neighborhood after operating from a single campus in the Ohio City neighborhood for 44 years.

The new location enables the organization to double its capacity and provides additional resources in another part of the city.

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While portions of the project are complete, including the renovation of a historic building and a newly built crisis nursery center, Providence House is working to secure funding to break ground on a community service hub that it hopes will increase access to social services in the area.


"We're really proud that we're the largest private development on Buckeye Road in almost 30 years, and that it's a nonprofit. That's our commitment. It's to strengthen these neighborhoods by starting with its kids and families," Natalie Leek, president and CEO of Providence House, told Crain's.



History of the organization and its future

Providence House provides emergency shelter to children whose families are in crisis and who may be at risk of abuse, neglect, or other dangers while parents remain in custody of the child.

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The organization provides a variety of services within that mission, including temporary residential units and care for newborns to 12-year-old children; family case management services; and aftercare engagement to monitor family progress and stability following discharge.

Providence House reported \$6.38 million in annual revenue in 2024, according to ProPublica.

Founded in 1981 in a three-room house on West 44th Street, Providence House has since expanded four times in the Ohio City neighborhood. However, when increased demand led to a longer wait list for children needing services — many of whom were coming from the East Side of the city — the organization decided to look for a place to set up an additional campus.

The development has been a long time in the making. In 2017, the Providence House board approved the plan to expand. Two years later, the organization bought the 100-year-old Weizer Building at 11801 Buckeye Road, which was created as a Hungarian-nationality parish.

After purchasing the building, Providence House began raising capital for renovations with initial contributions from the Saint Luke's Foundation and the Cleveland Foundation, Leek said. The initial phase of the project— which consisted of the Weizer Building renovation and a newly-built crisis nursery center extending the back of the building— cost \$11.5 million, with the majority of the funding coming from foundation grants and gifts from individual donors.

The Weizer Building was opened for employee use in early 2021 and is now home to the nonprofit's administrative offices, increased spaces for family support work, children's education and activity spaces and a community space. The building is 19,972 square feet, including the basement.

The newly built, 6,672-square-foot crisis nursery center behind the historic building welcomed the first group of children to the facility this July. The approximately 7,000-square-foot center consists of 20 beds, an infant playroom, a kitchen space and a dining space.

The architects on both projects was Ohio City-based Hiti, DiFrancesco and Siebold, Inc., a firm that specializes in complex residential environments like senior dementia care facilities that has been the team on Providence House's multiple expansion projects, Leek said.

The construction manager on the project was Albert Higley, a Cleveland-based construction firm.

The East Side facility has created over 40 jobs, including three social workers and about 14 child care workers per shift with three shifts a day, said Ashley Stock, director of programming and clinical operations.

With the new location, Providence House has the ability to double its capacity. The organization hopes to aid 500 children a year, which will help reduce the wait list of "hundreds of children a year," Leek said.



Providence House

Rendering of the Community Services Hub slated for construction at the corner of Buckeye Road and East 119th Street.

What needs to be done

Now the nonprofit is turning its attention to the next development in the Buckeye-Shaker neighborhood: a community services hub on a small parcel to the southeast corner of the property.

The vision for the 0.27 acre or 11,765-square-foot parcel on the East Side campus is to build a three-story mixed-use facility will serve as a Community Service Hub that will house nonprofit partners for low rent rates, Leek said. The building will be approximately 10,300 square feet.

Providence House has connected to various Northeast Ohio service organizations about potentially becoming tenants, including Stella Maris; Birthing Beautiful Communities; Achievement Centers for Children; Cornerstone of Hope; Family Connections; LGBTQ+ Community Center of Greater Cleveland; May Duggan; Canopy Child Advocacy Center; and Connecting for Kids.

Potential partners can submit letters of interest as the next phase of project planning unfolds.

"What's really important to us as we connect families to services," Stock said. "To really understand that no matter where our campus is, if we're talking about the West Side or the East Side, wherever our families live, is where they're going to return. We want to connect them to organizations that are already near them and accessible."

Providence House has already invested about \$1 million in preparing the site for construction and is now build-ready. However, construction start dates are dependent on securing funding.

The Community Service Hub is expected to cost \$6 million. So far, \$825,000 is committed to the project. The organization is actively fundraising and estimates they will have an 18- to 24-month period to raise capital.

However, Providence House aims to secure approximately 40% to 50% of the pledges in order to progress to the next stage of the project—issuing a bid for a contractor.

The contractor will be determined by a public bid, which has not yet been issued, and Hiti, DiFrancesco and Siebold will serve as the architect.

The new build project is expected to be an eight to 10-month build, Leek said.

All of the Providence House projects on the East Side are funded through the Giving Hope for the PHuture Campaign's \$24.5 million raise. The phase one fundraiser was \$11.5 million and is spent. The phase 2 portion aims to reach \$13 million. So far, the organization has raised \$825,000 out of the \$6 million for the community services hub, about \$1.5 million for the projected \$5 million endowment, and \$816,515 raised out of \$2 million for expanded operations.

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