

With new clinic, MPHC no longer hidden treasure in Tempe

Content written by: LISC Phoenix

August 30, 2017



For nearly 11 years, **Mountain Park Health Center** has delivered its unique style of integrated healthcare in relative obscurity in Tempe. Now it's also working redevelopment magic in the city's center while continuing to advance community health and wellness—and you can't miss it.

At the **northeast corner of Broadway Road and McClintock Drive**, MPHC has transformed a former boat dealership into a clinic specially designed, with neighbors' input, for community benefit throughout its 6.5-acre site. Installation art, a mini-citrus orchard, a tree nursery, grassy open space, a 1/3-mile fitness trail made visually interesting by desert plants, and numerous trees promising coveted shade when they reach maturity catch visitors' eyes before they step through the doors of the open, inviting clinic.

The new clinic, which opened in May, is within the Apache Boulevard commercial corridor along Valley Metro's light-rail network. That corridor is among several key areas along the light-rail line where LISC Phoenix focuses comprehensive community and economic development efforts as part of a strategy to raise the standard of living for individuals and to create sustainable neighborhoods.

MPHC moved from an 8,000-square-foot space in a secluded location near Tempe St. Luke's Hospital to a 32,000-square-foot clinic. Dr. John Swagert, MPHC's chief executive officer, said the new clinic has averaged 2,500 patients per month, 1,000 patients per month more than at the previous location. In the first weeks at the new site, the clinic was getting about eight new patients who lived in the neighborhood, he said.

"As usually happens when we launch a site like this, we approach capacity pretty fast," Swagert said. "The needs are pretty high out there. With this one, we actually built in the possibility of an expansion."

Tempe City Councilwoman Lauren Kuby is among the new patients. She said she appreciates how MPHC built a clinic that is "proud and embracing of the community."

“It reflects my values,” Kuby said. “I think a lot about sustainability issues, and I think a lot about how I want to lead my life. But in terms of medical, I was just going to the same place for decades. When I saw what Mountain Park did, I said I want to support this and do whatever I can.

“It’s not just about serving a community that doesn’t have insurance or is underinsured. It’s about serving the entire community, and I want to be involved in anything that embraces the entire community.”

MPHC’s practice of integrated healthcare goes beyond treating illness to include health and nutrition education, a legal partnership program, and an expansive list of “other” services. Other could be transportation, offering summertime lunches for children who received free lunches during the school year, free children’s books, and the clever “Baby Box”— a padded cardboard container that when emptied of baby supplies serves as a safe, cozy space for newborns to sleep.

“We certainly recognize that healthcare intersects with just about every other aspect of life in the community,” Swagert said. “You can’t enjoy good health if you’re struggling with other parts of your life. . . . The more we can address things that get in the way of people’s health the better we feel about it, and the more impact we think our clinics have.”

That potential high community impact was a factor in MPHC receiving a \$9.35 million New Market Tax Credit through the LISC Healthy Futures Fund to help build the Tempe clinic.

“The conditions that go along with the New Market Tax Credit, that require you to be making a positive community impact and be in a location that needs that kind of help, those are very easy for us to meet because we plan to be in that location forever,” Swagert said. “I think it was just a really great combination of LISC’s desire to help the community and our desire to get the most advantageous financing plan that allows us to stretch our resources as far possible.”

The Tempe clinic is MPHC’s third adaptive re-use project. It has transformed an old Harkins movie theater in Avondale and the former Ramada Inn corporate headquarters in east Phoenix into clinics tailored for surrounding neighborhoods.

A grand opening of the clinic will be held from 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. on Sept.13.