

SAHA's Partnership with University Health Systems

The San Antonio Housing Authority (SAHA) and University Health Systems (UHS) have entered into a collaborative partnership to address significant health barriers on the east side of San Antonio. This partnership is part of a larger set of initiatives known as EastPoint, Choice Neighborhood, Promise Neighborhood, and Promise Zone. Together, these initiatives provide comprehensive community revitalization approach that address education, employment, and housing development in neighborhoods just east of Downtown. The new SAHA/UHS partnership addresses one of the key challenges in the area.

In January 2013, HUD awarded a Choice Neighborhood designation to the area around SAHA's Wheatley Courts. The Choice Neighborhood plan envisions the conversion of Wheatley Courts, an obsolete and unsafe public housing site, into a 412-unit, high quality, mixed-income community. The plan will ensure long-term affordability in a walkable, safe, compact, mixed use, pedestrian friendly neighborhood containing a wide range of amenities. The Choice plan also includes on-site case management that will respond to community needs in expanding job readiness, training and work placement programs; and improving access to primary health care and preventive services.

Access to Health Care and the Partnership with University Health System

Access to healthcare is a critical component of medical care. The Wheatley Choice Neighborhood is considered by the US Department of Health and Human Services Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to be a medically underserved area (MUA). This is defined (in the case of Wheatley Choice) as a group of urban census tracts in which there is a shortage of health services for residents who are part of a Medically Underserved Population (MUP), which includes individuals who face cultural, linguistic and/or economic barriers to clinical care.

SAHA reached out to University Health System (UHS) to determine if they were willing to partner with SAHA in working to overcome the health barriers for this community. As part of the partnership, SAHA agreed to provide two acres of land to UHS. UHS agreed to construct a new health clinic on that land that would increase access to primary care services in East Bexar County.

The new clinic will establish a clinical site to enhance access to early preventive care. UHS has a three year goal to conduct 3,783 primary care encounters by September 30, 2016, by establishing primary care services in partnership with community partners to expand delivery of preventive care services. Additionally, UHS will have a focus on mental health and health education. A recent San Antonio Metropolitan Health District (SAMHD) Health Impact Assessment found that mental health and health education were critical issues in the community. The SAHA/UHS partnership will go a long ways toward filling this gap and providing much needed primary care services in the area.