



The Bulletin



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ANNOUNCEMENTS

KCDC Breaks Ground on Neighborhood Components of Transforming Western

Knoxville's Community Development Corporation (KCDC), along with business and community leaders, officially broke ground July 8 on several neighborhood components of Transforming Western to provide residents with economic opportunities, healthy food options, a new park and youth enrichment.

The latest additions to the ongoing neighborhood revitalization will include a new Connections Building and destination park and the expansion of the Beaumont Youth Center, helping create a community where Knoxville residents can grow, learn and enjoy spending time together.

Part of the funding for the new amenities comes through the [New Markets Tax Credit Program](#), which helps economically distressed communities attract private investment by offering federal tax credits through Community Development Entities (CDEs), including CAHEC New Markets, the Reinvestment Fund and the Rose Urban Green Fund. Additional support comes from lending partners Regions Bank and Three Roots Capital.

"It's inspiring to see the Transforming Western initiative advance with such strong support from residents, community leaders and funding partners who are helping make our shared vision a reality," Ben Bentley, KCDC executive director and CEO, said. "These diverse funding sources

allow us to provide more than housing by adding supportive services like educational and vocational initiatives, youth development and recreational opportunities that help create a stronger, more connected community."

The Connections Building, destination park and Beaumont Youth Center expansion are all expected to be completed in 2027.

The City of Knoxville will contribute \$26.5 million over six years to support infrastructure and other improvements to transform the Western Heights and Beaumont neighborhoods.

"It's exciting to see Transforming Western move closer to completion," Indya Kincannon, Knoxville Mayor, said. "After safety and housing, the next most important component of a neighborhood is the connection between neighbors and opportunities to thrive. The elements we're breaking ground on today – including a new destination park – are those amenities that make a neighborhood a home."

These neighborhood investments have been made possible through an unprecedented collaboration among federal, state and local governments, philanthropic organizations, private-sector partners and community supporters. Philanthropic support for the neighborhood components has been provided in part by the Bill & Crissy Haslam Foundation, Clayton Homes Foundation, Home Federal Bank,

East Tennessee Foundation, and Kennerly, Montgomery & Finley P.C.

Grant support for the neighborhood components has been received from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Choice Neighborhoods grant, U.S. Department of Transportation Safe Streets for All grant, America's Healthy Food Financing Initiative, Tennessee Department of Health, Variety - the Children's Charity of Eastern Tennessee, Trinity Health Foundation, Tennessee Arts Commission, First Horizon Foundation and the Y-12 Federal Credit Union Gives Foundation.

Connections Building

The 16,114-square-foot building will be located at 1253 W. Oak Hill Drive and offer access to healthy foods and entrepreneurship opportunities, including culinary training and food-business start-up incubation services. Building tenants Real Good Kitchen and Junior Achievement of East Tennessee will offer an assortment of programs, including food education and financial literacy.

Real Good Kitchen, which will occupy 8,000 square feet of space on level two of the building, will have a commercial teaching kitchen designed and built out by KaTom Restaurant Supply for culinary workforce training experience that will enhance employment opportunities. It will include two full kitchen lines, a separate allergen kitchen, a bakery and stalls for pop-ups to sell food. Real Good Kitchen will also offer dining options and a grab-and-go concept operated in a 340-square-foot space near the recreation area.

The Connections Building also could be used as rentable, private space for about 100 people for events with food services from Real Good Kitchen food business partners already on site.

Junior Achievement of East Tennessee, which will be located in 6,000 square feet of space on level one, will provide an entrepreneurship and financial literacy education center. Programming will focus on middle- and high-school students to complement the elementary school programming already offered by Junior Achievement in Anderson County.

Architecture for the \$15 million Connections Building is provided by Sanders Pace Architects, and Merit Construction is general contractor.

Destination Park

The two-acre destination park will be located along West Oak Hill Drive between Reed and McSpadden streets and provide an immersive play experience for children of different ages and spaces for community gatherings and events.

The amenities will include: The Cascades area with a splash pad and boulders, and 1,800-square foot capacity for up to 120 users at one time; Ridge & Valley Playscape area built into the ridge with little and big kid playgrounds and two pavilions that can be reserved for birthday parties and gatherings; The Grove canopy of trees; parking plaza that doubles as outdoor event space with food truck hookups; outdoor stage that can be reserved and used for community events; The Steppes area, an ADA pathway with built-in boulders and seating for the stage area; north lawn with open play area; and a corner plaza.



Once completed, the destination park will become a public park managed by the City of Knoxville's Parks & Recreation Department.

Landscape architecture for the \$8.5 million destination park is provided by Merritt Chase with partner Sanders Pace, and Merit Construction is general contractor.

Beaumont Youth Center

The expansion of the Beaumont Youth Center will add activities and spaces for teenagers and youth and will be operated by Boys & Girls Clubs of the Tennessee Valley. Teenagers will have access to a new teen center, and younger children will have a new youth lounge in addition to new classrooms and a meal prep area for all ages.

The expanded center, located at 1331 W. Oldham Ave., will provide services for up to 200 youth daily, which marks an increase of 200 percent from the current facility. The 6,770-square-foot expansion will bring the Beaumont Youth Center to a total of 13,878 square feet.

Architecture for the \$10 million Beaumont Youth Center is provided by Design Innovation Architects, and Jenkins & Stiles is general contractor.



Transforming Western

The first step of the overall Transforming Western initiative was completed in October 2022 with the official opening of the Western Heights Head Start center, which provides comprehensive preschool programs for neighborhood children from infant to age 5 by the Knoxville-Knox County Community Action Committee (CAC).

The first new phase of housing for the Transforming Western initiative opened Jan. 14, 2026, with The Overlook at Beaumont, which includes 76 rental units with one- to five-bedroom options, including 31 subsidized replacement units, 30 affordable units and 15 market rate units.

The groundbreaking for phase 2 took place June 5, 2025, with completion expected in 2026 of two mixed-income residential buildings with a total of 52 one- to four-bedroom units and 15,000 square feet of mixed-use space that will include the Knoxville Arts Center and a health center operated by The University of Tennessee Medical Center. Construction of phase 3 is expected to start in 2027.

Construction for phase 4 is underway and will include a total of 47 one- to four-bedroom units in three residential structures and an amenities building featuring a fitness center, community room, meeting space, leasing office and maintenance office.

The overall redevelopment of the neighborhood will occur over six phases with completion expected in 2029 and an anticipated 479 total housing units. Beyond housing, Transforming Western is bringing together partners from across the public, private and philanthropic sectors to create a neighborhood where families can thrive.

The funding for Transforming Western comes in part from a competitive \$40 million U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Choice Neighborhoods grant that was announced in 2022.

Established in 1939, Western Heights is KCDC's largest affordable housing development. KCDC's lead partners in the Transforming Western planning process include the City of Knoxville, Brinshore Development and Knoxville-Knox County Community Action Committee (CAC).

While significant progress has been made, additional private and philanthropic investment will help bring the full neighborhood vision to life. Information about the Transforming Western initiative, project updates and opportunities to support the ongoing transformation of the neighborhood are available at www.transformingwestern.com. Community members, businesses, foundations and philanthropic organizations interested in supporting the ongoing transformation of the neighborhood are encouraged to learn more, get involved or make a contribution.

VIDEO:

Click [here](#) to see a video of the event.

On Location



Appreciation Lunch Held

Several of KCDC employees came together June 17 at Neyland Stadium to catch up with coworkers and enjoy a meal. Of KCDC's 157 total employees, 134 RSVP'd for the appreciation lunch.

VIDEO: Click [here](#) to see a video of the event.

PHOTOS: Click [here](#) to see a photo gallery of the event.



Work Anniversaries

The following were recently recognized for annual milestones with Knoxville's Community Development Corporation. Congratulations on the hard work over the years!



25 years

- James Jones



20 years

- Jennifer Bell



5 years

- Ron Buchanan
- Penny Howell *
- Edward Taylor
- Terri Stanley
- Emma Mitchell *
- Courtney Swatzell
- Danielle McLaughlin *



15 years

- David Lovelace

10 years

- Bill Pitts *

*** Not present**



KCDC Spotlight

The Spotlight aims to recognize the amazing things KCDC employees are doing to help make the community and workplace better. Email jnash@kcdc.org if you think there's someone we should highlight.

Grae Potter

The Manor at Northgate Terrace Supportive Services Coordinator



In The Manor at Northgate Terrace Supportive Services Coordinator Grae Potter's office sits an antique cabinet with different items that were donated by past residents who lived in the KCDC community.

These little tokens, showcased through the cabinet's glass door, are dear to Grae and others that help reinforce why they do the job.

"We call that our memory cabinet," Grae said. "It's a great way for us to remember the people that have been with us here on The Manor because we all affect each other's lives and it's worth being able to remember."

For a little more than four years Grae's been a friendly face for residents, interacting with them, developing relationships, and hearing the good and bad of their day-to-day lives. Any way to make that personal human connection is important for him.

"It makes me think of that old phrase there's no truly selfless act, and I think about that as I fulfill my role and engage with people," Grae said. "The rewards, the positive consequences of doing the work we do, it's not why we do it but it certainly is a beautiful outcome because when you help people not just find a place to live but when you're involved in their lives and you're dealing with those small little things that they have trouble managing, then it does give you the opportunity to step in to be helpful."

"The outcome of that is realizing you are making a difference for somebody, you are improving life and hopefully making it a little better for them," he added.

Grae joined KCDC in February 2022 as an associate for former program director Teresa Lawson. Within a year he took over the role after Teresa retired.

Grae's desire to help others dates back decades ago when he helped a friend's mother who had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's. For more than a year he helped feed, support and just give her company while she transitioned.

"It wasn't specifically supportive services that drew me to the mission of The Manor," Grae said. "I think I just realized that being my age there's only a certain number of years before I retire, and it shifted my perspective on what I was doing with my career. I often say that my spirituality and my career aligned by coming to KCDC, and that's a new experience."

"I'd always just been working the 8 to 5, helping to make different businesses successful and make the owners more money, but being on The Manor and doing this type of work is a whole different parameter," he added. "Far more rewarding, challenging and fun than any job I've done before."

His job wouldn't be possible without the help of Tina Muncey, The Manor supportive services associate.



"Tina is kind of our feet on the ground," Grae said. "As involved as I am with people's lives, she's even more involved. A part of my role is going into the community for networking, making sure that people are aware of The Manor, that they are making referrals as they have folks who would benefit from what we do."

Music and life

Grae's role with The Manor isn't something he planned for in life. For as long as he can remember, music has been an interest of his. In his early 20s he pursued that passion by auditioning for a vocal group called Konnexions. He moved to Trumbull, Conn., to sing and perform with the eight-person ensemble. Performing in front of audiences across the country for four years was a rewarding experience, but eventually Grae wanted to make his way back home to Tennessee.

In 1994, Grae earned a musical scholarship to East Tennessee State University (ETSU) with a double major in psychology and music therapy and a minor in special education.

"My original goal was to help children with special needs realize their potential but also to help the parents realize the potential of their children," Grae said.

On New Year's Eve in 1997 he met his future husband, Keith Potter, and ultimately decided to leave ETSU in his junior year and move to Knoxville in 1999. After several years of renting, they bought a home in North Knoxville. Grae and Keith will celebrate their 29th anniversary together this year. One of their passions is rescuing or fostering animals. They currently have three dogs and one 8-foot red-tailed boa constrictor.

A love of traveling

When Grae's not at work, there's a good chance he's venturing off to other parts of the country or overseas. His passion for traveling ramped up 10 years ago when he flew to Istanbul, Turkey, for three weeks.

"I've heard it all my life that traveling internationally breeds tolerance, and I think that's very true. You get to see how people in different cultures and different countries live life," Grae said. "Of all the places I've been, whether it's Turkey, Prague, Vienna or Budapest, their cultures all seem to have this great

connection with family. You may have three or four generations living in the same house, where they all take care of each other and the older members of their family are not viewed as a burden."

The rewards, the positive consequences of doing the work we do, it's not why we do it but it certainly is a beautiful outcome because when you help people not just find a place to live but when you're involved in their lives and you're dealing with those small little things that they have trouble managing, then it does give you the opportunity to step in to be helpful.

– Grae Potter

While the tourist sites are nice, Grae looks to the personal interactions with residents to really get a feel of any place he visits. "In Istanbul, there was a man and wife from Australia who owned a rug shop, I went in to look at the rugs, and we struck up a conversation," he said. "He invited me downstairs of a hostel that night where there was a small bar and a soccer game playing later that evening on TV. He invited me to come back and watch the game and I did. These are the experiences I love, when I meet another human being where they are in their life. What an honor to be invited and included."



Sock Donations Needed

By Lanita Puckett

The KCDC Community Involvement Committee (CIC) participates in the Shoes for School event hosted by the Knox Area Urban League. The Shoes for School Event brings in partners and resources each year to set up tables and booths to hand out school supplies and shoes for hundreds of students.

This Aug. 8, 2026, will mark the 24th year that the Shoes for School will take place. The CIC has attended these events and has participated in giving out supplies. Last year the magnificent group known as "KCDC Employees" came together to donate a total 1,018.5 pairs of socks. (You had to be here last year to understand). We are looking forward to outdoing ourselves this year but need your help!

How can you help?

You can help us by donating pairs of new, never-worn socks and/or shoelaces.

When do you bring them?

From June 29-July 30 you can donate socks and shoelaces.

Where do you bring them?

You can drop your socks and/or shoelace donations at the main office at 901 N. Broadway or the rental assistance office at 400 Harriet Tubman St. (A tote will be there waiting to be filled.) Sock and shoelace discrimination isn't a thing so please remember we accept donations of all colors, shapes and sizes.

Thank you in advance for joining in with us and helping us put our best foot forward! (pun intended) Contact me at lpuckett@kcdc.org or 865-910-5711 if you have questions.



2025 Shoes for School



2025 Shoes for School

Q & A

with Jodie Johnson

For the past year, AmeriCorps member Jodie Johnson worked hard to help residents living in KCDC communities. With Jodie's tenure nearly up, they look back on their time here, mull over what they've learned, and discuss how they hope to use their experience for future endeavors. Good luck, Jodie!



Jodie Johnson
AmeriCorps member

Q. What has been your focus while here?

While here, my main role has been preparing for the community resource fairs, coordinating with property staff and community partners and organizations, and engaging with residents at our elderly and disabled communities through monthly Bingo afternoons. Through my time spent on properties getting to know residents and partners providing resources, I have seen the gaps in knowledge and resources that exist in housing and in particular for individuals in Section 8 housing. Working creatively with KCDC staff, residents and partners to bridge these gaps has been my personal focus.

Q. How has your experience been, and in what ways do you think it'll help you in the future?

While I thought I had well-managed expectations going into my second year as an AmeriCorps (with my first year having been at CAC Beardsley Community Farm in 2023), I wasn't prepared to be hit with the full extent of my lack of knowledge on public housing. What I have seen and learned about how low-income individuals and families must struggle every day just to maintain stable housing while also trying to meet their other basic needs has kept my passion for housing justice at the forefront of my mind. I will continue to fight for tenant rights and for equitable public (and affordable) housing after my term ends.

Q. What is next for you, and what do you hope to do for a career?

I plan to swim in the quarry many more times this summer, explore different artistic mediums at Knox Makers, manage the Eastside Sunday Market for the 2026 season, plant and care for my flowers and herbs at BattleField Farms, read books and watch films from the public library, and continue learning from and growing with my community.

I hope to be able to do life-sustaining, community-focused work while also being able to take care of my own basic needs, and I will be creative in making that happen.



Church Holds Block Party at First Creek



Despite the threat of rain, City Hills Church members hoped to offer a ray of sunshine for a few hours on July 11 during the group's first Block Party in First Creek at Austin.

From 9 a.m.-noon, church members set up a couple tents alongside the roundabout and offered free food and arts and crafts. The effort was part of City Hills Church's Block Party program, where members go out to different areas and serve the community.

"Everyone is slightly different, but a Block Party is really just to bring the community together to know that there's resources if you need them," Shawnese, First Creek Block Party lead, said. "For instance, also, another outreach group is supposed to be bringing groceries and whoever needs them they can come get them for free. We also provide diaper giveaways, haircuts, and

this is all at the actual church location. We're here to let people know you're not alone. We're here." Bringing the program to First Creek at Austin was dear to Shawnese, as she's been living in Phase II for more than a year.

"When I first moved out here, I realized that I saw a lot of little kids out here and they were all just sitting around trying to find something to do," Shawnese said. "One day we were at the playground, my kids and I, my kids were talking to the kids about what do they typically do, and we had a couple say, 'There's not really much we can do, our families can't really afford to do too much'."



Bingo and BBQ for Northgate Residents

On June 26, Northgate Terrace residents were treated to free food and Bingo fun courtesy of local nonprofit We Care About You (WCAY).

The event was a first for WCAY at Northgate Terrace, but it's something WCAY co-founder Vanessa hopes won't be the last.

"I believe the event was a great success," Vanessa said. "The residents were smiling, laughing, interacting and enjoying themselves throughout the afternoon. Seeing the excitement during Bingo and the appreciation from both the residents and staff reminded us why we do what we do. It was rewarding for our volunteers as well, and we're already looking forward to returning."

Vanessa said she started WCAY 22 years ago with her daughter, who at the time was 5 years old. What started out as packing brown bag lunches for those in need around Knoxville eventually grew into serving under the North Broadway Bridge with food, water and clothing.

"Our goal is to restore hope, dignity and a sense of community to people in need," Vanessa said. "We don't just provide meals — we also provide hygiene items, clothing, pet supplies, referrals to community resources and opportunities for people to know they are seen and valued. We accomplish this through community partnerships, volunteers, donations, and by bringing people together to serve others with compassion and respect."

Based out of Knoxville, WCAY primarily focuses on Knox County and the surrounding area.

"Our goal is not only to meet physical needs but also to remind people they are valued, respected and never forgotten," Vanessa said.



Health & Wellness

With the summer months heating up, what better time to highlight July being National UV Safety Awareness Month.

UV – or ultraviolet – exposure is the root cause for most skin cancers. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, skin cancer is the most common type of cancer in the United States. Each year more than 5 million cases are diagnosed. This means that more people are diagnosed with skin cancer than all other cancers combined.

Before going outside, pay attention to the UV Index to see how strong the sun's UV rays will be. The higher the index, the stronger the sun's UV rays are and the faster you may experience damaging effects of overexposure. Even on cloudy days, you should still protect yourself from the sun when its UV Index is at its highest between 10 a.m.-4 p.m. This includes applying sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30 every two hours, and wearing sun-protective clothing, including a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses to protect your face, neck, ears and eyes.

UV Index

The University of Washington's John T. Milliken Department of Medicine offers some insight into what to watch for when looking at the UV Index.

- **0 to 2** – Means there is minimal danger for most and you can stay in the sun during peak time (10 a.m.-2 p.m.) without burning. You can safely enjoy being outside!
- **3 to 5** – Means there is a low risk. You should opt though to stay in the shade when the sun is the strongest and be sure to wear a broad-spectrum sunscreen (broad-spectrum means it protects against both UVA and UVB rays), protective clothing and sunglasses.
- **5 to 7** – Means there is a moderate risk and it's a good time to seek some shade, slip on a shirt and a wide-brimmed hat, wear UV or polarized sunglasses to protect your eyes and apply sunscreen. Or reapply if you've already done so. (Your sunscreen should be reapplied every two to three hours)
- **8 or higher** – Means there is a high risk from unprotected sun exposure. If possible, avoid being outside. And if you must, take some shade breaks and be sure to wear sunscreen of 30+ SPF or higher, a wide-brim hat and tightly-woven fabric clothing with UPF protection.



According to the American Academy of Ophthalmology, long-term exposure to bright sunlight could increase your risk of cataracts and growths on the eye, including cancer. Wearing UV-blocking sunglasses and broad-brimmed hats is recommended.

New Hires

The following were recently hired through June 30 at Knoxville's Community Development Corporation:



Brannasia Clegg

Hired: 5/11/26

Title: Leasing & Occupancy Specialist

Place: Five Points



Lisa Weddle

Hired: 5/26/26

Title: Property Manager

Place: The Vista at Summit Hill



Lana Swanson

Hired: 6/2/26

Title: Intern

Place: Main Office



Karen Dunn

Hired: 6/23/26

Title: Property Manager

Place: First Creek at Austin



Luca Reichart

Hired: 6/23/26

Title: Intern

Place: Main Office



Samuel Thomas

Hired: 6/25/26

Title: Maintenance Tech. II

Place: Western Heights



Reker Harris

Hired: 6/29/26

Title: Assistant Property Manager

Place: Isabella Towers



Alex Harsha

Hired: 6/29/26

Title: Intern

Place: Main Office



Jaiyah Anderson

Hired: 6/29/26

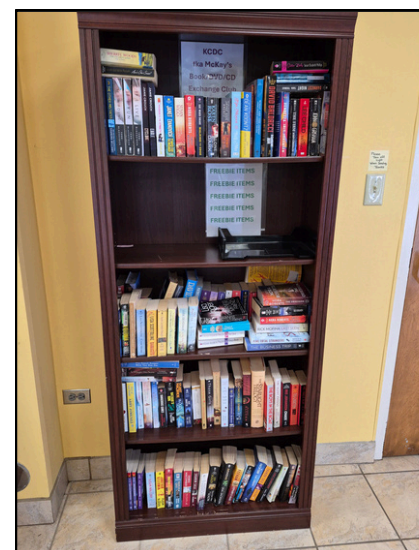
Title: Leasing & Occupancy Specialist

Place: Lonsdale Homes

Announcements

Got an announcement you'd like to put in The Bulletin? Email the information to jnash@kcdc.org.

- **KCDC's Library** — KCDC now has its own in-house book/DVD/CD location! Hopes are this will be like McKay's library program. There is no charge to donate or take a book, and don't feel like you need to return anything. The library also has an added shelf for free items to be given away. When you're at the main office, stop by the breakroom to see what's on the shelf!
- **New mini-market** — Be sure to check out the new mini-market when you're at the main office breakroom!
- **Sports tickets available** — KCDC has tickets available for baseball for employee use. Interested employees should contact Joy Patrick (jpatrick@kcdc.org) for more information or to reserve a game.
- **Pickleball league** — Interested in pickleball? Come join KCDC's small amateur league! Play is typically Monday-Thursday immediately after work at either the Williams Creek Community Center & Pool or Edgewood Park. Unsure if you want to participate? Feel free to check it out! Email Joy Patrick (jpatrick@kcdc.org) if you want to play or be placed on the weekly distribution pickleball list.



Newsletter Ideas

Got something you think could be in The Bulletin? Email the information to jnash@kcdc.org.

Newsletter Dates

- September-October
- November-December

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Resident Resources

