

The Bert Nash Community Mental Health Center

Vision for Site at 138 Alabama Street

The Bert Nash Center could not fulfill the mission of providing comprehensive outpatient services to local residents without the Community Health Facility provided by the City of Lawrence and Douglas County. The facility was planned to accommodate program growth of the three agencies housed there for the next ten years. In the case of the Bert Nash Center, we were already a bit cramped for space when we moved in.

In 1996 when the sales tax referendum for the building was approved, the Center served 2,741 Douglas County residents. The year the facility opened, we served 3,009. The last three years, we have averaged 5,825.

Additionally, the upheaval in healthcare reform includes new challenges and opportunities for community mental health. The proposed KanCares Medicaid program envisions that community mental health centers will become the health home for people with serious mental illnesses. We have already begun a partnership with Heartland Health Center collocating staff to better integrate care.

All these things point to the need to be prepared for additional space. This property, situated as it is directly north of the community Health Facility and near to Lawrence Memorial Hospital and the Douglas County Dental Clinic provides a great opportunity for partnerships as we move forward. Another potential partner is Outside for a Better Inside. Ideally, this site could become a wellness campus providing a central point for safety net services in Lawrence.

We anticipate that the development of this property could coincide with the implementation of healthcare reform Medicaid expansion in 2014.