

Groundbreaking new facility opens to serve people who are homeless

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OREGON REGION – Hundreds gathered July 9 for the opening of the Blackburn Center, an affordable housing site that will provide health care, housing and employment services to the homeless community in East Portland.



Blackburn Center is part of a trio of buildings within the [Housing is Health](#) initiative – the result of a collaboration between local health systems. Providence and five other health care organizations partnered with Central City Concern, providing funds to help create this comprehensive service.

"Blackburn will reduce health care costs for vulnerable populations while increasing quality of care and outcomes," says Joe Ichter, senior program manager for Providence's Community Health Division. "Until we solve these housing problems, we really can't get people healthy."

An exam room available to patients at the new Blackburn Center.

The center, named after Ed Blackburn, president and CEO of Central City, is a model for long term solutions. Ed spearheaded fundraising for Housing is Health, allowing the collaborative vision for the three centers to be fully realized. With recovery, mental health, and primary care services available on the lower levels, residents in the alcohol-and-drug-free transitional and permanent housing have all the resources they need.



With the continued support of Providence and other health care partners, the center hopes to serve 3,000 people a year.

Providence plans on continuing to work with Central City Concern as the next phase of the Housing is Health initiative begins, Joe explains. Identifying the critical gaps faced by vulnerable populations in our community remains a priority for Providence. It is not simply about providing low-cost housing, but rather providing a supportive and safe place for those experiencing homelessness.

Dr. Doug Koekkoek speaks about Providence's partnership with Central City Concern, at the Blackburn center grand opening July 9.

To commemorate the opening of this groundbreaking facility, Doug Koekkoek, M.D., system chief medical officer, physician enterprises, Providence St. Joseph Health, joined 18 other speakers.

"While our communities today take comfort in the clinical care provided today, it is the care of the vulnerable that keeps us grounded," said Dr. Koekkoek. "Celebrate our solidarity and effort to create something of value for those that depend on us."

You can learn more about Housing is Health on the [Central City Concern](#) website.



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