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Contact: Bob Van Meter, Boston LISC
(617) 338-0411 ext. 222 bvanmeter@lisc.org

Shuttered commercial corner gets new life with health care, fresh food, new jobs for Brockton residents

LISC helps supermarket, local health center develop adjacent buildings that address the needs of low-income residents

BROCKTON, Mass. (June 25, 2015)—The first phase of a \$22 million development plan to improve the health and economic outlook of downtown Brockton is opening its doors this week.

Vicente's Tropical Supermarket and Brockton Neighborhood Health Center (BNHC) have joined forces to transform an abandoned commercial site at the corner of Pleasant and Warren Streets with a full-service grocery store and neighborhood health clinic that will serve 6,700 patients each year—with a particular focus on low-income residents. The supermarket opens today; the health center will open later this summer.

The partners are also creating joint educational programs to directly address the connection between healthy eating and healthy living—tackling diabetes, obesity and other chronic health conditions that are often pervasive in disadvantaged communities. As part of the effort, they will reach out to nearby affordable housing residents, teaching how to select and prepare nutritious food for people who need help determining how to eat well within their means.

“This is about much more than cutting a ribbon on a new real estate project,” said Bob Van Meter, executive director with the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) in Boston, applauding the grand opening of Vicente's 33,000-square-foot store. LISC is the country's largest community development organization and has invested \$273 million to revitalize Boston-area neighborhoods, including nearly \$12 million for the grocery store and health center.

“Vicente's and BNHC are replacing a dark, blighted corner that dragged down the surrounding area with a vibrant source of fresh food, good health care and new jobs for Brockton,” he said. “They are providing a direct and immediate benefit to residents, while also generating economic activity that makes the community brighter and safer.”

LISC provided \$3.6 million to help Vicente's rehab an abandoned structure on the site for the new supermarket. It is part of LISC's work to expand access to healthy food in food deserts around the country, with significant funding from the Community Development Financial Institutions Fund's (CDFI Fund's) Healthy Food Financing Initiative. Other support for Vicente's new store comes from Boston Community Capital, JPMorgan Chase, The Reinvestment Fund and the Massachusetts Housing Investment Corporation.

LISC's Healthy Futures Fund—a national vehicle to finance better health and better housing in low-income communities—provided \$8 million for the new health center, with capital from Morgan Stanley, The Kresge Foundation, and Opportunity Finance Network/Leviticus Fund.

“Poor nutrition hits low-income communities particularly hard,” noted Amy Gillman, senior program director in charge of LISC’s national healthy food initiatives. “This unique connection between the supermarket and the health clinic means we can expand access to fresh food and to primary care services in an area where people struggle to find both. That’s a critical piece of our work to help low-income residents improve their overall quality of life,” she said.

To date, LISC has invested in 55 community health centers and 64 grocery stores across the country—all helping meet the needs of disadvantaged residents and raise standards of living in distressed areas.

About LISC

LISC combines corporate, government and philanthropic resources to help nonprofit community development corporations revitalize distressed neighborhoods. Since 1980, LISC has invested \$14.7 billion to build or rehab 330,000 affordable homes and apartments and develop 53 million square feet of retail, community and educational space. For more, visit www.lisc.org.