

This is the first in a series of weekly articles focused on individual visions for the economic future of North Omaha. Each article will feature the comments of a North Omaha Development Project steering committee member.

Health Center CEO Optimistic About North Omaha's Future

Dr. Richard Brown, CEO of the Charles Drew Health Center, has a message for the naysayers, the people who think businesses and individuals are not going to invest in North Omaha.

“My message to them is, ‘That’s not true.’ The health center is a prime example that the community will invest in North Omaha because it has invested in us.”

Dr. Brown is among the dozens of business and community leaders serving on the steering committee for the North Omaha Development Project, an initiative of the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce aimed at fostering economic growth in the North Omaha community. Brown said he agreed to serve on the steering committee because he is passionate about North Omaha and very concerned about a lack of development there.

“We need to develop it like other parts of the city, to create some attractions in North Omaha so it can participate in the economic mainstream,” said Brown. “I would like to see the infrastructure improved. I would like to see more entertainment for this community at a level that would attract people from other areas. I would like to see more physical fitness opportunities like biking trails and walking trails.”

Being a “healthcare person,” Brown said the physical well-being of his North Omaha neighbors is especially important to him. He said that priority is helping to shape his service on the steering committee.

“I plan to work with any developer that comes to North Omaha to insure that the health of the community is considered and improved upon,” said Brown. “Anything that is going on relative to health care, I intend to be at the table to help offer guidance and direction.”

He said he is also determined to continue making positive change within his own realm.

“I plan to work very hard to continue to develop the Charles Drew Health Center as a major center for health care delivery and service here,” said Brown. “I would like to see us become the ambulatory health care facility of choice in North Omaha by continuing to develop the services and programs that we offer.”

Right now, Brown is overseeing a major expansion of the health center to better accommodate current and future needs. The center is more than doubling in size -- from 13,000 square feet to 27,000 square feet -- and adding nine more exam rooms for a total of 23. The

project is scheduled to be completed in mid-August.

The center launched a capital campaign to fund the expansion, raising a whopping \$4 million dollars in about a year.

“Before I came, there were no philanthropic dollars coming into the organization. It was all federal and state money. Once we brought in the potential funders and they saw what we were doing and what our needs were, it wasn’t too difficult to get them to provide money to support this particular project. They were excited about doing it.”

Brown said the tremendous success of the center’s capital campaign bodes well for all of North Omaha and the North Omaha Development Project, a strong indication, he believes, that people are willing to pour money into the community.

“One of the reasons they invested in us was because we had a good product, a good service and we marketed it through radio, TV and word of mouth. The growth and development in North Omaha has to be marketed and promoted to the public the same way.”

Brown said he is looking forward to helping bring about that growth and development, looking forward to success.

“I’m glad to be on the steering committee, optimistic and enthusiastic about it. I think the people of North Omaha are as well.”

The North Omaha Development Project is a focused commitment of the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce, corporate leaders, elected officials, African American business leaders and the North Omaha community to make strategic investments in North Omaha. The study area is Sorensen Parkway on the north, Cuming Street on the south, 16th Street on the east and 52nd Street on the west. For more information, email info@projectnorthomaha.org, visit [www.ProjectNorth Omaha.org](http://www.ProjectNorthOmaha.org) or call (402) 346-5000.