

ThriveOn King *A Vision Fulfilled*

"A Local Inspiration, a National Model and a Dream Come True."

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On June 6, 2024, the ThriveOn Collaboration ("the Collaboration"), a joint venture among the Medical College of Wisconsin (MCW), the Greater Milwaukee Foundation ("the Foundation") and Royal Capital (RC), hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony to commemorate the completion and occupancy of the administrative floors of ThriveOn King – the partners' foundational investment in the restoration and redevelopment of the iconic Gimbels-Schuster's Department Store building in the heart of Milwaukee's Historic King Drive district. The gathering also celebrated the work of hundreds of partners and community members who are helping bring the building to life.

The Collaboration's vision is for a Milwaukee that is equitable, healthy and thriving for all – and ThriveOn King is a physical manifestation of what that vision can become.

MCW, the Foundation and RC, along with the residents of the Halyard Park, Harambee and Brewer's Hill neighborhoods, are committed to working in partnership to make generational investments in Milwaukee communities with the ultimate goal of eliminating racial, health, economic and social disparities.

What follows is a brief history of events, spearheaded by MCW, that led to the creation of the ThriveOn Collaboration and, ultimately, ThriveOn King – the centerpiece of this community-centered, place-based collaboration.

The Need Arises

Violence and protests swept the country during the summer of 2016, fueled in part by the fatal shootings of Black men in Louisiana and Minnesota by police officers.

Unrest simmered in Milwaukee throughout July 2016, culminating on August 13 when a riot began in the Sherman Park neighborhood, sparked by

the fatal police shooting of a 23-year-old Black male by a Black police officer.

During the three-day turmoil, several people – including police officers – were injured and dozens of protesters arrested. A nightly curfew was established for teenagers in the area.

On August 18, MCW's executive leaders disseminated an institution-wide email

that reflected on the recent events, both locally and nationally, and how to best move forward.

"Our institution's primary and deepest commitment is to the health of our communities – not just to the physical state of individuals, but also to their

mental and social well-being and that of society as a whole. When we are faced with events such as those of this past week, it punctuates and highlights the importance of the work that MCW and our partners undertake across the city and state. Thus, we must continue to focus on the needs of our community. We can, and should, do more," the letter stated.

It further read, "Just as these events impact many individuals, it will take many to develop and implement solutions. Several decades of focus by MCW on the betterment of our communities have shown us that we can partner most effectively if we truly comprehend the needs of the individuals we serve. To that end, we must take the time to listen to the individuals who are most affected – to fully understand what resources, programs and support will be impactful and sustainable."

The turbulence prompted internal discussions at MCW as well as meetings



John Meurer, MD, MBA, then-professor and director of MCW's Institute for Health & Equity (second from right), facilitates a small group discussion with community members in August 2019.



Key Visionaries for ThriveOn King



John R. Raymond, Sr., MD
President and Chief Executive Officer of the Medical College of Wisconsin



Gregory M. Wesley, JD
MCW Senior Vice President for Strategic Alliances and Business Development (November 2016-July 2024). President and Chief Executive Officer of the Greater Milwaukee Foundation (as of August 1, 2024)



Kevin Newell
Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Royal Capital



Ellen M. Gilligan
President and Chief Executive Officer of the Greater Milwaukee Foundation (July 2010-July 2024)



Ken Robertson
Executive Vice President, Chief Operating Officer and Chief Financial Officer of the Greater Milwaukee Foundation (October 2020-August 2024)

with community leaders to determine how MCW could use its resources to address the disparities. John R. Raymond, Sr., MD, MCW president and CEO said at the time, “MCW needs to reinvigorate our highly visible commitment to the communities we serve. To that end, we are planning to invest in a building in or near downtown Milwaukee that would house most of our community-facing programs and would serve as a front door for our faculty to interact with colleagues and partners.”

He added that MCW wanted the geographic focus of the new facility to be within ZIP codes that have a large concentration of African Americans, as those areas have a high burden of poverty, health disparities, unemployment and fragmented resources. Dr. Raymond named Gregory M. Wesley, JD, then MCW’s senior vice president for strategic alliances and business development, to lead the planning and site selection for MCW’s Milwaukee location for its community-engaged programs.

Wesley was a respected leader in the Milwaukee community. Before joining MCW’s executive leadership team in 2016, he was an equity partner in the law firm of Gonzalez, Saggio and Harlan, LLP, and served as an MCW trustee from 2009–2016. Among other community leadership roles, he was co-chair of the Greater

Milwaukee Committee’s Downtown Task Force, a Milwaukee County Supplemental Court Commissioner, past president of the Wisconsin Association of African American Lawyers and former chair of the Milwaukee Urban League’s board of directors. In August 2024, Wesley began a new role as president and CEO of the Greater Milwaukee Foundation.

The Seeds are Planted

In his May 2017 *Letter from the President* (disseminated MCW-wide), Dr. Raymond wrote that MCW was in the earliest exploratory phases of assessing the feasibility of leasing or acquiring a 100,000–150,000-square-foot facility in or close to downtown Milwaukee that could house community-facing programs and serve as an interactive space for community partnerships, noting the possibility of sharing the space with other not-for-profit entities.

In August 2017, Dr. Raymond invited community leaders to serve on the MCW “Community Front Door Task Force,” which would explore the possibility of creating a substantial physical presence for MCW in Milwaukee by providing direction on strategic goals, guiding principles, planning and implementation. The objective was to bring together many of MCW’s community engagement programs

in a centralized, welcoming and accessible location that would benefit from further investment. The kickoff meeting was held in late September 2017.

In January 2018, MCW issued a request for proposals for a real estate development firm to formulate a plan and recommend a location. In March, MCW announced it had hired Milwaukee real estate developer Kevin Newell’s Royal Capital as its site selection consultant to help find and analyze potential locations, discuss needs and potential plans with prospective partners, community organizations, neighborhood leaders and residents, and to make recommendations about how to best finance, govern and sustain the project.

Wesley continued to work with community leaders to identify an

Key Focus Areas of the ThriveOn Collaboration

- Economic Opportunity
- Housing
- Early Childhood Education
- Health & Wellness
- Social Cohesion

Gimbels-Schuster's/ ThriveOn King *Fun Facts*

Built in 1907 by Edward Schuster

Future Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir worked as a clerk at the department store in 1915

In its heyday, the Schuster's Department Store building was noted for its state-of-the-art escalators

Gimbels bought Schuster's in 1962

The store closed in August 1970 and was used for department store storage

The building was wrapped in insulation and metal sheathing in 1984



CH Coakely & Co. purchased the building in 1992

The ThriveOn partners paid \$9.4 million for the property and an adjacent smaller warehouse in 2020

The building is a designated historic site on the State and National Registers of Historic Places

appropriate location for the initiative, and more than 20 sites were considered. A priority was to locate the facility in a Milwaukee neighborhood with a population that faced significant health disparities and socioeconomic needs while also possessing other assets that could be leveraged to advance positive change. MCW sought to partner with like-minded organizations that had similar goals and had demonstrated a commitment within the same Milwaukee neighborhood where MCW would locate its facility.

In late 2018, MCW found such a partner in the Greater Milwaukee Foundation, which announced it would join with MCW by relocating its headquarters to the new site. Founded in 1915, the Greater Milwaukee Foundation is Wisconsin's largest community foundation. Since then, it has been at the heart of the civic community, helping donors achieve the greatest philanthropic impact, elevating the work of changemakers across neighborhoods and bringing people and organizations together to help the region thrive.

Dr. Raymond said at that time, "Collaborating with like-minded partners helps create solutions for our community's biggest challenges, and we are grateful for the opportunity to partner with the Greater Milwaukee Foundation. This collaboration aligns our missions and will spark catalytic changes in the community through addressing social, economic and environmental factors that are key to improving health. The Foundation brings expertise that MCW simply cannot in terms of place-based investment and racial equality, which are very important for what we want to accomplish in terms of dealing with the social determinants of health. It's almost a dream partnership for MCW."

Ellen M. Gilligan, president and CEO of the Greater Milwaukee Foundation (who retired in July 2024), added, "Through each era of our history, the Foundation has invested in strengthening our region and addressing the greatest needs of the times. We are committed to ensuring access to opportunity and a high quality of life for all people, in neighborhoods throughout our community, a goal we can best achieve

by working together. This partnership is a perfect example of our enduring investment in place. The missions of the Foundation and the Medical College of Wisconsin complement one another well, and we look forward to applying our respective expertise and knowledge for greater collective impact."

During this time, as MCW continued to explore the possibility of a "Community Front Door" in downtown Milwaukee, many individuals began to refer to this potential project by the more inspiring title, "The Center for Flourishing Lives."

Development Phase Begins and the Site is Chosen

In early 2019, the partnership launched work groups covering communications, program and philanthropy, tenant buildout and neighborhood development, comprising MCW and Foundation stakeholders, community members and individuals from partner organizations and organizations with similar commitments in the community. The work groups met every other week from early 2019 to mid-2020.

Concurrently, the Foundation was engaged with its board and leadership about where its next lease would be and how to combine its community-based strategies.

On March 26, 2019, MCW and the Foundation announced that they had selected a location for MCW's initiative and the Foundation's headquarters: the iconic Gimbels-Schuster's Department Store building located at 2153 N. Martin Luther King, Jr., Drive in Milwaukee's Halyard Park neighborhood. The department store, built in 1907, was a community hub and gathering place but had closed in 1970 and was used for storage. In 1984 the building was wrapped in insulation and metal sheathing, and sold in 1992 to CH Coakley, a relocation, warehouse solutions and document management company.

The building also would house MCW's community-facing programs, space for service-learning opportunities for MCW students, office space for other organizations, an early childhood education center, a wellness center, 90 units of mixed-income housing and a parking structure.



ThriveOn Collaboration partners and community members, 2020

Milwaukee's Halyard Park neighborhood was a fitting location for MCW's initiative, as it was home to Milwaukee's first "medical center" from 1898 to 1932. MCW's predecessor, the Wisconsin College of Physicians and Surgeons (which became the Marquette University School of Medicine) was located at Fourth Street and Reservoir Avenue, just blocks away from the Schuster's building.

Implementation Phase Begins; Partnership Named the "ThriveOn Collaboration"

In February 2020, MCW and the Foundation signed a generational lease with Royal Capital and the partnership's website went live.

In his July 1, 2020, *Letter from the President*, Dr. Raymond updated the MCW community on the progress of the partnership, saying, "We are implementing a place-based investment strategy in the Halyard Park, Brewer's Hill and Harambee neighborhoods to inspire others and spur broad investment and access to communities that are disproportionately affected by the many disparities that limit our potential as a community."

Dr. Raymond added, "We remain fully committed to this generational partnership and we intend to commence redevelopment of the Gimbels-Schuster's building later this summer. In addition, we have continued to co-host virtual listening sessions with community residents, have begun to hold virtual office hours and will create a Community

Advisory Council with the residents of the respective neighborhoods."

In a news release issued on September 10, 2020, the community-centered partnership announced that it had chosen the name, "ThriveOn Collaboration," and that it was continuing deep resident and stakeholder engagement to inform priorities and investments for supporting a thriving King Drive corridor and its connected neighborhoods.

"The ThriveOn Collaboration champions a vision for a Milwaukee that is equitable, healthy and thriving for all. Achieving this vision will require partnerships with the community, focus on places where investment has been scarce and supporting people of color, especially African Americans, who are disproportionately affected by health and social disparities," according to the news release.

Dr. Raymond was quoted as saying, "It should come as no surprise that the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic crisis have had disproportionate impacts on people of color, and especially African American and Black people. By honoring

this community's history, culture and people, and by listening and collaborating every step of the way, we hope to accomplish our shared mission to support and sustain a united, equitable, thriving community."

The ThriveOn Collaboration identified five priority areas for program development and investment which were informed by the social determinants of health; factors that contribute significantly to health (such as where people live, access to healthy foods and affordable housing); and social support networks. The priority areas identified were: housing; early childhood education; health and wellness; social cohesion; and economic opportunity.

The ThriveOn Collaboration reflects the views and values of community, shared through continuous dialogue and participation among residents, the collaborating organizations and other community leaders. To that end, it established a Community Advisory Council, comprising 15 members who live or work in the Halyard Park, Harambee and Brewer's Hill neighborhoods to integrate community perspective and participation by ensuring residents have meaningful decision-making power within the Collaboration, and to include a community voice in grantmaking and program initiatives that promote an equitable, healthy and thriving community with a focus on those neighborhoods.

"ThriveOn King" is Unveiled

On January 26, 2021, the ThriveOn Collaboration announced "ThriveOn King" as the name of its physical home at 2153 N. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive. Created through strong neighborhood input, the ThriveOn King name honors the spirit



of its significant location between King Drive and Vel R. Phillips Avenue and pays reverence to the history and legacy of those who have brought pride and vibrancy to the community for generations.

As the construction planning and organization phase commenced, the Collaboration sponsored virtual job fairs, open house tours and other intentional efforts to ensure a high level of economic empowerment for the adjacent neighborhoods because of jobs and local small business participation.

The place-based collaboration is designed to bring economic and social benefit to the community, leveraging the complementary expertise and resources of MCW, the Foundation and Royal Capital.

“Through the ThriveOn Collaboration, the expansion of community assets will be a primary goal,” Wesley said at the time. “ThriveOn King will house many of these within the first-floor space of the building. It is thrilling to see the ongoing

conversation and input of the community be developed and constructed in the building.”

Construction Commences

Following delays related to the COVID-19 pandemic and finalizing a unique financing model, on June 7, 2022, the ThriveOn Collaboration announced the official start of construction on ThriveOn King, with occupancy expected in early 2024.

“We are thrilled to start construction for ThriveOn King,” said Kevin Newell, co-chair of the Collaboration. “From inception, this project has been a collective effort with the community, and we are excited to bring that collaborative vision to life in this next stage.”

With the increase in construction and other labor-intensive activities that would bring ThriveOn King to life, the development and construction team took a proactive approach to maximize local hiring of unemployed and underemployed

individuals. Among the first construction activities were internal asbestos abatement, demolition of the loading dock and elevator steel tower, and removal of the metal panels on the east and north sides of the building.

ThriveOn King Welcomes First Tenants

In April 2024, the Foundation moved into its 28,000-square-foot office space on ThriveOn King’s fourth floor, with the large Chicago-style windows putting the surrounding Bronzeville, Halyard Park, Brewer’s Hill and Harambee neighborhoods on full display.

Half of the Foundation’s space is dedicated to the organization’s approximately 70 employees, while the other half is set up as a large high-tech gathering space for community organizations.

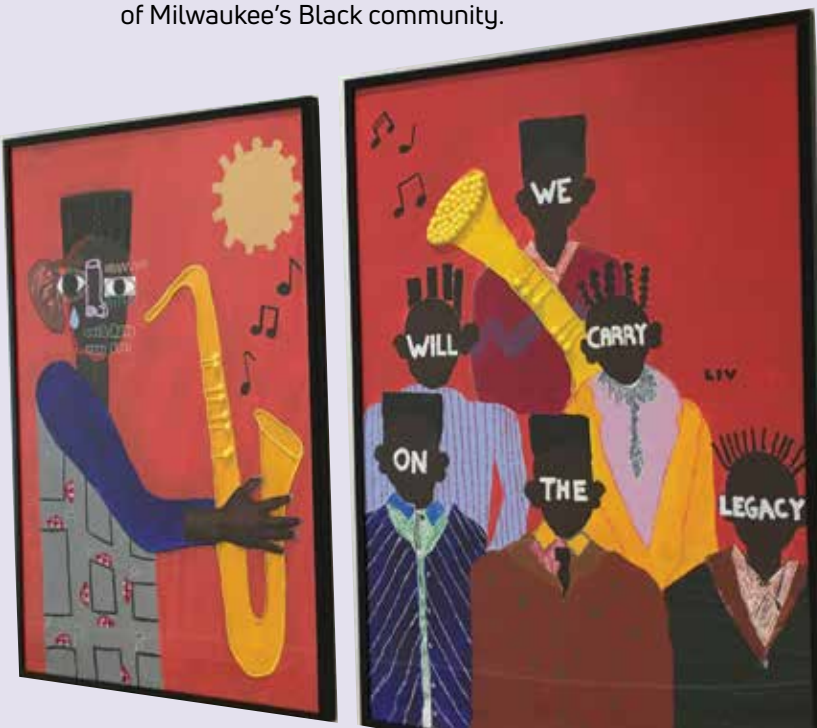
During May, many of MCW’s community engagement programs moved their offices

Arts to Bring Inspiration and History to ThriveOn King

More than 20 acclaimed and home-grown artists will bring the history, heritage and culture of Milwaukee’s Bronzeville neighborhood to life throughout the first floor of ThriveOn King. From tile to embroidery, painting to sculpture, the art of ThriveOn King will vary in size, medium and placement. Collectively, however, the works will immerse guests in the legacy, vibrancy and potential of Milwaukee’s Black community.

Neighborhood residents have emphasized the importance of art to the community and have helped lead plans to ensure its meaningful integration into ThriveOn King since the project’s inception.

Early community visioning throughout 2019 shaped the priorities of the Collaboration as a whole and set the stage for art to have a prominent place in the work that emerged. This was reinforced as relationships among





into two floors of the building (56,000 square feet in total) including:

- Advancing a Healthier Wisconsin Endowment
- Center for AIDS Intervention Research
- Center for Advancing Population Science
- Comprehensive Injury Center – the Division of Community Safety, 414LIFE and the Division of Data Surveillance and Informatics
- Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin Cancer Center – Community Outreach and Engagement Team
- HIV Care and Prevention Program
- Institute for Health & Equity – Division of Epidemiology & Social Sciences and the Public & Community Health PhD Program
- Maternal Fetal Health Center of Excellence
- Office of Community Engagement
- School of Medicine’s Health Equity Scholars Program

Center for AIDS Intervention Research (CAIR)

In 1990, MCW sought to initiate a major new program in HIV prevention research and began the recruitment of an interdisciplinary team of behavioral science, social science and public health faculty with research backgrounds in HIV prevention areas. In 1994 (30 years ago), the institution was awarded a center grant from the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) that established the Center for AIDS Intervention Research (CAIR).

Since that time, CAIR has been continuously dedicated to the development, conduct and evaluation of new strategies to prevent HIV among persons most vulnerable to the disease.

In 2023, the center formally expanded its name to the Division of Community Health and Intervention Research (CHAIR) and mission to include the development, evaluation and dissemination of behavioral, social and structural interventions to combat other health conditions.

Jeffrey Kelly, PhD (at center), has served as director of CAIR since 1994.



collaboration partners and community were built through years of neighborhood meetings, one-on-one interviews, office hours, meet-and-greet gatherings, community events and more.

Art began taking center stage in 2022 as the Collaboration held a series of three intensive arts visioning sessions for residents in the fall, followed by an information session specifically for artists. The resulting insight informed a truly unique “call for art” issued in early 2023 seeking engagement specifically with artists who have strong

Milwaukee ties and understanding of the Bronzeville community fabric.

Keeping with the ThriveOn Collaboration’s inclusive approach, the art initiative is supported by aligning partner resources, the Foundation’s grantmaking and the generosity of many donors who share an interest in art and its power to communicate important community narratives.



Tenants on the First Floor of ThriveOn King

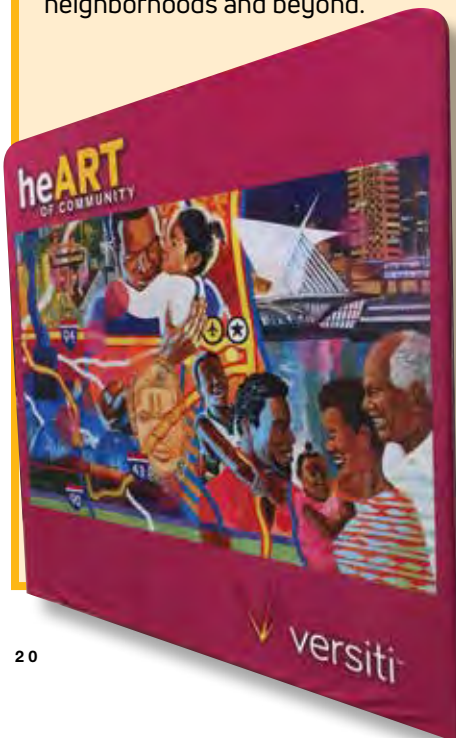
The sprawling first floor of ThriveOn King will be a hub for community engagement, including gathering spaces, healthy food options and public art.

A series of nonprofit partners also will occupy ThriveOn King's first floor:

JobsWork MKE, a local nonprofit that helps community residents achieve sustainable employment while strengthening neighborhood economies.

Malaika Early Learning Center will operate a new center in ThriveOn King to support quality and better prepare children for success in kindergarten and beyond. It also will provide training for other early childhood education programs in the neighborhood.

Versiti Blood Center of Wisconsin will offer a new community resource and permanent blood donation center within ThriveOn King and will serve as a community hub for Versiti, focused on providing resources to address healthcare disparities in Milwaukee neighborhoods and beyond.



On May 9, 2024, the ThriveOn Collaboration received the *Frederick I. Olson Historic Preservation Award* from the Milwaukee County Historical Society for its role in shaping the greater Milwaukee community through a commitment to equitable and sustainable revitalization of the ThriveOn King building. The Collaboration was honored for its commitment to the health, equity and economic well-being of the people of Milwaukee.

The Collaboration also is a finalist for the 2024 *Husch and Blackwell Building Block Award* (a component of the Milwaukee Awards for Neighborhood Development Innovation), which will be announced in mid-August.

ThriveOn King also plans to include approximately 90 units of mixed-income

housing for families, seniors and students. The residential portion of the project is scheduled to be completed in 2025.

A groundbreaking was held in late April 2024 for the Residencies@ThriveOn King in honor of Ruth and Roosevelt Wright, the aunt and uncle of Kevin Newell.

Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony: A Vision Fulfilled

On June 6, 2024, ThriveOn King hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate the milestone completion and occupancy of the building's administrative floors by MCW and the Greater Milwaukee Foundation. The event showcased the building's community space, and the energetic crowd of more than 300 individuals highlighted the enthusiasm the surrounding communities have for the

Office of Community Engagement Moves into ThriveOn King

MCW's Office of Community Engagement (OCE) officially moved to ThriveOn King on May 13, 2024. The OCE's area on the third floor has workstations for 10 faculty and staff, including Staci Young, PhD, senior associate dean for community engagement, director of the OCE and faculty director for the ThriveOn Collaboration.

Dr. Young shared that her father worked in the building when it was the department store as an overnight stock boy.

"We have a unique opportunity to work in partnership across MCW's academic units and highlight the best of our communities to create and grow initiatives that achieve health and wellness for all residents," Dr. Young says.



Distinguished African American Leaders to Receive Lasting Tribute at ThriveOn King

Public spaces in ThriveOn King will be named for distinguished African American leaders past and present through an innovative community-designed opportunity for donor partnership.

Community residents and other stakeholders nominated 48 leaders who have had a lasting impact on the Halyard Park, Harambee and Brewer's Hill neighborhoods surrounding ThriveOn King, as well as on Milwaukee overall. These leaders will be named shortly.



More than 300 community members and guests attended the ribbon-cutting ceremony.



Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers provided a prerecorded congratulatory message.

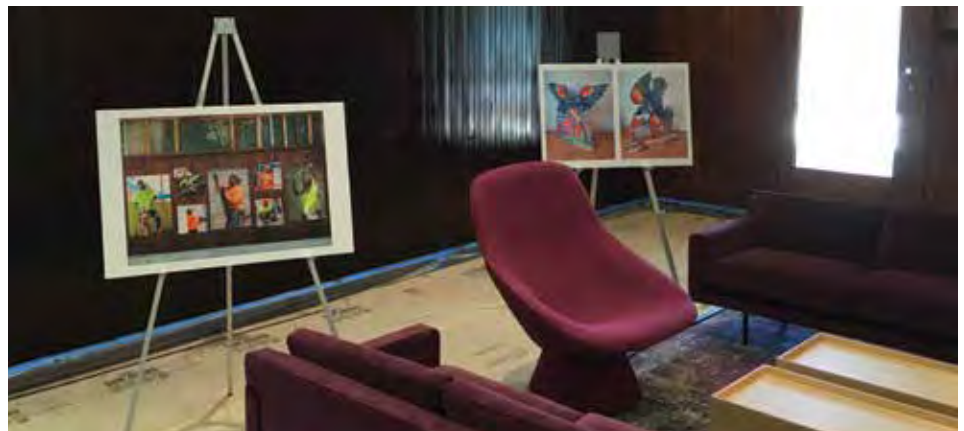
transformational impact of the project.

“What we have here is a local inspiration, a national model and a dream come true,” Dr. Raymond said during the event. “I thank everyone for being here to celebrate what is a dream that is beyond anything any of the partners imagined. This building has become something we should all be proud of and that can serve as a national model for partnership.”

Also during the program, Wesley spoke about the process of coming together. “It was critical to have all the neighborhoods where this location sits to be committed to what we were doing. Thank you to the neighbors who trusted us. Thank you to the neighbors who pushed us. And thank you to the neighbors who continue to challenge us. This is truly about community. This shows what is possible when you commit to people and meet them where they are.”

Milwaukee County Executive David Crowley added, “In order to foster a healthy community, we need partnership, and I believe ThriveOn truly represents what that partnership looks like. Not only are they bringing resources for families and children, they are bringing support services for those who are experiencing hardship. I want to say thank you to the entire ThriveOn team for their commitment, their collaboration and, more importantly, for their investment in this neighborhood on Martin Luther King Drive.”

Other speakers at the inspiring and powerful program included Ken Robertson; Kevin Newell; Cydney Key, senior director



Inspirational artwork was on display on the first floor of ThriveOn King during the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

for the ThriveOn Collaboration guest experience and strategic partnerships; Milele Coggs, Milwaukee alderwoman; Dalvery Blackwell, representing the Collaboration’s Community Advisory Council; Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers

(via video presentation); and Milwaukee Mayor Cavalier Johnson (whose remarks were read).

A grand-opening event that will be open to the Milwaukee community is being planned for later in 2024. ■



“A local inspiration, a national model and a dream come true.” — Dr. John R. Raymond, Sr.