



Columbus
Urban League

THE CITY OF
COLUMBUS
ANDREW J. GINTHER, MAYOR

 **Huntington**

New Huntington Empowerment Center Will Restore Communities and Help Families on Near East Side

Columbus Urban League's renovated building and new job creation hub will open in 2018

May 23, 2017

COLUMBUS, Ohio – Another step forward in the revitalization of Columbus' historic King-Lincoln district also marks another milestone for the city's oldest family advocate, the Columbus Urban League (CUL).



At a community celebration today, Columbus Mayor, Andrew Ginther, and Huntington Bank CEO, Stephen D. Steinour, joined CUL CEO, Stephanie Hightower in “nailing down” the rebuilding of 780 Mount Vernon Avenue, turning it from an abandoned property into a hub for workforce development and entrepreneurship.

Their Restoration Day celebration highlights the progress of CUL and its work to help more families achieve economic mobility as well as the continued transformation of the Near East Side. When fully operational in August 2018, the 6,500-square-foot Huntington Empowerment Center adjacent to CUL headquarters, will house My Brother's Closet, CUL's social enterprise and suiting boutique for low-income men; a high-tech learning lab for youth and adult skill development and training; and other business incubation initiatives.

“The Huntington Empowerment Center represents the realization of the vision and discipline needed to move people and communities out of poverty,” said Stephanie Hightower, CUL's president & CEO. “Its opening next year coincides with two other significant milestones as we host the National Urban League Conference and celebrate our own 100th anniversary of service. These amazing achievements are due to strong leadership from the City, County and the Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority, as well as tremendously integral private sector leaders like Huntington and so many more. We prove that, together, we can stand for economic mobility and help more families achieve their full potential.

“As we continue to grow, we remain committed to our hometown and to investing in meaningful ways to help people in Columbus lead better lives. We are honored to continue our partnership with the Columbus Urban League and humbled the Huntington Empowerment Center will be a namesake anchor in the Near East Side's continued renaissance,” said Steve Steinour, Huntington's chairman, president and CEO. “The Columbus Urban League has been an outstanding partner and together we're proud to support the Mayor's vision for sustained

economic inclusion and upward mobility for all the neighbors of this important Columbus neighborhood.”

“The transformation of this building into a center for jobs, training and innovation is a great step in the revitalization of the King-Lincoln neighborhood,” said Mayor Ginther. “The success of Columbus depends on strong, vibrant, distinctive neighborhoods. I am grateful to Huntington for again proving it is a committed partner in this vision.”

“We are grateful for the Columbus Urban League’s leadership in transforming this site into an asset that will anchor the Mount Vernon corridor,” said Charles Hillman, President & CEO of the Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority, which included the development project in its Choice Neighborhoods Initiative. “The Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority is pleased to be a partner in the development of the Huntington Empowerment Center, which will be a hub of job-creating initiatives that will serve the Near East Side community and former and future Poindexter Village residents.”

Built in 1930, the 780 Mount Vernon Ave. property is currently a boarded-up two-story former retail location with walk-up second-story apartment units. CUL purchased the abandoned property in 2012. Redevelopment plans originally called for a complete demolition of the building, but were modified to preserve the architecture of the front wall of the building at the request of the Near East Area Commission. The approximate cost of the complete restoration, not including the building/land purchase, is \$1.7 million.

In 2012, Huntington committed \$1 million over three years to CUL’s capital campaign and assisted in generating \$2 million toward CUL’s past \$3 million campaign goal, which was ultimately surpassed. In 2016, CUL earned a top-5 percent performance ranking among all 88 urban league affiliates across the country.

About CUL

The Columbus Urban League (CUL) stands as Central Ohio’s oldest and most successful family advocate. Fighting for equity and justice for nearly a century, the organization has emerged as a respected, relevant and effective force in overcoming poverty. Its coaches and experts, who come from and uniquely understand the urban community, rely on a holistic array of best practice initiatives focused on economic transformation, foundational education and family stabilization to touch and transform the lives of more than 7,000 people a year.