



**Barton  
Institute**  
for Community Action

## Our Vision for Westwood Redeemer

— A Case for Support —



A mother and daughter from Lifespan Local's Maternal Mental Health program play outside the Denver Indian Center.

[LifespanLocal.org/westwood-redeemer](https://LifespanLocal.org/westwood-redeemer)



# Westwood Redeemer

Lifespan Local has recently purchased the Redeemer Lutheran Church in Southwest Denver. Work will begin soon to transform this space into hub of community well-being.

## The Power of Place

Over the last two years, Dr. Lydia Prado has been deeply listening to resident community leaders and neighbors in Southwest Denver about what would make the Westwood neighborhood stronger and more resilient. The answer she kept hearing was that “we need a place.”

Guided by the community-driven process she undertook at Dahlia Campus for Health & Well-Being, Dr. Prado has replicated the framework of deep community listening in Southwest Denver to ensure that what is built in Westwood is truly aligned with what the community has advocated for.

In February of 2021, Lifespan Local purchased the Redeemer Lutheran Church in Southwest Denver one block south of Alameda Avenue on Irving Street. The planning phases of renovation are underway, and details about the upcoming capital campaign are coming soon.



**Dr. Lydia Prado**  
Executive Director  
Lifespan Local



# The Process of Deep Community Listening

Dr. Lydia Prado’s community driven approach fueled the creation of Northeast Denver’s Dahlia Campus for Health & Well-Being and informed the current Southwest Denver process.

The Dahlia Campus for Health and Well-Being began through the act of conversation — conversations about health, connection, raising children, growing old, hope & despair. As Dr. Lydia Prado dreamed of a new approach to mental health care, she met residents of Denver’s Northeast Park Hill neighborhood who were dreaming, too. These conversations centered around words like food, daycare, jobs, and after-school activities. As these conversations continued, themes began to emerge, people were looking for a way to connect mind, body, and community. She sensed an opportunity to meet a pragmatic need through an entirely new and innovative approach to mental health care. Rather than addressing each risk factor one-by-one, why not promote community well-being comprehensively — through the built environment, partnerships, and lifespan programming? Her process of listening to the community took years, and her commitment to centering the community’s voice was the priority. The result is a deeply-loved community gathering place that promotes health and well-being for all.

Now, she’s at it again in Southwest Denver.

The same community-driven approach has been underway in Southwest Denver for the last several years. “We know the end product will be very different from the Dahlia Campus, but I can honestly say that the process of deep community listening that we undertook at both sites was the same,” says Prado.

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- Dr. Lydia Prado







WELCOME TO WESTWOOD, DENVER

MORRISON

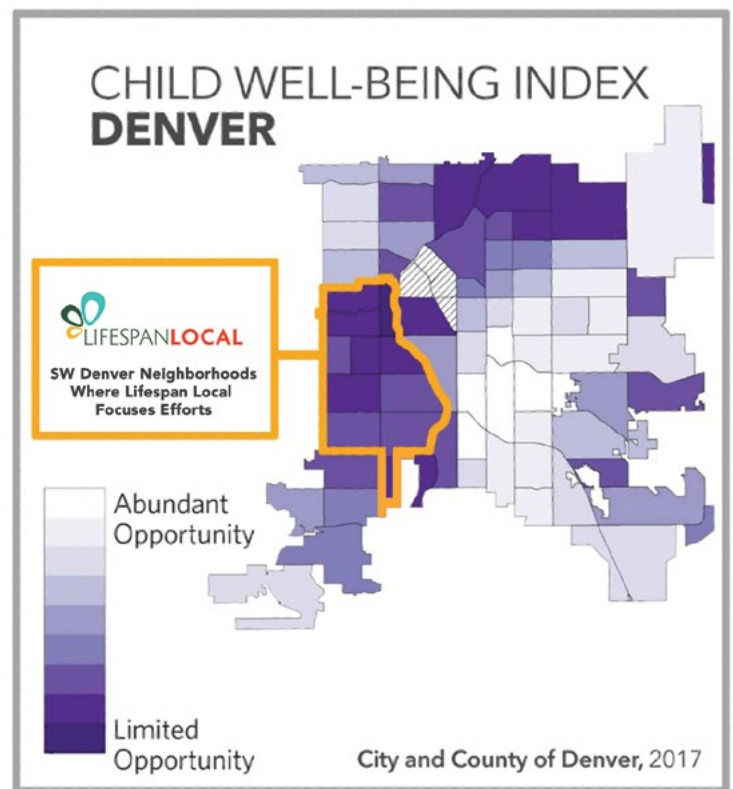


# Learning About & Learning From

As we listen to community members and engage local leaders as partners, we have become firmly rooted in Southwest Denver. Our research uncovered a community built upon resilience, a rich history and strength of character at every turn. We also found that an entire section of our city lacks public investment, infrastructure and community gathering places.

Beginning in February 2018, we pulled together a wide variety of neighborhood-level demographics and indicators of well-being—from race to income, birth rates to school performance. We mapped assets and read other groups’ reports. Then, we followed the curiosity of workgroup members, investigating crime rates, immigration enforcement activity, addiction treatment, homelessness initiatives, child welfare cases, and more. Over and over, we asked: “Who else should we talk to?” “What else would be helpful to know?” “What else should we be thinking about?”

Our inquiry unveiled a group of neighborhoods with a rich history—characterized by marginalization and tenacity. Southwest Denver is home to immigrants and refugees who speak myriad languages and meet challenges with creativity, savvy, and grit. Each neighborhood faces gentrification or risk of gentrification, and children have less opportunity than their peers in other parts of the city.

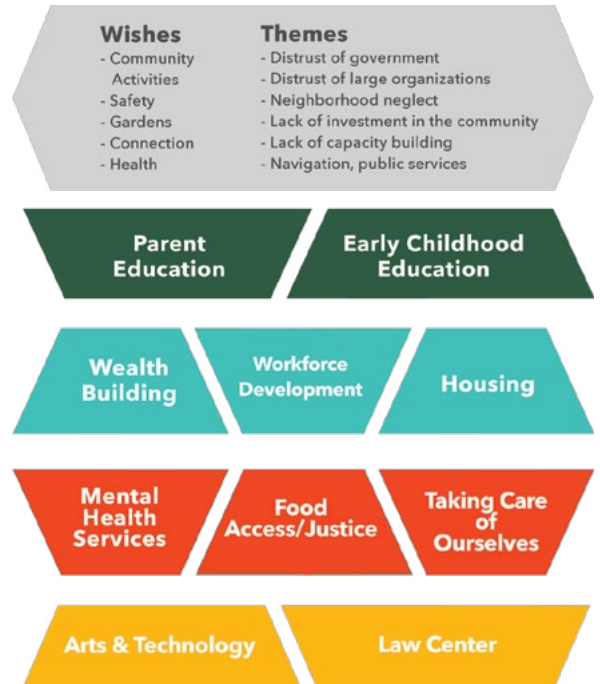


# Westwood Redeemer: Southwest Denver’s Front Porch

What we build will be inspired by the spirit of a front porch.

On front porches in various communities across this country, people feel comfortable spending time together, listening and learning, and building relationships of trust. When institutions desire to build partnerships with historically-marginalized groups, conversations can be most meaningfully invited on a welcoming “front porch.”

Over the course of the last several years, these are the themes, wishes, and areas of focus that have emerged from the Southwest Denver community. And these will be the drivers of what is created at the new site.



# Our Focus for the Campaign

In the early summer of 2021, we begin the soft launch of our capital campaign. The campaign will raise \$12.3 Million and we seek to close the campaign by the end of the year.

## Current Commitments

The campaign has already raised more a quarter of the funds and secured several long-term anchor tenants for the project.

## Structure of Fundraising Efforts

### Major Gifts

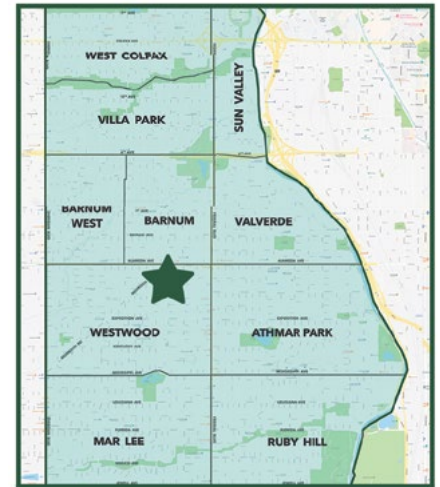
We will be seeking five large gifts with a target of \$1 Million each to support the five areas of focus outlined below.

### Mid-Tier Gifts

We will be seeking ten mid-tier gifts with a target of \$250,000 - \$500,000.

### Individual Gifts

The later stage of our campaign will focus on individual giving with contributions being welcomed at every level.



Map of Southwest Denver, the star marks the location of our new site.

# Areas of Focus



### COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

Creating spaces that promote well-being across the lifespan



### EARLY LEARNING

When children have a healthy start in life, their community is stronger



### DISCOVERY

Art, creativity, and a sense of discovery make lives and communities vibrant



### HEALTHY FOOD & SPACE

Community kitchens, green space, gardens, and a focus on nature



### LIFE-LONG LEARNING

The full richness of life is unlocked when people and communities are built around learning







# A Look at Our Plans

Our design phase is well underway. Below are current renderings and components of our front porch in Westwood.



### Library

In partnership with the Denver Public Library, we plan to build a state-of-the-art library on the southeast corner of the site. This library will be designed to inspire lifelong learning.



### Discovery Lab

The basement will be converted into creative space meant to inspire curiosity and digital literacy for youth and community members. We plan to outfit the lab with computers, a podcast studio, and innovative spaces for intellectual growth.



### Early Childhood Education

In partnership with Mile High Early Learning, we plan to build an early childhood learning center. One of the greatest needs we heard from the community is access to safe and reliable early childhood care and education.



### Law Clinic

One of the recurring themes we heard was a place for community members to receive high-quality legal services.



### Community Kitchen

We know that food brings a community together. For this reason, we plan to build a large community kitchen at the center of the building



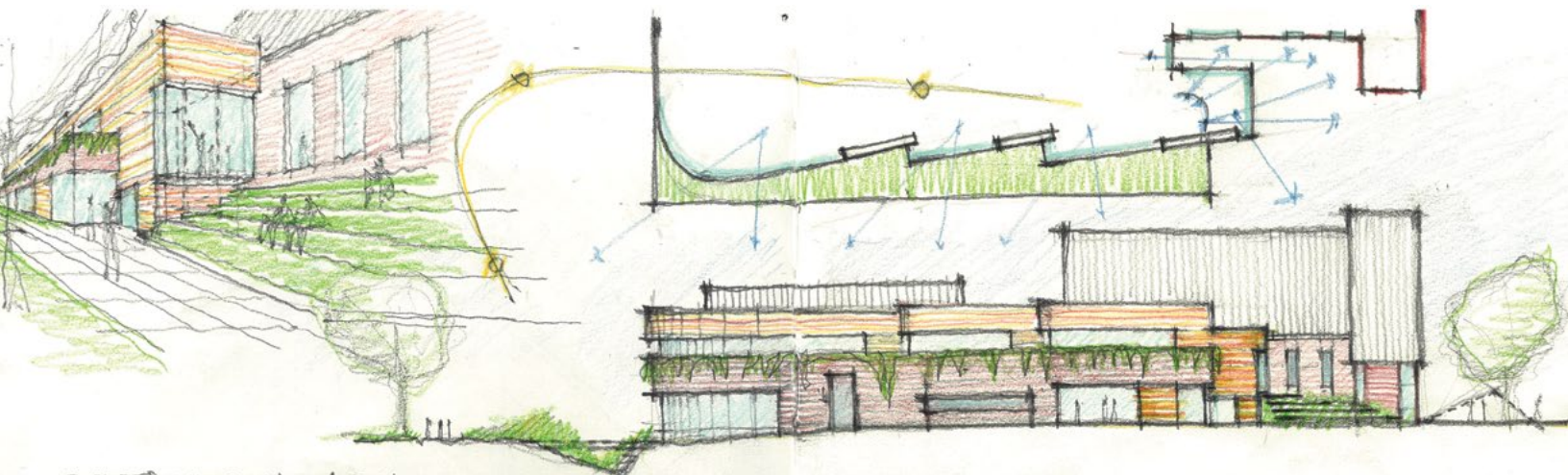
### Mental Health Services

We know that 3 out of 5 people experiencing a mental health concern don't get the care that they need.



### Community Room

We plan to convert the sanctuary into a large community space that can be reserved for neighborhood meetings, quinceañeras, food banks, and a variety of pop-up events.



WESTWOOD REDEEMER 04.2021



## Leadership From Within

Since moving to Denver twenty years ago, Armando Rangel has committed his life to improving the lot of marginalized communities. Born in Mexico, Rangel spent the majority of his youth in Mexico City before relocating to the United States.

His work today pivots around southwest Denver, as a part of Dr. Lydia Prado's Lifespan Local team. Rangel facilitates four-week programs with Latino men, exploring themes like leadership, mental health, and suicide prevention.

The program was conceived as part of a larger effort on the part of Lifespan Local to listen to, and empower, community members.

"Dr. Prado came to me and said, 'We need to do a better job of listening,'" said Rangel. "So I walked around the shopping centers and sidewalks of Southwest Denver and began talking to people."

While speaking with the community, Rangel recognized a passion for civic engagement among

its members. This instinct, however, was in many cases being thwarted by traditional family roles necessitating involvement in other affairs, or by economic realities that pressed and pulled on the time and energies of these families. Much of Rangel's work with Lifespan Local involves bridging that gap between passion and action.

Part of the ethos of Dr. Prado and the work of Lifespan Local is the belief that leadership is a capacity inherent to all people. By understanding the forces that shape the lives of the people of Southwest Denver, Lifespan Local can more effectively meet individuals and families where they are. Once there, the work of instilling agency and action can begin in earnest.

"Our hope is that the children of southwest Denver will become tomorrow's doctors and teachers of southwest Denver," said Rangel. "That, to me, is the fulfillment of the American dream."



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- Armando Rangel



# Trust Built on Follow Through

The daughter of Vietnamese immigrants, Hue Phung grew up in the Denver area with a unique perspective on community. As a child, Hue and her family made frequent trips from their home in Westminster to Southwest Denver, where a significant portion of Colorado's Vietnamese community resides.

It was during these years that Phung began to notice a number of difficulties facing the community, particularly those pertaining to mental health.

"It might have been due to the translation, but it seemed like once 'mental health' entered the conversation, people kind of shut down," said Phung. "They just didn't want to talk about it."

Phung took this puzzling picture of stigma and denial with her during her undergraduate studies at the University of Colorado, Denver. Her collegiate experience, though full of interesting ideas, seemed mired by abstractions.

What Phung craved was a living, breathing example of the concepts she was learning about. Shortly

after completing her undergraduate degree, she was introduced to Dr. Lydia Prado, who was visiting the Mi Casa Resource Center, where Phung worked at the time.

"It was really the moment when everything came into focus for me," said Phung of her introduction to Prado. "Here was someone who was actually getting out there beyond the rhetoric and living these concepts of outreach and solidarity and belonging."

In the course of a single conversation, Phung's life trajectory changed indelibly.

Phung was impressed by Prado's commitment to listen and learn from communities at the margins rather than dictating their needs to them. Soon after, Phung became part of Prado's non-profit organization, Lifespan Local.

“

**People trust Lydia. Not only because she listens but because she follows through.”**

**-Hue Phung**

Phung now engages with community members as part of Lifespan Local's Community Activator team. The organization works to tackle difficult civic and social challenges by engaging with communities and lifting up a collective voice.

Along with this work, Phung is continuing her studies at CU-Denver's campus in Aurora, focusing on the mental health of new mothers.







**Dr. Lydia Prado**  
**Executive Director**  
Lifespan Local

Dr. Lydia Prado approaches her work from a systems and strengths-based perspective, with an emphasis on diversity, equity, and community-based leadership. Dr. Prado is a placemaker, convening partners with a shared commitment to healthy living and social change.

Before starting Lifespan Local, Dr. Prado spent 17 years with the Mental Health Center of Denver as the Vice President of Child & Family Services. She is the project visionary behind the Dahlia Campus for Health & Well-Being, an innovative community center in Northeast Park Hill that promotes well-being across the lifespan. The site features an inclusive preschool, a full service dental clinic for children, a one-acre urban farm, a 5,400 sq ft aquaponics greenhouse, horticultural therapy spaces, community gardens, teaching kitchen, community room, gymnasium, and a full array of mental health services for all ages.



## A Deep Collaboration

### Barton Institute for Community Action & Lifespan Local

The Barton Institute for Community Action and Lifespan Local enjoy a deep collaboration that is rooted in the shared values of service, equity, and integrity as we work together and in connection with the community. The Barton Institute serves as the fiscal sponsor for the work of Lifespan Local. Together, we have created a new model for partnership – one of mutual benefit, shared risk, and a joint commitment to centering natural community leaders as the drivers of change. The collaboration exists because of a confident alignment in values and thrives based on the unique expertise and strengths of each. Together, our impact exceeds what would be possible alone.

This partnership is fueled by the principles of cooperation and shared strengths. Under the leadership of David Miller, the Barton Institute brings decades of experience in Denver's philanthropic and civic spaces. Under the leadership of Dr. Lydia Prado, Lifespan Local brings a community-driven process that led to the internationally-recognized Dahlia Campus for Health & Well-Being. David and Lydia decided that their strengths and goals were complementary and that a partnership between their teams would create more sustainable and meaningful community impact.

Together, the Barton Institute and Lifespan Local are leveraging our unique strengths to take creative approaches to placemaking and cultivating healthy communities in Southwest Denver.

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