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City, Auburn University partnering on health clinic in Boykin Community Center

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The city is currently in negotiations to purchase property in Northwest Auburn for the project
Allison Blankenship/The Villager

Auburn University and the city of Auburn are partnering to bring a health clinic to Boykin Community Center in northwest Auburn.

The planned Auburn University Health Care Clinic and Education Center will offer health care services for Auburn residents that are uninsured, underinsured or prefer to access health care in northwest Auburn, according Richard Hansen, dean of the Harrison School of Pharmacy.

"We are very excited about this partnership with the city of Auburn and the opportunities we have with the Auburn University Health Care Clinic and Education Center," he said. "We plan for it to be sort of an interdisciplinary clinic. We're hoping that the Osteopathic Medical School will join us at some point as well — social work, nutrition, nursing, physical therapy. We're hoping that it can be a place where we can all provide our own services and give back to the community."

The clinic, to be overseen by the School of Pharmacy, will also feature services and health education provided by the School of Nursing and, possibly in the future, from VCOM.

The schools of pharmacy and nursing have partnered together for years to bring health services to the community, often through mobile clinics.

"Having a stationary site where we can build and have a place where we can meet the needs that we've been seeing across the years is just really exciting for both of our schools and both of our missions," said Kathy Ellison, professor in the School of Nursing. "We have nurse practitioners that are primary care providers that will be working in the clinic as well as our nursing students doing health education and helping with the flow of the clinic and helping with vital signs and those types of things.

"Together I think we really cross the gamut of all the needs these clients have."

The clinic will provide learning opportunities for Auburn students, like Ren Aranda, a third-year student in the School of Pharmacy, across multiple disciplines.

"It's a great opportunity for us to give back as students to a community that's taken us in," he said. "It's allowing us to be part of it for at least four to seven years, being pharmacy students. It's a great opportunity to serve people who really need the services. But it also lets us practice and it also allows us to participate with nursing and VCOM and other health care programs at the university."

The city has allocated \$1.2 million in its budget for Fiscal Year 2019 that will cover clinic construction, among other improvements, as part of phase two of renovations at Boykin Community Center. Build-out of the clinic, which will take about a year, is expected to start as soon as possible. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama has already extended support to the clinic and will continue to back interprofessional education.

The Boykin Community Center is currently being transitioned from the Parks and Recreation Department to the newly-formed Community Services Department, said Megan McGowen Crouch, executive director of Development Services.

"We're making it even more a community center," she said. "Our goal is to continue to provide more and more services in the northwest Auburn community, specifically.

"We're looking at making it more of a comprehensive community center that provides a lot of services in the middle of northwest Auburn that allows people to travel much shorter distances to get services that they may need."