Mid-Ohio Food Collective to Re-Purpose Former Refugee Road Kroger into Flagship Anti-Hunger Center

Former retail space to offer food access, human-centered services to meet neighborhood needs

COLUMBUS – Mid-Ohio Food Collective (MOFC) and The Kroger Co. have announced that the former Kroger store location near the corner of Refugee and Hamilton Roads in southeast Columbus has been purchased by MOFC and will be re-imagined to serve as a groundbreaking anti-hunger service hub.

While exact plans for the 67,000-square-foot former grocery store are being finalized, the new location will offer food access as well as critically needed services and supports to nearby customers. MOFC will work with community partners and conduct outreach to learn what services are most needed in the area. The Eastland neighborhood has high rates of food insecurity and evictions, and the nearby Eastland Mall closed in late 2022. Possible co-located operations at the new anti-hunger center could include health services, public benefits navigation assistance, commercial-grade kitchen space and more.

“It’s a lot of space with a lot of raw potential,” said MOFC President and CEO Matt Habash. “This is a chance to learn from the nearby community, respond to their needs and build something that can help tackle the interconnected causes of hunger on a scale Columbus has never seen before.”

Prior to closing in May 2022, the former Kroger store anchored several smaller businesses in a strip mall at 4485 Refugee Road. Talks between The Kroger Co. and MOFC started shortly before the closure and, on March 3, 2023, Kroger sold the entire retail complex to MOFC significantly below market rate to help ensure continuous food access for the neighborhood. Current commercial tenants at the shopping center will not be affected.

“We had several other parties interested in purchasing the property, but through Kroger’s existing support of MOFC with our Zero Hunger | Zero Waste Food Rescue program and additional financial contributions, we knew that their mission aligned with our goal of ending hunger in our communities. We are excited to find out what services this partnership can make available for our neighbors and customers in the area,” said Amy McCormick, corporate affairs manager for The Kroger Co. and MOFC board member.

As MOFC continues to focus on supplying fresh, nutritious food and addressing the social determinants of hunger, it has opened several Mid-Ohio Markets in collaboration with valued community partners that allow qualifying customers to shop with a dignified, grocery-store experience.

The non-profit has also expanded its child and senior hunger programs, kitchen operations, and wrap-around services to help meet customers’ diverse needs. The purchase of the former Kroger will create opportunities to scale up lessons from other areas and co-locate services to address hunger’s root causes.
“MOFC is used to pushing the boundaries of what fighting hunger looks like, but this is a first-of-its-kind opportunity for us,” Habash said. “Thanks to Kroger, we will have space for multiple supports and services under one roof and the chance to imagine what a truly intersectional anti-hunger center could look like for our neighbors in need.”

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About Mid-Ohio Food Collective
Mid-Ohio Food Collective (MOFC) is the largest anti-hunger organization in central and eastern Ohio. Through our five assets (the Mid-Ohio Foodbank, Farm, Farmacy, Kitchen, and Markets), MOFC addresses the root causes of hunger while working with more 680 partner agencies in 20 counties to feed hundreds of thousands of hungry Ohioans every year. Learn how we’re co-creating hunger-free, healthier communities at www.mofc.org.

About The Kroger Co. Columbus
The Kroger Co.’s Columbus Division operates 113 Kroger stores, 94 fuel centers and 11 pharmacies throughout central and northwest Ohio as well as southeast Michigan and the Ohio River Valley region. Kroger’s 18,000 associates in the Columbus Division are dedicated to the Kroger Purpose: to FEED the Human Spirit, by serving the region through food, inspiration, and uplift, and creating #ZeroHungerZeroWaste communities by 2025.