

## Hospital Invests in Sustaining Local Community



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St. Luke's Hospital is helping preserve its midtown neighbourhood and has taken on the role of residential real estate developer. Westport Today LLC, a subsidiary of the St. Luke's Foundation is building a bright new row of townhomes in the 4400 block of Summit Street. It is also engaged in buying property, renovating and reselling old houses in the midtown neighbourhood west of St. Luke's Hospital, some that were 80 years old.

The project of preserving the neighbourhood began approximately 17 years ago when a foundation and trust associated with Country Club Plaza developer Miller Nichols looked for and found a neighbour — St. Luke's Hospital — who would care about protecting property values near the Plaza. The Miller Nichols Charitable Foundation and Miller Nichols Living Trust gave 93 Plaza-area properties to the St. Luke's Foundation and also founded Westport Today.

"Our mission has been to improve the neighborhood west of St. Luke's Hospital," said Whitney Kerr Sr., chairman of Westport Today. "We didn't want it to die. We wanted to stabilize the neighbourhood. We didn't want to think of moving the hospital like you've seen many other hospitals do."

Mark Litzler, executive director of the St. Luke's Foundation explains that they do not want to be a long-term landlord but that their primary goal is to improve the neighbourhood through home ownership. He also points out that Westport Today has spent nearly \$3 million to acquire and improve existing houses before selling them and has spent almost \$900,000 to upgrade an existing 12-unit apartment building in the 4400 block of Summit Street.

Source: [The Kansas City Star](#)  
Image Credit: The Kansas City Star

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