

CHC Unveiling Reveals Future of Affordable Health Care

The view from the top of the new Community Health Center is breathtaking. Middletown Patch took a tour after the ribbon cutting for the new green building a year-and-a-half in the making.

By [Cassandra Day](#)

[Email the author](#)

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Colo. Gov. John Hickenlooper flew in to Middletown in time for Saturday morning's ribbon cutting for the new [Community Health Center](#) at 675 Main Street. The 1974 Wesleyan University alum was instrumental in the health center's early survival.

May 5 was the grand opening to the public — a day of tours and a evening 40th anniversary private gala for the founders, a group of community activists and Wesleyan students who believed "health care is a right, not a privilege" in 1972.

Mayor Dan Drew was in attendance, as were many community leaders, residents, employees, medical staff and well-wishers.

Gov. Dannel P. Malloy stopped by the dinner at 6 p.m. to congratulate all those involved in this state-of-the-art health care endeavor.

When you walk inside the new health center, it's more like entering a museum or art gallery foyer. The high ceiling and preponderous of windows allow for natural light and airiness.

A traditional labyrinth patterns the center of the lobby floor. There are several computer stations where patients can check in, see their lab results or when their next appointment is.

There are four floors — the first has the lobby, community room, kitchen area; the second and third floors are clinical "pods" where health care teams are work together in small groups' and the rooftop.

The color schemes on the second and third floor are bold. "They really capture the warmth and the spirit of the health center, it uplifts you," says President and CEO Mark Masselli. "I can't tell you how many complements we get."

The architect, Robert Olson & Associates of Hartford, has replicated the color combinations from the 13 other Community Health Centers around the state like Bristol, Clinton, Enfield, New London and Waterbury.

A buttercream and tomato orange waiting room leads to an orange, royal purple and bright yellow walled community room with grasshopper green carpeting and blue and purple sofa groupings.

"We're trying to break down all those barriers," Masselli says, referring to traditionally cold, hard and antiseptic health care treatment areas.

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Chief dental officer Margaret Drozdoski, says individual offices for physicians and nurses' stations are a thing of the past at CHC. "Everybody who works in a pod sits together in a room" with no partitions.

"This is the future of affordable health care," says one woman on today's tour.

The rooftop garden has hydroponic plants arraigned vertically, a calm, babbling water feature, magnificent 36-degree views of the Arrigoni Bridge, Main Street, the North End and sky. Many plots are marked off already as the future home of the Macdonough Elementary School garden club.

Vegetables and fruits will be spread throughout the community, according to CHC Media Specialist Eliza Cole.

Whereas the Community Health Center dental, medical, behavioral health and administrative offices are spread from one side of Main Street to the other, including a floor in the Harding Building (atop [It's Only Natural Market](#)), Cole says soon they'll all be housed in this new building — and another across Grand Street where the former [Steve's Gas Station was just razed](#).

"We'll be under one roof, sharing ideas, communications, IT, will all function separately, but together," Cole says, collaborating and sharing ideas.

For a year's worth of photographs of the building's rise, see [Community Health Center: From Ground Up \[VIDEO\]](#)