

Columbus REGIONAL HEALTH

Building a HEALTHIER COMMUNITY with city COLLABORATION

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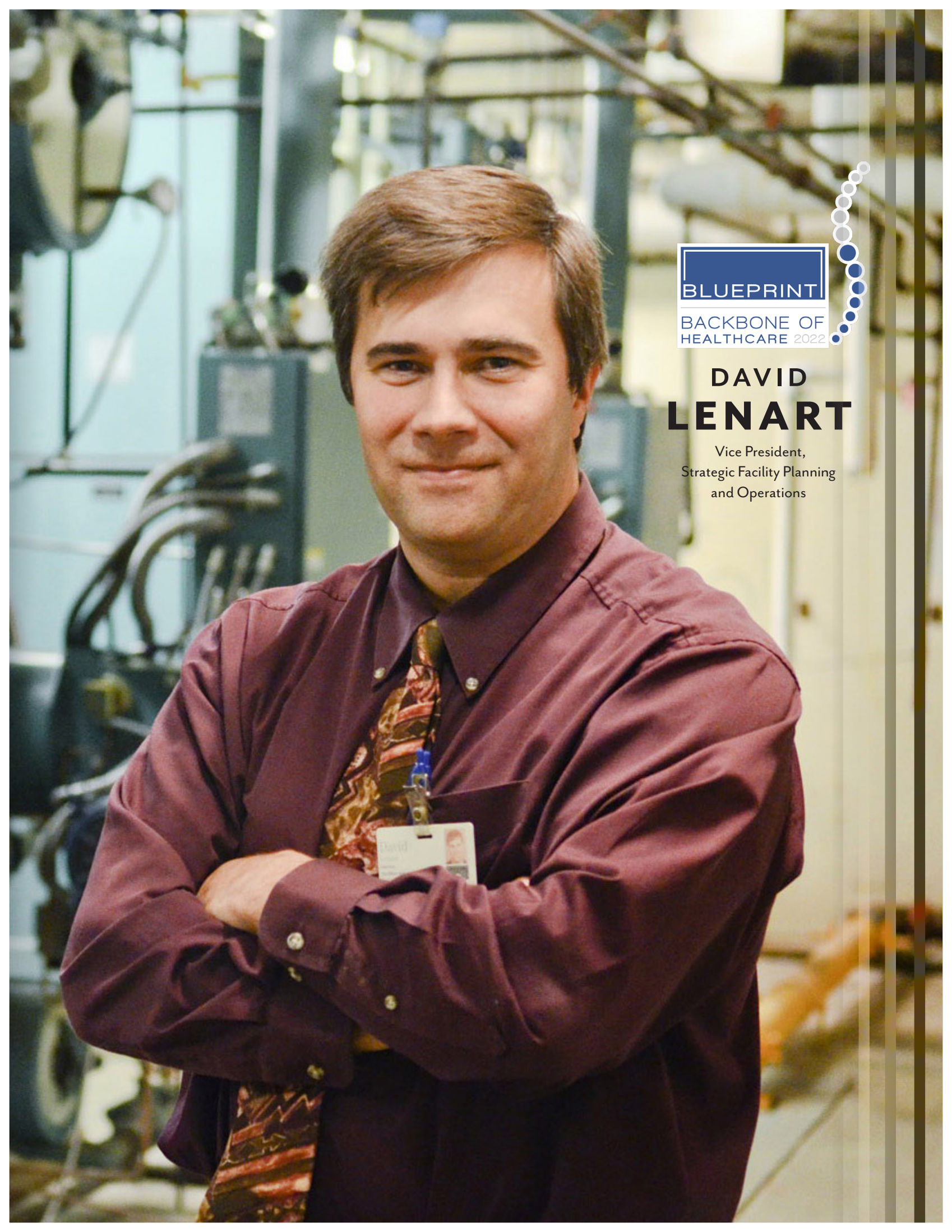
When patients are referred to a physical or occupational therapist, they sometimes struggle to keep up with their stretches or exercises after sessions are finished.

For patients at Columbus Regional Health, this will soon be made easier by a partnership with the local parks and recreation department. After an appointment, they'll be able to walk down the hall and work with a fitness professional to develop manageable routines and habits.

Columbus Regional Health, based in Columbus, Indiana, has partnered with the city to create the NexusPark Community Development Corporation, to bring health and recreational services together under one roof.

The new facility, located in a former shopping mall, is expected to begin placing services in the space by the end of 2023. Overseeing the renovations is David Lenart, CRH's vice president – strategic facility planning and operations. He and his team have been coordinating the project with hospital and city leaders for the past few years.

“We’re taking an old mall and through adaptive reuse are trying to give it a new function completely,” he says. “We want to make sure the environment is best suited for all the caregivers, patients and residents who’ll be using the space.”



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**DAVID
LENART**

Vice President,
Strategic Facility Planning
and Operations

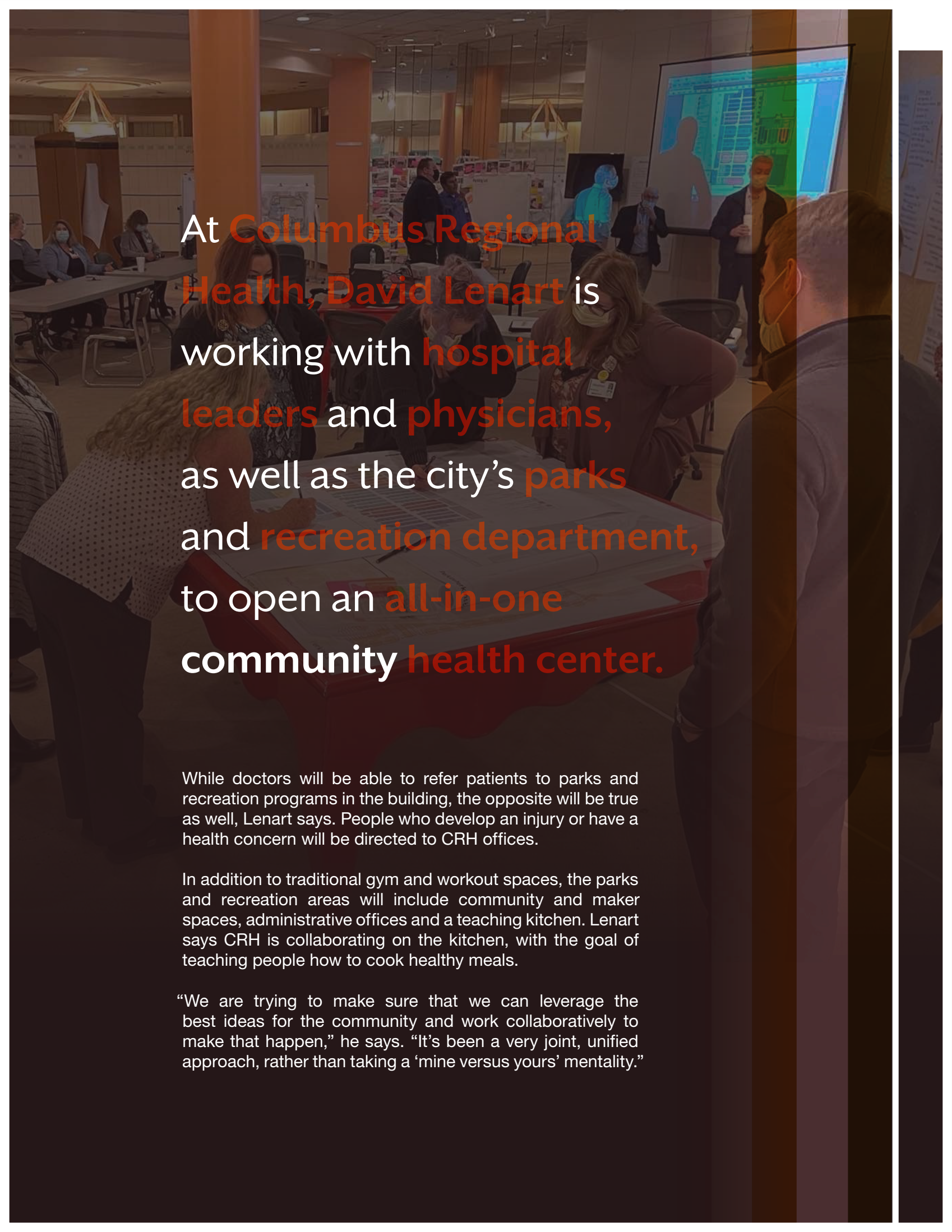
Unified approach

CRH, which isn't affiliated with any major healthcare systems, serves patients in 10 counties with a 225-bed hospital and dozens of specialty and primary care centers. According to Lenart, the city approached the hospital prior to the COVID-19 pandemic to ask about partnering on a joint facility.

The goal, he says, was to create a centralized place for residents to improve their health and wellbeing. The 400,000-square-foot NexusPark complex will be split between CRH clinics and the city's parks and recreation programs; it will also have retail spaces. The city also plans to expand with an adjoining 150,000-square-foot fieldhouse, which will house a soccer field, softball field and basketball courts.

CRH will be consolidating 11 of its care centers in the new facility. According to Lenart, the offices are currently spread out, making them difficult to access for people who need multiple services. NexusPark will house primary care, neurology, obstetrics, physical therapy, occupational therapy, lab services and more.





At Columbus Regional Health, David Lenart is working with hospital leaders and physicians, as well as the city's parks and recreation department, to open an all-in-one community health center.

While doctors will be able to refer patients to parks and recreation programs in the building, the opposite will be true as well, Lenart says. People who develop an injury or have a health concern will be directed to CRH offices.

In addition to traditional gym and workout spaces, the parks and recreation areas will include community and maker spaces, administrative offices and a teaching kitchen. Lenart says CRH is collaborating on the kitchen, with the goal of teaching people how to cook healthy meals.

“We are trying to make sure that we can leverage the best ideas for the community and work collaboratively to make that happen,” he says. “It’s been a very joint, unified approach, rather than taking a ‘mine versus yours’ mentality.”



Open to ideas

Leaders in the health system and city have taken an integrated project delivery approach to the project, he says, meaning teams are working across disciplines to share ideas. In a more traditional approach, most decisions are made between the respective designer and owner.

“Our teams don’t say, ‘stay in your lane,’” Lenart says. “We collaborate and build off each other’s ideas so everyone’s part of the creative process.”

For example, his team and the project’s design team have met with CRH’s patient and family experience team. This led to the development of a more “staff-minded design,” he says, which will include more natural light and quieter, more comfortable workspaces.





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Those conversations also informed how to design the space with COVID-19 safety in mind. Originally, the space was designed to have patients come through the middle of the medical practice, which would have meant walking past many offices, staff work areas and exam rooms. After working with the patient and family experience team, the design was changed to give patients more direct routes to the exam rooms without passing by the other spaces.

CRH also plans to use geofencing and digital communication technologies with patients before they come on site, which will help reduce wait times.

“We’re trying to make a cultural match between what we need to do in healthcare, and what the public will be willing to engage with post-COVID,” Lenart says.



Building community

Throughout his 22 years at CRH, Lenart says working with doctors and nurses to improve the patient experience has been most rewarding.

“I’m not a clinician, but clinicians listen to my advice when I have it,” he says. “And I always welcome their input. CRH has a strong culture of collaboration.”

He’s been working in hospital facilities for over 30 years, having first worked for a healthcare organization in northern Indiana and then one in Memphis, Tennessee. After graduating from Purdue University with a degree in mechanical engineering, he had the opportunity to work in a steel mill, but chose hospitals instead.

“I thought it was a place to better help people and that it’d be challenging work in relation to building level complexity,” Lenart says.





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In addition to being a registered professional engineer in Indiana, he also has an MBA from Indiana University Northwest. The degree in business has been helpful in managing the facilities department, he says, especially as he's worked to manage finances. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, he's been focused on reducing costs.

Lenart's life outside of CRH is consumed by similar work, with house projects being a hobby of his and his wife. In that way, work life and home life aren't that different, he says.

"At CRH we all care about the same thing and work together towards that end," Lenart says. "Our desires and passions are for our patients and our community." •