

# Grocery Project Targets Food Desert In North Memphis

The project would be both a retail and a community resource endeavor.



*Bringing healthier options closer to where North Memphians live, work and play!*

*Photo Credit: North Memphis Grocery Project via Facebook*



**Kailynn  
Johnson**

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A project to bring a grocery and resource center to residents in North Memphis is underway.

Councilwoman Michalyn Easter-Thomas presented the North Memphis Grocery Project as a way to address the food desert in North Memphis. She says the store is to be built on Chelsea Avenue at Tunica Street.

An article in the University of Memphis' Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law publication *ML — Memphis Law Magazine* by Ryan Jones defined food deserts as "communities that have poor access to healthy and affordable foods. ... They are usually concentrated in low-income and historically marginalized areas throughout the country, with issues of longtime systemic racism, racial residential segregation, poor access to transportation and economic inequality woven into the history of these barren food landscapes."

On Thursday, Easter-Thomas presented the project to residents at a community meeting at Springdale Baptist Church. "A grocery store is something that you all have said that we needed," she said to the gathering. "I would love for all of us to have access to be able to get something of quality and affordability in our own backyard."

Easter-Thomas, who is a resident of the community, told the *Memphis Flyer* that it was public knowledge that there was a need to address the food desert in the community. She said that in her position as councilwoman, she wanted to advocate and get funding started for this project.

Cornelius Sanders, executive director of Promise Development Corporation, explained to residents that the Memphis City Council passed a resolution from American Rescue Plan funds in October 2021 to get the project started. They then entered a purchase agreement for 1993 Chelsea in April of 2022. The project owns 12 acres of land as of May 2023.

Easter-Thomas heavily emphasized the duality of the project as a place for groceries and resources, differentiating it as a resource center and not a retail center.

“The whole aspect is bringing much needed resources together with the collaboration of public and private and government and philanthropic dollars to ensure that those resources are there,” she said. She explained that these resources will encompass aspects of dental, pharmacy, medical and financial. Easter-Thomas said that groceries will be the only retail component there.

She said that this is intentional, because there are a lot of land-owning Black entrepreneurs in the area, and they want to support them, encourage them, and “allow them space to expand.”

“I don’t want to compete with them or make it hard for them to continue to thrive and progress in North Memphis,” she said. “It’s intentionally not including any retail so that those Black businesses can thrive with the upcoming of everything else in the project.”

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