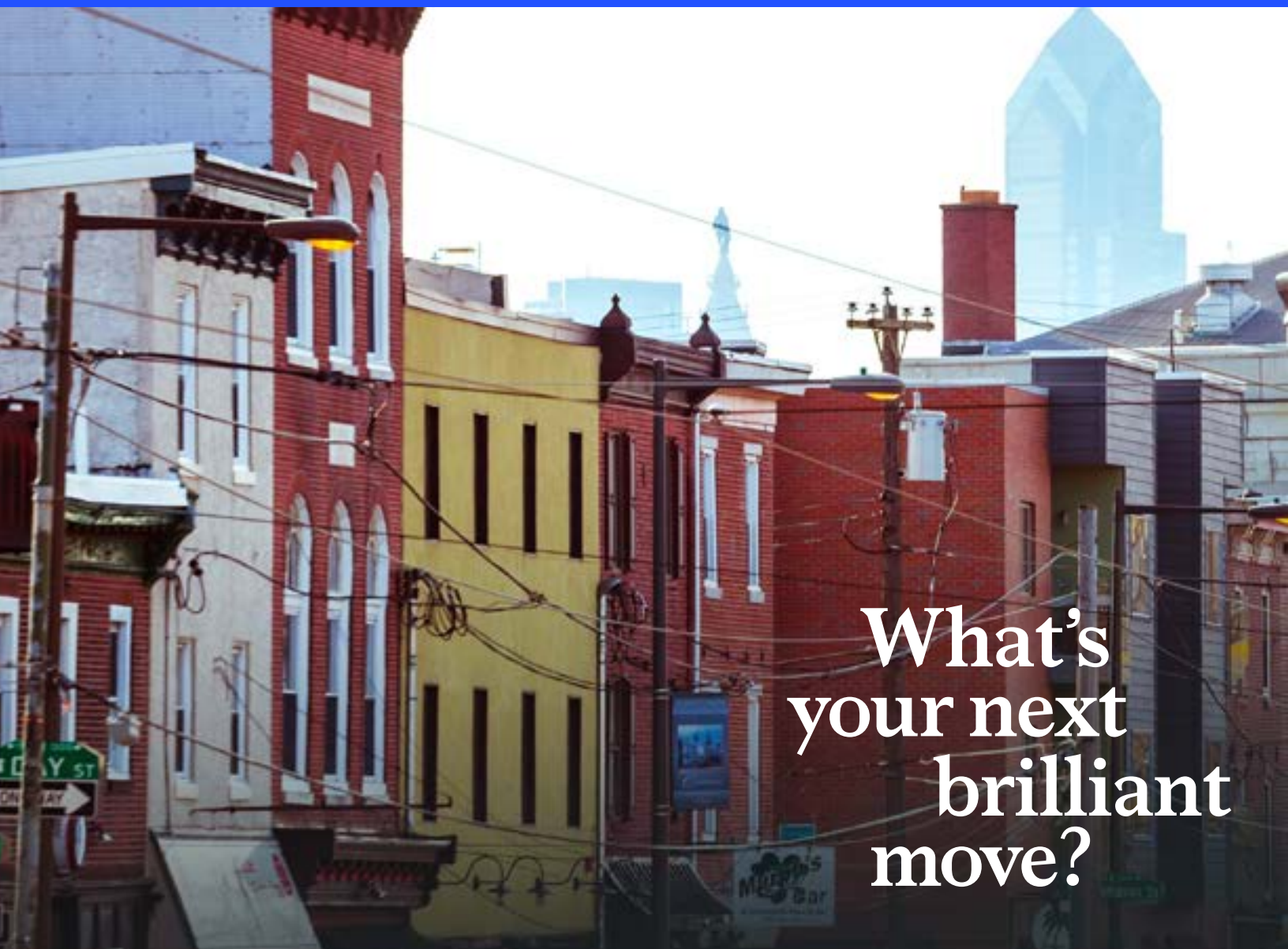


CASE STUDY

When a grocery run becomes a lifeline: How public–private collaboration is reshaping health in Philadelphia



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The automatic doors at Brown’s ShopRite on Fox Street slide open before sunrise. The aisles are stocked with the usual staples—bread, milk, eggs. But just inside the entrance sits something unexpected: a Healthy Together Hub, marked by a small table, blood pressure cuff, glucose monitor, and a healthcare worker offering a warm hello.

At this ShopRite, grocery runs are sometimes more than an errand. They can be a lifeline. That was the case for Kevin Carter, who stepped into the Fox Street store last year.

“I stopped in just to grab groceries,” Kevin remembers. “I wasn’t feeling great, but I figured I’d be in and out.” When a community health worker asked if he wanted a quick check, he almost said no. Instead, he sat down. Minutes later, his blood sugar read over 500—dangerously high. “They looked at me and said, ‘You need to go to the hospital. Right now.’ I didn’t know it then, but that moment saved my life.”

Kevin was in the middle of a massive heart attack. Doctors later told him that if he’d gone home instead of into the Hub, he likely wouldn’t be here today. “I was 33. I kept thinking, how does this happen to me?” he says. “Now I tell everyone I know: get checked. Don’t wait.”

Kevin’s story helps explain why leaders across Philadelphia are coming together around a simple but powerful idea: Health works best when it shows up where life already happens.



“I didn’t know it then, but that moment saved my life.”

—Kevin Carter, Fox Street ShopRite customer & heart attack survivor

Building health into everyday spaces

At the center of this effort is the Philadelphia Partnership for Nutrition and Health (PPNH), a coalition of more than 20 leaders from business, healthcare, and the nonprofit sector focused on advancing equitable access to nutrition and preventive care. Founded by Ken Frazier, former CEO of Merck, PPNH serves as a convener—bringing the right partners together, aligning incentives, and helping design and scale initiatives that are both community-driven and economically sustainable. The organization has partnered with the [McKinsey Health Institute \(MHI\)](#) to build the business case and systems thinking to help partners scale initiatives that improve health outcomes—and make economic sense for those

involved. This collaboration is part of McKinsey's [Action 9](#) commitment to organizations that are growing opportunity among Black communities globally.

“Cities are where life happens,” says Pooja Kumar, MD, a senior partner at McKinsey and a global leader of MHI, which published research showing health investment at the city level could [add 20–25 billion additional years of higher-quality life globally](#)—about five extra healthy years per person. “If we bring health into the everyday spaces people already trust—grocery stores, pharmacies—we can add years to life and life to years. And Philadelphia is proving that.”

“Your life expectancy shouldn’t be determined by your ZIP code, but that isn’t the case in Philadelphia, where life expectancy can vary by nearly 20 years based on your neighborhood.”

— Ken Frazier, Founder, Philadelphia Partnership for Nutrition and Health

A Hub inside the grocery store

The Healthy Together Hub at Brown’s ShopRite is one example of how that vision becomes real.

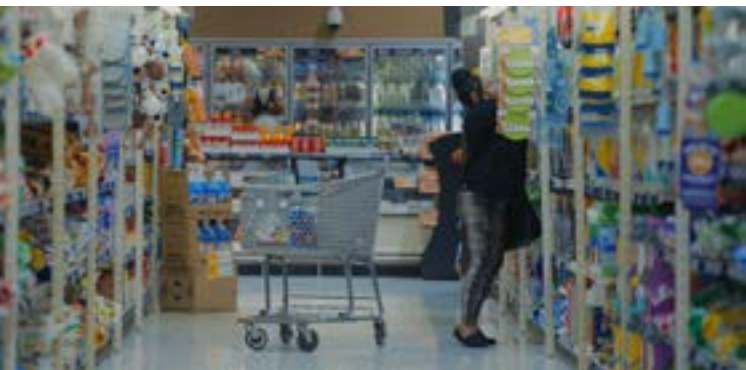
Jeff Brown, a fourth-generation grocer and owner of Brown’s Super Stores, didn’t set out to create a health intervention. He set out to serve his customers.

“Three thousand people walk through this store every day,” he says. “They trust us. They’re here anyway. So why wouldn’t we use this space to help them live healthier lives?”

It took several groups coming together to make the Hubs a reality alongside Jeff. Temple Health’s nurses and community health workers serve as the friendly faces at the Hub, engaging ShopRite customers every day. Through them, the Healthy Hubs offer free blood pressure and glucose screenings, nutrition guidance,

and direct referrals into the healthcare system—without appointments, white coats, or stigma.

Highmark Health also came on board, providing investment into Healthy Together Hub. “Early on, one of our biggest challenges was determining how to fund the program sustainably—how much we could support and how many people we could realistically serve,” says Steve Carson, senior vice president of population health at Temple Health. “We’re grateful that Highmark’s funding of the Healthy Hub at the ShopRite has made this work possible. To continue the program sustainably, we focus on delivering strong data and metrics that demonstrate clear impact and value while ensuring meaningful access for individuals.”



“Here, we catch things early. We don’t just screen—we follow up. We call. We help schedule appointments. We walk with people through the next step.”

— **Lakisha Sturgis**, Director of community care management at Temple Health

“For a lot of our neighbors, the emergency room is their first and only point of care,” explains Lakisha Sturgis, director of community care management at Temple Health. “Here, we catch things early. We don’t just screen—we follow up. We call. We help schedule appointments. We walk with people through the next step.”

PPNH and MHI helped bring the right partners to the table—retail, healthcare, and community—while supporting funding from donors, design, and coordination.

“Our role is to look across the ecosystem and identify partners who might not naturally come together to form true partnerships that can tackle the toughest problems,” says Pooja. “We bring the data and evidence about what’s working and build business cases that we think will allow for sustainable models to scale more broadly.”

MHI helped frame the Hub as a shared investment, not just a cost: reducing costly emergency events for hospitals and payers, building trust and loyalty for

retailers, and giving community members accessible, preventive care in a familiar setting.

That trust has translated into results.

In 2025, the Healthy Together Hub at Fox Street engaged more than nearly 10,000 community members, screened over 1,000 people, and identified hypertension or elevated risk in about 30 percent of those screened—with 100 percent of at-risk individuals connected to follow-up care.

Temple estimates that for a modest annual operating cost, the Hub helps avert hundreds of emergency-room visits each year—saving lives and avoiding tens of thousands of dollars per incident in acute care costs.

“We planned to reach about 1,200 people in the first year,” Lakisha says. “We doubled that. And behind every number is a person.”

Kevin is one of them.

“I’m still here,” he says simply. “Because someone cared enough to ask me to sit down.”

“We bring the data and evidence about what’s working and build business cases that we think will allow for sustainable models to scale more broadly.”

— **Pooja Kumar**, senior partner at McKinsey and a global leader of MHI



The Healthy Together Hub at Brown’s ShopRite is staffed by Temple Health nurses and community workers.

A model built to scale

What started in one grocery store is now expanding across Philadelphia's highest-need neighborhoods, with the potential to serve thousands more residents across the city. The Healthy Together Hub is part of a broader place-based strategy supported by PPNH and MHI that also includes community fridges in pharmacies, maternal nutrition support, and healthier food incentives. The model works because the interventions are proven—and the incentives are aligned with all organizations.

“For hospitals, it means fewer catastrophic emergencies and more preventive care,” Pooja explains. “For payers, lower long-term costs. For grocers, deeper trust and loyalty. And for communities, care that feels accessible and human.”

Jeff sees the difference every day. “People come back and say, ‘You helped me,’” he says. “That builds something you can’t measure on a spreadsheet.

But over time, that trust matters—to families, to neighborhoods, and yes, to business.”

For Bill Golderer, president and CEO of United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey—another partner in PPNH's community—that collaboration is what makes their impact distinctive.

“Any one institution can do something noble,” he says. “But what actually changes lives is when you organize all the pieces—health systems, community leaders, capital, and trust—into something coordinated and sustained.”

That's certainly been the case for Philadelphia, where health shows up where life already happens—between the produce aisle and the checkout line.

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— **Bill Golderer**, President and CEO of United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey



Jeff Brown, left, is a fourth-generation grocer and owner of Brown's Super Stores.

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