

LYNN — Greater Lynn Senior Services and Catholic Charities of Boston are set to develop a food pantry in downtown Lynn as part of the emerging Phoenix Food Hub initiative.

The two local nonprofits have entered into an agreement for Catholic Charities to lease approximately 3,600 square feet of space on the first floor of the Greater Lynn Senior Services (GLSS) office building located at 8 Silsbee St.

“We are delighted to announce this important partnership,” said GLSS CEO Kathryn C. Burns. “The food pantry is a critical piece of this new initiative, which addresses food insecurity through a systemic solution in collaboration with other social-services agencies like Catholic Charities.”

Announced on Feb. 8, the food pantry will be one of the key programs in the Phoenix Food Hub initiative — a community-wide collaboration among members of Lynn’s Food Security Task Force to provide nutrition-related resources to those in need in the Lynn area.

GLSS is the lead agency in developing and managing Phoenix Food Hub’s on-site operations. In addition to Catholic Charities, key partners in the project include the City of Lynn, Lynn Community Health Center (LCHC), Leading through Empowering Opportunities (LEO Inc.), New American Center, The Food Project, Mutual Aid Lynn, and Lynn Grows. Funding partners include Mass General Brigham, Point32Health Foundation (formerly Tufts Foundation), Element Care and the City of Lynn.

Frances Troutman, the director of Catholic Charities North, said the pantry is expected to be built this spring.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the food-insecurity crisis in Massachusetts, increasing the urgency to get this pantry open to those in need as quickly as possible,” said Troutman. “Once we complete the build-out of this state-of-the-art pantry later this spring, Lynn residents will have easier access to nutritious food.”

Catholic Charities operates five other pantries throughout Eastern Massachusetts and distributed 3.5-million pounds of food last year, marking a 102-percent increase from pre-pandemic levels.

Additionally, Phoenix Food Hub will also offer housing advocacy, mental-health counseling, stress management, mobility training, healthy cooking classes, nutrition screening, and benefits counseling to those eligible for SNAP, WIC, and other nutrition-based resources.

A state-of-the-art teaching kitchen is currently being designed to provide healthy cooking classes and other educational opportunities to individuals and families alongside a monthly Brown Bag distribution program offered on-site in conjunction with the Greater Boston Food Bank.

The teaching kitchen is expected to be completed by the fall.

“Food insecurity almost always indicates other underlying societal challenges,” Burns said. “We hope our efforts to address social and health inequities by removing barriers to comprehensive services – including nutritious food – will become a model for other communities across the country.”

Adam Bass can be reached at adam@itemlive.com.