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Cultivate Hope Corner Store to Close in December. Building Will Be Repurposed to Continue Serving Neighborhood

Closure affects only the retail grocery program; Matthew 25 will continue its work in food, housing, education and community building.

CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa — Matthew 25 announced today that the Cultivate Hope Corner Store at 604 Ellis Blvd NW will close on December 18, 2026.

The decision follows a structured evaluation of the organization's programs that gathered input from staff, board members, neighbors, donors, and community partners, and included an in-depth financial analysis of the program. The evaluation found that the economics of operating a small-format grocery store are not financially sustainable, even with strong community support and careful management.

"Our staff, volunteers, and supporters worked incredibly hard to create the Corner Store and provide the best experience we could for our guests, but ultimately the model wasn't financially sustainable," said Courtney Ball, co-founder and executive director of Matthew 25. "It's really hard to close down something we all cared so much about. But this isn't the end of the story. We're here for the long haul. The Corner Store transformed this corner from what it was before. We still own the property, and we will find another use for it that serves the neighborhood."

Matthew 25 will continue serving the Northwest neighborhood through its four pillars of food, housing, education, and community building — including the Cultivate Hope Urban Farm, two blocks from the store, and Groundswell, Iowa's only pay-it-forward Cafe, both part of Matthew 25's local food programming.

The Corner Store opened in April 2022, transforming a once high-crime corner into a neighborhood asset and a walkable source of fresh, healthy food. Over nearly five years, it offered affordable groceries and free produce while creating a welcoming place for neighbors to connect and experience Matthew 25's pay-it-forward mission.

As Corner Store operations wind down ahead of the December 18 closing, Matthew 25 will begin developing plans for the building's next use. That conversation is expected to take time and involve neighbors, partners, and other stakeholders. Those interested in taking part can contact the organization at info@matthew-25.org.

Matthew 25 thanks the customers, donors, volunteers, and staff who sustained the store. "You've made our part of the world a better place," Ball said. "We're grateful for everything this community

built with us at the Corner Store, and we look forward to continuing that work together in the neighborhood for years to come.”

About Matthew 25

Matthew 25, an independent, local 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, began in 2006 to help strengthen and elevate neighborhoods on the west side of Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Matthew 25 works to improve the health of people and neighborhoods by investing in quality affordable housing, healthy food, educational opportunities, and community building. Learn more at Matthew-25.org. Or call 319-362-2214.