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Avenue and Vecino Health Centers Collaborate with Local Veteran Artist for Northline Mural Initiative *Alex Arzu's Latest Public Art Installation Set for Community Wall Near Fulton and Crosstimbers*

HOUSTON – (April 10, 2017) – Avenue Community Development Corporation, a Houston nonprofit organization dedicated to building affordable homes and strengthening communities, and Vecino Health Centers, a community-based nonprofit and Federally Qualified Health Center that provides high-quality, community-centric primary care to its working families, have announced a new public art collaboration with veteran artist Alex Arzu in Houston's Northline neighborhood.

The mural, which measures more than 300 feet, roughly the length of a professional football field, was inspired by residents in the Northline neighborhood, who had long sought to beautify the area to create a more welcoming and unified community. After learning of this desire, Vecino saw a connection with their #LetHealthShine campaign, which illustrates the connection between people in the community, their personal health and the vitality of our city, and partnered with Avenue, who obtained funding for the creation of a public art piece.

According to Mary Lawler, executive director of Avenue, the mural's location is a welcome improvement to its site, a long wall on the exterior of a Walmart. That wall had become a prominent eyesore in the community as the result of continuous vandalism and tagging.

"The Near Northside and Northline neighborhoods have long been known for their vibrant history and culture, but in engaging with residents, we discovered that the neighborhood considered this longwall to be divisive and not representative of the community's spirit," said Lawler. "We are thrilled to partner with Vecino and Alex Arzu on this initiative that will beautify the neighborhood and hopefully serve as a catalyst for continued revitalization efforts throughout the Northline."

A large portion of Vecino's patients come from the Northside neighborhood, and Vecino Health Centers is excited about this new opportunity to #LetHealthShine by taking one more step toward a healthier Houston.

"Vecino and Avenue have clearly aligned approaches to serving our communities—and we are thrilled to work toward our mission in partnership with them. Our #LetHealthShine campaign shares the varied stories of our neighbors in each community—their passions, culture and shining vibrancy—so we're looking forward to the brilliance that Alex's mural will offer the Northside community, and are excited to see the continued influence the art will have on the area," said Vecino Health Centers' CEO, Daniel Montez.

Arzu, a visual artist based in Houston, operates Zu Art Collective, an organization based in the Second Ward that specializes in custom design work including book illustrations, murals, commissioned paintings, commissioned public art and graphic design. Before opening Zu Art Collective, Arzu attended the Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture at the University of Houston, graduating in 2009.

According to Arzu, becoming a public artist in Houston has opened his eyes to just how inspiring art can be in our communities.

“The most rewarding thing about creating public art is being able to motivate aspiring artists and those pursuing art-based career paths,” Arzu said. “It’s an honor to know that I’m adding even a little sparkle to someone’s day when they pass by my artwork. With each new piece I create, I’m just as moved by them as they are by me.”

Since 2002, Avenue has served as a convening agency in the Near Northside, working closely with residents and community leaders to identify community building initiatives that preserve the historic and cultural integrity of the neighborhood and enhance the quality of life for families. Those efforts have since expanded throughout the Northside of Houston, including the Northline community.

In late 2016, Avenue partnered with McDugald-Steele and the Greater Northside Management District on an Adopt-An-Esplanade beautification initiative in the Northline – at the intersection of Irvington Blvd. and Crosstimbers Street - which also featured Arzu’s artwork.

For more information about Avenue’s community revitalization efforts visit, <http://avenuecdc.org/>.

About Avenue

Avenue’s mission is to build affordable homes and strengthen communities. The organization enhances the quality of life of working families and works to promote Houston’s future as a world-class city of healthy, vibrant and economically diverse neighborhoods. Avenue develops homes for purchase and rent as well as provides homebuyer education and counseling to help working families buy and maintain their own homes. They promote economic development and offer supportive services such as computer labs, after-school programs, and nutrition, fitness, and financial literacy classes that enrich the lives of the individuals and families they serve. Avenue is a member of the nationwide NeighborWorks® Network of more than 245 community development organizations working in nearly 4,358 urban, suburban and rural communities across America. Connect with Avenue on Facebook: <http://bit.ly/FBAvenueCDC> and Twitter: <https://twitter.com/AvenueCDC>.