

SC First Steps grant will create Highland Community Early Learning Center

WEDNESDAY, MAY 20

\$300,000 grant to be used to renovate former Cammie Clagett child care center



A \$300,000 grant from South Carolina First Steps announced on May 20 is set to be the catalyst for a new early learning center in the Highland neighborhood. The grant will be used to renovate a city-owned building at 400 Highland Avenue, a 3,520 square foot building that was once home to the child care center for the now-demolished Cammie Clagett public housing complex.

Once completed, the new Highland Community Early Learning Center will provide classroom space for 18 First Steps 4K children from both within and outside the Highland neighborhood, as well as a bus to provide needed transportation for enrolled children. The facility will be operated by the Bethlehem Center, a well-respected nonprofit organization that has served the Highland Community for 90 years with afterschool and summer youth programs, senior adult services, food pantry, and adult education programs.

The Bethlehem Center previously operated the Cammie Clagett child care center for 16 years until it closed in 2008, and the vision is to use other public and private funding to expand services to children 0-5 in a similar manner as the blending of early childhood programs and funding streams that created the nearby Franklin School. Spartanburg County First Steps, operator of the Franklin School, will provide training and technical assistance to the project and will explore adding Early Head Start classrooms to the site for children 0-3.