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Community Leaders Break Ground on Urban Sprouts Child Development Center \$2.2 Million Facility Will Be Home to World Class Early Childhood Education Program

St. Louis, MO — Today, University City Mayor Shelley Walsh and 100 other local officials and supporters of Urban Sprouts' high-quality early childhood education program gathered to break ground and celebrate the start of construction on the nonprofit's future home at 6757 Olive Boulevard, University City, MO, 53130.

This \$2.2 million first phase of renovation will convert the former McCarthy Spice factory into the Urban Sprouts Child Development Center — a 15,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art early education facility that will serve 128 children, almost double the number now served by Urban Sprouts' two existing though smaller facilities in Olivette and University City.

"We are eager to deepen our impact in University City by expanding our early care and education programs to accommodate our diverse community," said Urban Sprouts Executive Director Ellicia Qualls. "This expansion will give us the space we need to fulfill our mission and serve children and families at a greater capacity."

Guests at the groundbreaking toured and viewed renderings of the building's 10,000-square-foot main level, which will be transformed into learning studios, water rooms, light and shadow rooms, a clay and kiln-firing room, three large classrooms (one each for infants, toddlers, and pre-kindergartners), as well as a piazza where children, teachers, and parents can gather and learn.

By their very design, these improvements are specifically intended to support the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood learning, which emphasizes the interests and natural curiosity of children as well as the importance of an open and orderly learning environment that helps to promote collaboration and communication.

When completed, just over half of the children and families served by the new center will be eligible for subsidized care through the state's child care assistance program or Head Start, increasing the number of high-need families served locally.



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The project is being managed and financed by IFF, a leading nonprofit community development lender and real estate consultant in the St. Louis region, with nearly \$2 million of the financing coming from funds generated by the U.S. Department of the Treasury's New Markets Tax Credit program. Other sources of funds for this project include a separate IFF loan; support for additional Head Start slots from Youth-In-Need, the St. Louis region's Head Start administrator; and an equity contribution from Urban Sprouts itself.

"We are so proud to be leading the development of the new Urban Sprouts Child Development Center," said David Desai-Ramirez of IFF's St. Louis office. "IFF got its start helping nonprofits to plan, build, and finance high-quality early childhood facilities. Making this new center a reality for the University City community takes us back to our roots and represents some of the most important work we do."

This first phase of construction is scheduled to be completed by late spring of 2017, with a second round of improvements to the lower level of the building anticipated to begin next year as well.

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About Urban Sprouts Child Development Center

Founded in 2009, [Urban Sprouts Child Development Center](#) is the only mixed-income Reggio Emilia early education center in Missouri. This innovative approach fosters the development of children aged birth to pre-kindergarten by encouraging them to investigate, question, and explore the world around them. Urban Sprouts is one of only 21 early education centers in St. Louis accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Currently, it has a staff of 21 and serves 80 children through its two facilities in Olivette and University City, MO., with a waiting list of 300.

About IFF

[IFF](#) is a mission-driven lender, real estate consultant and developer that helps communities thrive by creating opportunities for low-income populations and individuals with disabilities. From child care to senior housing, IFF works closely with clients from every sector, offering affordable, flexible financing; full-scale real estate consulting; and community development services. Since 1988, we have made over \$620 million in loans, leveraged \$1.7 billion in community investments and grown our total managed assets to \$498 million.