

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Boston Square Early Childhood Center to Open in HUB 07

Grand Rapids, MI – The Refugee Education Center (REC) announced an expansion of their early childhood program with the opening of the Boston Square Early Childhood Center (BSQ-ECC) in HUB 07 within the Boston Square neighborhood. This critical resource will provide high-quality, affordable early learning opportunities to children, infant to 5 years old in the neighborhood, equipping them with the skills and confidence to thrive both developmentally and socially.

“We are incredibly honored to be chosen as the early childhood education provider for the Boston Square Early Childhood Center,” shared Refugee Education Center executive director, Meg Derrer. “This new center represents a significant milestone in our mission to create nurturing, inclusive spaces where every child can thrive. We believe that by providing children with access to high-quality education from a young age, we are not only investing in their future but in the future of the entire Boston Square community. We are excited to collaborate with families and partners to foster an environment where every child’s potential is celebrated and supported.”

The BSQ-ECC, located inside HUB 07 at 1534 Kalamazoo Ave. SE, is projected to open in fall 2025 and will serve approximately 77 children.

A Vision for a Thriving Future

Boston Square Together, a community-focused planning process, and IFF’s 2018 report, *A System for All Children: An Early Childhood Education Needs Assessment in Grand Rapids*, identified early childhood education as a need and opportunity for future generations who will affectionately call Boston Square home. Since then, great efforts have been made to increase access to quality childcare in the community. The BSQ-ECC is another critical step in providing more birth to career opportunities for Boston Square neighbors.

After a thorough and rigorous selection process led by IFF and Amplify GR, the Refugee Education Center was chosen as the early childhood education provider for the BSQ-ECC. This partnership is deeply committed to ensuring that the growth and development of the Boston Square neighborhood remains centered on the priorities and needs of its residents.

“Every community should have access to high-quality early learning spaces that match the quality of the early education program – and that’s exactly what this center will do,” said Chris Uhl, IFF executive director for the Eastern Region. “This new center is designed specifically to

help children learn, grow, and develop, and paired with REC's incredible programming will provide more than 70 young learners with a high-quality child-care opportunity that represents a significant investment not only in the children who have the opportunity to learn there, but in the future of the neighborhood itself."

"We are thrilled to welcome the Refugee Education Center (REC) to HUB 07," shared Jon Ippel, executive director at Amplify GR. "We eagerly await our youngest Boston Square neighbors accessing well-established early childhood education rooted in a diverse and culturally rich curriculum. For decades, neighbors have asked for more high-quality education options. REC's commitment builds upon neighbors and community stakeholders Boston Square Together plan that envisioned all Boston Square children – regardless of background - will have access to the state-of-the-art facility and high-quality education focused on each child's long-term success."

Approximately 50% of the children served by REC already live in the Boston Square neighborhood and surrounding areas, and the opening of the BSQ-ECC represents a significant step forward in ensuring accessible, quality education for all residents.

The BSQ-ECC will focus on fostering an environment where each child's background and heritage are honored, while introducing children to a wide array of experiences that support their healthy development.

By maintaining a program that serves both American-born and refugee children, REC will cultivate an environment where all children can learn, grow, and succeed. Children at the BSQ-ECC will benefit from a global enrichment model, learning alongside peers from diverse backgrounds and taught by bilingual teachers, building a strong foundation in English while preserving their cultural identities.

Learn more about the BSQ-ECC and submit inquiries at www.bsq-ecc.org.

About the Refugee Education Center

Founded in 2006 by a group of Somali Bantu refugees who were prohibited from receiving formal education, the Refugee Education Center provides a wide range of programs designed to help refugee children and families integrate into the West Michigan community. REC's inclusive approach to early childhood education has long served both American-born and refugee children, supporting their development and ensuring access to high-quality, culturally responsive education. Learn more about the Refugee Education Center at www.refugeegr.org.

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