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Construction of New Early Childcare Center Begins at Shimer Square

Mount Carroll, IL – Driven by the demand for accessible childcare, construction on the new Early Childhood Development Center at Shimer Square officially began Friday, October 17, 2024, and is set for completion in fall 2025, weather permitting. The Development Team includes Economic Growth Corporation (GROWTH) as owner/developer; Growth General Contracting, LLC as general contractor; Baranski Hammer Moretta Sheehy as architect; Applegate & Thorne-Thomsen as legal counsel; and Home Base Property Management, LLC as property manager. An operator has been identified and will be announced in the future.

Last week, site work, grading, and foundation walls were completed. This week, the underground electrical and plumbing installations will wrap up, and the building pad is set to be poured starting Friday. In the coming weeks, walls will go up, and trusses will be installed. We've been fortunate with favorable weather and hope it continues to keep construction moving forward before winter sets in. Completion is anticipated for fall 2025, weather permitting and/or unforeseen circumstances.

The parking lot located at the northeast corner will remain closed and unavailable for use throughout the construction period. After the completion of the project, the parking lot will be reserved exclusively for the childcare center's use, serving employees and families with children enrolled in the center.

"The Early Childhood Development Center at Shimer Square is a crucial step in workforce development," said Brian Hollenback, President/CEO. "By providing access to new jobs and quality childcare, we support today's working parents. Our co-workspace in the Resource Center at Sawyer House, along with the connection between housing and employment on the Shimer Square campus, addresses many needs that communities throughout the region are seeking."

Childcare as a Catalyst for Workforce Development

The development will create new jobs and childcare openings, supporting families in a 30-minute radius. GROWTH's efforts align with the state of Illinois' objectives to improve childcare availability, a recent report¹ identified unmet childcare needs for over 25% of Illinois families, underscoring the project's regional significance.

¹Illinois Department of Human Services, [FY23 Child Care Annual Report](#)

Shimer Square's mixed-use campus will now feature a childcare center and 51 new apartments, offering live-work opportunities for residents and employees alike, with access to a co-working space at the Resource Center within the Sawyer House.

Partnerships

A third-party feasibility study was conducted in 2022 by the City of Mount Carroll and GROWTH, demonstrating a pressing need for childcare services, with significant interest in childcare at the Shimer Square campus. Further, GROWTH collaborated with numerous community partners to ensure that the development is maximized and aligns with state standards, including 4C Community Coordinated Childcare, Birth to Five, and Marcy Mendenhall and her team at SAL Community Services. Mendenhall serves as Quality and Workforce Co-Chair for the 18-member Child Care Advisory Committee, appointed by Governor JB Pritzker, which is guiding the state in establishing a unified agency for early childhood programs².

Investment and Commitment

The total development costs total over \$2 million and is made possible through grant funding from the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, financing by Bridge Investment Community Development Corporation, additional financial support from GROWTH, and the City of Mount Carroll. Also awarded was a workforce development grant that will be announced soon. A bid notice was published in August 2024 attracted over 20 submissions, with most of the reasonable bids awarded. GROWTH continues to seek additional funding, including additional Congressional support by U.S. Congresswoman Tammy Duckworth, contingent on the approval of the FY 2025 federal budget, that will further advance childcare needs identified in the feasibility study.

About GROWTH

GROWTH is a non-profit, community-based development organization spearheading the transformation of the historic Shimer Square campus in Mt. Carroll, IL. GROWTH has successfully completed a \$1.5 million Rebuild Illinois project and is under active construction on the \$33.4 million adaptive reuse of McKee/Hostetter and Dezendorf Halls into 51 studio, one bedroom, two bedroom, and three-bedroom apartment units. Construction is now underway with the \$2 million Early Childhood Development Center. The mixed-use initiative will result in a Resource Center, childcare center, new housing, and new quality of life amenities.

GROWTH's revitalization effort emphasizes adaptive reuse while preserving the campus's unique historical character. The total overall investment at Shimer Square will exceed \$37 million resulting in at least a 1988.24% increase in tax base in 2025: creating and supporting 260 jobs, along with 51 new housing units, marking the first new construction multifamily development in Carroll County in over 2 decades, along with creating vital childcare openings within a previously vacant and underutilized historic campus. Committed to preserving the campus's unique character, historical significance, and integrity, GROWTH is advancing a mixed-use development that honors the campus' past while building for the future. For more detailed information about GROWTH, visit <https://www.economicgrowthcorporation.com/> and more information specific on Shimer Square, visit <https://www.shimersquare.com/>.

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² Illinois Department of Human Services, [Child Care Advisory Council](#)