



BETTER WORLD STUDIOS

125 Marshall Street
Graniteville, South Carolina 29829

betterworldstudios.org

October 23, 2024

South Carolina State Housing Finance & Development Authority
Attn: Kim Wilbourne, LIHTC Manager
300-C Outlet Pointe Blvd
Columbia, SC 2921

Ms. Wilbourne:

I am writing a letter of support for the renovation of the historic Leavelle McCampbell School on behalf of the 82 Canal Street Lofts in Graniteville SC. The school has been sitting empty for years and the property is slowly deteriorating, and vandals are entering the building and taking away some of its historic charm.

I lead a community arts nonprofit (Better World Studios Inc) in the center of this historic mill town. We are surrounded by vacant buildings, once alive with the industry of a thriving community. We invested in "downtown" Graniteville because we saw an opportunity to re-establish the heart and home a community's spirit. What could be more integral to this effort than to take their original school building and convert it into a place that teachers, young artists, artisans and trades people call home?

We occupy Hickman Hall a block away from the school, another historic building, originally erected "for the people" as a community center. With the demise of the local textile industry, followed by the tragic train wreck (1/6/2005) and chlorine spill, we are surrounded by empty structures like the LMC school. Like so many repurposed industrial centers around the country, here is the potential for another arts and culture district with all the opportunity and economic gains these initiatives represent. This is not a theory - it's a demonstrated fact.

The renovation of the Leavelle McCampbell building will be another significant catalyst towards the realization of that vision. The property can provide accessible housing to teachers, craftsmen, musicians, gardeners, chefs, dancers and care-givers. It can once again host community events.

I strongly urge the endorsement of this long overdue venture. It will result in something in which we can all take pride.

Yours in service to a better world,

Joya Jimenez DiStefano, president

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