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News

## **\$1M from state to help build new community health center**

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By Steve Collins  
Staff Writer

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BRISTOL — With a \$1 million boost from the state expected next week, a new Bristol Community Health Center is slated for construction on North Main Street this year.

“We are really quite excited,” said Yvette Highsmith-Francis, of Community Health Center, Inc., which will operate the center.

The Middletown-based nonprofit agency, which operates 11 primary care centers in Connecticut, already has a small medical office in Bristol in the CVS Plaza downtown.

This office serves 1,000 people in Bristol, Highsmith-Francis said, many of them lacking health insurance.

The new building, slated to open by fall, will allow the Bristol center to serve twice as many patients here and to expand its offerings to include dental and behavioral health services, according to Highsmith-Francis, who is director of the agency’s Hartford County facilities.

She said the nonprofit found “a tremendous need in Bristol” for its affordable primary care services.

The 6,000-square-foot community health center would be erected at 395 N. Main St., the first new structure to be constructed along the stretch of road overhauled six years ago in the hope that streetscape improvements would bolster development.

The State Bond Commission plans next Friday to approve \$1 million to fund the new building in Bristol, which is slated to cost \$1.25 million in all.

Highsmith-Francis said work on the new building will begin within 120 days of the bond panel’s approval. It will create 14 construction jobs, she said, during the 90-day period the work will take.

The center will support nine and a half job slots when it opens, she said.

The project got its initial push from former state Sen. Tom Colapietro, a Bristol Democrat, but Gov. Dannel Malloy opted to put it on this month’s bond agenda.

"I'm pleased we were able to secure this funding," said state Rep. Betty Boukus, a Plainville Democrat whose 22nd District includes a sliver of Bristol.

She said the Bristol Community Health Center, which opened its medical office downtown last year, "provides critical health care services to our community."

Boukus, a member of the bond commission because of her role as the chairwoman of the legislature's general bonding subcommittee, said Malloy deserves thanks "for moving the process forward through the bond commission."

The bond commission is scheduled to meet at 10:30 a.m. April 29 in Hartford.

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