

Developments

LISC New York City

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SPRING/SUMMER 2006

HCCI Trains Future Builders

Big Apple Innovation Awards 2006

LISC NYC Convenes Joint Venture Seminar

Residents Get Connected

Exploring Community Development's Next Era



HCCI Trains Future Builders

It's no secret that Harlem has experienced a resurgence in recent years. Real estate values are skyrocketing, construction is booming and new businesses are opening.

In the Bradhurst area, for example, where in the 1980s only 0.4 percent of households had incomes of more than \$50,000 annually, now 10 percent of households have incomes of more than \$75,000.

"The increase in real household income in the past decade is at least 10 percent for all of Harlem," said Lionel McIntyre, Director - Urban Technical Assistance Project, Columbia University.

But those statistics mask the fact that the median household income in Bradhurst is only \$19,000,

according to Harlem Congregations for Community Improvement (HCCI), a neighborhood-based group that has been building affordable housing and providing services to low-income residents since 1986. Additionally, 90 percent of Harlem's population is African-American and Hispanic - two groups with the highest unemployment rates among all city residents.

The best way to raise household income is to find quality jobs, which HCCI is attempting to do through its training program called the Construction Trades Academy. Launched a little more than a year ago with a grant from LISC NYC, the Academy equips Harlem residents, ages 18 and older, with skills in the building maintenance and construction industries, workplace readiness

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skills and provides placement opportunities for its successful graduates. The Academy, which created the motto, "Paving The Way to a Brighter Future!", is one of HCCI's more recent efforts to connect residents to job opportunities.

Its premise is that, with proper training, many of Harlem's residents can take advantage of the booming real estate market by joining the skilled trades in construction and real estate. The 24-week program teaches the basic tenets of the construction industry to men and women of limited educational backgrounds. HCCI has enabled successful participants to embark on a career path, earn a living wage and break the cycle of poverty that plagues many Harlem residents.

The Academy consists of three phases over the 24-week period. Phase I - Boot Camp, provides job-readiness training such as workplace etiquette, math related concepts, communications and computer skills. Phase II - the Learning Lab, provides a mix of classroom training and hands-on learning. Students gain experience by training on simulated construction sites in small three or four person crews. During Phase III - the Internship, students are placed in internship positions on actual construction sites to work on tasks assigned by the general contractor or subcontractor, while still under the supervision of the classroom instructor. They also receive wages during this phase, based on job description and acquired skills.

HCCI boasts a 66 percent graduation rate for its first class of students. Equipped with a better understanding of the multifaceted challenges facing students, HCCI looks forward to an even greater success rate for its second class of students, scheduled to graduate on August 31st of this year. More than 50 percent of the first class of students obtained employment with the contractors with which they interned or through HCCI's ongoing job placement assistance.

HCCI seeks to expand its programs to offer continued assistance to those placed in jobs in order to increase their chances of obtaining long-term job success and, consequently, improving their lives and the lives of their families. The Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone (UMEZ) recently responded to HCCI's efforts by providing a \$325,950 one year grant for the expansion of the Academy.

