



NEW BILL RAISES QUESTIONS ABOUT PLAs

By Arnesa A. Howell

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MAKING STRIDES: JOBS COALITION ACCOMPLISHMENTS



While raising awareness of workforce challenges and potential barriers to employment, the JOBS Coalition and its members have combined their resources and industry expertise to achieve the following results:

- > Built the Bellevue Resource Center, a program facility serving the hard-to-reach, hard-to-employ, and returning ex-offender populations. The Center was completed on September 30, 2003.
- > Guided the creation of the Construction & Design Academy at Cardozo, providing District students access, training, and preparation for careers in the construction industry and trades after graduation. The Academy officially opened in September 2005.
- > Leading the Children of Mine Center, in partnership with the Architecture Research Institute at the University of the District of Columbia, in designing, planning and developing a new community center in the Anacostia/Hillsdale community, and restoring the historic home of the city's first mayor. □



This photo rendering shows a northeastern view of the "green" house.

CARDOZO STUDENTS TO BUILD ECO-FRIENDLY HOUSE IN NORTHWEST D.C.

Each year, the students of the Cardozo Academy of Construction & Design (ACAD) are exposed to new opportunities in learning skilled trades. They have helped build new homes for needy families as part of DC Habitat for Humanity, and studied the fundamentals of construction and design. Now, they are preparing to embark on a new skill-building adventure: gaining hands-on training in the construction of a "green" house in Northwest Washington, D.C.

By Arnesa A. Howell

“Because it’s being built by students, you’re creating an awareness to what not only is a trend in building, but something that is a necessity in how you build. It’s important for students to understand green strategies and how they are implemented in construction,” says Greg Kearley, principal of Inscape Studio, an architectural design firm on U Street dedicated to developing socially responsible and environmentally sensitive projects. “It’s a laboratory for students to learn how to build.”

Inscape is part of a collaboration involving the nonprofit D.C. Students Construction Trades Foundation and D.C. Public Schools offering ACAD students the chance to work alongside industry professionals in building an eco-friendly, single-family home at 5734 13th Street, N.W. Known as “The D.C. Students’ Residence,” the single-family home will rest on property donated by the D.C. government.

The project gained momentum in May 2009, after Inscape was folded into the proposal process. The firm immediately started developing the designs and evaluating the house’s physical relationship to its environment. Like

Inscape’s other projects, this one would have a contemporary flair with numerous innovative features: natural daylight strategies to cut back on energy costs; use of renewable resources like bamboo for flooring; energy-efficient fluorescent or LED lighting; and rainwater harvesting, in which runoff is collected in barrels for use in watering vegetation on-site. Its design takes into consideration everything from winter and summer winds to sunrise and sunset.

Over the months, Kearley and his team tweaked the project design to stay in line with the roughly \$250,000 budget while keeping in consideration ease of construction for the students. The value of the project is double the budgeted amount, but he explains they are able to keep costs down by relying on donations from partnering companies. Inscape has already made a promise to donate the kitchen cabinetry, and is hoping other contractors and builders that are part of this effort will follow suit.

“The Foundation members will be donating their time and materials to make the cost work for everybody,” says Kearley, who’s

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The issue of Project Labor Agreements, or PLAs, is again on the front burner as District Councilmember Michael A. Brown has introduced a bill (B18-650) aimed at stimulating employment and trades education for city residents. But does the legislation live up to its intent? No, according to JOBS Coalition Legal Adviser Rod Woodson.

To start, the bill's title, "District Resident Employment and Trade Stimulus Amendment Act of 2010," is "disingenuous," says Woodson. "What the city keeps losing sight of in this kind of legislation is that this is not workforce development. These are narrowly tailored legislative initiatives, which seek to benefit only a small sector of the workforce, and [this act] is not going to open up broad swathes of employment to D.C. residents."

While the legislation purports to address the issue of workforce development, PLAs are at the heart of the bill, which states that District government-assisted construction projects over \$200,000 must have in place increased residency standards by skill level and trade. Among other things, the bill includes a laundry list of provisions detailing the percentage of city residents by trade area that must be part of these projects. For example, at least 60 percent of skilled laborer hours and 70 percent of unskilled laborer hours must be performed by District residents.

In addition, labor agreements must be in place to ensure the project is completed with so-called "full labor peace" and "strong labor standards." Under collective bargaining agreements with labor unions, also known as PLAs, there are set terms and conditions of employment on large construction projects.

Industry Concerns

Some industry observers have noted that PLAs typically hinder workforce development – particularly in the local communities where these projects are intended to stimulate the economy – because they mainly hire out-of-area union workers. Also, these labor agreements require nonunion contractors to adopt union rules that oftentimes prohibit employees from expanding their skill sets across multiple areas, which is key in supporting workforce development. Finally, construction unions have a history of limiting workforce diversity by restricting access among certain populations, particularly women and minorities.

So considering the possible impact, who is pushing this policy agenda? Woodson says labor unions are the driving force behind the legislation. He says if the bill were to pass, labor unions would benefit through increased membership. "By increasing their member-

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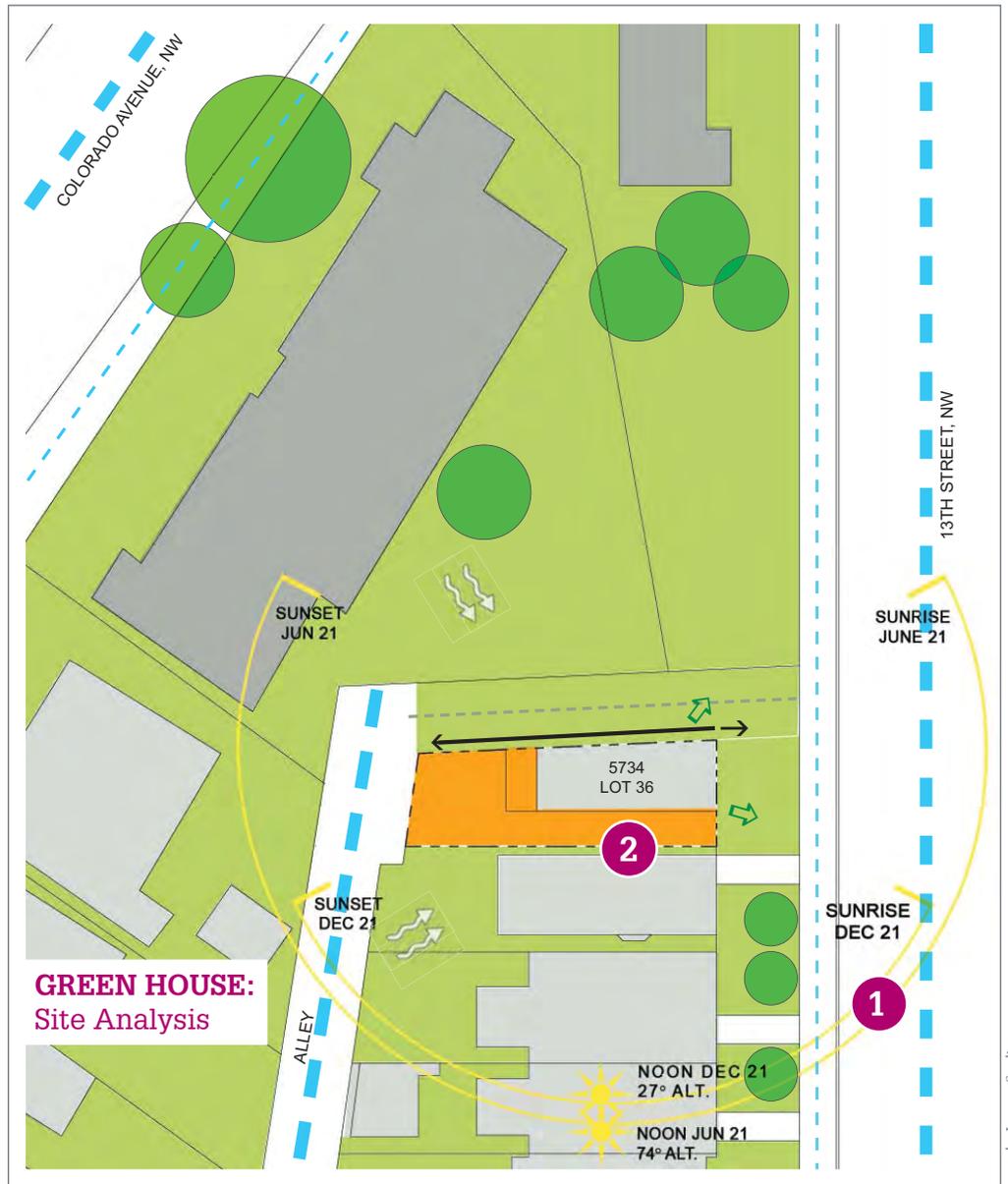


Image by Inscape Studio

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hoping construction will start this summer with a June groundbreaking. The design, completed in March, has been submitted for building permits, and is now awaiting approval.

Small Site, Big Ideas

The house will sit on a 1,559 square foot lot. Despite its small scale, collaborators are expecting a big impact on the students and surrounding community.

"Hopefully, it will enrich the lives of the residents of D.C. because of their pride in the students building the house," says Kearley, adding that the Academy students will also gain a sense of "pride and purpose" that can be passed down to future students. "The students who follow in their footsteps will understand we can accomplish something."

While some aspects of the 2,000 square foot residence are uncertain (initial plans called for a grass-covered rooftop), others are more concrete. The small roof will now serve as a patio and outdoor

living space. Below, the house will feature three bedrooms, three-and-a-half baths and a basement.

Poised in a traditional neighborhood, the multi-level house with recyclable Hardie Board siding will likely catch the attention of neighbors for its unique design style, while still fitting in aesthetically based on size and proportion. The residence will also boast ENERGY STAR appliances, high-efficiency heating and cooling systems, and double-paned windows. Its presence will be a visible and practical lesson in sustainable development.

Stefan Schwarzkopf, senior associate at Inscape and project lead, adds that he is looking forward to working with the young people on this house, and is anxious to make the green aspects of its design part of the classroom discussion before moving into the field.

The build itself is anticipated to take about 18 months; then, the house will be sold and the money used to fund the next project. During the school year, students will work on the project un-

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GREEN HOUSE: First Floor Plan

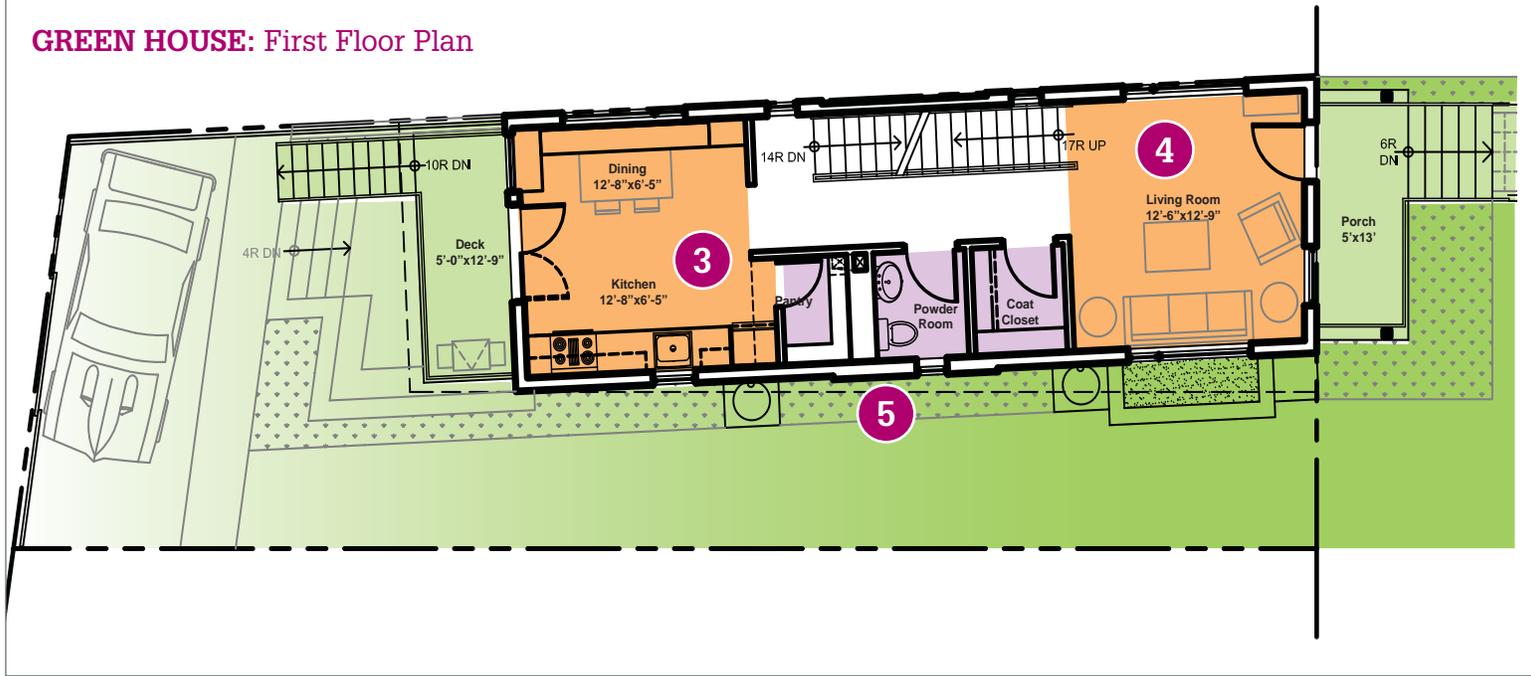


Image by Inscape Studio

1. NATURAL LIGHT STRATEGIES

The design takes advantage of natural light so homeowners won't have to turn on lights every time they enter a room. The house is poised on the north side of the site so it can get maximum sun exposure. Most rooms have windows against every wall so there's always natural light coming in.

2. RAINWATER HARVESTING

With this innovative feature, barrels are used to catch rainwater for watering plants and vegetation on-site. The benefits of recycling

rainwater include cutting down on portable water waste and stormwater runoff that carries pollutants to waterways.

3. ENERGY STAR APPLIANCES

From the refrigerator to the dishwasher, standard energy-efficient appliances will be used in the kitchen to increase cost savings while helping the environment.

4. BAMBOO FLOORING

Bamboo flooring is a great "green" alternative because it's a renewable resource. Not only is

this durable material rapidly renewable, but its price point is comparable to many common hardwoods. Bamboo has become increasingly popular, and is widely used in homes.

5. HARDIE BOARD SIDING

The panels of the house will be made of a siding material known as Hardie Board, a long-lasting product composed of a high content of recyclable materials. This tree-saving material mimics the look of wood without the harmful environmental impact. □

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der the guidance of skilled instructors – primarily in the afternoons on school days – and full days in the summer.

Ready, Set, Build!

The project will be a new and exciting one for ACAD students, who have never built a house from inception. Academy staff and Inscape are already gearing up for the build, working together to develop a curriculum that will get students ready to work on-site. Academy Manager Shelly Morrison says that they are supplementing existing coursework with information about sustainable construction, and have carved out a block of time devoted solely to learning design, documentation and construction processes related to building the eco-friendly home.

"This particular curriculum is being developed so [students] can understand the land that the property is being built on and the actual structure itself," she says, adding that the curriculum will also cover take-offs, the process of estimating costs and

quantity of materials at each phase of construction.

Morrison agrees the biggest benefit to her "kids" is the sense of pride and accomplishment they will gain in themselves and from their peers. At the same time, she adds, the community gets to see these young people do something positive.

"This house will show that these children are shining like diamonds. They might be a little rough around the edges," says Morrison, "but diamonds none the less."

What's Next?

In the final stages of agreement, a disposition hearing is set for May 19 with the Department of Housing and Community Development to inform city residents about the proposed handover of the 13th Street property to the D.C. Students Construction Trades Foundation.

Following the hearing, the Foundation will need to take care of some key housekeeping issues – from obtaining building permits to providing proof of insurance coverage for students – before closing the deal with the District government agency. □

JOBS Coalition Pathways

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ship base, they are angled to take more money into their union coffers. Union dues and related costs are deducted from employees' hourly wages," he explains, adding that unions also get to keep employee contributions for the union-operated pension funds, which are "woefully underfunded."

But in these tough economic times, he states it's important to look at whether there's even employment to be had. Like many other industries, construction has faced a significant financial hit, and construction jobs have declined consistently since the middle of 2008, says Woodson. "It's been the biggest job sector loss of this region's economy," he adds. "No one is expanding its hiring of construction workers, so where is all this employment to be had?"

Woodson reiterates that bill proponents suggest that by adopting this legislation, construction employment will increase – a "disingenuous argument." It might appear that B18-650 may evoke more questions than answers. □

THREE TENETS OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

1. A potential workforce that's ready and willing to work.
2. A training apparatus to give the workforce the skill sets needed.
3. Employers in need of workers.

According to Woodson, the core of training in any labor force is education, something that is lacking in a city that has been plagued with illiteracy rates above the national average. He asks, "How does the community and city compensate for the failure of the school system?" □

REV. STEPHEN TUCKER STEPS IN AS NEW PRESIDENT

Rev. Stephen Tucker, a member of the JOBS Coalition Board of Directors, is the new president of the nonprofit organization. Rev. Anthony Motley stepped down in February from his position with the Coalition.

Fellow board member John McMahon, one of four co-founders of the Coalition, accepted Motley's decision to step down, saying, "This action and his cooperation with our internal review demonstrate his commitment to the Coalition's ongoing work."

The action comes as the Coalition's Board continues its internal review of management practices related to the administration of grant funding received from the Council of the District of Columbia in 2009. Motley also relinquished his role and responsibilities as executive director of the Coalition's workforce development and community outreach programs.

The JOBS Coalition remains committed to improving access to job training and employment opportunities for District residents. □

JOBS COALITION MISSION STATEMENT

We will work together to develop a long-term strategy that creates an environment where aspiring District residents will have unprecedented opportunity to succeed. We strive to create a fair and open system, supported by government, industry, employers and the education and faith-based communities, which seeks to properly train today's apprentices while making an unparalleled commitment to educating students and others not yet in the workforce.

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