

Springfield MA

Project Description: Decades of chronic, high unemployment and the lack of marketable job skills, especially in the downtown neighborhoods of Springfield, MA, prompted local leaders to contract with Better City to assist in developing a workforce technical training and job skills mentoring project to be located in the City's Forest Park area. Better City proposed an innovative project with machinists, trade unions and technical education institutions collaborating to transform a tornado damaged municipal building into a regional training facility that focuses on building practical skills and creating sustainable higher wage jobs.

Outcome: The concept attracted support from public and private contributors for funding facility construction and providing a program of year-round technical training and hands-on skill development. A contract for architectural design has been awarded and construction will begin this spring on the 11,400 sq. ft. multipurpose facility that will create some 200 new jobs in the local workforce.

Implementation: Better City coordinated with a local team of civic, education and business leaders to create the plan, secure contributions and submit grant requests for this \$1.6 million facility. The majority of construction funding has been provided by a \$1.29 million EDA grant. Better City is continuing to provide project management and oversight through project completion. This tech training facility is scheduled to open by late 2015.

Appendix

Springfield, MA

The Springfield Technical Training and Job Creation project focused on eleven census tracts in downtown Springfield that have the City's highest concentration of persistent poverty and border Springfield's famous 735 acre Forest Park where this construction/job training project is located. Springfield MA is the largest city in Western New England (population 153,060). Springfield neighborhoods were extensively damaged by an EF-3 tornado in 2011.

As part of a City rebuilding effort, the Better City team of economic development consultants proposed the construction of a building to host job creation and technical skills development for distressed neighborhoods. Vital job skills development and small business economic growth in these downtown areas of greatest need required an innovative approach to the long-standing problems of urban poverty. A regional collaboration, working together to implement this innovative technical training and jobs skills partnership, identified proposed City-owned year-round technical classroom facilities and workshop space to provide skills



training for apprentices, Vo-Tech candidates, displaced workers and small businesses through an inventive partnership with trade unions, a manufacturing association, local vendors, not-for-profit groups, city/state government, schools and higher education.



The project specifically targets Springfield's blighted downtown neighborhoods, however, this unique collaboration will produce benefits throughout the region as needed skills are developed, technical jobs are filled by qualified applicants, businesses can invest and expand, and new wages are generated and spent throughout the region.

This cooperative partnership leverages local investment to:

- construct a new classroom/storage/workshop facility
- provide new space for training and technical skills classes
- create over 195 new jobs and more than \$10 million in yearly wages for workers in these distressed urban neighborhoods
- offer technical training and mentoring opportunities to over 240 of the working poor, at-risk youth and disadvantaged area residents each year
- help provide technical facilities to sustain a regional tourism attraction and economic catalyst for downtown neighborhoods
- provide additional economic benefits and return on investment to the City and region in the form of lower social services cost, reduced crime, lower drop-out rates, increased local spending support for small businesses, etc.

Project Location: Forest Park, Springfield MA

Status: Funding approved, project is under design

Sources of funding: EDA, Walker Trust, Spirit of Springfield, City of Springfield

Total Cost: \$1,612,500.00

Completion: December 2015

Reference: Patrick Sullivan, Executive Director
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