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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. □



A 'CAPITOL' IDEA Bob Braunohler, regional vice president of Property Group Partners, stands beside the Capitol Crossing model in PGP's interactive marketing center at 1101 New York Avenue, NW.

THE AIR UP THERE: CAPITOL CROSSING PROJECT TO BUILD JOBS, TAX REVENUE FOR DISTRICT

Change is coming to a pocket of Northwest Washington, D.C. known more for being a business district than a pedestrian's gateway to retail excursions and condo living. But that's just what's expected with the Air Rights Tunnel Project, a \$1.3 billion budgeted development aiming to revive the three blocks of I-395 from E Street to Massachusetts Avenue.

By Arnesa A. Howell

The project will “create a seamless connection between the East End and Capitol Hill,” said Bob Braunohler, regional vice president of Property Group Partners (PGP), developers of the project alongside three minority partners that include The Jarvis Company and Spectrum Management.

Known as Capitol Crossing, the project will be a 2.2 million-square-foot mix of office space, residential and retail on seven acres of land upheld by a man-made “deck” being constructed over the highway. With a timeline of eight to 10 years for completion, the project is expected to bolster jobs, according to an economic impact analysis study conducted by the real estate consulting firm Bolan Smart Associates.

“[A] total of 7,980 full-time equivalent jobs are estimated to be located at the subject development, including 184 retail-related jobs,

7,747 office jobs, plus a number of project support jobs, responsible for over \$500 million (average \$65,000-plus annual income) in annual District-based payroll,” the analysis stated, adding that close to 5,800 full-time construction jobs are projected to be created.

According to Braunohler, the construction jobs will be in the “typical trades” of concrete, electrical and mechanical, and waterproofing. But since the construction spanning the highway requires heavy steel girders, there will be significant structural steel work involved as well, he explained. PGP is also operating under the First Source Agreement, so all new hires have to come in under the Department of Employment Services.

“You can't just walk onto the site and ask for a job,” he explained of First Source, which requires 51 percent of new hires on govern-

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CUTTING RECIDIVISM: DEVELOPING STRATEGIES THAT WORK

By Arnesa A. Howell

Zulema Rodriguez knows the impact of incarceration on families all too well. At the age of 17 while a freshman at Northwestern University in Chicago, she received a call one night from her mother. Her father had been handcuffed and taken away. She recalled gathering with her family in the courtroom the next morning and watching her dad – handcuffed, legs shackled and wearing a red jumpsuit – sentenced to 25 years in prison for drug-related charges. He would miss his only daughter’s graduation from college and the birth of his first grandchild.

“My story is not just mine, but the story of 700,000 families,” said Rodriguez, the lead field organizer for the Barriers to Employment program with the Center for Community Change, a Washington, D.C.-based organization focusing on eliminating employment barriers for the formerly incarcerated, among other issues. “Each year 700,000 are released from prison hoping for a fresh start.”

“You have to humanize the face of incarceration and educate the public on the fact that there are many faces to it,” Rodriguez later told *JOBS Coalition Pathways*, noting that there is a stigma to incarceration and telling “our stories” is key to breaking down the stereotypes.

Rodriguez joined fellow panelists on Sept. 27 as part of the reentry forum, “What’s Really Working for Returning Citizens,” hosted by Rep. Danny Davis (D-Ill.) during the 2014 Congressional Black Caucus Foundation’s Annual Legislative Conference. Davis convened the panel to examine best practices across federal and state programs, as well as those used by community-based organizations aimed at helping returning citizens transition back into the community and workforce.

“If a person can get a job and be sustained and helped, many of those individuals will never see the inside of a correctional institution again as an inmate,” Davis told *JOBS Coalition Pathways* before the forum. Characterizing ex-offender issues as some of the “most cutting edge” in the country, he added, “Finding a job is the best thing we can possibly do [for them].”

In the Numbers

At the federal level alone, more than 45,000 inmates are released back into the community each year, according to the Federal Bureau of Prisons. And for many returning citizens – regardless of where they were incarcerated – the employment pipeline is clogged with challenges. Transportation, housing and

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ALL DECKED OUT. With the project’s photo rendering in the background, Braunohler says the platform over I-395 is expected to start in December 2014.

Air Rights Project *Continued from page 1*
ment-assisted projects to be District residents.

Meanwhile, the estimated real estate tax revenue is projected to be between \$30 and \$40 million a year, said Braunohler, a plus when the “city is getting nothing on it right now.”

A Changing Landscape

As the name implies, air rights involve the purchasing of the rights to build in the open space over a highway or other transit system. In this case, however, developers Property Group Partners not only own these rights but that strip of highway as well. “We gave an easement back to the District for the highway. It’s an unusual structure,” said Braunohler of PGP being able to buy both land and air rights.

This project will transform the landscape of downtown Washington, D.C. A departure from the current clusters of concrete buildings, the new look will feature sleek facades surrounded by pedestrian-friendly walkways. With the project impacting multiple wards, the company took steps to get community feedback.

“Wards 2 and 6 come together right on the freeway,” Braunohler said with a chuckle. Therefore, PGP has maintained an open dialogue with Advisory Neighborhood Commissions in both wards, among others. “We go to the ANC [meetings] every few months. We’re also meeting on a regular basis with condo associations that are up and down Massachusetts Avenue because we’re impacting them as well,” he said.

Stamps of Approval

However, getting this development moving hasn’t



STRIKINGLY CLEAR. The view from 200 Massachusetts Ave. shows the glass facades of the buildings.

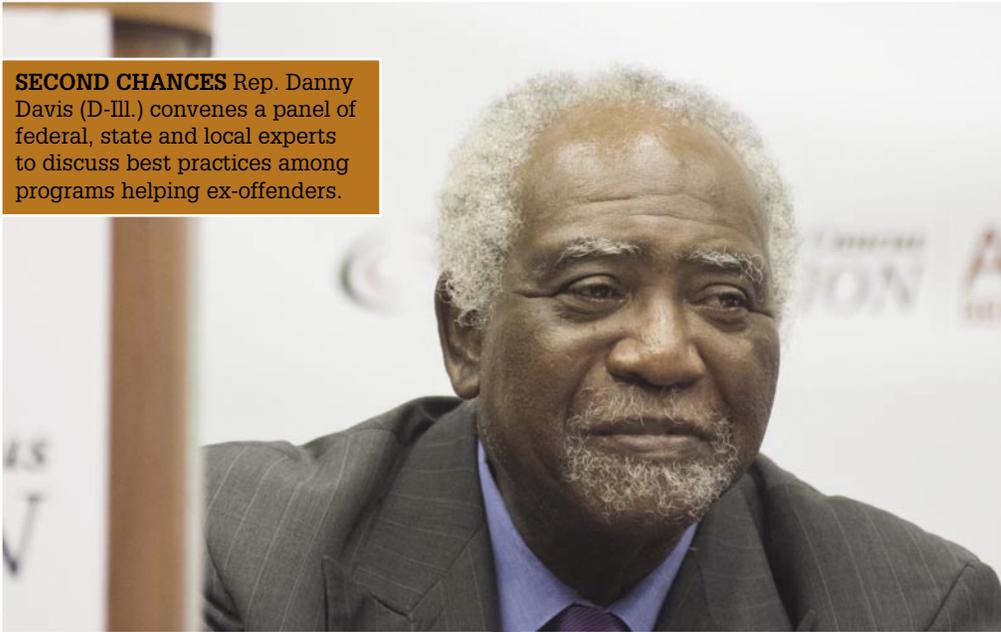
been without its hiccups. It’s taken three mayoral administrations for the project to gain traction. Braunohler said PGP came on board in 2006 at the tail end of former Mayor Anthony Williams’ administration. At the time, said Braunohler, the property was tied up in a lawsuit between developer Conrad Monts and the District. “He and the city were involved in a dispute over what the property was worth,” he recalled. PGP proved instrumental in settling the lawsuit, gaining exclusive rights to buy the property at fair market value, Braunohler added.

He continued that a major challenge the company faced was reaching an agreement with the city on the deal structure because no one knew the cost of building over the highway. Ultimately, a deal was struck to wait until the deck is finished and costs calculated to determine how much the air rights are worth. “We’ll back into it after the fact,” he said, “and that’s what everybody agreed to, even Federal Highway [Administration].” All parties agreed to a formula where the more PGP spends on the deck, the less they have to pay for the air rights, Braunohler explained. He said PGP paid the city roughly \$11 million for the property at closing in 2012, and will owe the city more

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COURTESY OF PROPERTY GROUP PARTNERS

SECOND CHANCES Rep. Danny Davis (D-Ill.) convenes a panel of federal, state and local experts to discuss best practices among programs helping ex-offenders.



FAMILY TIME The Bureau of Prisons' Linda McGrew says a pilot video program enables family to "video visit" when in-person visitation is too costly.



AGENCY INNOVATIONS Rhea Harris with the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services lays out the reentry programs that have helped drop the state's recidivism rate.

Danny Davis *Continued from page 2*

education are all issues the formerly incarcerated face upon release. But there are programs in place aiming to ease the transition.

Linda McGrew, assistant director for the Reentry Services Division of the Bureau of Prisons (BOP), stressed the importance of evidence-based programming as part of their reentry strategy. Calling these programs "critical," she cited the Federal Prison Industries Program, whose participants are 24 percent less likely to relapse into crime than similar nonparticipating inmates.

Under Federal Prison Industries, or UNICOR,

inmates are taught life-enhancing skills. From building furniture to learning trades such as electrical work, McGrew said these individuals are building the hard skills needed to be successful upon release. Also, the bureau has reentry affairs coordinators across more than 100 institutions working with businesses in communities to provide this population with employment. For example, in Los Angeles, a BOP institution has been working with community agencies to interview offenders with these hard skills 40 to 60 days before release. "Within the last two months, local communities have hired out of the 200 releasing

inmates ... they have hired 75 starting at \$16 an hour, with a 401(k) and health insurance," she said, to which the audience applauded. She added that BOP also has programs providing vocational and occupational training, with those participants being 30 percent less likely to recidivate. And a residential drug abuse program has proven to be an important component as well.

"These are the skills we're trying to instill in our offenders," said McGrew.

Breaking the Cycle

Officials at the state level are also taking steps to address ex-offender issues, striving to make an impact on the numbers. In Maryland, the recidivism rate is down from about 51 percent to 40.3 percent, according to Rhea Harris, assistant secretary and chief of staff for the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services. The reentry services have been key in chiseling away at that number, she added.

"We can't control the front door, but we can control how people come back to us," she told a crowd that included returning citizens.

Harris said the keys to breaking the prison cycle and clearing a path to employment include assessing an individual's education level, developing an action plan that starts at the beginning of incarceration and lasts through release, and instilling sustainable life and job skills. "We're teaching them how to live with a family, live with your children, and teaching them better than what they got," she said, adding that education is "very important" to reentry. "A lot of our inmates come in at about a 5th grade, 6th grade reading level, and there's not one job you can go out and do today with that little bit of education."

So to address that issue, her department partnered with the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation to increase adult learning skills and the opportunities available after incarceration. "If you're going to get a license to cut hair or cosmetology, you've got to have the educational background to do it," she explained.

Also, the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services is working together with the Department of Human Resources and Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to smooth out the Medicaid enrollment process, which is now a paper-based system. The goal: to enroll inmates in Medicaid before they get out of prison, starting with the sickest of the population. It's a move she said would help a cross-section of inmates, including those who have children needing health coverage. Stressing the importance of proper identification, she added that steps have also been taken to help inmates get birth certificates and Social Security cards, documentation needed to receive photo IDs upon release. "So we changed the regulation about how to get IDs," Harris said.

Community Connections

Based in the nation's capital, D.C. Central Kitchen
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Danny Davis *Continued from page 3*
(DCCK) is among the community-based organizations dedicated to creating career opportunities for the unemployed, including the formerly incarcerated. Marianne Ali, director of culinary training and street outreach, said during a separate panel that they are battling hunger while opening the door to success for those in need.

Through its 14-week Culinary Job Training Program, D.C. Central Kitchen is changing lives and helping individuals reintegrate into the community by teaching them basic culinary skills. Ali said that one component of the program is the self-empowerment segment, which allows men and women to discuss life experiences and learn within a group setting. "It has absolutely nothing to do with cooking at all, but it does have everything to do with changing your thinking and changing your behavior," she stated.

Roughly 35 percent of students enrolled are women, a figure Ali said they decided to raise to 50 percent. With four classes a year, 100 students are enrolled in the program annually. And 80 percent of those students have employment before graduation. D.C. Kitchen continues to support graduates upon program completion, with staff helping with job placement for those still seeking employment. Ali added that 70 percent of graduates retain employment for a year. Concluded Ali: "We're trying to train as many people as possible, and we have the right recipe for that." □

Air Rights Project *Continued from page 2*
money in the future.

Other challenges included getting the deal structure and other approvals from the District Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration on this unique project, and finding private investors in light of the recession of 2008. While declining to name the primary key investor, Braunohler did say, "It's a major insurance company." Braunohler noted they have the roughly \$400 million needed to build the deck over I-395 and the first office building.

Innovative features of this project include a facility that generates electricity onsite to reduce the electric bills of tenants, the ability to capture groundwater under the site for use in cooling towers, and a design that incorporates green rooftops as well as automated shading devices on all the windows. "All the basics you need to do to meet LEED platinum [certification]," he stated, referencing the highest level of certification provided by the U.S. Green Building Council.

In April 2014, the project started with the 18-month utilities work process. The deck construction is expected to start in December 2014 and take about three years to complete. While that project is underway, construction is expected to start in October 2015 on the first building. Braunohler said the entire Capitol Crossing project will continue to roll out over six or seven years, translating to a completion date of 2020 or 2021. □

JOBS COALITION PROMISES

- Provide opportunities for District residents to secure gainful employment.
- Remove barriers that prevent meaningful employment.
- Provide educational and training opportunities for all District residents interested in pursuing careers in various industries and trades.
- Work toward the creation of a comprehensive, fair, and more open system of training and hiring the underserved, unemployed and returning ex-offenders.
- Ensure that the training and educational skills being taught are relevant to the job market of today and tomorrow.
- Engage elected and appointed officials to support legislation and maintain appropriate oversight to ensure gainful employment for District residents, including the underserved, unemployed, and returning ex-offenders.

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