

IMPLEMENTING WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS

Issues

High Unemployment Rate

At almost 24 percent, Hunts Point's Community District has the highest unemployment rate in New York City among the population aged 16 and over.

Education and Language Barriers

An estimated 53 percent of adult residents from the Hunts Point area and its outskirts do not have a high school diploma. In addition, 30 percent of adults do not speak English proficiently. Local employers have identified these as leading barriers to hiring from the immediate community but have expressed an interest in hiring residents who possess these basic skills.

Limited Workplace Skills

Businesses within the area have reported difficulty in finding workers with basic workplace competencies. These include work ethic and attitude, an understanding of workplace expectations, ability to follow directions and customer service. In addition, many companies have computerized aspects of their entry-level work, requiring even entry-level hires to have computer skills. Finally, Hunts Point businesses have reported a need for workers with more specialized training, including supervisory/management skills, accounting/bookkeeping and commercial driver's licenses.

Short-Term Approaches

Connect Residents to Local Businesses

Despite these concerns, Hunts Point businesses have expressed a commitment to hiring locally and have a proven history of promoting from within. The New York City Department of Small Business Services (SBS) is spearheading an initiative to connect Hunts Point residents to local jobs and to the training they need to advance their careers. SBS will take the lead in funding and developing an employment and training center in Hunts Point, which will be called Hunts Point Works. Hunts Point Works will start as a one-year demonstration project. To be accessible to job-seekers, the center will be located on Bryant Avenue near the intersection with Hunts Point Avenue and close to a Bx6 bus stop.

The Hunts Point Economic Development Corporation (HPEDC) will serve as the primary liaison between local community-based organizations and businesses. The organization will streamline the process of identifying and hiring capable candidates for businesses by recruiting, screening and training job seekers. HPEDC will also work with local businesses to connect new and existing workers to training programs in English as a Second Language (ESL), General Equivalency Diploma (GED) and specific occupations. In addition, HPEDC and SBS will work with local businesses to coordinate training programs for new and existing workers, as well as to fill the vacancies that result from internal promotions.

Engage Community-Based Organizations

Community-based organizations (CBOs) and other community partners will play a central role in Hunts Point Works. SBS knows from experience that individuals often seek assistance from organizations within their immediate community. As a result, SBS will build this network of neighborhood service providers into the program, creating multiple ways for job seekers to enter the program. SBS will also work with community organizations to design marketing materials to enable partner organizations to send a unified message to job seekers about the services available to them. The materials will inform residents of existing training and placement services in and around Hunts Point, including providers

of ESL and GED classes, as well as occupational training. HPEDC and SBS will play an integral role in managing communication among community partners and in helping them connect their customers to the various career development resources available.

Expand Retail

Most of the retail in the peninsula is on Hunts Point Avenue. Although this location is convenient to the residential core, it is a long distance from the majority of workers in the peninsula. This problem is often cited by business owners as one of the difficulties in attracting and retaining employees. To address this issue, a site for new retail is proposed at the three-way intersection of Halleck Street, Hunts Point Avenue and East Bay Avenue at the western edge of the Market (see page 9). In addition, the City is seeking to expand opportunities for new retail within the residential core and has begun funding façade improvements to support existing retail businesses.

Long-Term Approaches

SBS expects to continue providing workforce development services to the Hunts Point community on a long-term basis. The agency plans to release a Request for Proposals (RFP) for employment centers throughout the City, including Hunts Point. In the long term, SBS anticipates providing employment and training services that will help decrease the high unemployment rate in Hunts Point and increase the number of local hires with neighborhood businesses, while improving employee retention and advancement.



Sketch of the proposed Hunts Point Works center.