

SAN FRANCISCO Building jobs to be reserved for residents

Rachel Gordon, Chronicle Staff Writer

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SIZE

Contractors working on city-financed construction projects in San Francisco must try to make sure that half the new laborers they hire are local, City Hall officials announced Thursday.

The announcement comes as San Francisco has \$1.5 billion worth of public works projects in the pipeline over the next few years, every one of them completing the Third Street light-rail project. Hundreds of laborers will be needed to do the work.

To help contractors meet the local-hire goal, the city is expanding its "CityBuild" program that targets low-income San Franciscans who will go through a 14-week training course at the City College campus in the Bayview that provides traditional classroom instruction and hands-on experience. Graduates will jump into a hiring pool for city contractors. And while they aren't guaranteed a job, officials are optimistic.

"If you want to do business, we want you to hire the best and the brightest, and that means 50 percent need to come from our city," said Mayor Gavin Newsom. "We should be able to have a string attached, and that's creating real jobs for real people."

The mayor's office will monitor the program -- including a look at weekly payroll records to verify the residency of the workers -- to make sure contractors make an effort to comply with the local-hire mandate. Noncompliance can jeopardize a contractor's ability to do business with the city.

CityBuild, which is a collaborative effort involving the municipal government, City College, the Northern California carpenters union and other groups, started the program last year. So far, 65 participants have landed jobs on public works projects. Another 55 students are now going through the training.

Twana Davenport, a 31-year-old Bayview resident, is one of them. She's worked as a certified nurse assistant, a security guard and held a job learning to become a carpenter, the trade of her grandfather who helped build Candlestick Park.

At first, she said, the prospect seemed daunting. But now that she's actually learned how to properly pound nails, measure lumber and handle tools, she's grown. The mother of a 10-year-old son and 16-year-old stepdaughter, Davenport, who still works a security job after school, hopes that the program will help her and bring more economic stability to her life.

"My dream is to put a down payment on a house by the time I'm 40," she said.

San Francisco has pushed contractors to hire locally before, but the results never matched expectations. Newsom believes the outcome will be different. He said, the program will be coordinated through the mayor's Office of Economic and Workforce Development, which will serve as a one-stop shop for opportunities involving city projects. In the past, each department operated its own hiring program, some with success, others without.

Also, contractors now can hire San Francisco residents to work on projects outside the city to help them meet the 50 percent local-hire benchmark.

Supervisor Sophie Maxwell, who represents the Bayview and surrounding neighborhoods that have some of the highest unemployment rates in the city, has high hopes.

"CityBuild," she said, "is about valuing our residents as resources ... (and) about building our middle class from within, not importing one."

E-mail Rachel Gordon at rgordon@sfgate.com.

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