

# School Construction Industry Connection

## Rebuilding Orleans Parish Schools

Schools Rebuilding DBE Newsletter • Volume 2 • Issue 1 • August 2014

Paul B. Habans School



## Rebuilding New Orleans Public Schools — A Remarkable Journey



**RECOVERY**  
School District  
Excellence Equity Community

## OPSB and RSD Report Significant Progress in DBE and Local Contractor Participation in the School Rebuilding Program

Two years after the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) and the Recovery School District (RSD) set their respective goals for Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) contractor participation, both school entities are reporting significant gains.

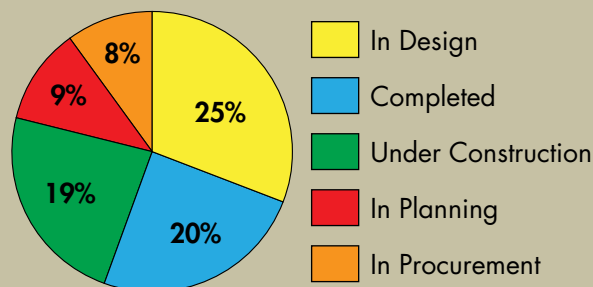
The OPSB set a 35% goal and RSD set a 25% goal. In 2012, the combined participation between both programs was less than 2%. As of the end of June 2014, the OPSB is reporting a DBE participation rate of 25% and the RSD is reporting a 24.28% (less than a percentage point away from their stated goal). Combined the two school entities have awarded construction contracts totaling in excess of \$130 million dollars to DBE certified companies.

In addition to this success, OPSB and RSD are reporting that over 86.9% of the construction contracts are being awarded to local general contractors. This is in contrast to the 54% of contracts awarded to non-Louisiana companies prior to 2012.

Stan Smith, Interim Superintendent for OPSB, states: "DBE and local involvement in the rebuilding of our school system is important to invigorating the local economy and sustaining the educational gains by having the people of New Orleans be key players in providing quality educational environments for our students." Interim Superintendent Smith noted that the construction contract awards are trending in an upward trajectory. "We also have a strong DBE participation in projects valued less than \$500,000."

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Following the massive flooding after Hurricane Katrina in 2005, eighty percent (80%) of the City's public school buildings were damaged beyond repair. To date, 20 schools have been built new, renovated or fully refurbished; 19 schools are under construction, 25 are in design, and 9 buildings are in the planning stage. In seven years, the rebuilding program has completed 12,000+ "quality" seats for local public school students with another 15,000 in construction.



The rebuilding of public schools got underway in 2007, when then State Superintendent, Paul Pastorek, ignited the rebuilding of schools by having New Orleans City Council members select a school in each of their 5 districts to "Quick Start" the rebuilding effort. In 2008, following public meetings with more than 10,000 local citizens, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) and the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) adopted a Master Plan for rebuilding to accommodate students in new or renovated educational environments.

The rebuilding program was fully funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in 2010 to the tune of \$1.8 billion dollars. The Master Plan was amended in 2011 with eighty-one (81) schools identified for new buildings, renovation or refurbishment.

To the credit of both the OPSB and the RSD, the building program has proceeded with a minimum amount of delays, change orders, on the job accidents, and neighborhood disruptions.

Contained within this newsletter is information, along with important tips and resources to get you connected.



Patrick Dobard

OPSB and RSD Report Significant Progress...  
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Patrick Dobard, Superintendent for RSD, agrees: "We have identified resources and worked with DBE contractors to provide them information, build their capacity and overcome credit issues, so they can be competitive in the bidding process." Superintendent Dobard also points out that the recently awarded Design-Build contracts for Carver Senior High School, Habans Elementary School and Sherwood Forest Elementary School have been secured by local general contractors committed to DBE participation in excess of 30%. Dobard said, "The Design-Build procurement process has aided our efforts to achieve our DBE goals".

Both school systems have hired DBE directors and staff to monitor, enforce compliance and provide assistance to DBE companies. Armer Bright, Director of DBE for OPSB and Sombra Williams, Director of DBE for RSD are reporting an increase in the number of DBE companies that have received work over the past 2 years. As of June 1st, OPSB is reporting that 67 DBE companies have been awarded contracts. RSD is reporting 70 DBE contract awards over the same period.

Each week, the DBE Oversight Team (the two DBE Directors, representatives of the Louisiana Association of General Contractors (LAGC), the Greater New Orleans Urban League, Bright Moments and the Community Development Director with Jacobs/CSRS) meet to review progress, discuss issues, and develop programs to assist DBE contractors. To ensure transparency, a quarterly newsletter, which tracks DBE participation, is published.

"Such accomplishments are what happens when the total construction community comes together, the contractors,



Stan Smith

the DBE's, the designers, the consultants, the owner and in particular the local citizenry", commented LAGC, CEO Ken Naquin. "We look forward to even greater achievements as the work progresses."

Urban League President Erika McConduit said, "The work being implemented to improve the transparency in bidding, the access to critical information, and the connection between general and DBE contractors has shown great promise for the future of our local and minority contracting community. We are encouraged by the strong increase in DBE participation and will continue to push for even more opportunities as projects are unbundled and fairly accessible."

One of the DBE companies that has secured work on school projects is CDW Services. They are currently the lead contractor in the "mothballing" of Andrew J. Bell School in the Sixth Ward. Mr. Chris Walker, the CDW Services president, commented, "In my opinion, the OPSB and the RSD Schools Project is the most noticeable job information out there. They have worked very hard at making sure the DBE contracting community knows what's up for bid".

In closing, both Interim Superintendent Smith and Superintendent Dobard acknowledge that more work needs to be done to reach their respective DBE participation goals. "We are committed to doing whatever is necessary to ensure that our schools are truly great environments for student learning. We also want to make sure that local people embrace our schools and that they benefit in the construction," said Interim Superintendent Smith.

# An Economic Inclusion Initiative of the Urban League of Greater New Orleans

**T**he Women's Business Resource Center at the Urban League of Greater New Orleans (ULGNO) will open its Contractors Resource Center (CRC) on September 8, 2014. The facility is located at the Urban League of

Greater New Orleans' new headquarters at 4640 S. Carrollton Avenue; New Orleans, LA 70119.

The ULGNO has partnered with Jacobs/CSRS in the economic inclusion of disadvantaged business enterprises (DBE) in the rebuilding of New Orleans schools since March, 2011. The Urban League has provided substantial outreach, business training, informational briefings, personalized consulting and technical assistance and capacity building services to hundreds of local contractors.

Additionally, the Urban League has been a partner on the DBE team over the past two years. The efforts of this group have facilitated access to numerous school construction projects and resulted in the average inclusion rate of nearly 25% on current school construction projects, inclusive of those that are designated "design-build."

The Contractors Resource Center was developed to provide technology-based resources and plan room services that are critically needed by local DBE and small firm contractors.

"The Urban League recognizes that closing the technology gap can be an equalizer to ensure local DBEs the same advantages of larger contractors to accurately estimate and submit competitive bids" said Lynnette Colin, Director of the Urban League's Women's Business Resource Center.

The CRC houses a computer lab outfitted with widely used construction estimating software, as well as the latest electronic accounting system software. These computerized training tools will be complemented by other business sustainability

education modules to provide comprehensive business growth planning for small business contractors. Users of the Contractors Resource Center can access periodic remote and virtual basic training on project estimating software. Computers equipped with estimating software are available for use by members of the CRC; and they will have full access to large-scale printing equipment to produce hard copies of project plans

and specifications. All other services offered by the Women's Business Resource Center are available to the CRC clients.

The Urban League has fostered a partnership agreement with a leading estimating software company to offer a discount to members of the CRC that purchase the software.

The Alliance of Minority Contractors, the trade association for local minority owned contracting firms will occupy an office in the Contractors Resource Center to add another layer of service for users of the facility.

The Contractors Resource Center is currently accepting membership applications. The fee for membership is \$150 annually for use during normal business hours. Fees may be assessed for some of the training programs; others are offered free of charge. A nominal fee is required for printouts.

The Contractors Resource Center is funded in part by Jacobs/CSRS, project managers for Orleans Parish School Rebuilding projects.



**For more information on the Urban League's Contractors Resource Center, please contact Lynnette Colin at the Urban League of Greater New Orleans (504) 620-9647 or (504) 620-2332 or visit our website <http://www.urbanleagueneuorleans.org/ul/color-options/red/>**



Ray Abrams Elementary School

## DBE Team

# Publisher's Corner

**T**his newsletter, "School Construction Industry Connection", is a publication created by the School Rebuilding Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Team. The DBE Team meets weekly to review, plan and advocate for DBE and local involvement in rebuilding the public schools of New Orleans.

The newsletter is intended to provide a transparent look at the level of local and DBE involvement in school rebuilding. We will provide updates on DBE involvement in each construction project, information on upcoming construction bids, contact information on resource providers, a feature story on a successful DBE contractor, and commentary on policy initiatives to enhance DBE participation.

We encourage you to circulate the newsletter to people in the industry who benefit from this information.

**We welcome your critique, feedback and any helpful information that can enhance our efforts.**

**For more information, please contact,  
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Please e-mail all comments to [Billr@Brightmomentsnola.com](mailto:Billr@Brightmomentsnola.com)**



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