

Job site hiring goals for Minneapolis schools HQ are exceeded

- Article by: [STEVE BRANDT](#) , Star Tribune
 - Updated: July 20, 2012 - 9:20 PM
-

The school district's largest construction project in years surpassed its diversity goals for contractors and workers.

- 1 The new \$41.7 million Minneapolis school headquarters built in the heart of the North Side stands out for its record in hiring women and minority workers and contractors.

All hiring and contracting goals for the John B. Davis Educational Service Center project were exceeded, according to the construction team of Mortenson Construction and Thor Construction.

The goal of hiring a workforce that was 25 percent minority was exceeded by 2 percentage points, as measured by hours worked. The project also doubled its 5 percent target for female hours worked.

Meanwhile, the project also topped its goals for contracting work out to minority- and women-owned firms. Twenty percent of the dollar value of construction contracts went to minority-owned firms, compared with a goal of 15 percent. Women-owned firms got 31 percent of the work, tripling the goal of 10 percent. In all, work went to 21 minority-owned firms and 23 women-owned firms.

The largest minority contract was for \$905,000, awarded to MAG Mechanical of New Hope. "Score one for the good guys," said Tony Goze, MAG's chief manager. The firm handled piping for hot water and gas, and did sheet metal and other work on the new building at 1250 W. Broadway.

Goze said that not only is the firm minority-owned -- he and his father, Michael, are members of the Ho Chunk tribe from Wisconsin -- but also has a field workforce of 20 workers that's more than half minority. He said the opportunity to win contracts through programs designed to employ minority firms and workers is vital to the five-year-old company. The company was founded in Minneapolis, and is looking to return to the city once it locates a site for an office, warehouse and shop.

Lynn Littlejohn, director of community affairs at Mortenson, said that breaking work into smaller contracts was one key to hitting contracting goals. Thor and Mortenson also did outreach work to find the smaller firms that could bid on the contracts.

For Minneapolis public schools, the headquarters was its biggest construction project in years. The heavily minority district was intentional about trying to support minority- and women-owned businesses, putting a sign reporting the participation of such businesses up at the Broadway site for the community to see. An outside oversight committee was formed to monitor progress. The district also quizzed potential contractors and suppliers not only on whether owners were minority

members or women but also whether diversity was reflected in their workforces, said James Burroughs, the school district's executive director of equity and diversity.

Louis King, CEO of Summit Academy OIC, which trains construction workers, said Mortenson and Thor are the leading firms in the metro area in getting minority workers on their payrolls for construction work. "They have figured out how to build relationships in this community," King said.

Steve Brandt • 612-673-4438

© 2012 StarTribune. All rights reserved.

StarTribune.com is powered by Limelight Networks