



NJ's First Sustainable Charter School Launches Green Building Project on Earth Day

The Barack Obama Green Charter High School is looking to be a national model of sustainability-centered education

PLAINFIELD (April 21, 2011) – When the Barack Obama Green Charter High School (BOGCHS) first opened in September 2010, the school immediately began thinking about their facility future. The school currently leases space from the Boys and Girls Club of Union County located at 530 West 7th Street in Plainfield. Currently educating 120 students, BOGCHS is approved to grow to 240 students which will require more space to operate.

Co-founded by Principal Safiyah Sadiq and Stephen King, CEO and President of the Urban Development Group International, the groundbreaking curriculum and school site are a ground-up model of sustainability-centered education in New Jersey as well as nationally. "Our intention is to provide students and the community with a green building that can be integrated into the curriculum and used as a teaching and learning tool," said Sadiq. The school has already built an impressive list of supporters at an early age including generous support from the PSE&G Foundation and the Dodge Foundation to pursue the school's "green" goals.

Real Estate Advisory & Development Services (READS) began working with the school in February 2011 to support the school's upcoming growth and need for additional space. Although the school was very interested in the redevelopment of the Plainfield Armory, the timeline did not work for the school to occupy space for September 2012. Instead, the school will be able to remain on West 7th by utilizing part of the space with the Boys and Girls Club and also occupying renovated space built from the former United Orthodox Synagogue at 524 West 7th Street in Plainfield. For the 2011-2012 school year, BOGCHS will move to the Lincoln School at 209 Berkman Street after which they will return to the campus on West 7th Street in September 2012. The arrangement will also allow the partnership between the school and the Boys and Girls Club to remain.

READS will act as the nonprofit real estate developer including assembling the project team, securing the financing and managing the renovation process. READS successfully completed a similar \$5.55M project on behalf of the Sussex County Charter School for Technology in Sparta, NJ, whereas the structure allows BOGCHS to focus on educating students while READS focuses on the real estate.

Project Manager Eric Felczak is helping coordinate the team of professionals to make environmental responsibility integral to the building process. "We want to project the environmentally responsible mission to the community with plant life, gardens, and an outdoor classroom," said Felczak. KSS Architects and LAN Associates are also helping to realize the school's commitment to sustainability through material resourcefulness, energy efficient systems and other architectural elements. An outdoor garden space and lush courtyard will function as exterior classroom space. READS is also coordinating with the NJ Chapter of the US Green Building Council to explore how the school can get involved in the project and how the project might ultimately qualify for LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification.



The project launches in time for Earth Day where the school is holding a ceremony that includes announcing the proposed facility plan. READS' Community Organizer, Jane Zatkan, has been working with the school to organize and promote the event. Zatkan is currently working with the school two days a week to support their sustainability efforts through organizing student green teams and developing partnerships with outside organizations committed to sustainability. READS anticipates that this community organizing support will remain for the school throughout the entire project.

As a nonprofit, READS is committed to building strong organizations and communities through innovative real estate development. Since its inception in 2003, READS has assisted dozens of nonprofits in developing their facilities to meet their social service needs.

READS provides all phases of real estate development and technical assistance including financial structuring and project management. READS has been recognized by the New Jersey Department of Education with the Corporate Partnership Award for its work with charter schools and by the Federal Department of Education as a promising practice in real estate development.

For more information, contact READS at (732) 635-1000.

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