

## Harlem

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# State to Review Minority Hiring at Columbia Expansion Project

Updated 3 hrs ago

February 4, 2013 1:14pm | By Jeff Mays, DNAinfo Reporter/Producer

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HARLEM — Columbia University's minority hiring practices at its \$6.3 billion West Harlem campus expansion are to be reviewed by the Empire State Development Corporation.

The investigation is in response to a letter from **Vincent Morgan**, a banker and a candidate for City Council, who asked the corporation to make sure the university was living up to its promises to ensure a share of the jobs go to minority workers.

"There needs to be oversight," said Morgan. "And it has to be oversight that has the ability to enforce the agreement Columbia made with the community."

In a Jan. 30 response to Morgan, the Empire State Development Corporation said that it was monitoring Columbia and said it had taken steps to confirm that minority hiring goals Columbia agreed to were being met.

The ESDC is the state's chief economic development agency.

"In connection with minority, women and local contracting and employment obligations, ESD[C] has asked Columbia to present additional information in part directed at providing the requisite information in a format and manner that will permit ESD to assess compliance more readily," spokeswoman Arana Hankin wrote.

An ESDC spokeswoman said the agency, over the next few weeks, hopes to determine the best format for the hiring information to be submitted in. Spectrum Personal Communications Corporation has been hired as a monitor.

Hankin also wrote that "ESD[C] will continue to take appropriate and affirmative steps to ensure that Columbia complies with each of its many obligations."

Columbia is expanding onto 17 acres of land from West 129th to West 133rd streets, between Broadway and 12th Avenue. The first phase of the project is scheduled to be completed by 2015. Later phases won't be finished until 2030.

In exchange for permission to build, the university signed a community benefits agreement that requires 25 percent participation by minorities, women and local businesses, and that 35 percent of non-construction contracts go to minority, women and locally owned firms. Large contracts must also be broken into pieces so that smaller contractors can compete.

Columbia has said that it has surpassed the goals.

"For the Manhattanville Project, Columbia University set forth some of the highest [minority, women and locally owned] goals in our state, and we have met or exceeded them in the early stage of construction of the new campus," a spokesman said in a statement.

"We regularly report to the West Harlem Development Corporation on the progress we are making on our MWL goals in Manhattanville construction. Sharing the progress we have made on this front with the community and with ESDC is a valuable part of the process."

But some area residents have questioned the ability of the West Harlem Development Corporation, which was recently **investigated** and cleared by the Attorney General for initially **spending more on consultants than programming**, to enforce the agreement.



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"This project has been under way for four years and Columbia has already spent hundreds of millions of dollars," said **Larry English**, former chairman of Community Board 9.

"The community recognizes that at the end of the day, it has to take responsibility to insure that ESDC and WHDC do their job and protect the community."

Kofi Boateng, executive director of the WHDC disagreed with that assessment.

"We are putting several layers of monitoring in place to ensure the provisions of the CBA are lived up to by Columbia," Boateng said in a statement.

He said the group was working with the ESDC, New York City Department of Planning and general project plan manager to ensure that "Columbia lives up to the requirements of both the General Project Plan and the CBA as a minimum."

Local activists complain Columbia **has not provided verifiable proof** that it is meeting minority hiring goals.

"Let them show us their numbers. They have been reluctant to show us any numbers," said Mark Barksdale, a member of a group of black architects named **Arch527 that has tried and failed to get work on the campus expansion.**

"There should be someone overseeing Columbia," said Barksdale. "I'm frustrated there hasn't been more enforcement of the agreement."

Morgan said the project is of great importance to the future of the West Harlem neighborhood and should be treated as such.

"We have time to fix the problem," said Morgan. "This is an opportunity to right the ship and make sure we don't get left behind with the opportunity created by this development."

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By **Jeff Mays**, DNAinfo.com  
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SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
27	28	29	30	31	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	1	2

*Upcoming Events*



**Apollo Live Wire Series**

Date: Feb 7, 2013 - Feb 7, 2013  
Location: West 125th Street  
Time: 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM



**Apollo Black History Month Open House**

Date: Feb 9, 2013 - Feb 10, 2013  
Location: West 125th Street  
Time: 12:00 PM - 5:00 PM

Tuesday, February 5, 2013

No events scheduled for this date

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