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Milwaukee TechForce Training Center | 1916 N. Fourth St. | Milwaukee

Best Public/Private Partnership

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Mike Dries

You know you're on to something good when a single project can restore an historically important building, help stabilize a neighborhood and provide a pathway to family-supporting jobs. That's what a public/private partnership orchestrated by the Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee (HACM) accomplished last year when it launched the Milwaukee TechForce Training Center on the city's near north side.

The building, constructed in 1925, originally served as the St. Francis of Assisi Social Center and is still owned by St. Francis of Assisi parish, whose church is on the opposite side of North Fourth Street. HACM leased the building from the parish and redeveloped it, using a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Critically important to the ultimate success of the project was the fact that Employ Milwaukee, the workforce development board serving Milwaukee County, received two new \$4 million TechHire grants from the U.S. Department of Labor that designated Milwaukee TechForce as the primary training facility.

"We knew HACM would have to have a partner when we applied for the HUD grant," said HACM director [Tony Perez](#), who quarterbacked the project. "Providing training to bridge the digital divide is not a core competency of HACM."

In addition to Employ Milwaukee, other educational and workforce development partners Perez enlisted included Milwaukee Area Technical College, which has equipped the TechForce

Training Center, Milwaukee Public Schools, and the Adult Learning Center (ALC). For many years, the ALC has used the first floor of the building to provide GED preparatory classes for adults.



The space includes more than 2,200 square feet of reception space and two conference rooms.

Scott Paulus

HACM'S redevelopment of the building was a significant undertaking. The 2,800-square-foot second floor was dilapidated. That space was rebuilt as two new technology-equipped classrooms, two teacher offices, storage area and communal study space in two common areas. In addition, a new entrance was added providing another 2,216 square feet of reception space, two conference rooms and a large communal study space. In all, the project cost \$1.12 million.

HACM retained Triad Construction Inc., West Allis, to serve as the project's general contractor. Milwaukee's Quorum Architects designed the project. Ellis Engineering, Milwaukee, served as the project's engineer.

On March 20, the first class of 20 students began their information technology training at Milwaukee TechForce Training Center through Employ Milwaukee's TechHire IT training project. After completing the 10-week program, the students will have earned the IT-industry recognized CompTIA A Plus certification, preparing them for an entry or mid-level IT position.

"I'm inspired by this collaboration..." Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett said in a news release. "This is about helping people get the skills to operate in this economy. There are so many family-supporting jobs out there that are tech-related that we want our residents to be trained for these positions."

PROJECT CREDITS

- **Owner/Developer:** Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee
- **General contractor:** Triad Construction Inc.
- **Architect:** Quorum Architects Inc.
- **Engineer:** Ellis Engineering
- **Lead finance:** NA (funded with HUD grant)
- **Lead legal counsel:** Milwaukee City Attorney's Office
- **Completion date:** May 2016
- **Project cost:** \$1.12 million



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