



EYES ON MILWAUKEE

## City, MATC Still Seek To Train Students in Rehabbing Homes

Progress has been slow. Ezekiel CDC steps in as new private partner.

By Jeramey Jannene - Dec 19th, 2022 12:30 pm

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2606 N. Holton St. in 2019 Photo by Jeramey Jannene.

A 2019 idea to train [Milwaukee Area Technical College](#) (MATC) students in construction by having them rehabilitate city-owned, foreclosed homes still remains in its infancy, but a new group of project partners are poised to move the concept forward.

"Unfortunately with the pandemic, things changed pretty dramatically with the ability to have students in a living classroom," said [Department of City Development](#) real estate services manager [Amy Turim](#) of the slow progress in implementing the program in her comments Thursday to the board of the [Redevelopment Authority of the City of Milwaukee](#) (RACM).

The idea, born out of [Reclaiming Vacant Properties Conference](#) held in Milwaukee in 2018, relies on an approach whereby the city sells vacant homes for \$1 to a private partner. That partner was to coordinate the renovation work. MATC students, supervised by professors, would rehab the homes.

[JCP Construction](#) was initially to be the private partner, but will now be replaced by [Ezekiel Community Development Corp.](#)

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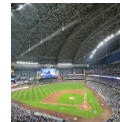
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"There is a real reason we selected Ezekiel CDC," Turm told the RACM board. The nonprofit has a focus on neighborhood revitalization and is an active participant in several city housing efforts, including the jobs-focused Milwaukee Employment/Renovation Initiative, the new Homes MKE effort and a [Northwestern Mutual](#)-backed [effort](#) to revitalize a block of the [Amani](#) neighborhood as a test case for a larger project.

RACM contributed \$25,000 to the MATC project, with approximately half of that grant already spent.

"There has been some work done inside," said Turim, referencing interior demolition. Part of that work was completed by students. A RACM report indicates \$14,191.57 remains unspent.

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The RACM board unanimously endorsed terminating the 2019 agreement with JCP and creating a new agreement with Ezekiel. JCP will transfer the first house, [2606 N. Holton St.](#), to Ezekiel.

Once the house is rehabilitated, it is to be sold to a private buyer. Half the profit is to go towards future renovations. In addition to the RACM funding, the partners are to raise philanthropic support to move the program forward.

"The property is actually a byproduct. When we get with it, we sell it to a first-time homebuyer," said Ezekiel vice president and training manager [Jim Gaillard](#).

The [Social Development Commission](#) (SDC) is also a program participant. The students in the program are expected to come primarily from participants in existing SDC programs. "We already have a pre-apprenticeship program where students are introduced to construction and the trades," said SDC job developer [Courtney Kelly, to a Common Council committee in 2019](#). She said that SDC plays a key role in the program because it provides wraparound services MATC does not offer, including driver's license recovery and GED programs.

The initial home that Ezekiel will work on sits on the border of the [Riverwest](#) and [Harambee](#) neighborhoods. City records indicate the 1,025-square-foot house, built in 1890, was acquired by the city in January 2019 via property tax foreclosure.

Between 2016 and 2019, the [Department of Neighborhood Services](#) issued more than 20 violations to the property, including the requirement to register a vacant property. Since returning to private ownership, it has continued to draw the ire of neighbors and DNS, with several violations issued for

litter, debris and tall grass.

A resolution is pending before the council to approve the change in partners.

## 2606 N. Holton St. in 2019



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