

## Donning hard hats and standing high above the city, officials formally launch Building Futures



"Before Building Futures, I had no future," Varsana Sihavong told the group gathered on the 32nd floor of the new Westin Tower, a structure that is still under construction. "I was going from one dead-end job to another. I didn't think I had a lot of choices."

Varsana is one of the first candidates to receive support from Building Futures, a program designed to help unemployed and unskilled young adults secure apprenticeships in the building trades.

Having received tutoring and other assistance through Building Futures, Varsana now feels ready to take his apprenticeship exam later this month.

At a press conference held on November 14 to formally announce the initiative, Mayor David N. Cicilline explained that "Building Futures is about creating a promising career path to excellent paying jobs with good benefits in the construction industry for Providence residents." But, he stressed, "It's not just about giving people a trade. It's about giving people hope and opportunity."



### ***Building Futures , cont.***

Andrew Cortes, director of Building Futures, said that in this pilot year the program is focusing on commercial construction and expects to place some 30 young adults from inner-city neighborhoods into apprenticeship programs.

Surrounding Andrew and the Mayor at the podium were representatives from the building trades. "The construction industry has an aging workforce," noted Michael Sabitoni, president of the R.I. Building

Trades. “This program assists us in replenishing that workforce. It gives us new blood and new enthusiasm.”

Building Futures is a partnership of The Providence Plan, Build RI and YouthBuild Providence. In addition to recruiting, assessing and supporting candidates for placement into apprenticeship programs, the initiative seeks to bring systemic change to the construction industry in ways that will help the sector meet future needs while creating employment opportunities for low-income adults in urban areas.

Funders for Building Futures include The United Way, Making Connections Providence, the R.I. Department of Education and the Governor’s Workforce Board. [\[top\]](#)