

Green-collar jobs taking root

Providence sets up an eight-week program with Groundwork Providence to train 30 unemployed residents.

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PROVIDENCE — City officials gathered beside a community garden on the West Side Monday

ENVIRONMENT | to celebrate a new initiative that aims to train workers for green-collar jobs.

The eight-week program will be offered free to 30 unemployed or underemployed residents who will learn skills for careers in sustainable landscaping. The trainees will also be able to take math and English classes at the Community College of Rhode Island in addition to courses in workplace safety and hazardous materials handling.

The training program was developed by the nonprofit environmental group Groundwork Providence with funding from

the United Way of Rhode Island and the City of Providence's First Source program. The Providence Housing Authority is partnering with Groundwork to help recruit low-income city residents for the training. Classes will be held at the Chad Brown housing development.

The creation of the program comes as the City of Providence tries to position itself as a leader in green technology. Earlier this year, Mayor David N. Cicilline's administration issued Greenprint Providence, a plan to invest in alternative energy, encourage energy-efficient construction and create green jobs. The city is considering installing wind turbines to provide alternative power and is promoting the development of a green business cluster around Promenade Street and the Valley neighborhood.

Cicilline said Monday that the partnership between Groundwork and the housing authority fits in with that plan.

"This is an effort that is critical to the future of Providence," Cicilline said as he stood next to

Groundwork's community garden on Grove Street.

Sergio Jaramillo will be one of the trainees in the new program. Jaramillo, 44, of Pawtucket, was laid off from his job as a designer at a metals company in Massachusetts in January. He has been out of work since then.

"This training will help me do something that I care about," he said.

The program is set to start Sept. 28. About half the slots in are filled already.

Groundwork Providence plans to offer two more training programs over the next year to out-of-work Rhode Islanders. Courses are still being finalized, but one of the additional programs will likely focus on low-impact development.

"Groundwork is committed to providing low-income residents with the resources and skills they need to make a difference in their own communities," said Joe Vaughan, director of Groundwork.

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