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KC pledges that minorities will help build patrol station

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Kansas City officials pledged Thursday to make sure minorities will benefit from the jobs created by construction of the East Patrol station and crime lab.

"We know that the workforce on the project needs to reflect the community," Tom Whittaker, executive vice president of J.E. Dunn Construction, told a City Council committee.

The discussion came as the council is poised to approve a \$48 million construction contract, with J.E. Dunn/Alexander Mechanical as the construction manager for a new law enforcement campus in the heart of the inner city, between 26th and 27th streets and from Brooklyn to Prospect avenues.

The council is expected to vote on the contract next Thursday.

The goal is more than 35 percent participation by subcontracting firms owned by women, minorities or low-income residents. But council members said they want even higher results, and they hope many of the 120 construction jobs on the site can also be filled by minorities.

"It's not a target to reach but to exceed," said Councilman Jermaine Reed, who represents the council district where the new police station and crime lab will be built.

Several prominent African-American ministers testified that the city shouldn't pass up the chance to provide desperately needed employment opportunities in a struggling neighborhood.

"It's a springboard for our community," said the Rev. Wallace Hartsfield Sr., pastor emeritus of Metropolitan Missionary Baptist Church. "This is much more than a building."

The project's total cost is \$57 million, including land acquisition and design. It's being paid for with a quarter cent public safety sales tax.

It involved the acquisition of 128 parcels, including 66 occupied properties. Don Frank, manager of acquisition and relocation services, said Thursday that 90 percent of the properties have been acquired and that only a few people are still holding out for more money.

Construction is expected to begin next spring and be completed in fall 2015.

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