



## FORD MEDIA CENTER

# Detroit Residents Get Fast Track to Michigan Central Station

DETROIT, September 16, 2020 -- Ford Motor Company, Christman|Brinker, Detroit at Work, Workforce Development Institute, Barton Malow, SkillSmart and Michigan Building and Construction Trades Council yesterday launched the Fast Track Job Program at Michigan Central Station. The work experience project is a joint initiative aimed at providing a pathway from existing training and on-boarding programs to skilled city workers for future construction projects.

The first cohort of 25 individuals will get paid hands-on training and supervision in various building trades, including masonry, carpentry, electrical, painting and iron work. Those trades are all involved in Ford's restoration of Michigan Central Station, which was purchased by the automaker in 2018 as the centerpiece of a new mobility innovation district in Corktown.

"This is an opportunity of a lifetime to work on the most high-profile project in Detroit," said Richard Bardelli, Ford's construction manager at Michigan Central Station. "When our cohort members learned they would be working on the train station their eyes lit up, smiles everywhere. One day they will look back and say this is where my career started."

The restoration of Michigan Central Station is now in the second of three phases of construction. This is the longest and most labor-intensive part of the project and involves fixing the steel structure, installing new roofing and repairing more than eight acres of masonry. The 25 men and women in the Fast Track program will join 140 workers already onsite. This number is expected to grow to some 300 workers by year's end, many of them masons, a trade that is currently in short supply in the City of Detroit.

"In Michigan and across the country, we are seeing a shortage of skilled workers in the construction industry," says Ronald D. Staley, executive director of historic preservation for Christman|Brinker, the joint venture selected as construction manager of the project. "We have at least a generation where a lot of younger people were pushed into college instead of the hands-on trades. The goal of this program is that participants will be sponsored for a full apprenticeship and go on to have a life long career in skilled trades. Other developers in the City are interested too because it provides a pathway to sustainable jobs for Detroiters."

"Detroit at Work partnered with Ford to develop a program that will allow Detroit residents who have completed a Detroit at Work skilled trades training program to continue building their careers and honing their skills," said Nicole Sherard-Freeman, Executive Director of Detroit at Work. "This is a tremendous opportunity for Detroiters to gain on-the job training while restoring one of the most iconic buildings in Detroit."

During the four-month program, workers will be paid \$15 an hour for a 40-hour week. In addition to receiving hands on experience, like a "test-drive" of the construction skilled trades, they will gain work readiness skills and support services.

"We want to equip these individuals with the skill set and tools they need so when they show up on day one, they have a better chance of succeeding," said Cheryl Sanford, CEO of Michigan Workforce Development Institute, that administers Access for All Apprenticeship Readiness Program. "Through this pre-apprenticeship-like program, they can see what it's like to be part of building site and have a paycheck every month. This is the start of a new career journey for these individuals and we couldn't be more excited for them."

For this initial group, the program sourced applicants from a variety of existing construction awareness programs including, Detroit Future Workforce (DWF), Randolph CTE/Adult Ed, Access for All, and individual trades programs.

Among the 25 participants is Juane Bullock, who learnt about Fast Track through Access for All.

“The train station is really amazing, I can’t stop staring at the architecture. I can’t wait to get started,” says Bullock. “I feel like it’s an opportunity that’s going to change my life because I’m going to learn so much from so many different people. There are a lot of trades involved. I’m just a sponge right now, I’m going to soak it all up.”

Another key program partner was the Michigan Building & Construction Trades Council, which represents about 125,000 union construction skilled trades men and women in Michigan.

“We are pleased to be part of the Fast Track program which offers qualified Detroiters paid on-the-job project experience and builds on the existing construction exploration programs participants have already completed,” says Pat Devlin, secretary-treasurer of the Michigan Building & Construction Trades Council. “The union construction industry is growing, and we will continue to partner with programs like Fast Track which strengthen connections to our industry.”

Jason Green, co-founder and senior vice president of SkillSmart, a skills-based job matching program, says the Fast Track program is a win-win for participants and the construction industry.

“In a lot of introductory programs, participants don’t get hands-on experience,” he says. “So often, they never get to an actual job site. It’s often theoretical. Ford and its partners are filling a very specific gap. They’re taking candidates with some early work experience and putting them into action. This program provides Detroiters with the opportunity to connect with local work opportunities and get a long-term career. It’s more than just a training opportunity.”

The second Fast Track cohort will start in February 2021 and continue until the restoration of Michigan Central Station is complete at the end of 2022, by which point 175 Detroit residents would have been through the program.

Detroiters interested in joining the program can register at [www.detroitatwork.com](http://www.detroitatwork.com). Priority will be given to residents who live in the Michigan Central Station impact area.

## About Ford Motor Company

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