

MTA Project Reinvents Jobs Lost in Bakery Fire



The MTA's James Rojas, Transportation Planning manager, poses with members of Homeboy Landscaping at an MTA site near the intersection of Soto and Cesar Chavez in Boyle Heights.

Photos: Gary Wosk

MTA Hires Homeboys in Training Program for Eastside Properties Beautification Project

By Jose Ubaldo

(Dec. 6) The MTA, Proyecto Pastoral and North East Trees began a beautification project today for three MTA Eastside properties as part of a fencing and landscaping training program that will benefit youth-at-risk from the Eastside community.

The project, which will cost \$134,640, is part of the MTA's effort to maintain its Eastside properties while also providing jobs for members of Homeboy Industries, who lost their jobs in an Oct. 29 fire in the Homeboy Bakery.

Homeboys to provide landscaping



Homeboys ready with their shovels to landscape an MTA property in Boyle Heights.

Fencing and landscaping will be provided by Homeboy Landscaping. North East Trees, a nonprofit organization known for their efforts to plant an urban forest, designed the fencing and landscaping.

"The partnership between Homeboy Landscaping, North East Trees and the MTA signals a renewed commitment to seek alternatives for at-risk youth who wish to redirect their lives," said Father Gregory J. Boyle, director of Proyecto Pastoral, a nonprofit organization that trains and employs at-risk youth from the Eastside community. "Together we will be able to offer hope to young people for whom hope, sometimes, is foreign."

MTA Media Relations reported that the event was covered by TV news crews from KNBC, KTLA, KABC, KCAL, KCOP, KMEX, KVEA and KWHY. An LA Times photographer attended, along with reporters from La Opinion and the Eastern Group Newspapers.

"The MTA needs to maintain its properties but, at the same time, we believe that the labor of Homeboy Industries in the Eastside community has been one of dedication and hard work to rescue and redirect the lives of youths at-risk," said James L. de la Loza, executive officer RTP&D. "That's why Proyecto Pastoral was chosen to do the job".

Bakery damaged in fire

The Homeboy Bakery in Boyle Heights was partially destroyed by a fire, Oct. 29. Most of the machines were spared damage, however, 12 employees lost their jobs just two months before Christmas.

The MTA originally bought its Eastside properties for Metro Red Line construction, which was suspended by the MTA Board in 1998. A study is underway to consider what should be done with the land.

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