



CHICAGO TITLE  
DC COMMERCIAL CENTER

## **Washington, DC Development and Construction Community Supports the Hispanic Community**

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To paraphrase Ray Ritchey of Boston Properties, "...no group of our society has contributed more to the success of the real estate community than the Hispanic Community..." Just over two years ago, several, prominent leaders of the real estate industry joined forces to give back to the Hispanic Community in Washington, DC through the Spanish Education Development (SED) Center. The SED center, a non-profit organization, offers bilingual preschool and adult educational programs for low-income residents of the DC metro area and has been the cornerstone of the Hispanic community for over 37 years.

Having outgrown an aging facility in Adams Morgan and receiving notice that the lease would not be renewed for its annex, the SED Center will move to its new home in the Petworth neighborhood in January, 2009, the result of two years of hard work and dedication by a team that has become a new part of the SED Center's family. The team includes leaders throughout the development and construction community (Clark Construction, Boston Properties, Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman, Arnold and Porter, Goulston and Storrs, DLA Piper, Jones Lang LaSalle, CB Richard Ellis, Hickok Cole Architects and Washington Group Sales, among others), all of whom understand the importance of giving back to a Hispanic community that is so integral to their industry. SED's new home, the 1940's era Hahn's Shoes warehouse, is 24,000 square feet of brick walls, steel beams and large industrial windows yielding an abundance of natural light.

The SED Center's Board of Directors worked closely with Hickok Cole Architects to design a space reflecting the broad spectrum of cultures and traditions of its community. In one initial design exercise, Hickok Cole Architects asked SED Children's Program Director, Martha Egas (a 30 year SED veteran), to imagine and describe her perfect dining room. Mrs. Egas described a rustic room full of warmth and spirit: soft stucco walls reflecting pink hues of the setting sun; a bright yellow jute rug partially covering the warm concrete floor; a sturdy dark wood table worn smooth by generations of use; a linen table runner and narrow glass vases full of fresh iris flowers; an iron chandelier suspended from exposed rough hewn beams.

Using those images for inspiration, the design team developed two color palettes. The two palettes were displayed at a SED event hosted by the Mexican Ambassador where guests were invited to choose their favorite colors. One palette became the clear winner: bold and vibrant orange, blue and green colors balanced with softer earth tones of pink, yellow and blue.

Just like the idea of family around a table helping each other – so went the process of community support. With a construction budget relying completely on donations, the team spent many long hours balancing essentials, like new electrical service, plumbing and HVAC systems, achieving a state of the art educational facility with large glass garage doors joining the children's classrooms, custom carpet designed to look like circles of sidewalk chalk in the SED Center's color palette and the latest computer facilities. Due to the generosity of the DC real estate community, the SED Center expects to meet its fundraising goal through donations and in-kind work by raising \$300,000 to pay for the remaining construction by the end of January 2009, and it expects to be fully operational in its new location by March 2009.

As construction on the SED Center's new home nears completion, Mrs. Egas offered this reflection on the last two years: "I've never seen so many people come together to help in this way. I mean in such a large and widespread way. They are acknowledging that they believe and trust our community, and the supporters are making a wonderful investment in our future and most precious legacy, our children."

To learn more about the SED Center or to make a donation, please visit [www.sedcenter.org](http://www.sedcenter.org).