

FC Cincinnati pledges to involve diverse group of contractors in stadium construction

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CINCINNATI -- FC Cincinnati will break ground on its permanent home, a \$200 million soccer stadium in the West End, by the end of the year and hopes to move in by March 2021.

Getting the space ready in time will take the combined efforts of hundreds, and team president Jeff Berding said Monday night he plans to hire a diverse team of contractors to make it happen.

"We feel it's a moral imperative to show we can do this the right way and be a real beacon for the future. Dozens of people attended an FC Cincinnati Construction Connection meeting Monday night at the Woodward Theater in hopes of netting a job opportunity. Among them was Dereck Allen, who hopes Dereck's Contractor Service can join the stadium construction effort.

"I'm trying to revamp my company and become a part of FCC," he said.

Team partners Turner Construction and Jostin Construction will be in charge of deciding if his and other small firms make the cut.

"We are going to try to take all of the bid packages and breaking them down to smaller scopes so the people who have the ability to work there get the jobs," Turner representative David Spaulding said. "We are going to team them with other companies, small and large."

Allen said that spirit of inclusivity gave him hope that his small business could be part of the stadium construction process.

"They are being so versatile with all people and giving us an opportunity to put our bids in and even to learn management skills to be a part of this," he said. "It ain't about who you know no more. It's what you know, and what is so nice about this is, even if you don't know much, they are willing to teach you."

Albert Smitherman of Jostin Construction added the plan would emphasize employing minority contractors and those with a diverse workforce.

"If you can't bring that diversity for all to the project, don't come," he said.