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Contact: Susan Corsini  
202-999-9995

**New Charter High School Opens to Help Meet the Demand for  
STEM Qualified Job Applicants in Philadelphia**

*Historic, Vacant Building Transformed in to High Tech Learning Environment*

**PHILADELPHIA, PA (September 27, 2016)** -- Build the Future Education Collaborative hosted an Open House and Unveiling Ceremony Monday evening to celebrate the opening of its third school in Philadelphia - TECH Freire Charter High School.

TECH Freire Charter High School is modeled after the successful Freire High School that has a track record of producing high academic results among low-income, urban student populations.

“The word ‘TECH’ has been added to the name because the new high school integrates technology and entrepreneurship into every classroom to prepare students for the workplace or the future,” explained Kelly Davenport, Executive Director, Build the Future Education Collaborative (Build the Future).

Joining Ms. Davenport for the unveiling were a host of partners that worked with Build the Future to bring the vision of TECH Freire to life including:

- Building Hope, a national, nonprofit charter school facility developer that acquired and renovated the North Broad Street property. As part of Building Hope’s Turnkey Facility Development solution, the building is being leased to TECH Freire at a below market rate with a purchase option;
- Reinvestment Fund and Local Initiatives Support Corporation, which partnered to provide \$8.3 million in financing for the real estate project; and,
- The Philadelphia School Partnership, which provided a \$1.9 million grant for start-up costs.

“Freire has a strong track record of helping students excel,” said Philadelphia City Council President Darrell Clarke who also participated in the unveiling ceremony. “We’re fortunate that young people in this community have access to this quality education. At TECH Freire, they’ll develop tech skills that are in demand in today’s economy. We all know that future success begins with a strong foundation. TECH Freire offers opportunity beyond high school in whatever path the students take.”

Philadelphia is the 8th largest region in the country for STEM employment opportunities, yet there are few options for Philadelphia’s youth to learn the basic skills and education needed to work in these fields ([www.us2020.org](http://www.us2020.org)). Minorities are especially underrepresented in the technology sector, currently representing between 4% and 5% percent of employed software developers in the United States (Bureau of Labor Statistics).

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TECH Freire opened its doors at its new Broad Street location on August 30, 2016 with approximately 300 students in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades. 92% of students are African American, 3% Hispanic, and 5% multi-racial, Asian, or Indian. 85% come from low income households.

“Building Hope was established in 2003 to tackle one of the key barriers to quality charter school growth: identifying and financing viable facilities so that all students have access to a quality K-12 education,” said S. Joseph Bruno, President Building Hope. “We have participated in the building of all of the Freire schools and we applaud Build the Future’s efforts to provide more quality education options for students in Philadelphia.”

The historic building, a former showroom and storage facility for Packard Motor Car Company, has been transformed in to a state of the art learning facility featuring several Makerspaces, where students learn to use machinery and technology together to design and build things.

Thanks to Reinvestment Fund’s financing the building is also more energy-efficient. Estimates indicate that the renovated building’s total annual energy consumption will be 54% less than the average school.

“We have been a long-time supporter of Freire and are excited to partner with them again,” said Bridget Wiedeman, Senior Director, Healthy Communities, Reinvestment Fund. “As mission-driven lenders, we provide capital to projects that bring improved access to critical services and opportunity to communities in need. We are delighted to be part of this project that has repurposed an underutilized building to bring top-notch educational opportunities to this community.”

At full capacity TECH Freire Charter School will serve 580 students in ninth through 12<sup>th</sup> grades.

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**Building Hope: A Charter School Facilities Fund** established in 2003, is a nonprofit organization that supports high quality charter school growth by providing facilities financing, charter school facility development, incubator space, and back-office business services to charter schools nationwide. [www.buildinghope.org](http://www.buildinghope.org)

**Build the Future Education Collaborative** was formed in 2015 to provide support services to all Freire schools, current and future, including: school leadership recruitment and development, governance, facilities management, strategic planning, financial management, IT services, legal compliance, and fundraising. [www.buildthefuture.org](http://www.buildthefuture.org).