



Civic Builders Dedicates Itself To Building New Charter Schools

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Opening a charter school involves more than setting the curriculum, finding teachers and attracting students - you need a building too. In the following report, NY1's Jennifer Rainville tells us about a group that's helping educators deal with the brick and mortar problems that need to be solved before classes can start.

What does it take to turn an ordinary building into modern charter school? A lot more than just a desire. In this city, it takes lots of dollars and lots of dealing.

"Charter schools shouldn't be in the business of real estate - they should be in the business of educating kids," says David Umansky of Civic Builders.

Thanks to Umansky and his team at Civic Builders, they can be.

Civic Builders, a non-profit real estate developer, has done something no other group in New York and perhaps nationwide has done before; taken on the real estate burden - that by law prospective charter schools have to carry - of working out details with everyone from landlords to lenders.

The group's mission is to improve educational opportunities in low-income neighborhoods.

"Taking a derelict building and turning it around into this great piece of architecture, which is also educating the children of the community, is really a win for the community in total," says Civic Builder's Annie Tirschwell.

In just two years, Civic Builders has worked to get about half of the current 35 charters in the city up and running.

The Bloomberg administration has made a commitment to open dozens more within the next five years, and has said it sees Civic Builders as a key partner in that pursuit.

"We're going to look to work with David and his team to work quickly," Schools Chancellor Joel Klein said in September.