

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SCHOOLS DEVELOPMENT ANNOUNCES THE OPENING OF THE NEW ESTHER SALAS ACADEMY IN UNION CITY

Union City – The New Jersey Schools Development Authority (SDA) recently celebrated the opening of the new Esther Salas Academy in Union City, which provides approximately 900 seats for students in grades seven to nine. The delivery of this school construction project continues SDA’s commitment to building high-quality, high-performing school facilities that best meet the needs of the students of New Jersey.

“As another school year begins, with it comes the hope and excitement for learning and growth in a new school,” **said SDA CEO Manuel Da Silva**. “This state-of-the-art facility will stand as a testament to its namesake, encouraging leadership, dedication, and the pursuit of excellence. Thank you to the Union City School District and City officials for your partnership and cooperation.”

The Esther Salas Academy is an approximately 132,000 square-foot, six-story facility, funded through a \$93.7 million investment by the SDA. In addition to general classrooms and science labs, students have access to innovative learning spaces including three art rooms, a stem/robotics lab, a hydroponics lab, a technology lab, vocal music room, a dance studio, a rooftop environmental science lab with an outdoor growing area, a media center, a gymnasium, and a cafetorium with a stage/instrumental room. The school was designed and constructed to meet USGBC LEED (United States Green Building Council – Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Silver certification.

This project showcases the advantages of strong partnerships between State, City, and school district officials. Together, officials were able to secure more than \$56 million in federal grant funding to help support this project. The SDA is the subrecipient of a Federal Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund (CPF) grant, passed through the State of New Jersey Department of Community Affairs. Union City School District partnered with the SDA and committed to providing programming at the school that will enable work, education, and health monitoring for the community, a grant funding requirement. The CPF funds for the Union City Grade 7-9 project were awarded by U.S. Treasury on June 14, 2023.



The new Esther Salas Academy was built using a design-build approach. The design-build method differs from the traditional design-bid-build approach by allowing the SDA to contract with one firm for both design and construction of a school facilities project. Dobco, Inc. was awarded a design-build contract for the design and construction of the new school. As part of the contract, Dobco worked with NK Architects on the design. Anser Advisory, part of Accenture, was the Construction Manager on the project.

The Esther Salas Academy is the sixth Capital Project funded by the SDA in Union City since the inception of the school construction program. To date, SDA has invested nearly \$360 million in completed projects in the Union City School District.

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About the New Jersey Schools Development Authority

The SDA is the State agency responsible for fully funding and managing the new construction, modernization and renovation of school facilities projects in 31 SDA Districts. Its current portfolio of active projects is valued at approximately \$2 billion – including the Capital Project portfolio, emergent projects and Regular Operating District grants. Since the program's inception, the SDA has provided funding for and management oversight of more than 900 completed school facilities projects in SDA Districts and has executed more than 5,400 grants for Regular Operating Districts throughout the State of New Jersey. For more information about the SDA, please visit our website at: www.njsda.gov.