

Living Wage and Columbia's Expansion

One of the major selling points of Columbia's expansion plan is the University's claim that the development would create 6,900 new jobs in the area: 21% administrators, 20% researchers, 14% faculty, 14% technicians, 9% post-doc, 7% support staff, 6% clerical staff, and 9% non-Columbia jobs

- Of the Columbia jobs, only support staff and clerical staff do not require advanced degrees or extensive job training, and they are the only jobs that Columbia could not readily fill with University affiliates (most technician positions, for example, are likely to be awarded to graduate students). These jobs would account for about 900 of the new jobs created by the expansion.
- The University estimates that 9% would be non-Columbia jobs – about 620 mostly minimum-wage, service sector jobs (retail, food service, etc.).
- The trade off of these 1500 or so jobs, created over the next 30 years, does not add up when considering that there are already 1,600 jobs in the area, as estimated by the Environmental Impact Statement Scoping Document.
- If you look at Columbia's pool current employees, this makes sense: of all of their currently listed jobs, fewer than two thousand CB9 residents are employed and only 213 of those (just over 10%) live above 125th St. or in public housing.
- Columbia also often uses subcontracted labor from employers like New England Linen and Summit Security that do not guarantee a living wage.

The University has made no commitment verbally or in writing to ensuring that any new jobs created by the expansion will be living wage jobs.

So What is a Living Wage?

A living wage enables workers to meet their needs for nutritious food and clean water, shelter, clothes, education, health care and transport, as well as allowing for a discretionary income. It should be enough to provide for the basic needs of workers and their families, to allow them to participate fully in society and live with dignity. It should take into account the cost of living, social security benefits and the relative standards of other groups. (Labor Behind the Label, 1999)