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Project Place Helps To Keep Area Clean

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Between 11 am and 1 pm on weekdays you might spot a crew of 10 to 12 men and women in royal blue shirts picking up cigarette butts, removing fliers from poles or sweeping up trash on the sidewalks of Downtown Crossing.

They are members of the Clean Corners...Bright Hopes (CCBH) program run by the nonprofit Project Place, which provides the formerly homeless with a temporary facilities maintenance job to help them build their résumés and skills to reenter the workforce.

"It shows potential employers that they have work stability, and they're more willing to give them an opportunity," said Suzanne Kenney, executive director of Project Place, adding that 68 percent of the crew members in the last five years now have permanent jobs.



PHOTO: KATHY TARANTOLA

A percentage of program participants have been hired to work for the city's Public Works Department, said Randi Lathrop, deputy director of community planning at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.

"The mayor has always been very supportive of Project Place because of its training of homeless individuals," Lathrop said.

CCBH has been working in Downtown

Crossing since 1995 when the program launched. At that time the crew was only cleaning Winter and Summer Streets, and their Washington Street intersection.

However, in the last year the cleaning area has expanded to include Temple Place, West Street, part of Arch Street, Chauncy

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Street, Province Court and Avenue De Lafayette, Kenney said.

"When you see someone with a broom, there is a perception, and the reality is that someone cares. And that translates into the perception of safety," Kenney said.

The Downtown Crossing Association (now the Downtown Crossing Partnership) approached Project Place in the mid-1990s about teaming up to clean up the area. Project Place took it one step further and

asked the Newbury Street League and Downtown North to come on board.

"It was a novel concept of a nonprofit partnering with a business association to create job opportunities," Kenney said.

Currently, the Downtown Crossing Partnership has a \$50,000 annual contract with Project Place which area merchants help pay for, Kenney said.

"We're happy to be involved partnering with an organization that provides a service that is so vital while helping the homeless," said Rosemarie Sansone, president of the Downtown Crossing Partnership. "They're picking up all kinds of debris, and it's cleaner, and the area looks better."