

Why is the boarding school named "Hisan J. Polk Transformation Academy"?

Hisan Polk was a young Black man who participated in the LINC L.I.T.E. program in 2007. He was beloved, active, and well-respected. He graduated and started a business of his own, and continued his association with L.I.T.E. as a mentor and role-model for scores of young men. His life held infinite promise. He was lost to gun violence in a case of mistaken identity on October 19, 2014. The boarding school will be named in his memory.

How is the boarding school related to LINC's L.I.T.E. Manhood program?

For more than a decade, through L.I.T.E. (LINC's Initiative to Educate), LINC has provided educational support, mentoring, after school activities, and career building resources for African American youth from ages 13 to 40.

L.I.T.E. expanded reach with funding for Community Resource Coordinators (CRCs) through New Hanover County's Port City United Program and continued support through other grants. The CRCs work directly with young men and women in local schools helping with academic issues and mitigating situations that could lead to conflicts. L.I.T.E now offers summer sessions, special activities, and educational field trips.

Through L.I.T.E.'s interaction with youth in the community, LINC leadership saw the need for a residential component to serve at-risk youth. This residential component would allow staff to further serve youth who were failing academically. LINC's experience in both schools and the community at large was the impetus for the concept of a boarding school to provide **education, opportunity, and hope for young men** who have dropped out or are struggling in traditional public/private school.

The planned boarding school, as it has evolved, will be open to any young man who is struggling in a traditional educational institution, *not solely to L.I.T.E. program participants.*

What makes the Princess Place fire station a desirable site?

In 2016, when LINC leadership learned that the fire station at 3933 Princess Place was closing, and because it had been "residential" for firemen, it became an attractive site for the boarding school because the building could be easily adapted for both educational and residential use.

In 2017, LINC explored options to acquire the building.

In 2019, the fire station at 3933 Princess Place Drive was decommissioned. At that time, the City of Wilmington did not have a process to convey the property. LINC interest in the building did not wane. When the city was ready to transfer the property, LINC was poised to pursue the boarding school project.

Through studies and evaluation over the next couple years, Wilmington city staff determined the boarding school project to be consistent with the Create Wilmington Comprehensive plan. It was noted that the site is:

- Adjacent to a high density transition area of opportunity
- In an urban mixed-use center
- Of great potential to accommodate growth and redevelopment per The City of Wilmington's Growth Strategies Map

Concurrent to conversations with the City of Wilmington regarding acquisition of the property, LINC forged partnerships with neighbors, and property owners in the Barclay Hills community. Collaboration and communication between all concerned parties are key to the success of the boarding school, which will serve as a much-needed model for achievement and youth empowerment in the community. LINC is determined that this project be part of the positive revitalization of Barclay Hills.

> **Historical Fact**
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> Historically, the Princess Place fire station was where Russell Jackson, Wilmington's first Black fire fighter, served. Jackson was the first African American employed with the Wilmington Fire Department since 1898.

How did LINC acquire the property?

The decommissioned fire station was conveyed by resolution in September 2021 by the City of Wilmington to LINC, Inc., with the condition that the property be used for an approved public purpose: housing and education. The resolution was passed unanimously. If LINC fails to use the property for the stated purpose, the property will revert back to the city.

What is the time frame for commencing redevelopment of the fire station?

Drawings have been prepared by the architecture firm Sawyer Sherwood & Associate Architecture. This process took approximately 5-6 months. (Sawyer Sherwood had previously worked with the city when previous options for the property were under discussion.)

Concurrently, conversations about zoning/rezoning requirements were undertaken.

Resolutions approving zoning were approved in April 2024.

Following a competitive RFP process and interviews, Mark Loudermilk Architecture, PLLC (MLA) was selected as final architect for the project.

What is the proposed budget for the boarding school project, and what are the funding sources?

The estimated construction budget is $3 million (dependent upon fluctuations in economic factors). Three years of school operations and capital campaign costs are estimated to be $4 million.

New Hanover County has committed $1.5 million toward construction costs.

The balance to raise from the community, through grants, and with corporate support is $5.4 million. The **Legacy Builders Campaign** will make the dream of building a place where young men reclaim their stories, unlock their brilliance, and step confidently into the futures they deserve.

LINC leadership is committed to ensuring sustainability is a key component of planning.

Students will not be charged tuition, room, or board.

The **Legacy Builders Campaign** offers a number of philanthropic options for donors, ranging from naming opportunities to endowed scholarships. Information can be requested from LINC's Development Director.

What are the community benefits of Hisan J. Polk Transformation Academy?

LINC leadership see HJP Academy as a community revitalization initiative for the Barclay Hills neighborhood. Community members will be part of the planning discussions, and community volunteers will participate in the admissions process to screen school applicants.

A task force was created to ensure that the school was supported by the neighbors; five community members currently sit on the task force and are participating in all phases of the planning.

What measures are being taken to reduce adverse impacts on the neighborhood?

HJP Academy admissions process will be conducted by a panel consisting of community members, youth development experts, and educators, with the intention of selecting students who have the highest probability of benefiting from and successfully completing the program by attaining a GED or trade certificate.

Risks to the community and to program participants will be mitigated by the 24/7 (three shifts) presence of three experienced supervisory staff.

How will HJP Academy operate?

HJP Academy will provide a culturally and demographically-rich educational curriculum for young men, ages 15-18, who are current residents of New Hanover County. Work that LINC has done in the past, along with collaborations with organizations also working in youth education and empowerment, and crime reduction, have informed the planning.

Cohorts of twelve students will participate in academic and trade instruction for a 14-month period. The end goal for all students in each cohort will be earning GEDs and trade certification.

Instruction will be provided through a partnership between LINC and Cape Fear Community College. Classes and training will take place at the boarding school. In addition, field trips, community service, hands-on skills development, and other enrichment will be provided.

HJP Academy applicants will be required to have attained an 8th grade reading proficiency prior to admittance. All students in a cohort will concurrently follow the same academic and skills curriculum, with special interests or needs assessed on a student-by-student basis and be dependent upon the capability of the teaching staff and the constraints of a 14-month program period. Upon graduation of a cohort, a new cohort of 12 students will begin the program. HJP Academy will run throughout the year, with 14 consecutive months, rather than on a traditional school year calendar.