

Green Era Sustainability Campus*

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Our NMTC allocation is funding the construction of Green Era’s nine-acre Sustainability Campus, including a biodigester facility, greenhouse space, educational facilities and offices for Urban Growers Collective, the operator of the non-digester portions of the project, classroom and education space, an outdoor market space and commercial compost pick-up and storage areas.

This project grew out of the sponsor’s desire to increase urban farming and community gardens across Chicago and will establish Chicago as a hub for the growing green economy and spur economic development in a distressed community. One of the key limiting factors to expanding urban farms in the city is the availability of compost needed for growing food and gardening. With over 800 urban farm sites across Chicago – most in low income areas – the need for the compost is huge and largely unmet. The biodigester in this project will create compost that will be used in farms across Chicago and its greenhouse will produce affordable and fresh produce for surrounding low-income residents.

MBS Urban Initiatives funded a \$7 million New Markets Tax Credit (“NMTC”) investment including both state of Illinois and Federal tax credits, which were combined with investments from USBCDC, the Southside Community Optimal Redevelopment

Enterprise and DV Community Investment for a total of \$21 million in NMTC allocation. Without NMTC financing, there would be insufficient resources to complete the project.

This project addresses several key environmental issues: (1) mitigation of the filling up of landfills, (2) reduction of off-gassing from food waste and (3) increasing the availability of clean energy. As a result of this project, 75,000 tons of food waste per year will be diverted from Chicago landfills, many of which are expected to be full in 10 years. The biodigester is expected to generate 173,000 MBTU/year of clean power (nearly 2 MW or 1.2 million Diesel Gallon Equivalent). This translates into 42,500 metric tons of carbon dioxide being kept out of the atmosphere. These outcomes help Chicago to meet its recycling, gas reduction and renewable energy goals. The project has the following projected impacts:

- Support of Urban Farms: The biodigester will create 30,000 yards of compost annually, enough to install five-acres of urban farmland a year.
- Brown Field Remediation: This project will remediate a former tractor manufacturing and auto impound lot that has been vacant for over 30 years.
- Fresh Food in Food Desert: The project will alleviate the shortage of fresh, healthy food by producing 26,000 pounds of food per year for sale on site for a low price. Green Era will also provide produce to Fresh Moves, a non-profit mobile market that serves Food Deserts.
- Catalytic Development: Green Era is an important component of the Greater Auburn Gresham Development Corporation's 79th Street Master Plan.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.