

50 Projects – 50 States: Illinois

NMTC Allocatee

Bethel New Life, Inc.
Chicago, IL
Stacey Flint: 773.473.7870

Community Profile

- 15% unemployment rate
- Predominantly African-American and growing Latino population
- Median income 72% of area median income
- Brownfield site

Bethel Commercial Center

Designed to a LEED Gold level, the building features a green roof, a photovoltaic canopy, and healthy materials.



Project Highlights

- Real Estate: Commercial Center, Gold LEED Certified
- Total Project Cost: \$4.6 million
- NMTC: \$1.3 million
- Other financing: State of Illinois, City of Chicago, other public sources
- Investors: Midwest Bank and Park National Private Bank
- Jobs: 75 permanent full-time

Bethel Center Chicago, IL

Formerly a vacant brownfield, the newly constructed Bethel Center is located in the West Garfield and Austin community, 5 miles west of downtown Chicago. Today, the 23,000 square foot Bethel Center houses employment services, child development facilities as well as a community technology center and six commercial storefronts (including a full service bank). The Center also serves as an anchor at a major transit stop which had previously been slated for closure by the City. But for this project the community would have been resigned to a contaminated vacant lot and a loss of vital transportation into the City center. The CDE, Bethel New Life used its New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) allocation to provide a \$1.3 million construction loan for this project.

For 29 years, Bethel New Life has been dedicated to asset-based community development and constantly seeks out projects that empower individuals, strengthens families, and builds thriving neighborhoods. The Center was born out of discussions with community members and a conscious effort to build green and transit-oriented development to comply with established guidelines and metrics. Bethel New Life worked with City, State, utility and environmental consultants over 10 years to realize the dream that is the Bethel Center.

Certified as LEED Gold, the Center features a “green” roof and photovoltaic cells which reduce the building’s energy consumption. Aligning the project with the El station was key, says Mary Nelson, then CEO of Bethel New Life. In this community, only about 35 percent of residents have cars, so public transit is a way of life for most. “We see this building, at this transit stop, as an anchor,” says Nelson. “We’ve built at least 50 new housing units within walking distance as a part of the transit-oriented development. This new building is just the first step, a wonderful stepping stone to revitalizing the area.”

Designed on a tight site, the two-story building has a third-story portion that acts as a lobby for the bridge from the El platform. A steel structure forms the building’s shape, but the rest of the structure is all about concrete. The thermal mass of concrete helps keep temperatures even and consistent, and blocks noise from busy adjacent Pulaski Road and the El train. In fact, energy modeling shows that the Center exceeds energy savings requirements by 50 percent.