Investing In More Than Just Housing

Bickerdike Redevelopment Corporation works towards long-term success in affordable housing by investing in the socioeconomic stability of the West Humboldt Park, addressing the root causes of neighborhood deterioration, not merely the symptoms. Green building features were lower construction and utility costs, and address chronic neighborhood health concerns. In addition, a scattered infill strategy was employed to fill multiple long-vacant lots and bring new life to numerous streets, while the construction process trained and hired over 100 locals, 50% of which became permanent jobs.

How do you revitalize a neighborhood sustainably?

Beyond One Building

The design process was guided by the goal of stabilizing both the housing market and the neighborhood of West Humboldt Park. This resulted in the plan to build multiple low-rise apartments throughout the neighborhood rather than a single high-rise. This strategy allowed each building to better fit into its context and helped the project to align with the long-term goal of revitalizing the entire neighborhood.
West Humboldt Park
A historic African American neighborhood in West Chicago, and one of the hardest hit areas of Chicago, losing 20% of its population in the last decade and half. Rosa Parks Apartments seeks to bring back stable, quality affordable housing that will help to revitalize the community and provide supportive services for 94 families. All of the apartments are rentals for individuals and families between 15% and 50% AMI, and range from one to four bedrooms. Bickerdike chose to focus on elements of sustainable design that would most improve residents quality of life, such as green features that would lower utility bills and improve indoor air quality to help reduce chronic asthma rates in the neighborhood.

Bickerdike Redevelopment
This is the second affordable housing project Bickerdike has led in the area, part of a long term commitment to rebuilding the local community. Bickerdike has a proven track record of building and maintaining affordable housing in Chicago, with a portfolio of over one thousand high quality units throughout the city.
Building Ownership and Pride
As part of their larger efforts towards community development, Bickerdike initiated a community mosaic project to bring together locals and new residents. The mosaic project brought together old and new residents of West Humboldt Park and helped to create a shared sense of ownership over the new apartments by adding to their design and appearance. Through community meetings, it was decided to use the mosaics to honor local black history and celebrate the message that Rosa Parks imprinted upon the city. This helped connect past with present and emphasize the power of building strong communal ties.

Restoring the Neighborhood
The scattered infill strategy not only helped evenly disperse affordable housing, it also helped to reverse the psychological effects of neighborhood deterioration by filling vacant lots, which were constant visual reminders that Humboldt Park was struggling to survive.
Efficient Materials
Using a pre-cast concrete wall system reduced time and material waste during construction, which saved developers time and money and helped keep excess garbage out of landfills.

Energy Recovery Systems
A smart ventilator regulates incoming air to reduce heating and cooling needs.

Clean Energy
Solar powered water heaters lower the building's total energy needs, which reduces operating costs for developers, utility costs for residents, and reliance on fossil fuels, while also increasing the building's appreciation value.

Green Roof
Planters on the roof absorb heat in the summer lowering cooling costs and providing a place for children to learn about plants.

Air Quality + Health
Eco-materials like low-VOC paints and recycled flooring save money and decrease airborne pollutants, helping to combat Humboldt Park's severe asthma rates. Improved air quality means fewer medical costs for families and healthier children.

Permeable Pavers
More durable than traditional pavement, greatly diminish environmental impact, and function as insurance by helping to reduce the risk of flooding.

Clean Energy
Solar powered water heaters lower the building's total energy needs, which reduces operating costs for developers, utility costs for residents, and reliance on fossil fuels, while also increasing the building's appreciation value.

Environmental Education + Training
A critical factor in the effective performance of green energy systems is ensuring that building staff understand how to operate and maintain those systems. Multiple workshops were facilitated training staff in proactive maintenance strategies, energy reduction techniques, and environmental cleaning methods. In addition, all residents received a green operations manual providing explanations about how systems function and tips on upkeep and utility cost reduction. This is part of a long-term effort to ensure that the building is not only designed and built green, but is operated and maintained green for its entire life cycle.

Graphic Explanations
In order to help developers and residents better understand the various green energy features in Rosa Parks Apartments, Daniel Splaingard designed the diagram above to explain how each of the various systems function. It aims to help residents gain a broader understanding of environmental sustainability within the context of their daily lives, as well as an appreciation for the value of their building.
Community Partnerships

Long Term Commitment
Bickerdike Redevelopment Corporation has a long and close relationship with the community of Humboldt Park, where they have fought neighborhood deterioration by building affordable housing since 1967. Because Bickerdike owns and manages all its properties, they are invested in the long term success of their buildings.

Community Input
From the earliest stages, Bickerdike met and collaborated with both neighborhood stakeholders and community organizations like BEEP (Building Employment and Entrepreneurial Partnerships) and the Chicago Avenue Task force. Their input helped guide key design decisions and enabled Bickerdike to better address local needs such as job training and employment, as well as ensure that key operational issues such as maintenance and resident use were considered in the design.

Leadership Training
In an effort to create “resident green leaders” at Rosa Parks, Bickerdike partnered with Landon Bone Baker Architects to create airLab, a six-week program that trained local youth in sustainable design and environmental issues. Participants designed and built devices to measure indoor air quality and energy consumption, and studied how the building impacted both the health of its residents and the environment.

Construction as Economic Development:
A key part of Bickerdike’s approach to revitalizing West Humboldt Park was not only building quality affordable housing for 94 families in need, but also using the process to engage with locals and provide job opportunities to address the larger challenge of socioeconomic revitalization. The Rosa Parks Apartments were built entirely by Bickerdike’s subsidiary, Humboldt Construction, which enabled Bickerdike to employ over 100 local residents and create over 50 permanent jobs. In addition, the construction process used multiple local subcontractors and utilized locally sourced materials, both of which pumped money back into the local economy. Bickerdike essentially transformed the construction process into a tool for economic development.

Management and Support:
Bickerdike not only oversaw Rosa Parks from conception to occupancy, it also owns and manages the property, which allows Bickerdike to ensure the building performs to its maximum potential and remains quality affordable housing for many years to come, thus continuing to strengthen the community and work towards long term neighborhood revitalization in West Humboldt Park.
ROSA PARKS APARTMENTS | WEST HUMBOLDT PARK, CHICAGO IL

ADDITIONAL PHOTOS

Images from mosaic project in progress

Images of completed buildings

Residents help install and finish mosaic
Funding Sources and Structure:

- Total Cost: $27.2 million (includes acquisition)
- Total Construction Cost: $23.8 million
- Cost per square foot: $183
- Cost per unit: $253,000
- Total Units: 94
- Total Grant amounts: $15.5 million
- Green Building Certifications: LEED Gold + Chicago Green
- Building location: 541 N. Homan St. Chicago, IL 60624
- Contact Info:
  Bickerdike Redevelopment Corporation
  773.278.5669
  information@bickerdike.org

Building Credits
Architect: Landone Bone Baker
Project Team: Peter Landon FAIA
Developer: Bickerdike Redevelopment Corporation
Contractor: Humboldt Construction
Additional Design Firms Employed:
  J.T. Katrakis & Associates, Inc. (MEP)
  Lehman Design Consultants, Inc. (MEP)
  GFGR, Inc. (Structural)
  Prism Engineering, Inc. (Civil)
  McKay Landscape Architects

Case Study Credits
Page 1: Photo: ©Andreas Larsson
Page 2: Median household income map- data source 2007-2011 American Community Survey via www.richblockspoorblocks.com
  Lower map of vacant lots- Googlemaps
Page 3: Site plan diagram- Landon Bone Baker Architects
  Photos: ©Andreas Larsson
Page 4: Diagram- Daniel Splaingard
Page 5: ©Bruce Damonte and Enterprise Community Partners
Page 6: Photos- Landon Bone Baker Architects
Page 7: Building plan- Landon Bone Baker Architects, Photo ©Bruce Damonte

airLab website: http://airlab.landonbonebaker.com/
Enterprise Contact: 3 Cameron Street, Wellesly MA 02482 - 781.235.2006

Rose Fellow: Daniel Splaingard

Daniel was an integral member of Bickerdike’s team, assisting in its acclaimed, holistic approach to community development, and bridging the areas of project financing, design, construction, and property and asset management, as well as creating a model for an environmentally and socially sustainable single family home.

Daniel helped bridge the gap between design and development and has demonstrated his ability to expand the role of a traditional architect.

“This opportunity has enabled me to see and feel what it’s like to work really intimately in one group of neighborhoods, and to see the effect of projects over time, and the impact that stabilizing rental housing can have on people’s lives. My work at Bickerdike has made me appreciate the full life cycle of a building and all the people that have to participate for it to be successful, architecture and design are really only the first step.”