LUCHA was founded in 1982 by residents of Chicago’s Humboldt Park, West Town and Logan Square neighborhoods to combat displacement and preserve affordable housing in the community. Since its founding, LUCHA has helped more than 68,000 low-to-moderate income families rent affordable housing, obtain Section 8 rental assistance, purchase good homes, improve dilapidated buildings, obtain adequate insurance coverage, make their home more accessible or more energy efficient, and beautify their neighborhoods.
As part of its work to mitigate such gentrification dynamics, LUCHA began to conceptualize and pursue a new affordable housing development - Tierra Linda - in 2014. A $16.6 Million project, Tierra Linda will offer 43 units over 10 sites in three-flat, six-flat, and townhome configurations for residents earning 50% or less of area median income, the majority of whom will be Latino and African American. Tierra Linda will follow Energy Star, Indoor airPlus, and Enterprise Green Communities standards; thus the project will feature natural lighting, cost-efficient energy and building control systems, and improved indoor air quality. One of the six-flat Tierra Linda configurations will also be constructed as a passive building by: (1) Employing continuous insulation through the entire envelope without thermal bridging; (2) Using balanced heat- and moisture-recovery ventilation; and (3) Exploiting/minimizing solar gain. LUCHA conducted a comprehensive outreach campaign which introduced the Tierra Linda concept to and vetted the concept with the community, which led to a large amount of public support for Tierra Linda directly expressed to several Aldermen at various community forums and events.

LUCHA’s long-term goals for Tierra Linda are for it to be shovel ready by early 2016, receive its certificate of occupancy by March 2017, and complete its lease-up by November 2017. Short-term (and current mission-critical) goals include: Conducting community health/wellness outreach and program planning, finalizing design and construction scope, and finalizing financing of Tierra Linda project. However there are a number of challenges LUCHA must address if meeting these goals are going to be a reality. For example, LUCHA is only in the beginning stages of fleshing out the “increased health and wellness” outcomes it can expect; thus the organization must work to build a network of external partners who specialize in this area. State and local budget cuts have also impacted LUCHA’s Tierra Linda financing plan, so LUCHA must develop a strategy to ensure that the project stays on time and properly financed.
Typical 3-flat landscape plan (top-left), 6-flat plan (bottom).