RECLAIMING SOUTHWEST CHICAGO

USING CAPITAL FUNDS TO REBUILD A NEIGHBORHOOD: CHICAGO LAWN
Creating Affordable Homes, Safe Streets, and Good Schools

Location: Chicago Lawn neighborhood, Chicago, IL

Build Illinois Bond Program (BIBP) Impact: $900,000 in state capital budget funds were leveraged into over $15 million worth of investment in Chicago Lawn – a neighborhood swamped by 11,000 foreclosures after the 2008 financial crisis. This investment transformed over 75 vacant buildings back into rehabbed, occupied housing on the tax rolls, created over 100 affordable homes and apartments, decreased crime by over 60% and significantly improved the quality of local schools. State capital budget funds were used to catalyze an effort to create affordable homes, safe streets, and good schools in an area struggling with vacancy and disinvestment.

Project Description: Reclaiming Southwest Chicago is a strategic, community-led effort to reclaim a neighborhood hard hit by the financial crisis. Instead of giving up, giving in, or moving away, the neighborhood residents of Chicago Lawn banded together through the Southwest Organizing Project (SWOP) and partnered with Brinshore Development and with other people of good will from across Cook County (through United Power for Action and Justice) to strategically reclaim their community. They helped 650 families save their homes from foreclosure. They strategically acquired and rehabbed vacant buildings turning them back into decent homes and apartments. And they worked together to improve local schools and public safety.

Over the past five years, the people of SWOP and United Power have started to recreate a community of safe streets, good schools, and affordable homes:

- In an initial target area where 93 vacant properties existed, 85 have been rehabbed/reoccupied (only 8 properties remain vacant).
- In that initial target area, crime is down by over 60%
- Local schools are dramatically improved
- Property values have doubled
- Over 100 affordable homes have been created


Project Funds: BIBP, City of Chicago CDBG Funds, Illinois AG National Foreclosure Settlement Funds, LIHTC Equity, NSP Funds, and private lending

Capital dollars can be used to rebuild urban, suburban and rural communities and to rebuild our state so that every family can find a neighborhood with affordable homes, safe streets, and good schools.

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