

CITY REPORT

# Awards reflect more than brick and mortar

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Neighborhood development doesn't mean what it used to. For one thing, efforts to build and improve communities aren't always reflected just in brick and mortar.

"A decade ago, people focused on housing and housing development, still a core activity. But the extent of their activities is much broader," said Andrew Mooney, senior program director at Local Initiatives Support Corp./Chicago, which since the early 1990s has sponsored the Chicago Neighborhood Development Awards to recognize developers, lenders and community groups that have put their mark Chicago's neighborhoods.

More than 1,300 people attended the awards ceremony last week at the the Sheraton Chicago Hotel & Towers, up from 1,200 last year and about 400 in the early years, Mooney said in an interview. Not only is the number of community developers growing, but the role of those neighborhood builders is expanding, Mooney said.

The scope of work performed by eight winners, selected from 31 applications by 48 volunteer judges, reflected the changes in neighborhood housing development.

Bethel New Life won a \$15,000 award for Non-Profit Neighborhood Development Group of the Year for work that began with the development of more than 1,000 units of affordable housing in the West Garfield Park and Austin neighborhoods.

"They have also built a day-care center, an adults center, an arts and cultural center, run a home subsidiary where people visit the elderly in their homes, [and] have an employment center that works with residents in the neighborhood to help them train for and find jobs," Mooney said.

In May, Bethel will open a formerly vacant commercial building that was rehabbed to provide a day-care center where working parents can drop off and pick up their children en route to work via the nearby CTA Green Line station at Lake Street and Pulaski Road. A bridge will link the building, which will also have an employment service agency and five retailers, to the "L" platform.

"[Bethel is] a national model, with a diversity of services that connect issues once viewed as different but now recognized as one package. It's not just development, not just a job, not just transportation, but how they all integrate on a daily basis," said Peter Skosey, of the Chicago Metropolitan Planning Commission, a judge who spoke by phone before the event.

A \$10,000 Non-Profit Community Building award went to North Side Community Federal Credit Union, founded by seven women in 1974 to provide small loans for low-income and immigrant families in Lakeview, Uptown, Edgewater and Rogers Park who otherwise were turning to payday lenders and currency exchanges.

"North Side works creatively with immigrants who never had a banking relationship and teaches financial literacy to low-income people who normally can't build wealth because their financing needs are too high, they lack benefit of good financial guidance, and make bad financial decisions," said Calvin Holmes of the Chicago Community Loan Fund, another awards judge. "Financial literacy helps people to leverage themselves out of poverty."

The credit union has extended more than \$23 million in affordable credit to those seeking loans, mortgages and start-up funds for business.

A \$15,000 Outstanding Non-Profit Real Estate Developer award went to St. Bernard Housing Development Corp., a non-profit development arm of St. Bernard Hospital, for the \$15.9 million construction of Bernard Place in Englewood, on four blocks along Harvard and Yale Avenues between 64th and 66th Streets. Vacant since the 1970s and the site of drug, gang and prostitution dealings, a portion of the site is already visibly renewed with more than 50 homes and 12 two-flats, the first of more than 100 units to be built at Bernard Place and being sold to mixed-income home buyers.

"The hospital didn't secure a lot of financing, so it took on relatively high risk, [and] had to come up with a lot of self-financing [from benefactors] to keep it going," said Greg Sills a real estate consultant and judge for the event.

St. Bernard Place is being built on land donated by the Religious Hospitallers of St. Joseph, an order of nuns that formed St. Bernard Hospital 100 years ago and that formed the development subsidiary with an \$800,000 grant.

Holsten Real Estate Development Corp. and Kenard Corp. received a non-cash Outstanding For-Profit Neighborhood Real Estate Project award for development of North Town Village, and were credited by judges as being the first to take on the financing, construction and administration of a mixed-income neighborhood on a former public housing site.

Award presenters described North Town Village, built on a portion of the Cabrini-Green public housing site, as a national model for public housing transformation projects.

Richard H. Driehaus Foundation Awards for Architectural Excellence in Community Design went to:

McCollum & Noel Architects, which won a first-place, \$15,000 award for architectural excellence in community design, for its Children's Place at Vision House, 515 E. 50th St., a project sponsored by Interfaith Housing Development Corp. of Chicago;

Booth Hansen Architects, which won the second-place, \$3,000 Driehaus award for design of the Homan Square Community Center, 3517-59 W. Arthington St., sponsored by Homan Square Community Center Foundation/Chicago Park District; and

Architects at the Chicago Park District, who won the third-place, \$3,000 award for transforming early 20th

Century horse sheds earmarked for demolition, into the garden and arts-oriented Garfield Market at 300 N. Central Park Ave.

Mayor Daley received the event's Friends of the Neighborhood award.

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