

Profile: Growing Home-Wood St. Farm

PRI Tour-May 11, 2010

Organization Overview

Growing Home provides job training for homeless and low-income individuals in Chicago through a social enterprise business based on organic agriculture. The program provides experiential learning opportunities and employment in the horticulture field as well as a unique job readiness curriculum that helps reintroduces participants back into the workforce. It is Chicago's first permanent, year-round urban farm, meaning that growing can occur in hoop-houses throughout the winter.

Participants work through a curriculum that focuses on skills such as planting, cultivating, and harvesting organically, and also food and nutrition education, and basic life skills, including personal money management. In addition, they learn marketing and sales skills and have the chance to practice them when they take their turn working at our booths at the Green City Market and Englewood Farmer's Market, as well as our farm stand at the Wood Street Urban Farm

Social Benefits

Economic development: Program participants work at Growing Home's farms and food stands, learning job readiness, farming, marketing and sales skills. The farm is helping to revitalize Englewood by creating jobs, providing healthy produce and helping to encourage economic growth, particularly in the area of food vendors.

Public health: Provides fresh produce to multiple vendors in the Englewood community, an area that has been traditionally underserved by grocery stores, and categorized as food desert.

Environmental sustainability: Only produces USDA Certified organic produce, and performed a limited restoration of a former industrial site. Recycled products were used in construction of building, and there are plans to further expand the building's sustainable capacity.

CCLF's Role

In 2009, CCLF provided a \$250,000 mini-permanent mortgage to Growing Home for the completion of its Wood Street Urban Farm. The loan also allowed Growing Home to maintain essential reserves so that it could continue to be a successful and stable organization. CCLF worked closely with Growing Home to ensure the loan's success after other lenders voiced concerns over a high-loan to value rate and environmental remediation of the site.

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