PROJECT DESCRIPTION:
The Blue Hills Business Center is the corporate office for Blue Hills Community Center and the Blue Hills Contractor Incubator, and offers community space for public forms, neighborhood groups and service organizations. The business center was previously a vacant building and brownfield site. Blue Hills Community Services led the renovation efforts and the site is now a multi-tenant, state-of-the-art, energy-efficient office building.

The building is LEED Gold and Energy Star ® certified and includes the following amenities: occupancy light sensing controls; 6,500 gallon rain barrel; and electrical vehicle charging stations. Construction included low-VOC sealants and paint, roofing that reduces the urban heat island effect, recycled and environmentally friendly construction materials, and solar panels.

Event, training and meeting space seats 36 people in a classroom setting and 70 people in a theater setting. In addition to the event space, the Blue Hills Business Center offers community gardening space, with 34 raised beds and 25 fruit trees and bushes. Produce from the garden is harvested and used by local residents and food pantries.

PROJECT GOALS:
- Provide business and trade specific training, in a structure built by small construction contractors.
- Create a property that benefits the community and has a community garden with fresh produce for local residents.
- Use sustainable practices to renovate a dilapidated structure and reuse more than 80 percent of the existing structure.
- Provide new offices for Blue Hills Community Services.
- Transform the aesthetics of the Prospect corridor.

COMMUNITY BENEFITS AND LESSONS LEARNED:
The Blue Hills Business Center offers a computer kiosk with three computers and Internet access for job seekers. The property includes community gardening space and community meeting space. This facility also supports the Blue Hills Contractor Incubator — a program to help small construction contractors expand their business and hire skills workers in the urban core.

Throughout the renovation process, Blue Hills Community Services learned about the need to train small construction contractors, especially on projects tied to federal funds. Design considerations for green development differ from designs for traditional construction, requiring Blue Hills Community Services to innovate.

FUNDING SOURCES AND PARTNERSHIPS:
Property renovation and development was financed through government and philanthropic sources. The largest source of financing was provided by Kansas City’s EnergyWorks KC program with funding through the U.S. Department of Energy as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The project also received funding from Greater Kansas City LISC, the Sunderland Foundation, Hall Family Foundation, Marion and Henry Bloch Foundation, the Capital Federal Foundation, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the city of Kansas City, Mo. Crucial community partners included the Green Impact Zone, Blue Hills Neighborhood Association, Town Fork Creek Neighborhood Association, Kansas City Community Gardens, the Giving Grove, Greater Kansas City LISC/NeighborhoodsNOW initiative and the Urban Neighborhood Initiative.

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