



**PULLMAN**

A Design for  
Community  
Development  
and Impact







What does it take to bring a neighborhood, long written off by planners, politicians, and pundits, back to health and vitality? Is it even possible?

We at Chicago Neighborhood Initiatives — from our varied experience in planning, organizing and finance — fervently believe it is possible. Working together with partners in Chicago's Pullman

neighborhood, we have tangible confirmation of our beliefs.

Here, after a decade of planning, partnership, and hard work, we see vacant homes restored and affordable to renters and owners alike, and vacant land transformed into needed industries, stores, restaurants and other amenities, all sites for nearly 2,000 jobs filled mostly by those who live in the community.

Pullman is often seen as exceptional; it need not be. While the efforts of residents and elected officials are exceptional, the building blocks of transformation are not. From our experience, the elements for success include:

An **asset-based perspective** that focuses and builds on a community's assets, including things often considered problems such as vacant land, abandoned buildings and even high unemployment numbers, as well as organizational strength, engaged residents and potential anchors for growth.

A commitment to **community-driven development plans** that reflect—and thus have the buy-in of—the community and its elected and organizational leaders, whose efforts are needed for success.

A comprehensive approach to redevelopment that understands the essential importance and interplay of an array of **housing** options, robust **business development** (jobs and services) and **amenities** (schools, parks, recreational facilities, restaurants and more) that are found in vital, sustainable communities.

Finally, an approach that sees the work not as alleviating poverty but helping to create wealth for individuals, families, businesses, and the community alike.

While the context and specifics vary, we hope that the following pages convey our experience of how these building blocks create a strong foundation for comprehensive, inclusive community renewal.

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David Doig, President

Rev. Merlon Jackson Jr., Board Chair





# PULLMAN

A DECADE-LONG EFFORT  
OF COMMUNITY RENEWAL

When Chicago Neighborhood Initiatives (CNI) came to Chicago's Pullman community in the early 2000s, the neighborhood was a study in contrasts. In one area there were beautifully preserved homes and churches; in another, vast swaths of empty brownfields and structures once occupied by steel mills and other industries.

While many pundits and politicians had written off Pullman as just another casualty in a changing global economy, CNI saw it differently. Along with local community leaders, CNI saw great potential in the attributes that others often were blind to — an unparalleled location where the nation's rail, roads and waterways connect; vast tracts of contiguous, available land; well-designed and well-built homes; and a broad grass-roots leadership committed and passionate about revitalizing Pullman. The only question was where to begin.

The answer came from CNI's community planning process. After more than 80 meetings, enthusiastic and engaged participants from all walks of life arrived at a four-pronged strategy built on the foundation of the community's assets: (1) attracting businesses that would provide needed jobs, goods, and services; (2) investment in housing — old and new; (3) strengthening institutions — civic, educational and more; and (4) building on the neighborhood's history as a cornerstone of the labor and civil rights movements to make the community and neighboring areas an attractive local, city, regional and national destination.

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## Economic Development

Pullman was once a working town with jobs, services, and goods close at hand, led by a diverse group of community organizations, elected leaders, and visionary businesspeople. That potent mix once again has become a hallmark of the neighborhood.



It started with the transformation of the 180-acre long-abandoned Ryerson Steel site into Pullman Park, a robust multi-tenanted retail hub. Opening in 2014, Pullman Park is anchored by the nation's first union-built Walmart, which was joined by Ross Dress for Less, Advocate Urgent Care Clinic and Planet Fitness – bringing the community 700 new jobs, the first fresh food in decades and new bus lines to ensure access for the entire neighborhood.

The success of Pullman Park generated demand for other amenities and jobs and the opening of 111th St. Gateway Retail Center boasting the city's first Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois “Blue Door” facility. National eateries like Potbelly joined a food hall for local entrepreneurs including Lexington Betty Smokehouse, which in 2022 expanded to fill the entire space with a full-service restaurant.

In the fall of 2021, the community celebrated the opening of a long-wished-for stand-alone, sit-down restaurant. Baron Waller, a Black entrepreneur originally from Chicago's Lawndale neighborhood, located a Culver's with delicious food and 70 new jobs immediately adjacent to Pullman Park.

With Pullman's compelling history and unique location, which makes it the only place in the nation from which you can reach both oceans and the entire south and north American continents by road, rail, water, and air, building for today's industry was a natural. In 2014, the first exciting company to come was Method Home Products with its first-ever U.S. production facility. The stunning \$30 million, 150,000-square-foot facility was soon joined by New York-based Gotham Greens. Atop the Method structure, the company built the nation's largest commercial rooftop greenhouse, using the heat, water, and steam from Method's processing to nurture the wonderful leafy greens grown there.

For both companies, Pullman became a place for growth and development. In 2019, to keep up with increased demand in Illinois and throughout the Midwest, Gotham Greens doubled-down on Pullman and opened a 105,000-square-foot, free-standing, state-of-the-art greenhouse, and distribution center. The expansion made it possible for Gotham Greens to

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deliver fresh produce to restaurants and stores throughout the year. In 2021, Method, now a subsidiary of SC Johnson, added a new 400,000-square-foot distribution center, bringing an additional 100 jobs to the community.

While being the perfect place for young companies, Pullman has also proved to be the ideal place for two of the nation's best-known names.

In 2018, Whole Foods relocated from Indiana with the company's 150,000-square-foot Midwest Distribution Center, immediately to the west of Pullman Park. And in 2020, Pullman was the site of Amazon's first Chicago Distribution Center, building a 40-acre facility, bringing more than 200 jobs and the area's first company to rely solely on electric-powered vehicles.

Over the last few years 1.5 million square-feet of new space has been created by projects spearheaded by CNI, which in turn have attracted new residents while increasing the income and available amenities for the entire community.

CNI's commitment and resources have turned \$132 million of its own coordinated investment, including over \$125 million from U.S. Bank, into more than \$500 million of additional public and private investments that have created nearly 2,000 new jobs.

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## Affordable Housing

Through CNI's partnership with the City of Chicago, and the State of Illinois, more than 40 homes have been renovated for sale at rates affordable to the Pullman community.

Complementing these opportunities for homeownership, CNI began to expand affordable rental options as well.

On the north end of Pullman, Mercy Housing has invested more than \$15 million in the once-troubled Wheelworks building making the 210-apartment complex a safe and attractive place to live.





Farther south, CNI partnered with Artspace and PullmanArts to create Pullman Artspace Lofts, an award-winning development offering 38 affordable live/work units for artists, exhibition space and ample community space.

## A Place to Live, Learn, and Play

A community where families stay for generations, Pullman always had strong schools, which over recent years have gained even greater prominence. While family income levels may be lower than the city average, Pullman's public schools, such as Edgar Allen Poe Elementary School and Gwendolyn Brooks College Prep, are among the city's and the state's top performing schools. In 2017, student academic performance at Poe earned the school the first National Blue Ribbon Award for a public elementary school on Chicago's South side.

While the schools flourished, housing options expanded and jobs grew, there remained few places for recreation, for children or adults. With no park or field house in any city budget, local nonprofit Roseland Youth Center raised millions of private dollars to remedy that lack, with CNI and partners providing financing to make the project a reality. And in late 2018, the neighborhood celebrated the opening of the Pullman Community Center (PCC), a 135,000-square-foot facility, with eight multi-purpose indoor courts and fields for basketball, soccer, and baseball as well as spaces for afterschool tutoring and community gatherings. The largest indoor sports and recreation facility in Chicago and its suburbs, prior to the pandemic, and now, once again, the Center is used by young and older residents alike.

During its first year of operation, more than 100,000 youth and adults participated in PCC activities. And, in less than a year, \$7 million in college athletic scholarships were awarded to local students — numbers that are now being replicated as the pandemic restrictions are removed.

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## The National Monument (or the Jewel in the Crown)

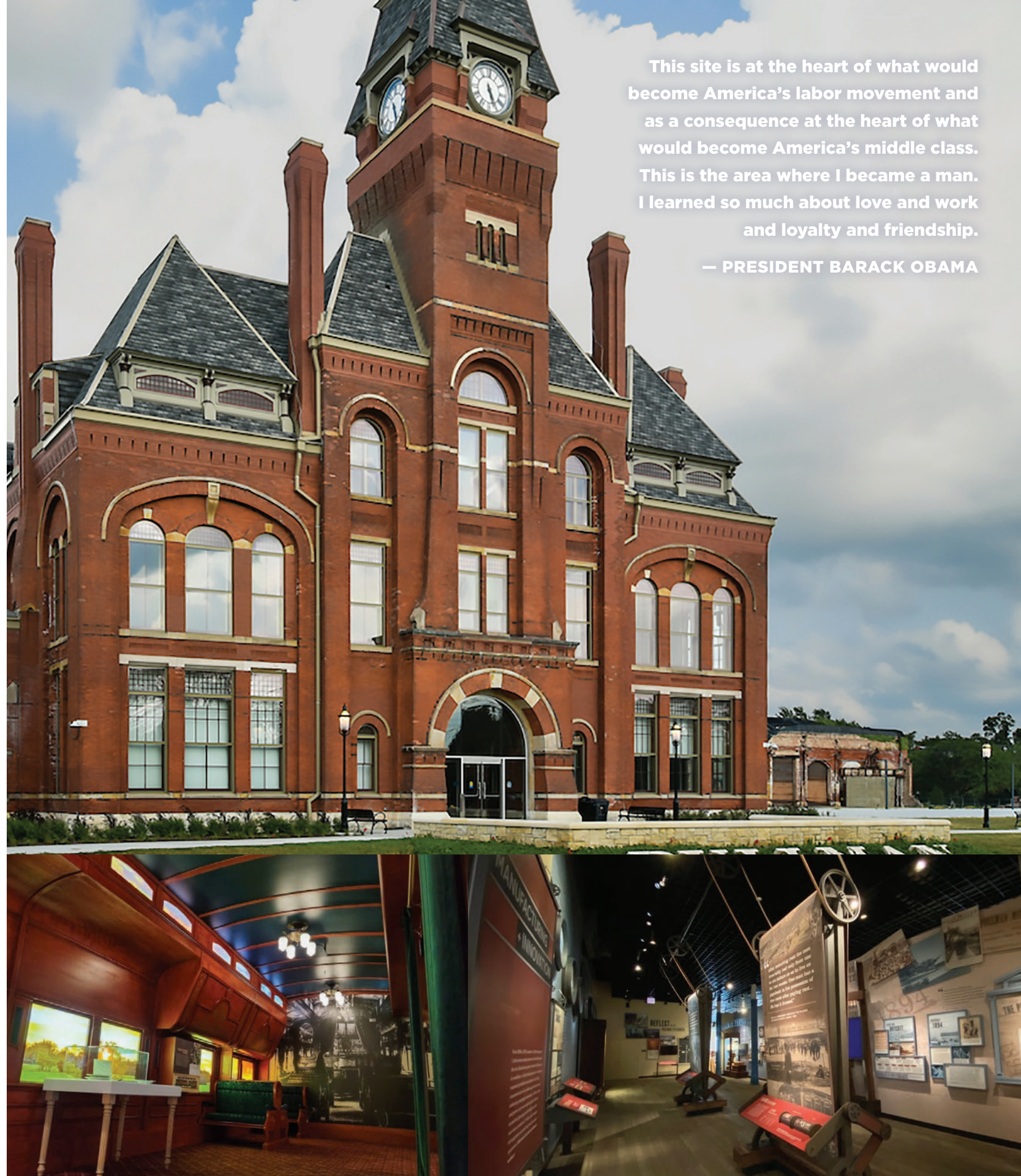
During Labor Day weekend 2021, federal, state, and local officials were on hand to celebrate the opening of the Pullman National Monument, a building and park commemorating the nation's first planned industrial community and telling the story of the battles that made Pullman the birthplace of the modern-day labor and civil rights movements.

More than 10,000 individuals participated in the opening ceremonies for the Pullman National Monument, which over time is expected to attract more than 300,000 visitors each year. All of this is testament to the vision and tenacity of the people of Pullman. While planners and politicians counseled that the Pullman Clock Tower, Administration Building, and surrounding structures should be demolished, the community disagreed. And, through the efforts of the Historic Pullman Foundation, PullmanArts and dozens of block clubs and businesses, President Barack Obama signed the Executive Order on Feb. 15, 2015 declaring the Pullman Clock Tower, Administration Building, and 12-acre historic district a National Monument — Chicago's only National Park Service site.

"The new Visitor Center is the entryway to Pullman's rich history and encourages them to explore the community and visit other local historic sites, including the National A. Philip Randolph Pullman Porter Museum, the historic rowhomes and more," said Teri Gage, Superintendent of the Pullman National Monument.

"Thanks to our private and public partners and members of the community, we've created a place where people of all ages, skills and interests can come together to learn, have fun, and prepare for the future in a safe place," said 9th Ward Alderman Anthony Beale.

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**This site is at the heart of what would become America's labor movement and as a consequence at the heart of what would become America's middle class. This is the area where I became a man. I learned so much about love and work and loyalty and friendship.**

**— PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA**







## A MEASURABLE IMPACT

The impact of CNI's efforts can be measured by looking at what has been produced in terms of generating investments, creating new developments and other opportunities that have improved the quality of life.

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### CREATED

- Nearly 300 new units of single- and multi-family affordable housing
- Over 1.5 million square feet of commercial, industrial, and recreational space
- Nearly 2,000 jobs



### INCREASED

- Number of college graduates by 21% between 2016 and 2020
- Average median income by 21% between 2016 and 2020 (\$42,516 v \$53,302)
- Median sale price of all types of homes by 50% since 2020 (Redfin)



### DECREASED

- Number of people living in poverty by nearly one-third from 2010 to 2020
- Unemployment rate by more than 40% between 2012 and 2020
- Number of vacant housing units nearly 35% from 2016 to 2020







# BEYOND PULLMAN

In Pullman, CNI created a model – comprehensive community development, with simultaneous efforts in housing, economic development, and civic amenities. It is a strategy CNI, in partnership with other grassroots organizations and community leaders, is using to support and accelerate needed development farther north along Chicago's lakefront, and on the West Side.

## Far South Communities

Expanding to nearby neighborhoods, CNI is working with the relatively new Far South Collaborative, which brings together 13 communities, including Roseland, Altgeld Gardens, Calumet Heights, Cottage Grove Heights, Fernwood, Golden Gates, London Towne, Morgan Park, Pullman, Roseland Heights, Rosemoor, Washington Heights, and West Pullman.

For more than a year, with the support of Local Initiatives Support Corporation Chicago, the Collaborative has engaged in an asset-based comprehensive planning process, building on the transportation infrastructure, singular history, natural resources, ready workforce, and well-organized community infrastructure. The Collaborative's goals include creating greater individual and community wealth by increasing home and local business ownership; improving community health by building on and enhancing the area's natural and built assets including the forest preserves, parks, prairie trails and cultural gems like the Pullman National Monument. The Collaborative is focusing on an array of transformative projects:

- Roseland Medical District Redevelopment Plan building on the foundation of Roseland Hospital
- Kensington Park (Roseland) new housing development

## Bronzeville

To the north, CNI is working in Bronzeville, where redevelopment has been underway for more than a decade, including redevelopment of public housing, an influx of new homeowners, renters, businesses, and amenities, including Mariano's, the first full-service grocery store in the community in more than half a century.





Today, building on the community's lakefront location, rich cultural history, and buildable land, CNI is part of GRIT, the development entity working on an exciting adaptive reuse of the 48-acre footprint of the former Michael Reese Hospital and Medical Center.

Working together as GRIT, Farpoint Development, Loop Capital Management, Draper & Kramer, McLaurin Development, Chicago Neighborhood Initiatives, and the Bronzeville Community Development Partnership will create Bronzeville Lakefront, a live/work community anchored by a world-class biomedical research facility, with housing, retail, and office space, a 10-acre park and other open spaces.

The first phase of the \$3.8 billion development includes a 300,000-square-foot Chicago Arc Innovation Building that will house the research facility, a 200-unit senior residential building; a 2-acre park; and the restoration of the historic Singer Pavilion, the only remaining building from the original hospital complex and widely recognized as an architectural treasure.

## North Lawndale and Austin

On Chicago's West Side, CNI has expanded its presence in the Lawndale and Austin communities, working with respected local organizations. In Lawndale, CNI has worked for many years with Lawndale Christian Health Center (LCHC) to create and expand a "medical corridor" along Ogden Boulevard that now includes a medical center, a senior center, and a farm that provides fresh vegetables to the community year-round. Now, working with LCHC, the Southwest Organizing Project, The Resurrection Project, and United Power for Action and Justice, CNI is working to increase the population of North Lawndale and help build individual and community wealth by creating new for-sale homes on 1,000 vacant lots in North Lawndale, and nearby communities.

And in North Austin, CNI is building on its experience and partnering with Grace and Peace Church and By The Hand Club For Kids to develop the new 140,000-square-foot North Austin Community Center (NACC) on land purchased by the local nonprofits from the City. Like the Pullman Community

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Center, when it opens in late fall 2022, the NACC will offer year-round recreational and educational programs, including after school activities and mentorship opportunities for hundreds of students. It will feature regulation-size indoor soccer fields, a fitness center, outdoor playing fields, classrooms, multipurpose spaces, and more.

To help develop other high-impact community projects in Pullman and beyond, CNI drew New Market Tax Credits (NMTC) from its “toolbox.” Using \$80 million in NMTC it had been awarded, CNI has also developed the University of Chicago Hospital Trauma Center; Ray and Joan Kroc Salvation Army Center in West Pullman; the Roseland Community Hospital; Noble Charter School Network; the Lawndale Christian Health and Fitness Center and Medical Corridor; the WINGS Metro Domestic Violence Shelter; and the Pullman Whole Foods Midwest Distribution Center. CNI also provided source debt to the Pullman Community Center NMTC transaction.

## A Complementary Lender



Complementing CNI’s development work is its financing subsidiary, the CNI Micro Finance Group, now renamed Greenwood Archer Capital (GAC) to recognize and honor the intersection in Tulsa known as Black Wall Street. A certified CDFI offering microloans up to \$100,000 for established and startup businesses, GAC has deployed almost \$18 million in debt capital to fuel the growth of more than 160 minority-owned small businesses in under-resourced and disinvested neighborhoods throughout Chicagoland. In fact, 82% of the loans made have been to Black entrepreneurs. And its been leveling the playing field for women by making 49% of its loans to women business owners.

In keeping with that spirit and building on its record of deploying capital, GAC recently added equity investments to the products offered to small businesses. Through its innovative new lending initiative, “Your Forte, Our Finance,” GAC is offering 100% financing and low-interest rate loans of up to \$200,000 for small and Black-owned businesses seeking to purchase commercial real estate.



CNI's commitment and achievements in the Pullman community were recognized when it was presented with several prestigious awards:

- | The John Baird Award for Stewardship in Historic Preservation in 2015 for the restoration of Pullman's historic rowhomes.
- | The Chicago Community Trust Award for Outstanding Community Strategy in 2015
- | The Burnham Award for Excellence in Planning from the Metropolitan Planning Council in 2016
- | The Neighborhood Housing Services of Chicago's Gale Cincotta Community Impact Award in 2019
- | The Chicago Innovation Neighborhood Award in 2019
- | The 2020 Developer of the Year Award from "Illinois Real Estate Journal"
- | The 2021 Richard H. Driehaus Foundation Preservation Award from Landmarks Illinois for Pullman Artspace Lofts
- | The Multifamily and Affordable Housing Development Awards in 2021 from "Illinois Real Estate Journal" for Pullman Artspace Lofts



## Toward the Future

With past as prologue, we look forward to a future of continued collaboration with all who see not just the challenges, but rather see the possibilities in all that surrounds us. We hope you will join us in creating the future as an essential part of our nation's continuing story.







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