

Inner-City Commercial District Revitalization: The Power of Partnerships

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Speaker Bios

Mary Nelson, Ph.D., was the founding president and CEO of Bethel New Life Inc., where she worked for 27 years. Bethel is a nationally recognized faith-based community development corporation focused on its low-income, African-American, west-side Chicago community. Under her leadership, the organization's annual budget grew from \$9,600 to more than \$13 million, with almost 350 employees. More importantly, Bethel has been a pioneering leader in building a sustainable community based on the strengths and capacities of people in places that others had written off as "ghetto." Under Nelson's leadership, Bethel developed 1,200 units of affordable housing; pioneered an energy-efficient, transit-related development (TOD); brought jobs and businesses into the community, thus developing a model community; and operated housing and community-based services. Nelson is retired from Bethel and now serves on various national boards. She is also a faculty member of Loyola University's (Chicago) master's program in social justice and community development.

Matthew Bourgeois is the director of Cincinnati's Clifton Heights Community Urban Redevelopment Corporation (CHCURC), established as a partnership between Clifton Heights Business Association, CUF Neighborhood Association and the University of Cincinnati. This partnership is dedicated to the revitalization of the Clifton Heights Neighborhood and is undertaking a number of redevelopment projects that seek to promote homeownership, revitalize the local retail market and create a pedestrian-friendly business district. The first project opened in 2005, adding 751 beds to the student housing market. The project also provided 37,000 square feet of ground-level retail, including Panera Bread, Buffalo Wild Wings and Fifth Third Bank. The business district includes Old Town District, Calhoun Street Marketplace and an entertainment district.

