



Institute of Cultural Affairs

Impact at a Glance

- **23% net building energy reduction** from baseline
- **39.8% reduction of carbon emissions** in 2022 compared to 2010 (data via ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager)
- **Building emits 29% less GHGs** than national median
- Goal of **carbon free by 2035**

Building Stats

- **Year Built:** 1921
- **Neighborhood:** Uptown
- **Architect:** Fugard and Knapp (1921), B. Leo Steif and Company (1926)
- **Use:** Mixed residential and nonprofit
- **Square Footage:** 166,000

The Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) GreenRise is the Chicago Carbon-Free Demonstration Building for cutting-edge urban sustainability in the Uptown community. ICA GreenRise was built in 1921, then known as the Mutual Insurance Building. Volunteers, residents, and staff have been committed to establishing and implementing environmentally sustainable elements into the building. GreenRise houses two residential intentional living communities providing affordable housing options to eco-conscious individuals and families. ICA is the largest non-profit, social service center in the Midwest.

ICA joined Retrofit Chicago in 2013 and achieved the 20% energy reduction target in 2016.

Spotlight on Energy Efficiency Investments



- Roof retrofits and façade repairs
- Rooftop solar installation that provides 25% of building's electricity
- Window replacements and lobby renovation
- Boiler, HVAC, lighting, and plumbing modernization

Beyond Retrofit Chicago

Following their success with Retrofit Chicago, ICA participated in the Neighborhood Power Project, a program of Illinois Green Alliance, Elevate, and the Environmental Defense Fund, that implements building retrofits for nonprofits and community organizations. Using grant funding from the program, ICA installed thermostatic valves on their radiators.



The Institute of Cultural Affairs has been a longtime advocate for sustainability, making this a priority in their intentional living communities through composting initiatives, building decarbonization, and more that engage the greater Uptown community.

ICA was founded in 1973 with the mission of promoting a just and equitable society by catalyzing sustainable communities and demonstrating sustainable practices to reverse the negative human impact on the planet. Central to their impact is the GreenRise building in Uptown which serves as both one of the largest social services hubs in the Midwest and as a demonstration center for carbon reduction in the built environment.

The GreenRise has always had big ambitions when it came to ideas on sustainability but had to manage the challenges that come with a building built in 1921. ICA worked with multiple outside agencies including Elevate, Illinois Green Alliance, Cyclone Energy, dbHMS, and Farr Associates to come up with a master plan for the building. Through this collaboration, ICA was able to create a roadmap that addressed necessary repairs while planning for highly aspirational items like onsite renewable energy and a target for carbon free by 2035.

ICA had to be strategic with financing green projects. They were able to utilize funding sources creatively to minimize cost. Utility incentives and private funding were integral to acquiring certain retrofits within the desired timeline. A lesson to draw from ICA GreenRise is the importance of having a prioritized master plan and the agility to take advantage of opportunities if and when they appear.

About Retrofit Chicago

The Retrofit Chicago Energy Challenge encourages, promotes, and celebrates voluntary energy efficiency leadership. Together, participating building owners, facility managers, engineers, and policymakers are demonstrating that energy efficiency is a winning proposition for Chicago's real estate industry as well as the environment.



The Key to Success

for The Institute of Cultural Affairs

“ Sustainability starts with people. **Collaboration is essential for change.**”

Lesley Showers

Executive Director,
Institute of Cultural Affairs



ICA's capital stack for the first phase of their ongoing project included PACE financing, historical tax credits, grants, and much more.