



Background

Located in the South Austin neighborhood of Chicago, Illinois, the building was originally home to the Francis Scott Key Public School. Built in 1907, the building was designed by Dwight Perkins when he was the chief architect of the Chicago Public Schools.

The Key School originally served 300 students in kindergarten through 8th grade. As the neighborhood desegregated at the end of the 1960s, enrollment increased to nearly 800. The school remained overcrowded for decades, with the teachers' lounge and several closets used as classrooms at one point.

Through the early 2000s, the school district added several charter schools and other educational options to the area and the school's enrollment began to drop. Within a decade, the school's enrollment had been declined by half. In May of 2013, the Chicago Board of Education announced that it was closing 49 of its schools, the largest single wave of closings in the history of the United States.

Using "low enrollment" as the primary determining factor, the district flagged nearly half the schools in the system as under-capacity, including the Key School. The school closed in 2013 and has remained vacant since. Now, the doors will open once again to serve students of the South Austin neighborhood.

THE PROJECT

Once complete in 2023, the former Key School annex building will become the new, larger home of The Field School, an independent elementary school founded in 2017 to prioritize the educational needs of low-income students on the west side of Chicago. The Field School uses a distinctive pedagogical approach that is academically rigorous and holistic, with a strong emphasis on arts programming, family engagement, and community revitalization.

The Field School currently operates out of a rented church space in the Oak Park neighborhood and serves more than 150 students in kindergarten through 5th grade. It is, however, projected to run out of room to grow by the end of 2022. To



Total Development Cost:
\$4.7 Million



NTCIC Financing:
\$3.25 Million NMTC Allocation -
Irvin Henderson Main Street
Revitalization Fund



Project Partner:
The Field School



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provide the space needed for the school to operate and expand, the Field School purchased the historic Key School buildings. The initial phase of rehabilitation will reactivate the North annex building, enabling the Field School to increase student enrollment up to 400.

Purchasing and revitalizing the vacant school buildings will allow the Field School to move from the more affluent Oak Park neighborhood into the Austin neighborhood of Chicago's Westside, where the need for quality and accessible elementary school education is great.

Economic and Community Impact

The Field School is currently operating out of rented church space that can serve a maximum of 150 students in kindergarten through 5th grade. By relocating to the new building, the school will be able to increase enrollment by up to **240 students**. Once the second phase of the project is complete, it will have space to support **400 students**.

Additionally, the Field School supports a mission to support diversity and to serve students who would not otherwise have strong educational options. The school wants to give those students a "home-field advantage." The current student cohort predominantly lives in and around the Austin neighborhood and by relocating to the new location, students will have much easier access to their education.

Every year, at least half of the School's seats are reserved for families from low-income homes (meaning they either qualify for free or reduced-price lunch or Section 8 housing assistance). This school year, 25% of the students at the School come from extremely low-income families earning less than \$30,000 a year. The School's goal with the expansion is to increase the extremely low-income student population to thirty percent (30%) or greater.

NTCIC's New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) investment will reduce the fundraising burden on the school. It will also help prevent significant delays in completing the rehabilitation, allowing the Field School to move to its new home and begin increasing enrollment. The project will create an estimated 55 construction and permanent jobs and retain 15 existing positions.

The **\$4.7 million** project was made possible in part by **\$3.25 million** in NMTC allocation provided by NTCIC's Irvin Henderson Main Street Revitalization Fund. Additional project financing also included over **\$1 million** in fundraising efforts from the Field School.