The idea to create permanent supportive housing for youth experiencing homelessness in Minneapolis and combine it with support services was a good one. With tremendous collaboration among city and county officials and other entities, the Downtown View Apartments and YouthLink Facility now share a space that provides both housing for youth ages 18-24 as well as the support and education they need to transition into independent adulthood. Another good idea came when administration decided to build energy efficiency into the property. The effort earned them Xcel Energy and CenterPoint Energy rebates, long term energy savings and the icing on the cake: the Xcel Energy High-Performance Building Award.

**Two buildings, one mission**

The property included two entities, two buildings, an addition and a renovation. The existing YouthLink offices and youth drop-in center needed an upgrade and more space to serve its 2,000 clients each year. Right next door and adjacent to that property would be the new construction of Downtown View Apartments, a housing wing for youth experiencing homeless ages 18-24. Operated by Project for Pride in Living (PPL), Downtown View is the first-ever affordable housing for youth of that age in the downtown core. It consists of 46 studio and four-bedroom units and other amenities such as a community kitchen, career center, social lounge, fitness center and bike storage area. These two non-profit organizations operate separately, but are unified in their mission to provide housing and supportive services in tandem.

“The goal is to create a unified campus,” explains Dr. Heather Huseby, Executive Director of YouthLink. “In a single day, a client can work on their GED, visit the Career Pathways Center to talk about their future, learn how to shop for and cook meals, get a checkup, and even work out in the fitness area.”

---

**Case Study**

**YouthLink Facility and Downtown View Apartments**

**Collaborating for youth and saving energy throughout**

At PPL, we do affordable housing development, so we’ve worked with Xcel Energy’s EDA program on a number of buildings. Energy efficiency is a great idea. It just makes more sense to invest in high quality systems.

Abbie Loosen, Senior Project Manager, PPL/Downtown View

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project snapshot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xcel Energy and CenterPoint rebates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated annual energy cost savings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payback term</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Both projects strengthen the youth community and surrounding neighborhood,” explains Abbie Loosen, Senior Project Manager, PPL/Downtown View. “We wanted an open and welcoming space where people can come for help, advice, and the support they need to transition into successful, independent living.”

Energy savings from the start
Project teams worked with Xcel Energy’s Energy Design Assistance program to build energy efficiency into the project from the ground up. The program provides energy modeling to identify all the energy efficient opportunities to consider – from lighting to insulation to heating and cooling equipment – along with equipment costs, payback terms and available rebates. The program helps them determine the best ways to save energy and money over the life of the equipment.

The most significant energy savers include a Variable Refrigerant Flow (VRF) mechanical system, a highly efficient technology that’s relatively new to the United States, which garnered half of the overall project savings. Other big savers included a heat recovery system, LED lighting, and highly efficient windows. They also implemented daylighting, lighting controls, continuous exterior insulation, storm water tanks, and a solar array on the roof. And finally, they use occupancy sensors to control the office equipment, which is a new and unique feature for office spaces.

The energy-saving measures will cut their overall energy use a whopping 41 percent compared to a building that meets code. Xcel Energy and CenterPoint Energy rebates in the amount of $50,000 helped offset the cost of the new equipment and they’ll save an estimated $44,000 per year in energy costs, meaning about a five-year simple payback term.

“At PPL, we do affordable housing development, so we’ve worked with Xcel Energy’s EDA program on a number of buildings,” explains Loosen. “Energy efficiency is a great idea. It just makes more sense to invest in high quality systems.”

The measures helped them meet the national Enterprise Green Communities checklist and is designed to Energy Star standards. In addition, Xcel Energy awarded them the High-Performance Building Award at the Finance & Commerce Top Projects of 2018 awards ceremony.

Grand opening
Everyone loves the new buildings. It’s modern and open, with multi-colored walls and warm, welcoming gathering areas. Murals created by local artists dot the walls in several areas.

“It’s a really inviting environment,” says Dr. Huseby. “Most of our tenants are used to dark and ugly shelters. But when they come into YouthLink, it’s bright, vibrant and spacious. Everyone here is really proud of it.”

It took over 6 years of collaboration, problem solving, and fund raising to bring this project to fruition. And knowing they’ll improve their service to Minneapolis youth, while saving energy and money along the way, makes the project’s completion that much sweeter.