Fighting to Save Our Communities

How Community Land Trusts can help us take control of our buildings, neighborhoods, and futures
1. Identifying the Problem

New York City... Joel sees that his neighbor is really upset.

Hey Greg, what’s going on?

I just got evicted and now I'm homeless. Rent keeps going up, but my paycheck doesn't! The landlord doesn't care and he took me to court. Hey Greg, what's going on?

There's no hot water and I can't get in touch with the landlord! Then where will we go?

Let's have it in the evening. I have a full time job, so I can't go to a meeting before 6pm.

I can't reach them either. I think they want us out of the building. So they can build another big fancy condo...

There's no hot water and I can't get in touch with the landlord!

CLTs are like the safety net underneath working with the MHA to keep the housing and other parts of the neighborhood under resident control and affordable over the long term.

Things are changing fast around here. We’d better hurry up.

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That’s a great idea honey!

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Hey Greg, what's going on?

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1. Getting Organized and Exploring Alternatives

The neighbors meet in Ms. Lopez's apartment to talk about their goals for their building and neighborhood.

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3. Learning More and Making a Plan

The residents decide to use a survey to find out about their neighbors’ housing concerns. They also invite their neighbors to the next organizing meeting.

The residents expand their outreach to other buildings in their neighborhood, including low-income cooperatives.

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The residents meet with the Dept. of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) and public officials to present their ideas for a CLT/MHA.

The residents organize a BBQ for their neighbors to get more support.

Residents’ meetings are getting larger. They have taken what they learned from talking to their neighbors to create a report. They plan to use the report to help make their case for a CLT and MHA. In the meantime, they aren’t waiting on a report to get organized!

CLTs involve more than just the people who live on CLT land, and include more than just housing. Gentrification affects everyone. If we, as local residents, can control and make decisions about land and housing in our community, we can keep our homes. At the next meeting we’re going to figure out how to make it work.
4. Key Questions and Next Steps

At the next residents’ meeting...

OK, this CLT and MHA thing sounds like a good idea, but we’ve got lots of questions.

Members of the MHA and CLT each vote to elect a Board of Directors*, which make decisions on behalf of members, and with their input.

But how can this be good for renters, shareholders in co-op buildings*, and homeless people?

Who will be in charge? How are decisions made?

Gentrification affects everyone. Many of our buildings and community members are in trouble – but together we’ll be stronger. The CLT/MHA will help us share resources and make decisions together about our neighborhood. But it only works if the land is collectively owned and at least some buildings are under resident control and keep the housing and other parts of the neighborhood in their neighborhoods, and get their neighbors involved. We can use our research to come up with a plan to make the city work.

If we’re going to fight to stay here, we’ve got to think big. We need to keep organizing meetings and public events to expand the coalition and build support. Remember, CLTs are not just about housing. There are so many ways you can shape your neighborhood. We’ve got to think big.

NYCCLI can also put you in touch with a legal organization that can help you with this.

NYCCLI is an organizer at the Land Initiative (NYCCLI), one of many member groups of the Co-op Empowerment Network (CEN). We’ve got one member group that is organizing to fight gentrification*

But how can this be good for renters, shareholders in co-op buildings*, and homeless people?

Who will take care of the building management?

If you’re going to manage and pay for the land and pay for all of this, we’d better get organized. How do we go about becoming a nonprofit organization?

The CLT board is responsible for making sure that the housing remains affordable for its members over the long term. The buildings in a CLT have a housing model that can involve financial support from the government, rent from commercial and higher income tenants, smart management, and ongoing protection and support from the CLT.

The buildings on a CLT have a mix of affordable, middle income, and market rate units. There are decisions about how to use the profits from the buildings.

We can dream our way to a future where our neighbors own and manage their housing, with the CLT and MHA working with the MHA to keep the housing affordable for us. We can dream our way to a future where our neighbors own and manage their housing, with the CLT and MHA working with the MHA to keep the housing affordable for us.

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I’d love to have a group of friends where we can play with my kids and have a safe place to live in.

CLTs are like the safety net underneath, managing buildings  away from bad landlords. We should try to get into charge? How do we get control of the building?
**Community Land Trusts (CLTs)**

**COMMUNITY LAND TRUSTS (CLTs) ARE NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS THAT TREAT LAND AS A PUBLIC GOOD.**

CLTs can work with NON-PROFIT, COOPERATIVE HOUSING models to:
- Keep rents low and to create and maintain homes not shelters.

CLTs can preserve and develop GOOD COMMUNITY SPACES like parks, gardens, and public centers.

CLTs can promote ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND JUSTICE by:
- Cleaning up toxic sites and fixing properties in poor shape.
- Requiring the use of environmentally sound materials and fair distribution of waste and resources.

CLTs can support JOBS AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE by:
- Making affordable space available to small businesses and non-profits.
- Requiring businesses and development projects to hire locally and pay a living wage.

CLTs can support DEVELOPMENT WITHOUT DISPLACEMENT by:
- Working closely with community members and prioritizing community needs when making decisions.

Want to learn more about how to organize a CLT in your Community?
Check out the other side to learn how to get started! You can also visit NYCCLI.org.
Glossary

*Gentrification*: A process in which lower-income neighborhoods, often of color, are transformed by the influx of higher-income people, often white. Gentrification typically results in displacement of lower-income residents and small businesses, leads to privatization or loss of public and community spaces, and changes the overall physical and economic character of the neighborhood.

*Community Land Trust (CLT)*: A non-profit organization that obtains and holds land in trust (out of the speculative real estate market) on behalf of a community. CLTs separate ownership of the land from the structures on top of it, which may be owned and used by organizations, businesses and individuals in ways that benefit the community.

*Mutual Housing Association (MHA)*: A non-profit, community-based organization that owns and manages housing. MHA housing is meant to be permanently affordable and democratically governed by low- and very low-income renters or homeowners, and to support community organizing on an ongoing basis.

*Board of Directors*: A group of elected individuals who are collectively empowered to make major decisions for a corporation (either for-profit or non-profit), within the guidelines established by the corporation’s bylaws (aka rules).

*Co-op (Cooperative) Building*: A building owned by a democratically governed corporation, in which residents vote on a governing board of directors, own shares, have the right to live in a unit within the building, and pay monthly maintenance charges for shared expenses.

*Outside Management*: Arrangement in which building maintenance, repairs, bookkeeping, etc. are taken care of by a paid individual or corporation.

*Resident Self-Management*: Arrangement in which most or all maintenance, repairs, bookkeeping, etc. are taken care of by the building’s residents.

*Non-profit Organization*: A tax-exempt corporation that is mission-driven and uses its income to achieve its goals, rather than for financial gain.

*Tax Credit*: A reduction in taxes, for example, that NYC offers to property developers in exchange for creating “affordable” housing units.

NYC Community Land Initiative

The NYC Community Land Initiative fights to preserve the right of low-income people to live in the city by supporting Community Land Trusts and other community-led housing and neighborhood development. We believe that land is a common good and that housing is a human right. Housing should be for people, not profit. Decision-making about land and housing should include all community members, and prioritize people with extremely low incomes, who are homeless or otherwise in dire need of housing and not served by the private market. NYCCLI provides technical support and engages in research, popular education, grassroots organizing, and advocacy.

To get involved contact us at info.nyccli@gmail.com

This poster was produced by NYCCLI members: New Economy Project and Picture the Homeless.

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For more information visit: NYCCCLI.org