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 says that his neighbor is really upset.

Hey Greg, what’s going on?

I feel just excited 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.

There’s no hot water and I can’t get in touch with the building.

I can’t reach him either. I think he wants us out of the building.

I’m building another big fancy condo...

What are we going to do?

I have a full-time job, so I can’t go to a meeting before 8pm.

We should have a meeting with our neighbors to let them know about it.

Let’s have it in the evening.

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

There’s no extra space around here. We need to let everybody know about it.

2. Getting Organized and Exploring Alternatives

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

I’m an organizer at Picture the Homeless, one of many member groups of the New York City Community Land Trust (NYCLT). We fight for the right of low-income people to live in NYC.

If you want in control of your building, what would you change?

I would make sure that everyone who lives here could afford to stay here.

What was that about democracy? And what does it have to do with a CLT?

A CLT owns and manages land, while a mututal housing association, or MHA, owns and manages housing.

A CLT can own multiple buildings and help residents work together to manage their housing with some outside help.

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

We can do a lot of what we want, but how do we get control of the building and our neighborhood?

We can do a lot of what we want, but how do we get control of the building and our neighborhood?

The city has programs that talk buildings away from bad landlords. We should try to convince the city to give us these buildings. They are also city-owned buildings and vacant properties that we should look into.

Organizing groups have also used our ways to find out what’s really going on in their neighborhoods, and get their neighbors involved. We can use our research to come up with a plan to make the city work on us. If we have enough buildings and if we’re organized.
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.

I've lived in the building for two years and I still can't use my oven.

Many of the neighbors have had similar problems, we just spoke to Ms. Ortiz another calling has been looking for three months.

Hey there, what changes would you like to see around here?

How can we fix up that store front? We're a small building, we don't have the money to make repairs.

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

The commercial space downtown has been empty forever. If we had a business in there, we could use their rent to fix our boiler. Maybe we could get a grocery store.

This sounds like a good idea, but how much neighborhood support do you have?

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

Just yourself aren't we.

We've surveyed our neighbors and done our research, we know what the problems are and we have ideas about how to deal with them.

The residents organize a list of the neighbors to get more support.

I work with the community garden coalition and we’re constantly struggling to get any city control over land. Could we be apart of the CLT?

What are you doing to do?

We’re organizing a Community Land Trust. A CLT? That will never work!

The community land trust movement is not collaborative. We’re organizing a Community Land Trust.

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.

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.

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

At the next resident meeting...

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

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 organize to form a large-scale MHA.

OK, let’s get started! How and decisions works?

But how can this good for renters, slow dividers in camp buildings, and homeless people?

I knew this one! There are a few options that the MHA board can vote on, including...

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

CLT Board

NYCCLT can put you in touch with organizations that can help with this.

NYCCLT

What makes the rent different from all other so-called affordable housing projects?

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

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

I knew this one! There are a few options that the MHA board can vote on, including...

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

NYCCLT can put you in touch with organizations that can help with this.

NYCCLT

What makes the rent different from all other so-called affordable housing projects?

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

NYCCLT can put you in touch with organizations that can help with this.

NYCCLT

What makes the rent different from all other so-called affordable housing projects?

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

NYCCLT can put you in touch with organizations that can help with this.

NYCCLT

What makes the rent different from all other so-called affordable housing projects?

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

NYCCLT can put you in touch with organizations that can help with this.

NYCCLT

What makes the rent different from all other so-called affordable housing projects?

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

NYCCLT can put you in touch with organizations that can help with this.

NYCCLT

What makes the rent different from all other so-called affordable housing projects?

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

NYCCLT can put you in touch with organizations that can help with this.

NYCCLT

What makes the rent different from all other so-called affordable housing projects?

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

NYCCLT can put you in touch with organizations that can help with this.

NYCCLT

What makes the rent different from all other so-called affordable housing projects?

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

NYCCLT can put you in touch with organizations that can help with this.

NYCCLT

What makes the rent different from all other so-called affordable housing projects?

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

NYCCLT can put you in touch with organizations that can help with this.

NYCCLT

What makes the rent different from all other so-called affordable housing projects?

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

NYCCLT can put you in touch with organizations that can help with this.

NYCCLT

What makes the rent different from all other so-called affordable housing projects?

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

NYCCLT can put you in touch with organizations that can help with this.

NYCCLT

What makes the rent different from all other so-called affordable housing projects?

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

NYCCLT can put you in touch with organizations that can help with this.

NYCCLT

What makes the rent different from all other so-called affordable housing projects?

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

NYCCLT can put you in touch with organizations that can help with this.

NYCCLT

What makes the rent different from all other so-called affordable housing projects?

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

NYCCLT can put you in touch with organizations that can help with this.

NYCCLT

What makes the rent different from all other so-called affordable housing projects?
Worried about Gentrification? Want to be part of a Community Land Trust?

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

Community Land Trusts (CLTs) support **DEVELOPMENT WITHOUT DISPLACEMENT** by:
- Working closely with community members and prioritizing community needs when making decisions.
- CLTs can preserve and develop **GOOD COMMUNITY SPACES** like: Parks, gardens, and public centers.
- CLTs can work with **NON-PROFIT, COOPERATIVE HOUSING** models to: Keep rents low and to create and maintain homes not shelters.
- 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 on the CLT to hire locally and pay a living wage.

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 NYCLL.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 or appointed 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.

*Government Tax Incentives: A reduction or elimination of taxes by the government in exchange for the creation of a public good, such as affordable housing.

NYC Community Land Initiative

The NYC Community Land Initiative (NYCCLI) 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.org

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

Designer: Emilio Martinez

Contributors: Members of NYCCLI Education and Outreach Committee including Althea, Arvernetta, Dave, Hillary, Jeff, José, Kendall, Marcus, Monica, Ryan and Scott.

For more information visit: NYCCCLI.org