Community Land Trusts in the United States
A quick overview

John Emmeus Davis
Center for CLT Innovation
Terra Nostra Press
www.cltweb.org

WHAT are key features of the CLT?
WHERE did CLTs come from?
WHY are they growing?

[Hint: Successful CLTs receive both community support and municipal support]

What do we mean by “community land trust”?
“Community-led development on community-owned land of homes (and other assets) that remain permanently affordable”

Community Land Trust
“community-led development”
“community-owned land”
“permanently affordable housing”
New Communities, Inc., 1969
*A nonprofit organization to hold land in perpetual trust for the permanent use of rural communities.*

"The idea behind New Communities was to take civil rights one step further into economic independence and economic rights..."

Mtamanika Youngblood

CLT Precursors: Outside the US

Moshavim in Israel

Garden Cities in England
- Letchworth (1903)
- Welwyn (1920)

Gramdan Villages in India

Moshavim in Israel

Ejidos in Mexico

Canberra, Australia

CLT Precursors: Inside the US

Agricultural cooperatives
- Federation of Southern Cooperatives
- Southern Tenant Farmers Union

New Deal towns
- Greenhills OH
- Greenbelt MD
- Greendale WI
- Norris TN

Alternative communities on leased land
- School of Living, Suffern NY
- Bryn Gweled PA
- Fairhope AL
- Arden DE

"The President in Washington sends word that he wishes to buy our land. But how can you buy or sell the sky? The land? The idea is strange to us."

Chief Seattle (S’AHL) (1780-1866)
COMMUNITY LAND TRUSTS: Who Owns What?

- Nonprofit corporation owns parcels of land scattered across the service area
- Homeowners, cooperatives, nonprofit organizations, or private businesses own buildings on the CLT’s land

Dual Ownership

- Ground lease ties building & land together
- Lease is long-term (99 yrs)
- Lease is mortgageable
- Lease is inheritable
Single-family houses, condominiums, rental housing, mobile home parks, shelters, etc.

Limited-equity cooperatives

Non-residential development

Why does a CLT hold onto the land?

Equitable development – community sets the rules for what happens on the land – and who is served.

Sustainable development – community ensures that any development continues to benefit local residents for a long time.

Sustainability requires watchful, durable “Stewardship” Care of land and housing entrusted to CLT

• Preserve affordability – ensure access to land and housing for low-income and moderate-income people

• Preserve quality – keep buildings in good repair; promote durability and energy efficiency

• Protect security of tenure – keep people in their homes, in good times and bad
“We are the developer that doesn’t go away”
Connie Chavez, Former Executive Director
Sawmill Community Land Trust

ORGANIZATION
The “C” in CLT

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Leaseholders:
• Homeowners
• Renters
• Co-op members
• Farmers & gardeners
• Businesses or nonprofits occupying lands and spaces owned/managed by the CLT

Residents:
• Neighboring homeowners & renters
• Nonprofit organizations
• Religious institutions
• Local businesses

Residents (located within a CLT’s service area):
• Seat(s) for government reps
• Seat(s) for nonprofit allies
• Seat(s) for professionals with skills or affiliations that will benefit the CLT

Public interest representatives:
Public interest representatives

Leaseholders

Residents

ORGANIZATION
The “C” in CLT

Organizational Versatility:
Some CLTs are grafted onto another NGO

Corporate subsidiary or internal program

Spin-off

Conversion

“Classic” Community Land Trust

Key to CLT Growth

Community support

Municipal support

COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR CLTs IN HOT MARKETS

• Prevent displacement of workforce and promote diversity in affluent, homogenous enclaves.
• Promote homeownership for the “missing middle”

COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR CLTs IN COLD MARKETS

DEVELOPMENT WITHOUT DISPLACEMENT
Keeping the “C” in CLT

- Governing the CLT
- Organizing power and solidarity within the neighborhood (or city)
- Building community among people using/occupying the CLT’s lands
- Involving proximate neighbors in designing/planning projects

Why do CLTs partner with cities?

- Money from city, state & federal programs
- Tax abatements
- Up-zoning
- Parking waivers & other regulatory incentives
- Vacant lots, abandoned buildings & surplus land “banked” by the city

Why do cities partner with CLTs?

- Housing extracted by inclusionary zoning
- Vacant lots, abandoned buildings & surplus land “banked” by the city

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