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CLTs GAINING GROUND in NYC

PRATT
CENTER
FOR
COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT

**Policies to
Sustain and
Scale the Growth
of Community
Land Trusts**

Acknowledgments

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New Economy Project's mission is to build an economy that works for all, based on cooperation, equity, social and racial justice, and ecological sustainability. We pursue lasting, transformational change by supporting cooperative and community-controlled development, and by challenging corporations that harm communities and perpetuate inequality and poverty. We believe a world is possible in which all people live in safe, healthy, thriving communities, and that fundamental change is needed to achieve that world.

The Pratt Center for Community Development works for a more just, equitable, and sustainable city for all New Yorkers by empowering communities to plan for and realize their futures. As part of Pratt Institute, we leverage professional skills such as participatory planning, applied research and public policy advocacy to work on the ground with community-based organizations to challenge systemic inequities and advance sustainable development.



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Executive Summary

Overview

New York City has seen Community Land Trusts (CLTs) emerge across the city as a strategy to combat land speculation and displacement of tenants, community organizations, and small businesses. The City has begun to implement policies to support this model as a result of community organizing and advocacy, yet most local CLTs are still advocating for land and securing mission-aligned financing remains a challenge. This report takes stock of growth of CLTs developing across the city, and examines policies that address current challenges to truly scaling and sustaining CLTs citywide.



CLT organizers and elected officials speak out in support of the Community Land Act, prior to a hearing on the proposed legislation in February 2023. Credit: New York City Council



Community members and organizers play Trustville, a board game developed by NYCCLI, in which players collectively decide how to develop a vacant lot to best meet community needs. Credit: NYCCLI

Recommendations

1. Enact legislation and develop plans to direct land to Community Land Trusts.

- A. Commit city-owned land to Community Land Trusts.
- B. Enact racially equitable property acquisition, debt collection, and land bank programs that work in collaboration with CLTs.
- C. Help CLTs acquire privately-owned apartment buildings by giving community organizations and tenants the right of first refusal.

2. Invest in CLT organizational development, housing, and City agency programs

- A. Deliver public funding for CLT organizational development and operations.
- B. Invest in HPD's CLT programs.
- C. Advocate for and commit financing to low-income housing development and operations to ensure deep affordability on CLTs.

3. Integrate CLTs into the City's housing, economic development, and land use plans

- A. Implement community-based, comprehensive citywide planning that incorporates community land stewardship.
- B. City housing plans should specify strategies and goals for making CLTs an affordable housing strategy.
- C. Expand opportunities for CLTs to maintain affordability and community stewardship for commercial, community, and open space.

The State of CLTs in NYC

Brief Definition & Local History

Community Land Trusts are democratic community organizations that take land off the speculative market and collectively steward it for affordable housing, community space, small businesses, or other local needs as defined by community members themselves. CLTs have deep roots in Black and Indigenous cultures and in modern U.S. history have been an important model for workers and tenants to build community wealth.¹ CLTs are found across a spectrum of housing movement ideologies and populations: some CLTs aim to provide opportunities for first-time homeownership for moderate-income people, while others focus on affordable rents for very low-income people.

CLTs maintain the mission of community land stewardship, and lease the land to housing cooperatives, other tenant-led

nonprofit housing organizations, or directly to low-income families.² In many cases, as in New York City, CLTs are subject to city land agreements and regulations as part of securing public financing. These multiple layers of public oversight and community control ensure that land is never sold for profit, housing is permanently affordable, public subsidy is maximized and safeguarded, and that its uses remain aligned with community needs and values through resident-led governance. Absent these safeguards, other affordable housing cooperatives in New York City have, in the past, abandoned their missions of affordability to benefit individual shareholders in the face of inadequate public resources.³ Today's CLTs draw on both the successes and lessons learned from the city's more than century long history of cooperative housing and tenant organizing.



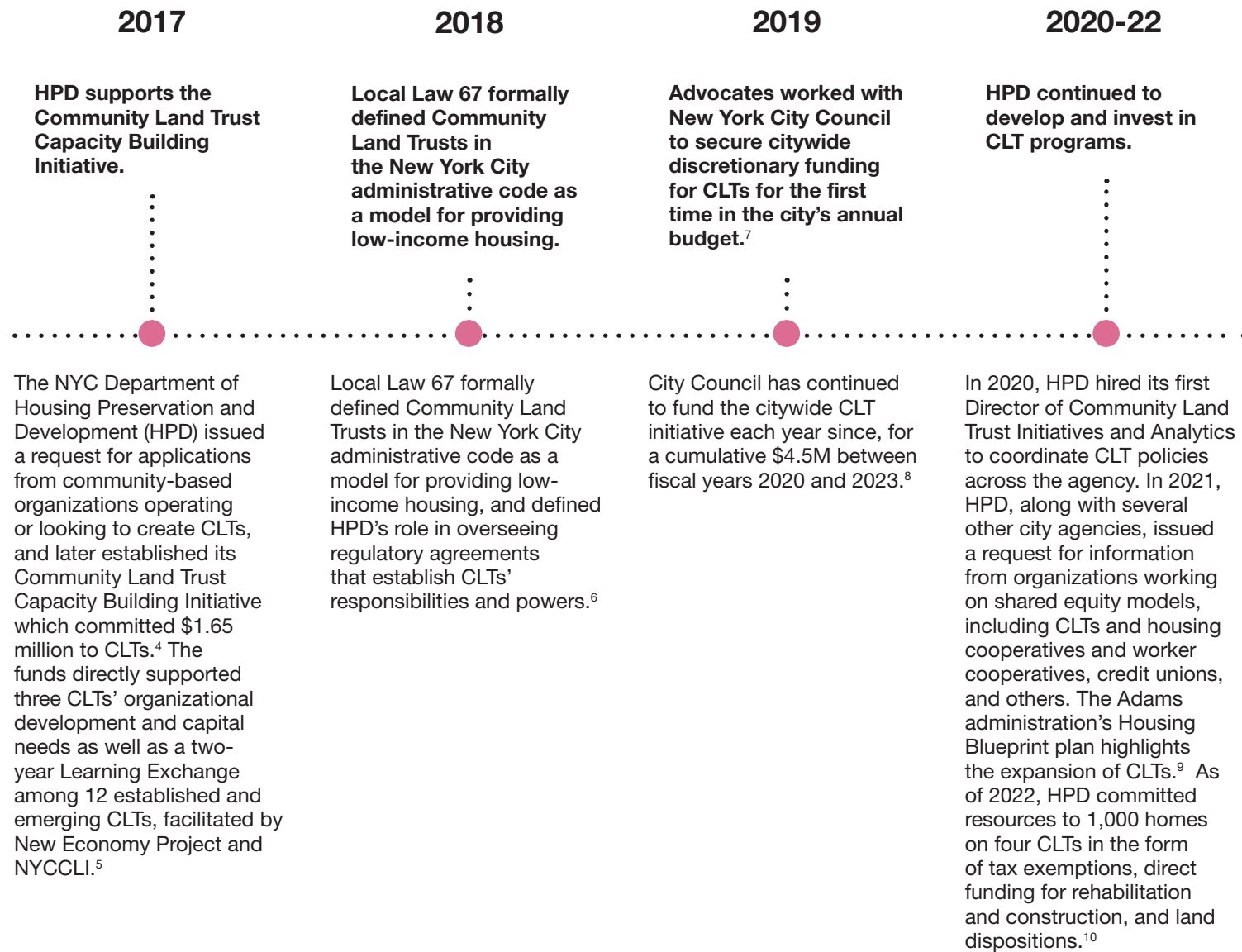
(Top) CLT organizers and City Council members rally at City Hall in April 2022, calling for increased funding and policy support for NYC's growing CLT movement. (Bottom) CLT Learning Exchange participants attend a 2018 workshop about CLT structure and governance. Credit: NYCCLI

Over the past fifteen years, New York City’s CLT movement has grown significantly. Amidst the city’s growing housing affordability and homelessness crises, several grassroots movements coalesced around CLTs. Tenants and unhoused New Yorkers—spearheaded by Picture the Homeless in its organizing around evictions, shelters, and the need for permanent affordable housing—began looking at CLTs as a solution to the underlying problem of housing speculation in the mid 2000s. Around that time, community-based organizations and advocacy groups including New Economy Project were exploring CLTs as a strategy to prevent foreclosures and stabilize housing in Black and brown neighborhoods in the wake of the subprime mortgage crisis. Neighborhood rezonings and sales of city-owned land under Mayor Bloomberg (and later, de Blasio) further spurred interest in CLTs as grassroots groups stepped up organizing around land-use decision-

making and alternative models of community control. These groups teamed up, alongside housing scholars and nonprofit mutual housing developers, to launch the New York City Community Land Initiative (NYCCLI, pronounced “nicely”) in 2013. Today the coalition is anchored by New Economy Project and includes dozens of CLTs and advocates from across the city leading campaigns for community controlled land and housing.

After years of coordinated advocacy and organizing, New York City has slowly begun to enact policies to facilitate the development of Community Land Trusts and integrate CLTs into its housing program.

CLT Policy Milestones



NYCCLI’s Brooklyn Town Hall drew 80+ participants to learn about CLTs and the Community Land Act, in February 2023. Credit: NYCCLI



NYCCLI members rally at City Hall in May 2019, calling on the City Council to fund CLT organizing through the citywide CLT initiative. Credit: NYCCLI

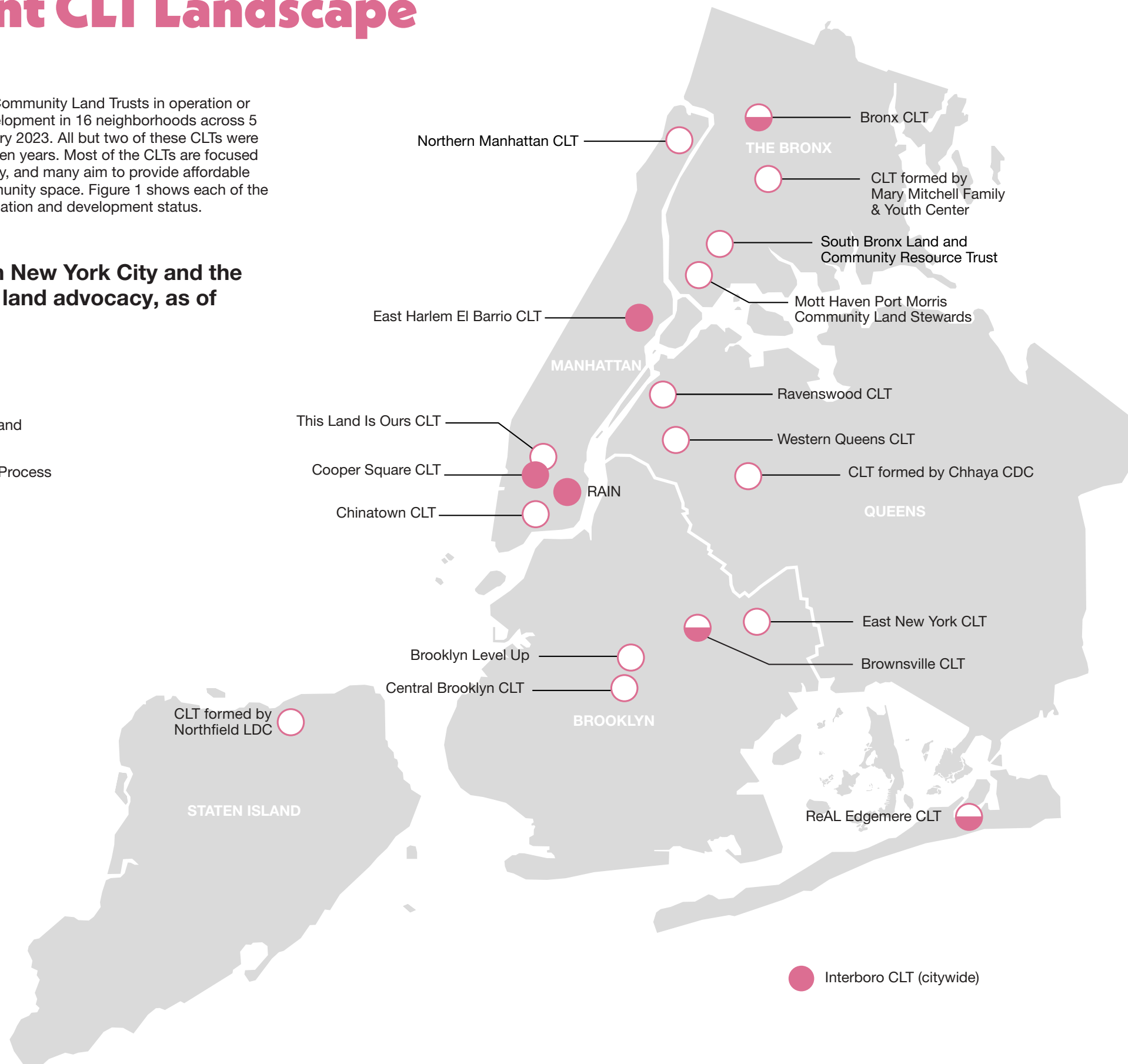
“Expanding CLTs requires a long-term, citywide plan, including policies to create a pipeline of land for CLTs and strategically integrating CLTs into affordable housing plans and land use planning with a racial justice framework.”

Current CLT Landscape

There are at least 20 Community Land Trusts in operation or various stages of development in 16 neighborhoods across 5 boroughs, as of January 2023. All but two of these CLTs were organized in the past ten years. Most of the CLTs are focused on housing affordability, and many aim to provide affordable commercial and community space. Figure 1 shows each of the city's current CLTs' location and development status.

Figure 1
Map of CLTs in New York City and the status of their land advocacy, as of March 2023.¹¹

- Advocating for Land
- ◐ Land Transfer in Process
- Has Land



4

CLTs with land

3

CLTs in process of land transfer

13

CLTs advocating for land

Four of the 20 CLTs in the city currently have land, with plans to commit city-owned land to three more. Cooper Square CLT, the city's longest-running CLT, stewards formerly city-owned land containing: 23 buildings with over 360 deeply-affordable apartments and 22 commercial spaces, a 21-building Mutual Housing Association formed in 1991 through negotiations for community control of the city-owned land dating back to the 1961 urban renewal plan, and two more rent-stabilized buildings currently in HPD's transfer process.

The City's next commitment of land to a CLT wouldn't come for another 30 years with the transfer of four buildings to the East Harlem-El Barrio CLT in 2020. The CLT will be home to a Mutual Housing Association with 38 income-restricted homes and 3 commercial and community spaces. In 2022, the City announced plans to transfer 13 parcels previously owned by NYCHA to Interboro CLT, the city's only CLT with plans to serve all five boroughs. In 2021, HPD requested proposals to form a CLT in the Edgemere neighborhood of the Rockaways, which would include housing and open space on city-owned land included in the Edgemere Urban Renewal Area and more recently acquired by the City through Hurricane Sandy recovery buyback programs. This offers contrast to the City's approach to the neighboring sections of the Arverne Urban Renewal Area where land was sold to private developers and the resulting developments are not 100% nor permanently affordable. Brownsville CLT and Bronx CLT are also in the process of securing land through HPD.

Yet the City's approach to land acquisition and disposition still presents challenges to scaling CLTs and advancing racial and economic justice goals. These land and housing commitments were made individually as the result of community advocacy and moments of opportunity with particular housing programs or neighborhood plans—some made decades ago—and do not offer an easily replicable model. Expanding CLTs requires a long-term, citywide plan, including policies to create a pipeline of land for CLTs and strategically integrating CLTs into affordable housing plans and land use planning with a racial justice framework. These plans must be paired with adequate public funding for low-income housing development and operations to ensure deep affordability and accessibility.

CLT Case Studies



Rehabilitation of apartment buildings on the East Harlem-El Barrio CLT, 2021. Credit: East Harlem-El Barrio CLT

East Harlem-El Barrio CLT

The East Harlem-El Barrio Community Land Trust (EHEBCLT) was organized in 2014 to develop and preserve community-controlled, truly and permanently affordable housing for extremely-low and low-income people in the historic and gentrifying East Harlem-El Barrio neighborhood. EHEBCLT aims to create community, commercial, and green space that serves the community.

The CLT will be home to a tenant-led Mutual Housing Association consisting of 38 permanently affordable apartments, as well as three commercial and community spaces, across four rehabilitated buildings currently in the construction process. Of the 38 homes, 16 (42%) will be targeted to households earning 35% of NYC's Area Median Income (AMI), and the remainder will target residents earning up to 100% of AMI. Four apartments will be reserved for people experiencing homelessness.

Successes

- Secured funding through the City Council's CLT Initiative.
- Acquired city-owned land and housing (\$1 sale completed November 2020), as the first CLT in nearly 30 years since Cooper Square was organized to secure public land.
- Construction underway, through partnerships with experienced nonprofit developers, Banana Kelly and Community Assisted, Tenant Controlled Housing (CATCH).
- Organized a Mutual Housing Association and provides political education and training on tenant governance and housing management.

Challenges

- City contract payments were significantly delayed, disrupting CLT activities and requiring additional fundraising to maintain staffing.
- Years of advocacy to secure land commitments from the City, followed by a protracted land transfer process.
- Securing sufficient capital financing. The buildings transferred to the CLT saw years of significant underinvestment and neglect under negligent landlords then then City ownership, requiring costly rehabilitation on the part of the CLT. As a result, the CLT could not meet its original affordability targets. A reparative approach from the City would ensure not only that land is transferred to community-ownership in neighborhoods of color but also that sufficient financing is made available to address historic disinvestment.
- Housing resources and policies are not in full alignment with CLT focus population goals. Additional housing subsidies (such as Project-Based Section 8 vouchers) and policies that allow for local preference would help the CLT carry out its mission to prevent local displacement among very low-income people.

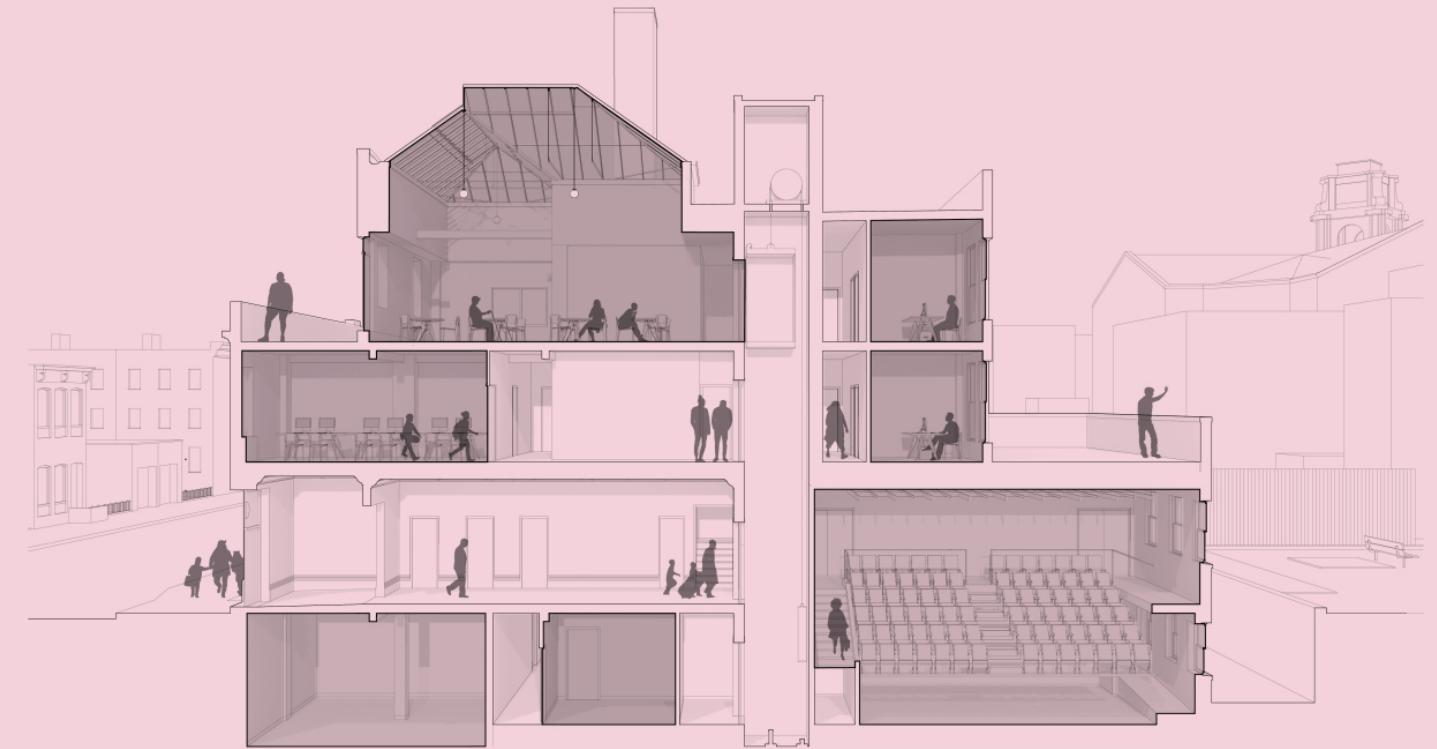
Mott Haven-Port Morris Community Land Stewards CLT



Credit: South Bronx Unite website

Mott Haven-Port Morris Community Land Stewards CLT was organized in 2014 by South Bronx Unite, residents, and community partners in response to the legacy of environmental and economic injustice in their community and newer threats of land speculation in the South Bronx. The CLT developed a community-based plan for collective stewardship and redevelopment of the former Lincoln Detox Center, which had been part of an under-resourced and negligent public hospital that

was famously reclaimed by the Black Panthers and Young Lords to deliver community-based healthcare services and subsequently left vacant and deteriorating. The CLT's plan would establish the H.E.Arts. Community Center for health, education, arts programming that would offer community meeting spaces, a culinary arts kitchen, classrooms, performance spaces, and offices for local organizations with deep roots in the South Bronx at risk of displacement.



South Bronx Unite and Mott Haven-Port Morris CLT's community-based adaptive re-use proposal to transform the abandoned, city-owned Lincoln Detox Center into a center for health (H), education (E) and the arts (ARTS) – H.E.ARTS.

Successes

- Completed an in-depth and participatory feasibility analysis for the redevelopment of the site, including an assessment of the existing building and surrounding conditions and design and financial plans developed through extensive community engagement and partnerships with architects, engineers, and community development consultants.
- Years-long advocacy of South Bronx Unite and the CLT helped lead the NYC Economic Development Corporation to release an RFP in fall 2022 for proposals to redevelop the site, which was closely aligned with the CLT's community-based feasibility analysis and plan, in contrast with NYC Health & Hospitals' initial proposals to redevelop the site for housing. Through a joint-partnership, the CLT responded to the RFP and as of March 2023 is in negotiations with EDC.
- Developed a community-based waterfront access and environmental justice plan for 7 different parcels on the South Bronx peninsula, which has begun implementation.

Challenges

- Acquiring public land, even vacant land, takes years of ongoing organizing and advocacy. City land disposition policies that integrate plans with and prioritize public land for community-based organizations including CLTs would expand community access to land.
- Identifying and securing financing that aligns with community plans and affordability goals, and ensures that the CLT will be sustainable and not encumbered by debt, remains a challenge, including for acquisition and redevelopment as well as long-term sustainability. Similar to the challenges facing the East Harlem-El Barrio CLT, the costs of the redevelopment of the H.E.Arts center have been driven up by the years of abandonment of property maintenance on the part of the City, yet sufficient public financing is not made available to address these capital needs.

East New York CLT



“This is Our Land” Tour and BBQ, June 2021. Credit: East New York CLT

The East New York Community Land Trust (ENYCLT) was organized in 2020 by residents of Brownsville and East New York, Brooklyn to preserve and create affordable homes, locally-owned small businesses, and green spaces that serve low to moderate-income BIPOC residents in those neighborhoods. The CLT emerged during the COVID pandemic, as

residents anticipated that the related economic crisis would exacerbate existing cycles of capital disinvestment and speculation. ENYCLT organizers built on years of grassroots advocacy around the 2016 East New York rezoning, which coincided with rising land and housing costs, house-flipping and harassment by predatory investors, and privatization of public land.



East New York CLT Black Paper #1 Release & Rally, May 21, 2022

Successes

- Reached strong organizational development milestones within its first two years, including establishing a Steering Committee, securing funding as part of the publicly-funded citywide CLT Initiative, and conducting ongoing political education and base-building.
- Conducted in-depth research and planning to identify city-owned land for community land stewardship through ENYCLT using a combination of robust analysis of public data sets and participatory mapping. ENYCLT’s analysis on target sites takes a racially reparative approach by identifying publicly-owned land not currently aligned with the community’s priorities and needs, such as NYPD parking lots, and calling to redistribute those resources for collective benefit.
- Spearheaded the Abolish the Tax Lien Sale Coalition, which successfully advocated for the City Council not to reauthorize the program when it expired in February 2022. ENYCLT and its allies in the Coalition continue to advocate for a permanent end to the program and a more just, non-punitive alternative for municipal debt collection that prevents displacement of low-income homeowners of color and partners with community land trusts.



Streetside community planning and engagement days (Summer 2021)

Challenges

- Obtaining accurate and up-to-date information about city-owned land, including city plans for disposition, remains a challenge. ENYCLT—as well as other CLTs in the city—do not have the resources to compete with real estate investors for researching property acquisition opportunities, and public datasets are often incomplete or out-of-date. The City should dedicate resources to maintaining transparent data about publicly-owned lots and actively identify land for community stewardship in partnership with CLTs.
- RFP processes lack community-engagement and transparency at HPD and other agencies with disposition power. HPD must build its capacity and commitment to CLT requests for basic information about where properties are in the disposition pipeline, as well as financing requirements, timelines, and whether their RFP criteria will honor existing community plans.

Policy Recommendations to Scale and Sustain CLTs



NYCCLI members rally at City Hall in August 2022, celebrating introduction of the Public Land for Public Good Act (int. 637). Credit: NYCCLI

“

The City’s remaining land resources—and any new land it acquires—should be maximized for public benefit, yet the majority of requests for proposals for housing development are granted to for-profit entities.

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Council members and CLT organizers hold rally in April 2022 calling for increased support for community land trusts. Credit: John McCarten, NYC Council Media Unit

As a result of community organizing and advocacy, New York City has seen tremendous growth in the CLT sector citywide and the development of policies that support Community Land Trusts as an affordable housing strategy. Yet the majority of local CLTs are still advocating for land, and securing mission-aligned financing remains a challenge. To truly scale and sustain CLTs, the city must enact policies to commit land to CLTs, ensure funding for CLTs, and strategically integrate CLTs into its housing and land use plans. Pratt Center recommends the below outlined strategies.

1. Enact legislation and develop plans to direct land to Community Land Trusts.

Land costs are a chief barrier to CLTs' accessing land and creating housing affordable to low-income people. Successful local CLT programs are dependent on municipal and state policies that create a pipeline of no- or low-cost land made accessible to CLTs.¹² As outlined below, New York City has the opportunity to implement policies that follow these best practices, including enacting several bills that have been introduced in City Council.¹³ These policies should be designed to work in tandem with one another to ensure equitable land acquisition and redistribution policies advance racial and economic justice.

A. Commit city-owned land to Community Land Trusts.

Commit city-owned land to Community Land Trusts. City-owned land is currently scarce and is increasingly valuable amidst rising land and housing costs.¹⁴ Since the Koch administration, New York City has completed a massive offloading of its land assets, particularly for housing, with an approach of privatization rather than public or community stewardship.¹⁵ Some disposition policies have provided land to private (for-profit and nonprofit) owners at nominal cost to redevelop housing and other projects, such as HPD's Alternative Management Programs, Request for Proposals (RFPs) issued by HPD, or the Economic Development Corporation for large-scale projects. As of 2022, for instance, HPD had disposed of nearly all (99.5%) of properties obtained via in rem foreclosure since 1994.¹⁶ Other disposition programs focus on maximizing short-term public revenues,¹⁷ such as city auctions and deed restriction removals administered by

the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS). Under Mayor Bloomberg's office consolidation initiative, for instance, which shifted city offices from city-owned buildings to rentals in private buildings, the city sold two large office buildings for \$250 million¹⁸ which have since been redeveloped as extremely high-cost condominiums. Some policies straddle the line between creating affordable space and generating revenue, such as NYCHA's Land Lease initiatives, which offer 99-year leases for new, largely affordable housing developments to fund public housing capital improvements.¹⁹ The City's remaining land resources—and any new land it acquires—should be maximized for public benefit, yet the majority of requests for proposals for housing development are granted to for-profit entities.²⁰

Intro 637, known as Public Land for Public Good, would require that any disposition of city-owned land prioritize qualified nonprofits including CLTs. The proposed legislation would help ensure that public lands are kept out of the speculative market and that these limited resources are maximized for affordability. To maximize opportunities for CLTs to access public land, agencies implementing requests for proposals for city-owned development sites could establish selection criteria that favors plans for permanent affordability, including partnerships between CLTs and Community Development Corporations or other traditional affordable housing developers. Further, the city must continue to invest in funding and technical assistance to build the capacity of CLTs, as outlined below.

B. Enact racially equitable property acquisition, debt collection, and land bank programs that work in collaboration with CLTs.

New York City could expand public and community-controlled land and collective wealth-building in communities of color by establishing equitable tax debt enforcement policies and land transfer programs. While cities throughout the U.S. enact policies to acquire and redevelop properties seized due to tax delinquency, foreclosure, or other neglect, these programs have historically been carried out to further racist wealth extraction and dispossession of land, but the same tools can be used to repair these harms.



#2: Abolish the Tax Lien Sale Rally in East New York, November 2020. Credit: East New York CLT

The expired New York City Tax Lien Sale policy to sell tax and water debt to private investors, for instance, disproportionately affected homeowners in majority-Black and Latinx neighborhoods with snowballing debts including, in some cases, the seizure of their homes. Advocates in the Abolish the Tax Lien Sale Coalition have proposed an alternative system that would make the city responsible for tax debt collection rather than outsourcing to private, for-profit investors, and provide more options for homeowners to hold onto their homes,²¹ including the option to transfer land ownership to a CLT to resolve their debts.²² This program could also work with a land bank to acquire distressed properties and prioritize assignment to CLTs.

Land acquired through tax debt collection and In Rem foreclosure programs can be managed by a local or county land bank; there are more than 250 land banks throughout the U.S.²³ Land banks can work in tandem with CLTs, particularly to ensure land resources are used to advance racial and economic justice, by balancing their respective missions of acquiring distressed properties and expanding collective ownership of land in communities of color.²⁴ In Albany, New York, for example, a county land bank gives the Albany CLT the right of first refusal and a 50% reduced price on land in certain neighborhoods.²⁵ In Atlanta, Georgia, the land bank and CLT have a similar longstanding partnership.²⁶ In Columbus, Ohio, the county land bank established a subsidiary CLT to which it dedicates land and funding as part of its racial justice goals.²⁷ New York City can build on these models to ensure that the land bank and CLTs work in tandem to advance shared, citywide housing goals for racial and economic equity. A bill (Intro 714) to establish a land bank has been introduced in New York City Council, but any such legislation should ensure that a local land bank prioritizes CLTs in dispositions and does not compete with them for land acquisitions, has its own structures of democratic governance, does not buy municipal debt but is granted post-foreclosure properties, and has its own mandate to keep land off of the speculative market.²⁸

C. Help CLTs acquire privately-owned apartment buildings by giving community organizations and tenants the right of first refusal.

One strategy to address speculation on multi-family housing, reduce displacement, and build tenant power is to enact laws requiring that landlords looking to sell their property first notify tenants and allow them to make an offer. Such laws have been enacted in Washington, D.C., San Francisco, California, and Montgomery County and Prince George's County, Maryland; many more jurisdictions grant rights of first refusal to nonprofits for housing created with public funds or affordability restrictions.²⁹

The Community Opportunity to Purchase Act (Intro 196) (COPA) introduced in City Council in spring 2022 would grant qualified housing nonprofits including CLTs the first opportunity to submit an offer to purchase certain private multi-family buildings when they are available for sale. COPA could work in tandem with the proposed Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act at the state level, which would grant the right of first refusal to tenants across New York, who could assign their rights to organizations including CLTs. For these policies to have impact, particularly in low-income communities where it's needed most, they must be paired with funding for acquisitions and ongoing technical assistance for CLTs and cooperatives.³⁰ To help CLTs exercise the right of first refusal to preserve low- and moderate-income housing, City Council could pass a resolution in support of the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act legislation and related state funding for tenant and community acquisitions.

2. Invest in CLT organizational development, housing, and agency programs

Tenant and community ownership models have long provided safe, affordable, democratically-governed housing for low-income New Yorkers, but have also struggled in the face of public disinvestment. For effective implementation of new policies to expand CLTs' access to land and housing, the City must invest in City agency and CLT organizational capacity and provide adequate low-income housing financing.

A. Deliver public funding for CLT organizational development and operations.

The City Council-funded Citywide CLT Initiative has been instrumental to advancing the model citywide. CLTs have hired dedicated staff, secured legal and technical support, and organized strong bases of support in their communities with Council funding. Renewed and increased public funding³¹ for CLT organizing and sector capacity will help CLTs maintain their missions of resident leadership and democracy in low-income communities of color.

These funding commitments, however, have been undermined by chronic delays in registering and paying contracts funded through the Council's discretionary budget; some CLTs have waited as long as two years after funding was approved in the budget to receive payment. Contracts are slowed due to several factors: first, the inherently retroactive nature of discretionary funding, which is allocated and approved at the same time the contract is set to begin,³² second, community-based organizations' challenges navigating the city's contracting requirements

and systems, and third, capacity and efficiency within the Mayor's Office of Contract Services (MOCS) and HPD to process the contracts and invoices. These systemic delays affect a range of city agencies and human services contracts, and have major programmatic implications, particularly for small grassroots CLT organizations, including the ability to maintain staff and carry out contract commitments. The city has made efforts to address contract delays, convening a Joint Task Force to Get Nonprofits Paid On Time and subsequent initiative to clear a backlog of more than \$5 billion in unpaid contracts, but CLT contract delays persist.³³ Increasing agency staffing for procurement and technical assistance at MOCS and HPD (and potentially at a to-be-formed Mayor's Office of Nonprofits) would improve contract registration times. As a longer-term improvement, beyond the urgent need for increased staffing and training at agency procurement teams, reforms to procurement laws and policies may also reduce documentation and bureaucratic burdens while still ensuring transparency.



Launch meeting of the Western Queens Community Land Trust, held in January 2020 at the Jacob Riis Center at Queensbridge Houses. Credit: Western Queens Community Land Trust



Credit: East Harlem El Barrio Community Land Trust

B. Invest in the Department of Housing Preservation and Development's CLT programs.

In addition to contract administration challenges, HPD lacks adequate capacity to responsively administer and provide guidance to CLTs. Currently, the process of establishing or updating Ground Leases and Regulatory Agreements between the City and a CLT can take months or longer; CLTs and their sister housing cooperatives commonly experience protracted response times to questions regarding regulatory requirements such as updates on the availability or status of HPD-managed properties for disposition, complying with marketing requirements for the affordable housing lottery, or ensuring that a given CLT decision is in compliance with the regulatory agreement. HPD staffing shortages are delaying project approvals, loans, and lease-ups, and having a ripple

effect across the agency; the city should ensure the agency has adequate budget and authority to make new hires and offer fair and competitive salaries and working conditions.³⁴ As part of these efforts, and building on the creation of the Director of CLT Programs role at HPD, the agency should continue to hire and train staff with expertise in the CLT model and governing policies and agreements, develop and carry out the city's strategy for CLTs, and coordinate closely with the agency's procurement team and other agencies interacting with CLTs. Mayor Adams has warned of future budget cuts to agencies including HPD, but the City Council should not approve any budget that reduces the social services that combat poverty.

C. Advocate for and commit financing to low-income housing development and operations to ensure deep affordability on CLTs.

While policies to curb land and housing speculation, regulate rents, and ensure living wages for workers are all necessary to increase housing affordability, public financing for development and operations is necessary to create housing that is truly affordable for people living in poverty. Identifying and qualifying for traditional sources of capital that align with CLT values and target populations remains a challenge, and public funding remains inadequate. Newer CLTs will not see affordability levels as deep as in Cooper Square CLT, for instance, nor in alignment with community needs, absent sufficient loans, grants, and rental subsidies. The city should maximize and protect the impact of its scarce housing subsidies by committing them to non-speculative, permanently affordable housing projects, while also advocating for additional state and federal resources for low-income housing.

The majority of the City's subsidies for housing development and preservation go to for-profit projects, which tend to have a lower percentage of income-targeted units and house people with higher incomes than non-profit housing.³⁵ While this is in part the result of federal policy, the City should prioritize grants, loans, and rental subsidies for non-profit projects with missions of deep and permanent affordability, including housing on CLTs.

The City must also actively advocate for new and increased state resources for low-income housing. Several bills under consideration in Albany in 2023 could help expand such resources, including Affordability Plus and the Housing Action Voucher Program (HAVP). Affordability Plus, which is supported by City Hall, would reform restrictions on the lending authority of HPD; the law could address some obstacles CLTs face to accessing financing by allowing loans to ground lessees and extending loans beyond the current 30-year limit. HAVP would create a new statewide rental voucher program for low-income people at risk of or experiencing homelessness, regardless of immigration status, structured similarly to the federal Section 8 program. Investing in HAVP and other new housing subsidy programs could help deepen affordability for rental housing on CLT land. Further, the City should expand sustainable financing for CLTs such as a revolving loan fund. A more equitable property tax system could help fund these programs.

3. Integrate CLTs into the City's housing, economic development and land use plans

For the above-outlined policy recommendations—committing land, funding, and programmatic support to CLTs—to have impact, they must be guided by land use, housing, and economic development plans that set clear goals and strategies for growing and sustaining CLTs.

A. Implement community-based, comprehensive citywide planning that incorporates community land stewardship.

The City's housing and economic development plans, including goals for CLTs, should be integrated with its land use plans, all guided by a long-term, comprehensive citywide plan. As part of implementation of the above-recommended legislation for equitable land acquisition and disposition policies, a citywide plan should outline the needs and opportunities for expanding city-owned and community-controlled land in neighborhoods across the city.

CLTs should be engaged in neighborhood and citywide planning not just to ensure that plans address the needs of CLTs, but also to model equitable community-based planning. As organizations led by low-income BIPOC tenants and shareholders knowledgeable in land and housing issues and experienced in participatory decision-making, CLTs can offer lessons for the city to move from its current limited community engagement model focused on public disclosure toward one of community planning.



Council Member Pierina Sanchez holds rally regarding social housing in February 2023. Credit: William Alatrste, NYC Council Media Unit



B. City housing plans should specify strategies and goals for making CLTs an affordable housing strategy.

That CLTs are highlighted in Mayor Adams' housing plan is a notable indicator of the growing city policy support for community land stewardship; neither the Bloomberg nor de Blasio housing plans acknowledged CLTs. Yet, scaling CLTs requires the city to go beyond highlighting existing CLT projects and broad statements of support for the model, and instead set goals for the creation and preservation of housing on CLTs and strategies to realize them.

HPD should build out a CLT program that sets explicit commitments and strategies for CLT development, proactively identifies properties and projects suitable for CLT acquisition and stewardship, and coordinates with other city agencies to support CLTs. RFPs for disposition of city-owned land should be developed through local, participatory planning to ensure that plans align with community needs and existing community plans, including through CLTs, and HPD must be adequately staffed and committed to responsiveness and transparency with community partners.

C. Expand opportunities for CLTs to maintain affordability and community stewardship for commercial, community, and open space.

Land commodification is also a root cause not just of the housing crisis but also of loss of small businesses and the jobs they provide, lack of free, accessible, and unsurveilled community space, and diminished agricultural and open space. As the CLT sector grows, the City should create opportunities for CLTs to address these challenges.

A first step to help expand and diversify CLT projects is to amend the definition of CLTs in New York City's Administrative Code, which currently addresses affordable housing, to include commercial, community, and open space land uses.

The City should also explore opportunities to integrate CLTs with other solidarity economy and shared equity models including worker cooperatives, credit unions, community gardens and agriculture, and food cooperatives. These community-centered businesses and organizations are well positioned to provide jobs and accessible services to CLT tenants and communities, particularly if their affordable space challenges are addressed. The City should build on its interagency Shared Equity Request for Information, released in 2021, to explore opportunities to support the growth and collaboration of these collective ownership models to address wealth inequality and displacement.

Finally, CLTs are currently likely to face the same challenges that traditional nonprofit affordable housing projects have seen in the competing goals of providing affordable commercial space that serves residents with the need to use commercial space as a revenue stream to help subsidize residential rents. The above-recommended policies to increase and prioritize housing operating subsidies for CLT housing would help challenge this paradigm on CLTs.

“Scaling CLTs requires the City to go beyond highlighting existing CLT projects and broad statements of support for the model, and instead set goals for the creation and preservation of housing on CLTs and strategies to realize them.”

NYCCLI members at the public launch of the Queensboro People's Space project, organized by Western Queens CLT, in May 2022. Credit: NYCCLI

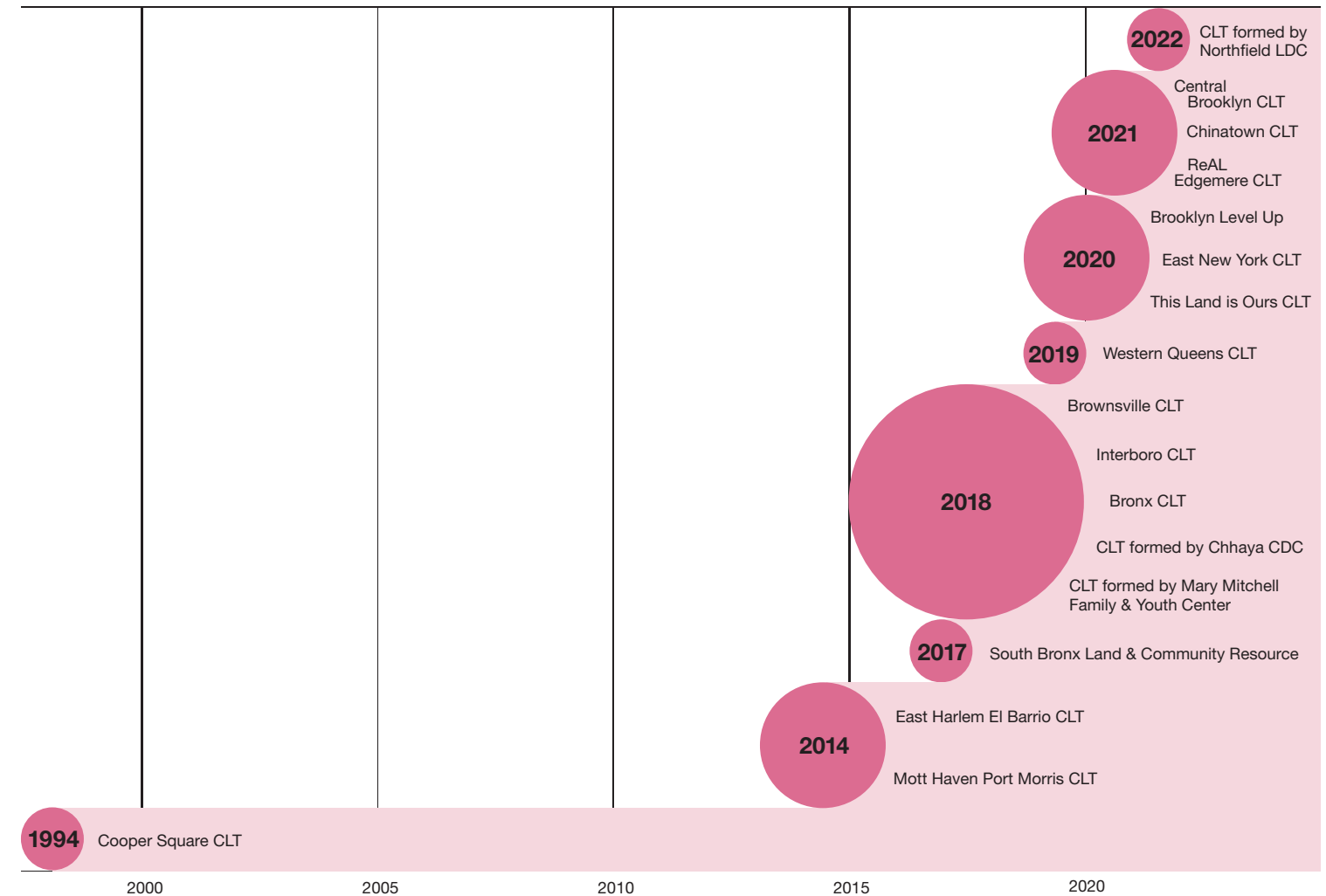
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- N.Y.C. Admin. Code § 26-2001.
- New Economy Project, “Victory! NYC Funds Community Land Trust in City Budget,” press release, June 21, 2019.
- The Citywide CLT initiative included \$750,000 in fiscal year 2020, \$637,500 in fiscal year 2021 (a decrease amid budget cuts during the start of the COVID-19 pandemic), \$1.5 million in fiscal year 2022, and \$1.5 million in fiscal year 2023. (Schedule C, FY20, FY21, FY22, FY23)
- Office of the Mayor, *Housing our Neighbors: A Blueprint for Housing and Homelessness*, April 2024, p. 69.
- Department of Housing Preservation and Development, “HPD CLT Initiatives,” Office of the Mayor, *Housing our Neighbors*, p. 69.
- Data shown in Figures 1 and 2 were compiled by New Economy Project and Pratt Center and provided by responding CLTs. The table (Figure 2) does not include the following CLTs for which Pratt Center was not able to obtain up-to-date information: RAIN, Northern Manhattan CLT, and Ravenswood CLT.
- National League of Cities and Grounded Solutions Network, *Community Land Trusts: A Guide for Local Governments*, August 2021
- Several of the policies recommended in this section—including Intro 637 to prioritize city-owned land for nonprofits, Intro 196 to establish the Community Opportunity to Purchase Act, and the Abolition of the Tax Lien Sales—are supported by NYCCLI and their member CLTs as part of the *NYC Community Land Act* (CLA). The CLA also includes a resolution in support of the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA) at the state-level.
- See especially: Office of the New York City Comptroller, *Building An Affordable Future: The Promise of a New York City Land Bank*, February 2016; Stephanie Sosa-Kalter, “The For-Profitization of Affordable Housing Development and the de Blasio Plan,” white paper published by Association for Neighborhood & Housing Development, October 2017; Samuel Stein and Oksana Mironova, “Public Land Revisited: Municipalization and Privatization in New York City,” *International Planning Studies* 25, no. 3 (June 2020): 247-260.
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- The Citywide CLT Initiative is requesting \$3 million in citywide funding for 20 CLTs in FY24 which is double the amount they were allocated in FY23. See: New York Community Land Trust Initiative, “FY2024 Discretionary Funding Request,” 2023.
- The New York City budget’s Schedule C, which outlines allocations for the City Council’s discretionary funding, is released by June 30th of each year for the budget—and any funded contracts—beginning July 1.
- New York City Mayor’s Office, “Mayor Eric Adams and Comptroller Brad Lander Release Five Key Actions for A Better Contract For New York,” press release, February 14, 2022; Charlette Hamamgian (NYC Comptroller’s Office), in discussion with Pratt Center, November 10, 2022; Joseph Connell (HPD ACCO), in discussion with Pratt Center, December 12, 2022
- New York Housing Conference, “HPD Staffing Shortage: Detailed Causes and Recommendations for Change,” May 2022.
- ANHD, “The For-Profitization of Affordable Housing Development and the de Blasio Plan,” October 2017.
- More than half a century of federal disinvestment in low-income and public housing have shifted affordable housing programs toward middle-incomes and public-private models. Local housing programs are highly dependent on federal programs like the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC), which does not require affordability beyond 30 years and does not tend to reach the lowest income people. See especially: Urban Institute, “The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit: How It Works and Who It Serves,” July 2018.

Appendix A

Growth of CLTs in NYC, 1994–2022

Note: This chart only includes CLTs for which Pratt Center was able to obtain up-to-date information. It does not include Northern Manhattan CLT, Ravenswood CLT, and RAIN.



Appendix B

List of New York City CLTs with their catchment area, land status, and purpose*

Brooklyn Level Up

BKLVUP CLT seeks to protect its neighborhoods as one of the last areas in NYC with high rates of Black home and business ownership. They plan to build and preserve truly affordable residential, commercial, communal, and open spaces within the next 5 years in East Flatbush, Flatbush, and Flatlands. They conduct CLT 101 trainings, partner with the NYC Civic Engagement Commission to conduct Participatory Budgeting, provide community engagement services, conduct on-the-ground project-based community data research and consulting, provide targeted homeowner and tenant land use education, and assist residents dealing with city agencies regarding development in their neighborhoods.

Year Organized	2020
Land Status	Advocating for Land
Borough	Brooklyn
Catchment Area	East Flatbush, Flatbush, Flatlands
Primary Purpose	Housing
Secondary Purpose	Commercial, Community Space, Open Space

Brownsville CLT (Brownsville Partnership)

The Brownsville Community Land Trust (BVCLT) is the centerpiece of Brownsville Partnership's (BP) racially and economically equitable development planning for the neighborhood. Over the past year, BP with its partners advanced progress on two comprehensive redevelopments with significant affordable housing, community, and cultural infrastructure in addition to programs for households impacted by the criminal justice system. The Rise, a supportive housing project with a rooftop garden and a community facility, broke ground in October 2022. Through an agreement, the building will be transferred to the BVCLT at the end of its financial tax credit period (15 years) and the BVCLT will play a role in ongoing governance and stewardship once the building is complete in 2024. A second site on Livonia Avenue, received its ULURP in December. Livonia C2 will have eighty units of family housing and a 1,000 square foot community facility; through a ground lease, this project will become the first asset under stewardship of the BVCLT. In 2023, the BVCLT aims to secure its 501(c)(3) status, ensuring that it is operational, resident-led, and stewarding assets that preserve wealth for community residents.

Year Organized	2018
Land Status	Land Transfer in Process
Borough	Brooklyn
Catchment Area	Brownsville
Primary Purpose	Housing

*This list includes CLTs for which Pratt Center was able to obtain up-to-date information. It does not include Northern Manhattan CLT, Ravenswood CLT, and RAIN.

Bronx CLT (NWBCCC)

The Bronx Community Land Trust (Bronx CLT) works to build and preserve safe, healthy, and deeply affordable housing for the borough's racially and economically diverse residents as well as affordable commercial, industrial, and green spaces. The Bronx CLT aims to advance community leadership, shared wealth, and collective governance over community land to create long-term sustainability, responsible planning, and equitable development that prevents displacement and restricts gentrification.

Year Organized	2018
Land Status	Land Transfer in Process
Borough	The Bronx
Catchment Area	The Bronx
Primary Purpose	Housing
Secondary Purpose	Commercial, Industrial, Community Space

Central Brooklyn CLT (Growhouse NYC)

GrowHouse empowers Black people and allies to become developers of our communities through collective ownership of artistic production, real estate/land, and cultural institutions. Its goal is to repair the harms caused by structural racism through equity-centered, anti-racist community design and development. GrowHouse views CLTs as one of many tools to preserve affordability in rapidly gentrifying neighborhoods.

Year Organized	2021
Land Status	Advocating for Land
Borough	Brooklyn
Catchment Area	Central Brooklyn
Primary Purpose	Housing
Secondary Purpose	Community Space

CLT formed by Chhaya CDC

Chhaya CDC works to build the housing stability, economic well being and power of the South Asian and Indo Caribbean community in NYC. Chhaya CDC convened Queens CLT in 2020 and is working to educate and engage community members on community land trusts and is identifying potential sites to create deeply affordable housing, commercial and community spaces in an effort to preserve and grow the communities already living there.

Year Organized	2018
Land Status	Advocating for Land
Borough	Queens
Catchment Area	Jackson Heights
Primary Purpose	Housing
Secondary Purpose	Community Space

Chinatown CLT (Chinatown Partnership LDC)

One of our main goals is to increase home ownership rate through conversion and create perpetual affordability for the neighborhood by adopting restrictive stipulations. We are also looking into increasing affordable rental housing stock through converting underutilized buildings in the area as well as studying any mechanism available to help small property owners who are providing affordable units to reduce their property tax.

Year Organized	2021
Land Status	Advocating for Land
Borough	Manhattan
Catchment Area	Chinatown
Primary Purpose	Housing

Cooper Square CLT

The Cooper Square Community Land Trust (CSCLT) is the longest-running community land trust in New York City. Born out of the struggles in the 1950s and 1960s against Robert Moses and his troubling urban renewal plans, CSCLT owns and stewards the land under 23 buildings in the Lower East Side in perpetuity. CSCLT land is home to 23 buildings, including the 21-building Cooper Square Mutual Housing Association II, which is home to 328 cooperative apartments and 22 ground-floor commercial spaces, and the Two Buildings Tenants United HDFC with 36 rent-stabilized units.

Year Organized	1994
Land Status	Has Land
Borough	Manhattan
Catchment Area	Lower East Side
Primary Purpose	Housing
Secondary Purpose	Commercial

East Harlem El Barrio CLT

The East Harlem/El Barrio Community Land Trust (EHEBCLT) works to develop and preserve community-controlled, truly and permanently affordable housing, commercial, green and cultural spaces in East Harlem/El Barrio that prioritizes households of extremely low to low incomes. As a strategy to ensure permanent affordability, the East Harlem/El Barrio Community Land Trust will own land and lease it to buildings on that land, as well as develop a resident-controlled Mutual Housing Association. EHEBCLT builds long-term power by securing BIPOC community control over land and housing. EHEBCLT formed in 2014 as a pilot project of the NYC Community Land Initiative (NYCCLI), with organizing support from Picture the Homeless members. In November 2020, it acquired its first four buildings for \$1 each from the City of New York, becoming the first new CLT in NYC to win city-owned properties.

Year Organized	2014
Land Status	Has Land
Borough	Manhattan
Catchment Area	Central and East Harlem
Primary Purpose	Housing

East New York CLT

ENYCLT is a grassroots, black-led nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving affordability for future generations and providing a vehicle to create generational wealth. The CLT's mission is to protect, stabilize, and expand the stock of affordable homes, locally-owned small businesses, and green spaces in East New York and Brownsville to benefit low to moderate-income residents. We use community organizing, education, and multi-generational engagement as the guiding forces of how we approach our work.

Year Organized	2020
Land Status	Advocating for Land
Borough	Brooklyn
Catchment Area	East New York
Primary Purpose	Housing
Secondary Purpose	Industrial

Interboro CLT

Interboro CLT is a citywide collaboration between four not-for-profit housing organizations whose mission is to create, preserve, and steward permanently-affordable homeownership and wealth-building opportunities for lower-income New Yorkers and BIPOC households. Interboro regards the creation of permanently-affordable homeownership through the CLT model as a pathway to housing and financial stability and a bulwark against the ravages of gentrification and speculation.

Year Organized	2018
Land Status	Has Land
Borough	Citywide
Catchment Area	Citywide
Primary Purpose	Housing

CLT formed by Mary Mitchell Family and Youth Center

Mary Mitchell Family and Youth Center is working in collaboration with Mothers on the Move and other local groups to create a CLT for the Crotona section of the Bronx, which has suffered high levels of youth violence, poor health outcomes, high unemployment, and generally low educational attainment. The CLT will foster intergenerational community organizing and decision-making about land use to expand and protect affordable housing, light industrial spaces that can provide local jobs and ownership opportunities, and programs of social, economic and health uplift (including community gardens and food justice programs).

Year Organized	2018
Land Status	Advocating for Land
Borough	Bronx
Catchment Area	Crotona
Primary Purpose	Community Space
Secondary Purpose	Community Gardens

Mott Haven Port Morris Community Land Stewards (South Bronx Unite)

The Mott Haven/Port Morris Community Land Stewards was established to acquire and hold in perpetuity real property to ensure that community members preserve a stake in a neighborhood profoundly impacted by decades of environmental injustice and economic neglect and to promote pathways to meaningful self-determination for, and to combat deterioration in, the Mott Haven/Port Morris community. Sponsored by South Bronx Unite, the Mott Haven-Port Morris Community Land Stewards is pursuing an economically sustainable and adaptive re-use and transformation of the city-owned and vacant Lincoln Detox Center into a center for health (H), education (E) and the arts (ARTS) – H.E.ARTS.

Year Organized	2014
Land Status	Advocating for Land
Borough	The Bronx
Catchment Area	Mott Haven, Port Morris
Primary Purpose	Community Space

CLT formed by Northfield LDC

Staten Island CLT's mission is to create quality affordable housing and economic opportunity for low-income individuals and families. It will acquire land and provide stewardship to ensure perpetual affordability of the homes that sit on CLT land. By sharing ownership in where they live, CLT families will have the opportunity to build wealth, while preserving permanent housing affordability in the Staten Island community. The CLT will foster resident-led housing development and preservation opportunities as well as partnerships to leverage resources for community cohesion and stability.

Year Organized	2022
Land Status	Advocating for Land
Borough	Staten Island
Catchment Area	Staten Island
Primary Purpose	Housing

ReAL Edgemere CLT

A resident-led CLT in the Edgemere neighborhood in the Rockaways.

Year Organized	2021
Land Status	Land Transfer in Process
Borough	Queens
Catchment Area	Edgemere
Primary Purpose	Housing
Secondary Purpose	Open Space, Community Space

South Bronx Land and Community Resource Trust (We Stay/Nos Quedamos)

The SBxLCRT will create vital, community-controlled housing, energy, and communication infrastructure in the Melrose Commons neighborhood and advance collective self-determination for its residents. The SBxLCRT is urgently needed in Melrose Commons, given the intensifying gentrification and market-rate development pressures that the community continues to face. In addition, Nos Quedamos has the opportunity to financially reposition and restructure several of their current buildings that are approaching Year-15 Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) investor exits. The SBxLCRT can provide the opportunity for Nos Quedamos to place existing assets under community control, with affordability permanently guaranteed, and pursue acquisition of new buildings in the area to be incorporated as part of the CLT. Nos Quedamos views this approach as imperative for advancing and expanding community engagement in the neighborhood's future, and to ensure that all future developments prioritize deep affordability.

Year Organized	2017
Land Status	Advocating for Land
Borough	The Bronx
Catchment Area	Melrose
Primary Purpose	Housing

This Land is Ours CLT

We are made up of housing activists and area residents committed to the development of deeply and permanently affordable housing. TLIO CLT is seeking to acquire underutilized properties (including decommissioned religious properties, troubled HDC's and public land. Our goal is community-owned land and resident-controlled housing. We aim through our efforts to help create social equity rather than financial equity for tenants.

Year Organized	2020
Land Status	Advocating for Land
Borough	Manhattan
Catchment Area	Lower East Side, Chelsea, Upper West Side
Primary Purpose	Housing

Western Queens CLT

The Western Queens Community Land Trust (WQCLT) is a non-profit organization made up of activists, small business owners, professors, artists, students, and community members who fight for democratic and equitable land use in Western Queens.

Year Organized	2019
Land Status	Advocating for Land
Borough	Queens
Catchment Area	Long Island City, Astoria, Sunnyside, Woodside, Elmhurst, Corona, Jackson Heights, East Elmhurst, Flushing (potential to add Maspeth, Ridgewood)
Primary Purpose	Commercial
Secondary Purpose	Community Space, Housing

GAINING GROUND

Policies to Sustain and Scale the Growth of Community Land Trusts in NYC

2023