

COMMUNITY LAND TRUSTS AND RACIAL EQUITY

HISTORY OF CLTs:

Community Land Trusts (CLTs) originated during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. Formerly enslaved Black American families faced significant barriers to affordable housing and homeownership opportunities.

- In 1969, community activists organized against Jim Crow Laws and voter suppression, and they established New Communities Inc., a Community Land Trust (CLT) model.
- New Communities acquired nearly 6,000 acres of farmland and forest near Albany, Georgia., to support black farmers in gaining collective access to farmland and housing.

ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF THE FIRST CLT INITIATIVE INCLUDED:

1. The land was to be collectively owned by a nonprofit organization and never resold.
2. The nonprofit landowner was to be democratically elected and governed by a member living on and around the land.
3. Houses and other buildings were to be individually owned by families, cooperatives, or small businesses, each owner holding a deed for the structure and a long-term ground lease for the underlying land.

CLTs TODAY:

This initiative marked the birth of CLTs in America. There are now **more than 314 CLTs holding over 40,000 housing units across the country.** Racial equity and inclusion are at the core of CLTs, demonstrated in part by their unique governance structure. The board of directors consists of equal parts homeowners, other members of the community, and nonprofit shareholders.

By empowering local communities, CLTs have the potential to rectify past policy decisions that prevented low-income and Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) from accessing quality affordable housing.



One in four executive directors or CEOs of CLTs is a person of color.



One in three of all CLT board members is a person of color.



45% of CLT homeowners are persons of color.

In the current landscape of US-based CLTs, a recent census demonstrates that this legacy of racial equity continues in both leadership roles and targeted populations.

CLTs AND GENTRIFICATION:

The community-based model of CLTs makes them a useful tool in moderating the effects of gentrification in urban areas. While most discussion around the intersections of CLTs and gentrification is theoretical, there is some empirical evidence that the presence of an active CLT in a neighborhood can moderate some of the negative impacts of gentrification. In a comparative study of gentrifying cities, neighborhoods with a CLT were more likely to retain lower-middle-class residents over a ten-year period. Furthermore, all neighborhoods with CLTs in this study (both gentrifying and non-gentrifying) had increased racial diversity compared to neighboring areas without CLTs.

Community Land Trusts, with their rich history, stand as a resilient model for community-driven empowerment and inclusive housing solutions in the United States.



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