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Homestead Community Land Trust Newsletter

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Take a stand for Beacon Hill

Gentrification. This often-misunderstood term refers to the process of a neighborhood changing hands. The process is simple. A once ignored neighborhood becomes widely recognized as a desirable place to live. People flock to it because of its relatively affordable housing prices. Demand outstrips supply and the cost of housing rises to compensate. Less affluent long-time residents find they can no longer afford the rent, many grown children wanting to buy a home in the neighborhood they grew up in find they can't afford it, and seniors on fixed incomes struggle to afford the rise in their property taxes. Home sale by home sale, the neighborhood changes hands from long-time residents to wealthier newcomers. Local businesses that catered to the tastes and needs of the long-time residents are also pushed out by corporations positioning themselves to tap a developing new market demographic. The entire neighborhood shifts away from its earlier character of cultural and economic diversity, and the fabric of the community becomes unraveled.

This is not a new phenomenon. It has been happening in cities all over the country for decades. It has happened many Seattle neighborhoods. What is new is that it is now happening on Beacon Hill.

The evidence is indisputable and the trend is clear. We gathered single family home sale data for

HCLT year in review

1999 was a great year for the Homestead Community Land Trust. We started off the year with our Annual Membership Meeting and pancake breakfast. Homestead's organizational focus was set for the year as we decided to concentrate our attentions on the Beacon Hill neighborhood for our first project. It has a unique character as a working and middle class, racially and culturally integrated neighborhood close to downtown with an "undervalued" housing stock, making it vulnerable to gentrification. Additional need to safeguard Beacon Hill's affordable housing was recognized due to the recent announcement that Amazon.com was going to be making the Pacific Medical landmark tower their headquarters. And our strong base of members who live on Beacon Hill sealed the decision. The Beacon Hill Community Land Trust Project was born.

At the membership meeting we also elected Syd Fredrickson to our board. Her experience on other boards, expertise in meeting facilitation and general great energy have proven to be a great asset to Homestead's board. Syd joined long term board members Janet Welt, Sheldon Cooper and Mas Koba.

Another important development last year came in the form of technical assistance grants from HUD (the Federal Department of

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Beacon Hill, North of Orcas St. for April through September. When compared to the same period from the previous year, the median price of a home rose 4.2% in 1996, 8% in 1997, 14.8% in 1998 and 22.6% in 1999. Despite our hot economy, the earning power of the average Beacon Hill resident has not kept up with these huge recent increases in the cost to buy a home. Fewer and fewer Beacon Hill residents can afford to own a home in their neighborhood. Without the security of homeownership, long-time residents find themselves pushed out. The cycle of gentrification is under way.

While it is important to understand the economic forces that lead to gentrification, laying blame is not productive. Arguing over who is at fault will not solve the problem. Beacon Hill residents taking direct control over some of their land resources to permanently preserve affordable housing will address the problem. This is exactly what the Beacon Hill Community Land Trust Project will do.

The city is not going to stop gentrification on Beacon Hill. Large corporations are not going to preserve the unique character of Beacon Hill. It is the residents of Beacon Hill themselves who can best address their own problems. The Beacon Hill Community Land Trust Project was created in 1999 through the actions of the Beacon Hill members of the Homestead Community Land Trust. Their concern over the potential gentrification of their neighborhood led them to initiate a community land trust project as a way of directly addressing rapidly rising homeownership costs.

In a few short months, the Beacon Hill Community Land Trust Project plans to submit funding applications to the city for its first land purchase and affordable housing project. This housing will offer renting families a homeownership opportunity, assuring that they don't become the next family to move off Beacon Hill in search of more affordable housing. The land trust will own the land under the housing and assure that the housing remains affordable for generation after generation of homeowner.

The Beacon Hill Community Land Trust Project is an open membership organization and gains its strength from the participation and energy of its members. We have come a long way in a short time and have a long way to go before reaching our goal of assuring that Beacon Hill remains a wonderful neighborhood for all of us. It is time for Beacon Hill residents to take control of our future. There is a saying in the community land trust movement across the country that goes "take a stand, own the land." Isn't it time we take a stand for Beacon Hill?

In 1999 we stepped up our outreach efforts, concentrating especially on the Beacon Hill Neighborhood. We tabled at the Beacon Hill Community festival, El Centro de la Raza's Housing Fair, and the Livable Communities Fair, handing out information about Beacon Hill's growing housing problem and the CLT solution of permanently affordable home ownership. We made "Save a place for me on Beacon Hill" stickers which we gave to many children at these events. We spoke at Beacon Hill community council meetings and continued our tradition of food-oriented events by hosting a fabulous "Brunch on the Hill" outreach and educational event. We participated in an "Alternatives To Rent" panel organized by the Tenant's Union at their Tenant Convention.

1999 was also a great year for networking, connecting with others involved in CLTs around the country and learning about the vibrant and growing national CLT movement of which we are a small part. HUD technical assistance funding allowed Homestead to send three members to the National Community Land Trust conference and technical training in St. Paul, Minnesota last April. Janet Welt, Syd Fredrickson and Sheldon Cooper all attended the two back-to-back events. "The training was invaluable!" reported Janet Welt. HCLT participated in a Western States meeting at the National conference in April and helped organize a Northwest regional CLT meeting in the Seattle area last August. About 12 CLTs from Washington and Oregon were represented during the weekend gathering. HCLT hosted a Sunday brunch to close the event. It was very helpful to hear each other's stories of struggle and success, strengthen our relationships with other area CLTs and set a foundation for future collaborative lobbying and fundraising efforts.

There was much more that we accomplished, including completing a strategic planning session led by Kevin Preston, and holding a fun kayaking fundraiser event. The coming year promises to be another growth year for HCLT, as we delve into our first housing development project. There is lots going on and plenty you can do if you want to increase your involvement. It's going to be an exciting ride!

About Homestead Community Land Trust

“We are drawing together our diverse communities to build and preserve decent, affordable housing and real self-determination in the places where we live and work.” - Homestead CLT’s mission statement

Since our incorporation in 1992, we have been working to bring the Community Land Trust model of permanently affordable homeownership to Seattle neighborhoods. To this end we engage in outreach and educational efforts with community and neighborhood groups, local and state government, and funding and lending institutions. Homestead CLT is a nonprofit corporation and donations are tax deductible. We support the creation of neighborhood-based projects that undertake community-focused housing development projects designed to meet local needs. Our current project is on Beacon Hill.

About the Beacon Hill Community Land Trust Project

The Beacon Hill CLT is a project sponsored by Homestead CLT and represents Homestead’s current major focus. In 1999, Homestead CLT decided to investigate the feasibility of creating a community land trust project on Beacon Hill. We are now in the process of moving forward into the next phase. The Beacon Hill CLT Project is planning on launching its first homeownership development project during this year, with housing units to be ready for purchase in 2001. We are always looking for more Beacon Hill residents to get involved. Whether you are a Beacon Hill renter who might want to own a home on CLT land, or are interested in safeguarding affordable housing and preserving Beacon Hill’s diverse character, we want to hear from you.

Become a member - take a stand, own the land

Homestead CLT is an open membership organization that seeks to use the Community Land Trust structure to permanently preserve affordable housing in Seattle. Our members come from all walks of life, from displaced persons to people in city government, community activists, business people, homeowners and renters. We all share a belief that Community Land Trusts offer individuals and neighborhoods an innovative, effective way to address our housing needs. As a member you help preserve affordable housing for ourselves and future generations, have a say in the running of HCLT, and receive our quarterly newsletter and notices about meetings and events. Members are also eligible to apply to buy homes on Homestead land (certain income requirements apply) and can run for positions on the board of delegates. Homestead’s board of delegates is elected by the general membership and meets monthly at open meetings to decide the business of the organization. Membership in Homestead CLT is open to all Seattle residents who agree with our mission, pay sliding scale yearly dues (at a suggested rate of \$1 per \$1000 of annual income) and attend at least one meeting each year.

Volunteers needed

There are many ways to get involved in Homestead and our Beacon Hill CLT Project.

We currently need people with the following skills and interests:

- * Graphic design and layout for quarterly newsletter, and other outreach publications.
- * Web master to oversee the creation and maintenance of HCLT’s site.
- * Beacon Hill outreach event hosts (host a gathering of friends and neighbors to learn about the Beacon Hill CLT Project).
- * Board members. We are looking for people from Beacon Hill who want to join our Board of Delegates. This elected position requires a time commitment of about 10 hours per month.

Contact HCLT at (206) 324-6822, email: homesteadclt@yahoo.com Mail: 1309 13th Ave S. Seattle, WA 98144

1999, from front page

Housing and Urban Development). Homestead was able to secure grants for technical assistance worth \$27,000. This money allows Homestead to receive paid staff time from Kevin Preston, a staff member of Common Ground who specializes in community land trust housing, and from Jeff Yegian who staffs the Institute of Community Economics’ Western office in Colorado. The Institute of Community Economics has been promoting the Community Land Trust model nationally for over 20 years. Kevin and Jeff have been a tremendous help over the past year,

lending their expertise in numerous areas.

The HUD grant also included some funds to hire a part time, interim staff person to attend to the many details of running a membership based, housing development organization. The board approved Sheldon Cooper for this role, and he subsequently stepped down from the board to accept this position. The goal of this contracted position is to build up the organization’s capacity and to oversee successful grant applications for HCLT’s first housing development project. We are on track to submit funding applications to the City of Seattle this spring.

Two Community Land Trust events not to miss:

Homestead Community Land Trust Annual Membership Meeting and Pancake Breakfast

Saturday, February 19th at El Centro De La Raza, 10AM to 12PM

2524 16th Ave South (Use Northeast entrance)

Northwest Regional
Community Land Trust

Introductory Seminar

Portland, Oregon, February 10 - 11th, 2000

Hear about the Beacon Hill Community Land Trust Project.

Celebrate Homestead CLT's achievements.

Eat breakfast. Elect new board members.

Take control of our future in 2000.

Meet old and new members.

Make your voice heard.

Call (206) 324-6822

for more info.

The Institute for Community Economics, the organization promoting the Community Land Trust model nationwide, is presenting this introductory training seminar for anyone interested in learning about Community Land Trusts in detail. Training topics include: an overview of the CLT model, major CLT ground lease issues, designing resale formulas, community land trusts and the HOME program, basic issues in financing CLT homes on leased land, case studies of community land trusts, and the CLT model as a response to various housing issues.

You should consider going if:

- You are a resident of an area that is experiencing gentrification and want to learn about tools to prevent displacement of lower income residents from your neighborhood.
- You are concerned about disinvestment and absentee landlords, and want to increase homeownership in your community.
- You want to learn how your local government can make the most cost effective use of its homeownership assistance dollar.
- You are looking to learn about long term solutions to homelessness.
- You want to hear how to strengthen your community through community ownership of land for locally identified needs.
- You want to learn why Community Land Trusts have been created for the benefit of communities all over the country for decades and why they are finally catching on in the Northwest!

The seminar is free. Meals and lodging are not provided. Registration by February 1st required.

Call Homestead CLT at 206-324-6822 ext 3 for more information and ride sharing.

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Seattle, WA 98144