

Decommodify land, preserve affordable housing, and build community wealth

Community Land Trusts

Frequently Asked Questions



**Canadian
Network of
Community
Land Trusts**

What is a community land trust?

A community land trust (CLT) is a model of collective land stewardship based on the belief that land should be held and managed for the benefit of local communities.

CLTs are place-based non-profits committed to the long-term stewardship and permanent community benefit of housing and other land-based assets. They seek to acquire and steward land within their geographic area of care.

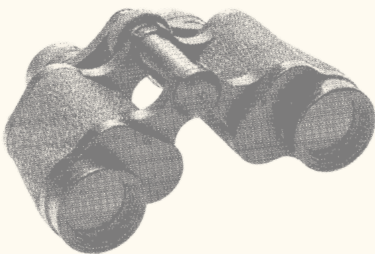
CLTs adapt to meet the needs of their particular community. They may own land used for rental, supportive, co-op, and/or affordable homeownership housing projects. Beyond housing, CLTs may steward commercial units, agricultural lands, or cultural spaces.



How many community land trusts are there in Canada?

Born during the Civil Rights Era as a method of achieving secure land tenure for disenfranchised Black tenant farmers, the CLT model has evolved into a global movement in both urban and rural areas.

In Canada, there are over forty established and emerging community land trusts stewarding (i.e. sustainably holding and managing) over 10,000 homes as well as businesses and



community spaces. How do community land trusts work?

1. **Permanent land stewardship:** CLT lands are never sold, effectively protecting them from the speculative real estate market. Any increase of value is repurposed into the mission and leveraged to buy additional properties. Some CLTs act mostly as portfolio managers and partner with other community groups to operate properties, while others may directly operate their housing and other spaces.
2. **Perpetual affordability:** Assets can remain forever affordable to low-to-moderate income households. CLTs use legal tools to enable individuals and organizations to use CLT land while maintaining permanent CLT stewardship.
3. **Expansionist:** Active acquisition and development pipelines can grow a CLT's portfolio. Established CLTs can unlock equity accumulated in their assets and leverage it for renewal and growth.
4. **Community governance:** CLTs have memberships open to anyone with ties to their area of operation. Members vote on key decisions and elect the board of directors. Boards typically include CLT residents, community members, technical experts, and public interest representatives.
5. **Community organizing and advocacy:** Beyond land stewardship, CLTs often engage in community planning, engagement, research, and advocacy.



How do community land trusts acquire land?

CLTs often acquire public lands at below-market or no-cost, while others purchase privately owned land at-market through grants, traditional financing, and fundraising. CLTs can acquire existing rental buildings, develop housing themselves, and/or make land available to non-profit housing developers. Some CLTs focus on the preservation of co-operative housing by acquiring and permanently stewarding land that is leased to housing co-ops.

How are CLTs initiated?

Most CLTs are formed as new non-profit corporations out of a coalition of local actors, which may include housing activists, community organizations, housing co-operatives, municipal councilors, etc.

Communities excluded from real estate ownership or facing displacement pressures form CLTs as a way to build power through collective land stewardship. For example, Black Canadians are organizing CLTs in Toronto, Vancouver, and African Nova Scotian communities; Toronto Chinatown Land Trust was formed to protect its cultural landscape; and Indigenous communities across Turtle Island are developing CLTs to collectively steward land in alignment with Indigenous worldviews.

Learn more at
CommunityLand.ca

