

# ON COMMON GROUND

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON  
THE COMMUNITY LAND TRUST



John Emmeus Davis, Line Algoed,  
María E. Hernández-Torrales

EDITORS

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## 7.

# Origins and Evolution of Urban Community Land Trusts in Canada



*Susannah Bunce and Joshua Barndt*

The development of community land trusts in Canada offers an interesting study of the often individualized and ad hoc processes involved in CLT creation. While certainly not as numerous as CLTs in the USA and England, CLTs in Canada have burgeoned over the past several decades. They have been on the forefront of addressing affordable housing shortages and offered new ways to consider community land stewardship in Canada. The earliest CLTs were primarily located in Canadian cities, established as independent land trust initiatives through cooperative housing organizations, and as responses to affordable housing challenges in cities such as Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, and Vancouver. More recently, there has been an increasingly robust and more formalized network of CLTs emerging across Canada in response to on-going affordable housing shortages, gentrification processes, and a renewed interest in community-led practices that extend beyond affordable housing provision. Our chapter explores the historical appearance of CLTs in Canadian cities and why they continue to be an important community-led, non-governmental organizational model in a nation where government has traditionally played the leading role in the provision of affordable housing and social services.

Despite Canada's social democratic roots, different levels of government have been actively dismantling social programs over the last several decades, including a withdrawal from the funding and delivery of social housing programs starting in the early 1990s (Hulchanski 2001, 2007; Leone and Carole, 2010; Moore and Skaburskis, 2004; Wolfe, 1998).<sup>1</sup> Increasing governmental reliance on the private, for-profit sector for the delivery of housing and fiscal cutbacks to social services have had a detrimental impact on both housing affordability and the presence of social and community-based programs.<sup>2</sup>



Community-led CLT organizations have emerged within the context of these broader political-economic transformations in Canada, which have shaped the organizational structure, community actions, and programming of CLTs over time.

We identify two “generations” of community land trust organizations in Canada — the first being a small group of CLTs, arising in the 1980s to around 2012, that were largely focused on the acquisition of land for affordable housing provision. These CLT organizations, inspired by the CLT model in the United States, differed from land trust organizing in Canada that had traditionally focused on the conservation of wilderness and agricultural areas. The emergence of this new form of land trust in Canadian cities occurred within the context of a lack of public policy and legislative support for the creation of CLTs. As a result, they were primarily formed by cooperative housing federations, non-profit developers, and activist groups, often in partnership with specific governmental affordable housing programs.

A “second generation” of CLTs has emerged since 2012, both as a response to increasing gentrification pressures in urban areas and as a result of renewed interest in affordable housing development. New CLTs have emerged in cities such as Toronto and Vancouver,

Canadian CLT development has been eclectic, sometimes incorporating features of the American model and sometimes not.

for example, cities that have experienced a steady rise in single-family homeownership and property speculation over the past decade, along with quickly rising housing prices and increased constraints on already

tight affordable rental housing markets (Gee, 2017; King, 2016; McClearn, 2017). These second-generation CLTs have forged connections with existing and new CLT organizations across Canada and have interacted with an emergent international CLT movement. Locally, the activism of these CLT organizations has often extended beyond the land trust model itself, responding to broader urban issues such as the impact of rapid gentrification and displacement, decreases in affordable housing supply, advocacy for urban food security, and solidarity with racialized and culturally diverse communities, including building allyship with Indigenous peoples. These second-generation CLT organizations are distinguished by new approaches to the development and provision of communal and shared equity housing, by varied forms of neighbourhood and city-wide activism, and by a community land trust network being built across Canada.

Our chapter traces the evolution of Canadian CLTs and underlines the importance of their self-identification as CLTs in structuring their own organizations and operations. More often than not, Canadian CLT organizations view themselves as being a community land trust regardless of whether they exhibit all the characteristics of the traditional or “classic” CLT, as that model has been defined and implemented in the United States. The American “classic” model was premised on: a two-party ownership structure, whereby the CLT acts as the owner and long-term lessor for multiple parcels of land underneath

buildings that are separately owned by individuals, cooperatives, or other nonprofit or for-profit entities; an organizational structure with a tripartite board and a place-based membership that emphasizes the participation of CLT residents, local community members, and members of the public; and an operational commitment to the permanent affordability of any housing located on the CLT's land, along with other stewardship duties designed to protect the condition of the structures and the security of tenure for the occupants (Davis, 2007; 2010). By comparison, Canadian CLT development has been more ad hoc and eclectic, sometimes incorporating these "classic" features and sometimes not, depending on their individual contexts and familiarity with the American CLT model. As such, Canadian CLTs have forged "home-grown" CLT characteristics that are primarily constituted by the very localized circumstances of their formation.

We trace the evolution of CLT development in Canada in a chronological way, through a narrative of the organizational objectives and projects of first- and second-generation CLTs. The CLTs that are discussed are organizations with which we are familiar, as CLT researchers and practitioners, and which offer certain insights into the origins and evolution of CLTs in the Canadian context. We conclude by suggesting that a steady increase in the presence of CLTs in Canada has necessitated the creation of formalized networks of knowledge transfer and information sharing in order to build solidarity and connections among CLT organizations and communities across Canada. An example of this is the recent emergence of the Canadian CLT Network that is fostering regular communication among CLT organizations across the country.

### **THE FIRST GENERATION OF CANADIAN CLTs 1980s–2012**

A defining characteristic of this first cluster of largely sector-based CLTs,<sup>3</sup> which emerged from the 1980s to 2012, was the primary focus on the provision of cooperative and other forms of affordable housing through land ownership by the CLT organization. The emphasis on co-op housing provision derived from the strong Canadian cooperative housing movement that started in the 1930s (Hulchanski, 1988) and became a dominant affordable housing model in cities in the 1970s, with the development of well-regarded co-op housing projects such as St. Lawrence in Toronto and with the support of housing activists and municipal, provincial, and federal governments for this form of housing.

The CLT model, adopted through informal activist knowledge of the American CLT movement, became a conduit through which affordable housing, primarily co-op housing, was produced at a localized scale. We also observe a notable difference in the size and scope of CLTs during this period. Some CLTs, such as Colandco in Toronto and the Vernon District Community Land Trust in Vernon, British Columbia, adopted a sector-based and city-wide organizational approach with little community-led direction over the CLT organization itself. Conversely, other CLTs such as the West Broadway CLT

embraced a more community-led, neighbourhood-based approach in the provision of affordable housing.

### **Colandco (Toronto)**

The first two CLTs in Canada, both formed in the 1980s, focused on the provision of cooperative housing: Colandco in Toronto and Milton-Parc in Montreal. Colandco (initially called Inner City) was established in 1986 as a land holding and sector-based development company by the Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto. Colandco purchased existing rental apartment buildings as well as parcels of land for the purpose of developing new multi-unit residential projects. Colandco retained ownership of the land and the buildings, while executing a 49-year lease with each cooperative for both. This arrangement provided the co-ops with use of the properties for the term of the lease. By retaining long-term ownership and control of the land and buildings, Colandco could ensure that the housing would remain affordable in perpetuity (Communitas Inc. 1985; Hulchanski, 1983; Interview with Tom Clement, February 18, 2019).

Colandco successfully leveraged its initial \$2 million (CAD) of seed funding to develop an initial project,<sup>4</sup> the City Park Co-op, that secured 770 cooperative housing units through the acquisition of a privately owned rental project that was in receivership. Using the revolving fund as a deposit to secure the site, Colandco was subsequently able to mobilize funding and financing from the provincial government to complete the \$63 million purchase. By the early 1990s, Colandco had assembled land ownership on a large scale for the development of fourteen housing cooperatives, containing a total of 2,350 housing units scattered across central Toronto, Scarborough, and Oshawa (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2005; Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto, 2019).

Colandco's program of land expansion and residential development started to face challenges in 1994, however, as a result of a global financial recession that began in the early 1990s and was significantly felt for several years in the province of Ontario. The withdrawal of governmental support for social housing and other affordable housing programs during the same period also impacted Colandco's projects. These pressures caused Colandco to downsize its housing development activities and to focus increasingly on retaining land ownership through a land trust arrangement with individual co-operatives (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2005; Hulchanski 1983). Colandco entered into contractual agreements with individual nonprofit housing cooperatives to operate housing on its land, an approach that has had significant success and longevity in Toronto.

In 2017, Colandco and the Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto took the lead in forming the Co-op Housing Land Trusts, consisting of four different land trusts: Colandco; the Bathurst Quay Co-op; Colandco's City Park Co-op; the Naismith Non-Profit Land Trust; and the Tenants Non-Profit Redevelopment Foundation (TNRC). These

land trusts operate as a group. With the exception of the Bathurst Quay Co-op, each land trust has the same Board of Directors. Importantly, each land trust owns the land that is occupied by its cooperatives. As the leasee, each co-op is responsible for the management of its buildings. At the end of the land lease, the buildings will be transferred to the land trust unless the lease is renewed.

As a whole, the cooperatives that constitute the Co-op Housing Land Trusts are made up of thirty-two buildings, containing a total of 4,196 apartments or houses that are occupied by approximately 10,000 residents (Correspondence with Tom Clement, 2019). It is important to note that co-op residents are not organizational members of the Co-op Housing Land Trusts, but remain members of their individual cooperatives. This arrangement points to an innovative utilization of the community land trust model, where particular aspects of the CLT, such as land ownership and ground lease agreements, are combined with the autonomy of the co-op buildings. Resident members govern their individual cooperatives, but they may or may not have any involvement with the entity that owns the underlying land.

### **Communaute Milton-Parc (Montreal)**

The Milton-Parc community, located in the downtown core of Montreal, has had similar success and longevity in the production of cooperative housing, while putting a creative, homegrown spin on the traditional CLT model. The idea for Communaute Milton-Parc (CMP) emerged from a lengthy resident-led and community-based struggle to save the neighbourhood from urban renewal plans proposed by a consortium of Montreal-based property developers. The activism of the Milton Parc Citizens Committee in the late 1960s and 1970s, which included street sit-ins and the occupation of buildings slated for demolition, succeeded in halting the renewal plans. The activists then formed multiple cooperative housing communities to purchase and to renovate the buildings, preserving this housing for low-income and middle-income residents (Kowaluk and Piche-Burton, 2012; Roussopoulos and Hawley, 2018).<sup>5</sup>

A growing concern about gentrification and displacement in the 1980s then led to the creation of the Communaute Milton-Parc in 1986. Approved by Quebec's provincial government, the CMP was viewed by the individual cooperatives as a way to protect housing affordability by protecting and stewarding the neighbourhood's land. Land titles in Milton-Parc are collectively owned by a syndicate of fifteen individual cooperatives and six nonprofit housing corporations through a Declaration of Co-Ownership. The CMP is governed by a general assembly constituted by the syndicate of co-owners. CMP acts as a governing and community decision-making body that regulates and sets guiding policy for cooperative ownership and community responsibility. CMP also owns and maintains the land beneath the common areas and enforces non-speculative restrictions on land uses and any land sales that might be contemplated by an individual cooperative (Ibid.).



Fig. 7.1. The Milton Parc neighbourhood, Montreal. OLIVIA WILLIAMS

CMP is an innovative take on the traditional structure of the CLT model. In the latter, the use of land and the affordability of housing are regulated through a ground lease for land that is owned by the CLT. *Communaute Milton-Parc*, by contrast, does not own the land beneath the housing itself but works as an overarching governance body for the Milton Parc neighbourhood that presently includes 148 buildings, 616 affordable units, and 1500 residents (Milton Parc, 2013). As a governance and decision-making body, the CMP arrangement offers a uniquely localized arrangement in which land is utilized and regulated in a way that best suits the preferences and circumstances of a particular neighbourhood. The organization has, over time, put in place a fulsome governance structure with a sophisticated assemblage of decision-making protocols and community engagement practices that connect the individual cooperatives and the overarching CMP body. This is combined with a focus on stopping residential displacement and supporting the longevity of affordable cooperative housing.

Milton Parc is the single largest cooperative housing neighbourhood in North America. Its size and success made *Communaute Milton-Parc* a finalist in the UN World Habitat Awards in 2013 (CMHC, 2005; World Habitat, 2017). Today, Milton Parc's residents remain active in public discussions about gentrification, displacement, and the need for affordable housing in Montreal. Importantly, they self-identify and publicly characterize their unique combination of fifteen cooperative housing communities, a single landholding syndicate, and an overarching structure of governance as being a community land trust.

### CLT Formation in Central and Western Canada

In Colandco, the Co-op Housing Land Trusts, and *Communaute Milton-Parc*, we observe an emphasis on and support for long-term retention of affordable housing, whereby land



trust arrangements serve as an innovative platform for producing and preserving housing that is cooperatively owned and managed. There was a similar focus on affordable housing provision among the community land trust organizations that arose in central and western Canada from the mid-1990s to mid-2000s. Without the existence of a formalized CLT network and, in most cases, without the existence of government legislation that would have legitimized or supported the existence of CLTs, such development tended to be ad hoc and localized.<sup>6</sup>

These CLTs were initiated by community activists who were searching for alternative, practical methods by which to attain affordable housing. They focused on individual homeownership, rather than cooperative housing, while working in partnership with private, for-profit developers and philanthropic affordable housing developers such as Habitat for Humanity. There is also evidence of informal knowledge sharing among these Canadian CLT organizers, who sometimes drew on personal information gathered about the implementation of the CLT model in the United States (Bunce, Khimani, *et al*, 2013).

*West Broadway Community Land Trust* (WBCLT) was the earliest example. It was established in 1999 as a subsidiary of the West Broadway Community Development Corporation (CMHC, 2005), located in the West Broadway neighbourhood of downtown Winnipeg, Manitoba. The community development corporation was a particularly innovative community development organization that focused on affordable housing and other social initiatives such as a community credit union, and was guided by concerns over local poverty issues caused by public disinvestment and encroaching gentrification/rising residential prices (Beaubien and Ring, 2006).

The intention of the WBCLT was to provide more diverse affordable housing tenure options in the form of rent-to-own homeownership, individual homeownership, cooperative homeownership, and affordable rental units (CMHC, 2005). A 2006 study of the WBCLT noted, however, that the primary focus of WBCLT was rent-to-own homeownership, addressing the needs of low-income households who were unable to move directly into homeownership but who might become homeowners over time with assistance (Beaubien and Ring, 2006). WBCLT assembled neighbourhood land parcels and purchased existing housing stock over a five-year period, offering a rent-to-own plan that was secured through a ground lease agreement between WBCLT and the tenant (who was also the potential owner).

This arrangement entailed the oversight of extensive renovations and the management of a complex array of funding from different governmental housing programs (Ibid., p. 3). Ultimately, WBCLT was unable to sustain the organizational and funding capacity that was needed both to undertake these renovations and to maintain the units through the duration of the rent-to-own period. This resulted in the eventual closure of the WBCLT as an arm of the West Broadway Community Development Corporation and the sale of some of its housing at market rate. Despite this failure, as Beaubien and Ring (Ibid.) noted, WBCLT played an important role in galvanizing community engagement and



increasing public debate about land tenure as a component of community development, having a positive and lasting significance for the West Broadway community.

Other first-generation CLTs in central and western Canada faced similar challenges. The *Vernon and District Community Land Trust Society* (VDCLT) was formed in the province of British Columbia in 2008 to accrue public and philanthropic donations of lands and buildings for the development and management of affordable housing (Vernon and District Community Land Trust Society, 2012). The VDCLT's first project was a joint initiative with the City of Vernon, whereby the local government purchased land near the downtown core that was leased to the VDCLT through a long-term contractual arrangement and a small lease payment. The VDCLT, with Habitat for Humanity as a development partner, subsequently constructed rental units for low-income families and people with disabilities on this site. Since this initial project, the VDCLT has focused its efforts on accruing title to other lands and attaining public and philanthropic funding for additional affordable housing projects. It remains engaged with local communities in advocating for affordable housing in Vernon.

Also appearing in western Canada during this period was the *Calgary Community Land Trust* (CCLT). The CCLT was formed by the Calgary Homeless Foundation and was incorporated as a nonprofit organization in 2003 (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2005). The CCLT focused on the assembly of land and building stock, as well as obtaining funds for the development and operation of affordable housing (Calgary Community Land Trust, 2012). CCLT received a donation of surplus federal government land, the result of a land swap between the federal government and the municipal government of Calgary, acquired for the purpose of building affordable housing on the land. The CCLT's first affordable housing project was the Sun Court development, completed in 2007, consisting of 27 units of owner-occupied family housing built by Habitat for Humanity Calgary (Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2012). The CCLT then went dormant for several years, as the work of the Calgary Homeless Foundation shifted towards more immediate and front-line initiatives to address homelessness in Calgary. It is now functioning as a CLT again, as we will discuss in the next section, reporting on more recent Canadian CLTs.

The *Central Edmonton Community Land Trust* (CECLT) emerged as a nonprofit corporation in 1998 with a mandate of fostering community-based development through land management and affordable housing provision. CECLT received donated land and properties from the municipal government of Edmonton and received funding from philanthropic foundations and development loans from the federal government's Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and Edmonton's Inner-City Housing Society. Unfortunately, due to difficulties in securing mortgages in the rent-to-own arrangements, CECLT had to repay Edmonton's government for the cost of the donated properties, selling them at market rate in order to raise reimbursement funds.

The situation in Edmonton highlights some of the broader challenges that were faced

by the early CLTs in Canada, including: an inability to obtain mortgages for CLT homeowners; reliance on piecemeal and unpredictable government funding; and shifting political support for CLT activities from local government.

There were major differences among the CLTs that formed during this period, both in the tenure and scale of their projects and in the extent to which organizations and their activities were led by a place-based community. Some of these efforts, such as Milton-Parc and the West Broadway CLT, were community-led at the neighbourhood level, while the majority of CLTs during this period were driven by sector-based organizations such as the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada (in the case of Colandoco) and the Calgary Homeless Foundation (in the case of the Calgary Community Land Trust). Despite the small number of CLTs that emerged prior to 2012, however, they contributed to an emerging public awareness about the model's potential for delivering affordable housing (see Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2005). They also shaped a path for the formation of a second wave of CLT organizations.

## **THE SECOND GENERATION OF CANADIAN CLTs 2012–PRESENT**

There has been a resurgence of interest in CLT development in Canada in recent years. Out of twenty currently active CLTs in Canada, nine were established since 2014. In 2017, moreover, a new Canadian CLT Network was formed to organize a more cohesive sector. This resurgence has been driven in part by the dynamic evolution of the small group of “first-generation,” sector-based land trusts, which have re-emerged as expert-led nonprofit affordable housing developers. It also includes a new and energized “second generation” of more activist-based, community-based CLTs. The activists behind these latter initiatives — neighbourhood residents, community agencies, radical planners and, in some cases, municipal staff — have organized CLTs in response to the escalating affordable housing crisis in Canadian cities, rapid gentrification, and a renewed interest in community-based responses to these problems. While contemporary Canadian CLTs from both phases of CLT development share a common objective of increasing the supply of permanently affordable housing, they differ in their respective approaches to community-led development, community ownership, and democratic governance. We explore these issues in the following sections by referring to the activities of several representative second-generation CLTs.

### **Community-Based CLT Development**

Since 2014, nine new community-led CLTs have emerged in response to an escalating affordable housing crisis in Canadian cities and a growing sense that government and social sector responses have been inadequate. This crisis, driven by an undersupply of housing, the increasing financialization of the housing market, and the repositioning by

corporate landlords and private developers of existing housing for higher-income renters and homeowners, has translated into gentrification and redevelopment pressures in particular urban neighbourhoods (August and Walks, 2018; Bunce, 2018; Walks, 2014). For low-income and vulnerable residents, gentrification is a harmful process of destabilization. It causes food insecurity, housing insecurity, eviction, and displacement. While the social costs of gentrification are well known, neither the government nor the social housing sector has cultivated an adequate response. As a result, some impacted communities have looked to the community land trust as a way to mitigate gentrification.

The CLT model is appealing because of its emphasis on removing land and housing from the speculative market and controlling the rapid rise in real estate costs, thereby securing the perpetual affordability of land and housing. As Dominique Russell of the Kensington Market Land Trust in downtown Toronto's historic and gentrifying Kensington Market neighbourhood has stated, "Gentrification is a real estate problem and we felt we needed a real estate solution" (Interview with Dominique Russell, February 2, 2019, Toronto). Similar to first-generation CLTs, the current generation of community-led CLTs is focused on securing community ownership and/or community control of the land, whether through donation, purchase, or a long-term land lease from government, and then developing housing that will be permanently affordable. While CLT organizations retain ownership of the land, ownership of the building is retained by the CLT and leased to a nonprofit organization to provide affordable housing, or the building is owned directly by the nonprofit organization. Unlike sector-based CLTs, however, which

The CLT is not only used for land preservation and housing provision, but also for planning and preserving socially just communities.

view land ownership primarily as a legal tool to ensure affordable housing provision, the community-based organizations tend to have a broader agenda where community ownership of land is seen as the means to exercise

broader community control over local development. They also engage in participatory democracy practices to fight against detrimental land uses and harmful real estate development decisions.

In urban areas like Toronto's Parkdale and Kensington Market neighbourhoods, Hamilton's Beasley neighbourhood, and the Heatherington area of Ottawa, where there is a long-standing working class, racialized, immigrant and socially progressive identity, gentrification threatens not only housing affordability, but collective social infrastructures, the local economy, and neighbourhood culture. In Vancouver's Hogan's Alley Society, the CLT acts as a way to redress the historical displacement of Vancouver's Black population. The CLT model provides a platform in such places for encouraging resident empowerment and participation and for exercising community control over neighbourhood change. In these contexts, the CLT is not only used for land preservation and housing provision, but also for planning and preserving more socially just communities.

Recent community-led CLTs have gone beyond a first-generation focus on the acquisition of land and the development of housing to engage more broadly in neighbourhood and city-wide activism, social rights advocacy, and community-led planning.

*Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust (Toronto).* The first of these second-generation, community-led CLTs to emerge was the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust (PNLT). Established in 2014, the PNLT was initiated by residents and representatives from local nonprofit organizations who were concerned about the increasing gentrification of an historically working-class community. The intended role of the land trust was the acquisition and preservation of important community assets, removing them from the speculative market. A secondary goal was to enable increased democratic participation by neighbourhood residents in planning around land use. Although still in its start-up phase, PNLT has already generated strong local support. By mid 2019, it had attracted over 700 registered members and had completed two acquisitions, including an urban agricultural project and a rooming house preservation pilot project, which it intends to expand to build a portfolio of community-owned rooming houses.

Canada's charity law is more restrictive and burdensome than the 501(c)(3) designation in the United States. As a result, to accomplish its goals, Parkdale has developed a unique dual organizational model, consisting of a charity and a nonprofit that work together, but have different strategic purposes. The charitable land trust, called the Neighbourhood Land Trust (NLT), can benefit from charitable donations of land and money, but may only hold land that is used for charitable purposes and may only lease land to other charities. The charity cannot own cooperative housing or undertake community planning, both of which are not considered charitable purposes. It is also very limited in its ability to undertake political activity. The nonprofit land trust, the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust (PNLT), has limited ability to fundraise, but can own and lease land more freely and has no limits on its political activity. The nonprofit land trust has a broad-based membership and community-elected board, while retaining control over the charity.

Inspired by CLTs in the United States, such as Dudley Neighbors Inc. in Boston and the Oakland CLT in the San Francisco Bay Area, PNLT has embraced the governance model of the "classic" CLT. Emphasizing community control of the organization itself, the PNLT's 15-person board of directors is elected from its resident membership. Furthermore, a tripartite board structure ensures equal representation from: "core members" who live or work on the trust's land; "organizational members" who are drawn from organizations that serve or embody the diversity of Parkdale; and "community members" who live or work within the geographic boundaries of Parkdale.

PNLT focuses its acquisition planning efforts on affordable housing and also space for community economic development, such as urban agriculture, social enterprises, and community services. With an interest in being responsive to community needs and





Fig. 7.2. PNLT members celebrating acquisition of at-risk rooming house, Toronto.

visions, the trust sets its priorities through community planning and action research. In 2016, PNLT co-led a participatory planning process, engaging 31 local organizations and over 400 residents in the creation of the *Parkdale Community Planning Study—A plan for decent work, shared wealth and equitable development in Parkdale*. The study identified an opportunity for the Neighborhood Land Trust to secure its first piece of land, a 7000 square-foot vacant property, which was acquired in 2017 through a below-market private purchase. The trust does not operate programs on the land it owns, but provides affordable land leases to eligible operating partners. Its first acquisition, now named the Milky Way Garden, is leased to Greenest City, a local environmental charity that will redevelop this vacant lot into an urban agriculture space to enhance affordable and equitable access to healthy food for local community members.

In 2017, the PNLT undertook a Community Action Research study of rooming house loss; a neighbourhood crisis that was quickly decreasing affordable single rooms and small rental units through the rapid conversion of rooming houses into upscaled rental housing or single-family homes. In response, the PNLT recruited four community organizations to implement a multi-partner Rooming House Preservation Strategy targeted to 59 at-risk rooming houses in Parkdale. Pursuing this strategy, after eight unsuccessful attempts, the Neighbourhood Land Trust has recently implemented a rooming housing preservation pilot, acquiring a 15-unit at-risk rooming house with capital funding

provided by the City of Toronto. It is important to note that it was necessary to undertake two years of targeted advocacy and activism in order to build political support at the City of Toronto to make capital funding available to the land trust.<sup>7</sup> This funding enables and requires NLT to maintain rents at or below 80% of Average Market Rent (AMR) for a 99-year affordability period. Eligible tenants can also benefit from deeper levels of affordability, however, through rental supplements. The property will be held by the charitable NLT, but leased and operated by PARC, a local supportive housing organization.

The asset bases of PNLTL and NLT are not large. Nevertheless, their public advocacy and higher profile in the press have contributed greatly to the growing public awareness and interest in CLTs, both in Toronto and across Canada.

***Hamilton Community Land Trust (Ontario).*** The Hamilton Community Land Trust (HCLT) was formed in 2014 in the Beasley neighbourhood of Hamilton, Ontario by residents and community-based organizations who saw the need for greater community control over land use and the revitalization of Central Hamilton. This historically working-class city has long suffered from economic decline, environmental contamination, and high vacancy rates, but by 2014 a new phase of real estate reinvestment and gentrification was well underway. Between 2012 and 2015, housing prices in Hamilton rose significantly. HCLT's mandate is to hold and to steward land, acquired primarily from the municipality, and to facilitate the land's use for affordable housing or other community needs. The CLT is playing a facilitative role in the development of its lands, rather than that of a developer or operator, by working with resident groups, housing developers, and other organizations to transform underutilized properties into high-quality affordable housing, gardens, and community spaces. In 2017, HCLT acquired its first parcel of land from the City of Hamilton and then partnered with Habitat for Humanity Hamilton to develop a four-bedroom home that is being leased to a lower-income family. This initial project has demonstrated the capacity of HCLT to act as a viable organizational vehicle for redeveloping vacant city land (Hamilton Community Land Trust, 2019).

***Kensington Market Community Land Trust (Toronto).*** Kensington Market Community Land Trust (KMCLT) was initiated in 2017 by an activist-minded group of residents who had successfully mobilized to stop the development of a WalMart store near an entrance road to the neighbourhood. The group aims to utilize the CLT to protect neighbourhood affordability more generally. Dominique Russell of KMCLT states that, "The fundamental underpinning characteristic of Kensington Market is its affordability, and we want to ensure this is preserved into the future" (Russell Interview, 2019). In recent years, Kensington Market has experienced increasing condominium development around the edges of the neighbourhood, rising rents, and "renovictions" linked to a surge in residential rehabilitation and the proliferation of short-term rentals such as AirBnB in



the area. For long-term tenants and small independent store owners in this historically immigrant community, there is a shared interest in finding a way to remain in the neighbourhood and to protect its unique character (Ibid.).

KMCLT is planning to utilize the CLT for community ownership of land and community control over whatever is built upon it. The organization hopes to acquire and to preserve at-risk rental housing and storefronts. Potentially it may also oversee the redevelopment of a large municipal parking lot into a new affordable housing building. While KMCLT is still in its start-up phase of CLT development, its early success has generated support from local residents and representatives of the municipal government.

*Hogan's Alley Society (Vancouver)*. Fifty years ago, after decades of displacement pressure on the community, the construction of the Georgia and Dunsmuir viaducts displaced an area historically known as Hogan's Alley, home to the city's Black population (Hogan's Alley Society, n.d.). In recent years, the City of Vancouver has focused efforts on removing the viaducts and is planning to revitalize the area through the North East False Creek (NEFC) area plan, approved in 2018. The Hogan's Alley Society was formed as a community-led nonprofit organization in 2017 to seek redress for the displacement of the Black community by fostering social, political, cultural and economic justice for Vancouver's Black community. Through a proposal for a nonprofit community land trust, the Hogan's Alley Society seeks to steward the land and to oversee the development of affordable housing, cultural amenities, social enterprise, and small business spaces, managing these assets in perpetuity. Negotiations with the City of Vancouver are also underway for a transfer of the former Hogan's Alley site into the CLT, a commitment made in the NEFC policy by the City Council in 2018. The redevelopment and stewardship of these lands will be led by the Hogan's Alley Society, working with partners and stakeholders in applying the CLT model to support renter households (Hogan's Alley Society, n.d.).

### **Sector-Based Community Land Trusts**

While community-led CLTs have generated new interest in the CLT as a model for bottom-up development, sector-based CLTs have continued to demonstrate that the CLT is an effective vehicle for the development and stewardship of large stocks of affordable housing. Some first-generation CLTs, such as Colandco, have halted their housing development activities and now focus purely on the stewardship of their assets. Others are forging new growth plans. The recent formation of the Vancouver Community Land Trust Foundation (VCLTF) and HomeSpace (formerly the Calgary Community Land Trust) underscore a new phase of sector-based CLT development led by organizations with expansionist business approaches. As a result, these two sector-based CLTs are building thousands of units of new affordable housing on community-owned land and, in the process, are creating broader public recognition of the CLT model in Canada.

*The Community Land Trust (Vancouver)*. The most prolific sector-based CLT development to be undertaken in the past decade has been led by the Cooperative Housing Federation of British Columbia (CHFBC), which controls three CLTs in the wider Vancouver area, collectively branded as *The Community Land Trust*. This recent development has occurred in the context of Vancouver's expensive housing market which, in turn, has sparked a renewed interest in cooperative and nonprofit affordable housing provision. The success of the three Vancouver-area land trusts was facilitated by enabling policy and political will at both the provincial and municipal levels. In this light, the CHFBC has imagined the CLT as a development and asset management vehicle that can deliver and steward affordable housing in direct partnership with government and the broader community housing sector.

Following in the footsteps of Colandco in Toronto, CHFBC created the Community Housing Land Trust Foundation in 1993 to hold the land and buildings of multiple cooperatives. In its early years, the Foundation acquired six properties, containing 354 units, transferred from the provincial government. The Foundation retained ownership of the land and the buildings, executing leases for the land and buildings with the independent housing cooperatives.

In 2012, a unique opportunity emerged for the CHFBC to establish a second land trust, the Vancouver Community Land Trust Foundation (VCLTF), when it won a bid competition to develop four parcels of land that were owned by the City of Vancouver. That year, CHFBC re-envisioned its model and began to self-identify as a community land trust, even rebranding its multiple land trust efforts as "The Community Land Trust." This re-framing was partially political: emphasizing the nonprofit ownership and stewardship of the land and buildings in contrast to the private provision of affordable housing that was being proposed by other developers who were competing for access to public land. It also signaled that the CLT would serve the broader community housing sector, including nonprofit and Indigenous organizations, rather than serving only cooperatives.

VCLTF has since successfully developed 358 affordable housing units on these four parcels of land. While title to the land has been retained by the City of Vancouver, the CLT has a 99-year leasehold for the land and owns the buildings until the end of the lease, when all of the improvements will revert to the City. VCLTF hopes that, at the end of this lease period, the CLT and the City will work together to redevelop the property for purposes that are consistent with their respective missions (Interview with Tom Armstrong, July 21, 2019).

Three of these properties are owned by the Community Land Trust and operated as rental housing, managed through operating agreements with three different nonprofit housing organizations. The fourth property is operated by a housing cooperative. Since the housing is operated by other organizations, the VCLTF is free to focus on other

The Vancouver CLT Foundation has become a preferred partner for doing residential development on municipally owned land.

aspects of development and stewardship. Across its entire portfolio, tenants pay rents that range from a shelter rate to 90% of Average Market Rent. Building on this successful partnership with the City of Vancouver, VCLTF won another com-

petitive bid in 2018 to develop an additional 1000 new affordable rental units on seven parcels of City-owned land.

While CLTs in Canada have historically faced challenges in increasing their scale, VCLTF has addressed this issue by forging strong partnerships with municipalities and by maximizing the benefits of a portfolio approach to development and stewardship; that is, when planning for new developments, VCLTF utilizes revenues generated from more profitable properties to cross-subsidize less profitable properties. This has allowed VCLTF to develop properties which may not have otherwise been financially viable. VCLTF's ability to develop affordable housing on a wide range of properties has positioned it as a preferred partner by the City of Vancouver for doing residential development on municipally owned land.

Significantly, through its multiple land trusts, CHFBC has departed from the standard practice of CLTs in other countries and has occasionally chosen to encumber its landholdings with debt, thereby “unlocking” the equity to leverage the financing needed for the development of new affordable housing. As Tiffany Duzzita, VCLTF's Director, notes:

[T]he community land trust is a vehicle for keeping the affordable housing sector growing, and it comes down to benefits derived from the separation of land and buildings. The land component stays with the land trust, removing it from the speculative market and rising real estate costs. But the nonprofit land trust can actually use the land value as equity to redevelop and build new housing by borrowing against it. Since the land trust is mission based—it uses its (growing equity) to build more housing, not generate profit (Presentation by Tiffany Duzzita, 2017).

The community land trust has also proven to be a successful conduit through which to stabilize, improve, and redevelop existing cooperative housing assets. Recently, VCLTF took ownership of 94 cooperative homes in Abbotsford BC after the co-op experienced financial challenges. VCLTF worked with co-op members to design a comprehensive renovation plan that was funded through refinancing their existing mortgages. By bringing the co-op's assets into the land trust, the co-op benefited from an increased asset management capacity. Additionally, VCLTF provided a guarantee that the land would be protected for affordable housing on a long-term basis. Tiffany Duzzita estimates that in

twelve years, the land trust will be able to leverage the increased value in the land to fund the development of an estimated 200 new units of affordable housing at the Abbotsford site, requiring little to no government assistance (Presentation by Duzzita, 2017).

*HomeSpace (Calgary)*. The initial vision for Calgary’s HomeSpace, in its previous incarnation as the Calgary Community Land Trust, was to focus on receiving cash and land donations for affordable housing, but not to develop or to operate the housing itself. HomeSpace now identifies as a nonprofit real estate corporation that seeks to provide development, property management, and asset management capacity to the affordable housing sector through the land trust model. As of early 2019, HomeSpace owned 27 buildings with a total of 520 rental units, and had an additional 211 units under development. Utilizing a partnership model, HomeSpace retains ownership of the buildings it develops and provides property management, while 17 agency partners provide support services to residents with the intention of serving diverse populations. Rents are offered at a “break-even” rate that is 20%–40% below market, with many tenants receiving deeper levels of affordability through housing allowances. One characteristic that sets HomeSpace apart from many other CLTs is that it explicitly focuses on developing properties for supportive housing. It is also distinctive in not separating the ownership of land and buildings. HomeSpace continues to own both.

Over several years, HomeSpace has increased its capacity to become one of the largest nonprofit housing developers in Calgary. In 2018, HomeSpace won competitive bids to build affordable housing on three parcels of land that were owned by the City of Calgary. HomeSpace attributes its recent success and growth in part to the high level of coordination of affordable housing efforts in Calgary. The Calgary Homeless Foundation acts as the systems planner, working with local agencies and government to identify areas of greatest need, while HomeSpace acts as the nonprofit developer in partnership with government and specialized housing providers to develop projects and to serve as their long-term steward after they are built (HomeSpace Society, 2018).

### CANADIAN NETWORK OF CLTs

There are currently twenty active CLTs in Canada, half of which were initiated since 2014. This recent surge in CLT development in Canada coalesced in July 2017 with the establishment of the Canadian Network of CLTs (CNCLT).<sup>8</sup> This new Network aims to unite both newer, community-led CLTs and more established CLTs into a cohesive, nation-wide movement. Initial objectives of the Canadian Network of CLTs include: (1) increasing government recognition of the CLT model through legislative advocacy; (2) increasing peer-to-peer resource sharing and capacity building; and (3) centering of social justice in CLT development.

In 2019, over 30 members of the fledgling Network met in person in Canada for the first time at a conference hosted by Communaute Milton-Parc in Montreal, entitled *From The Ground Up: Community Control of Land, Housing and the Economy*.

The Canadian CLT Network ([www.communityland.ca](http://www.communityland.ca)) is still new and remains fairly ad hoc in its organization, but it has already increased collaboration and resource sharing among Canadian CLTs. If the Network can successfully facilitate cross-pollination and capacity building between community-led approaches and sector-based CLT approaches, the expectation is that Canadian CLTs will continue to grow as necessary structures for more socially just planning and affordable housing provision, while also having a greater impact on public policies.



## CONCLUSION

The recent growth of CLTs in Canada builds upon several decades of organizing, from the 1980s onwards. In the context of large-scale government cutbacks in funding for social housing programs, social services, and community programs over the past several decades, Canadian CLTs have emerged as a relatively small, yet effective vehicle for meeting community needs and broader public priorities for affordable housing.

The “first generation” of CLTs that emerged in the 1980s were either large, sector-based organizations that prioritized affordable housing provision across cities and urban regions through partnerships with co-op housing societies, or neighbourhood-oriented and focused on community-based development through local affordable housing provision. This difference is evident in the organizational development of Colandco over the past several decades and its use of a land trust arrangement to include a portfolio of individual cooperative housing communities across Toronto. In contrast, the West Broadway CLT in Winnipeg chose to remain neighbourhood-focused, concentrating on the renovation of rent-to-own housing and supporting local community development efforts. Several of the CLTs in this first phase of Canadian CLT development created their own variations on the American CLT model, informed by the Canadian adoption of cooperatives, as a way to create affordable communities.

After 2012, the emergence of a “second generation” of CLTs followed a similar pattern of being either sector-based and expansionist in their approach to affordable housing provision or community-led and neighbourhood-based. The growth of CLTs during this period, especially over the last several years, has reflected the influence of local activists advocating for the particular needs of their surrounding community. This is evident in CLT initiatives that more broadly address the impact of gentrification, such as in Parkdale, Hamilton, and Hogan’s Alley. Sector-led CLTs, on the other hand, such as the Vancouver Community Land Trust and HomeSpace, demonstrate innovative strategies to accrue land and to act as affordable housing developers through the formation of multi-sectoral

partnerships and sophisticated management of their housing portfolios. With a city-wide service area, these sector-based CLTs are expanding affordable housing supply and, at the same time, increasing public awareness about the potential productivity and viability of the CLT model.

The recent establishment of a Canadian Network of CLTs, bringing together sector-based and community-based CLTs in a formal network for resource sharing and knowledge mobilization, points to a new phase of CLT development in Canada. CLT organizations are now actively engaged in creating links with one another and with organizations and networks in other countries. There has also been, of late, a much-needed discussion about Indigenous land rights and national reconciliation in relation to CLTs. Building on several decades of organizational development and advocacy, Canadian CLTs are now creating a new wave of innovative practices and opportunities for affordable housing provision and community-led development.

### Notes

1. A National Housing Strategy for Canada, the first federal government initiative for affordable housing in several decades, was announced by the Liberal government in their 2016 budget. This Strategy is a 10-year, \$40 billion plan to address homelessness and to subsidize the production of 100,000 new affordable housing units (National Housing Strategy, 2018).
2. 96% of all housing in Canada is currently built by the private sector (Cheung, 2017).
3. Throughout this chapter we use the term “sector-based” to refer to the nonprofit housing sector. This is a common colloquial term used by affordable housing advocates in Canada.
4. This \$2 million seed grant was provided by the Campeau Corporation, a Canadian-based commercial and residential real estate development firm (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2005).
5. The renovation of these buildings and other infrastructure was publicly funded at an estimated cost of \$30 million (CAD), provided by the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the City of Montreal, and the provincial government of Quebec (World Habitat, 2017).
6. In Canada, legislation for local level (municipal) governance is produced and enacted by provincial or territorial governments. There are ten provincial governments and three territorial governments.
7. Because of this project, the City of Toronto piloted a new approach to distributing capital funding through a fast-tracked approval process that enabled PNLT to act quickly to acquire the property on the open market.



8. The first meetings were held online with support from Grounded Solutions Network in the United States. They included representatives from Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust, Kensington Market CLT, Circle CLT, Colandco, Hamilton CLT, Vivacité (Montreal), Hogan's Alley, Communaute Milton-Parc, Vancouver's Community Land Trust, the North End Halifax CLT (Nova Scotia), and Heatherington Land Trust (Ottawa).

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