

Research Brief: Mechanisms to Improve Health Through Community Land Trusts

Community land trusts (CLTs) are nonprofits that acquire land, often in gentrifying areas, and develop housing on that land. Homes are sold at discounted rates to low- and moderate-income households while the CLT retains the land in trust. Homes carry resale price limits to ensure permanent affordability. CLTs also operate democratically and champion community control of development.

The CLT model is a unique approach to affordable housing that may improve the health and well-being of lower income households in several ways. We interviewed CLT staff and residents across the country to better understand the connections between CLTs and health.

We found that participants most often mentioned mental health benefits, such as lower chronic stress, that come from the stability and affordability of a CLT unit.

Other health-related factors included the chance to build wealth, improved housing quality and neighborhood amenities, residential services and partnerships with health systems, and democratic governance.

Our findings suggest that CLTs offer multiple pathways for future research on housing's impact on health.



Interview Themes Expressed by CLT Staff and Residents

- 1. Improved mental health:** “It’s about creating that stability, and that contributes to mental health. We’re talking about people who were living paycheck to paycheck and who were stressed out.”
- 2. High-quality housing:** “You get somebody into a home that passes a HUD quality checklist, and especially in our brand new construction homes, the air quality ... is vastly improved from what they were experiencing as a renter.”
- 3. Access to healthy neighborhood amenities:** “We can walk there for theater, college classes, take your kids to the doctors. You don’t have to leave this community for anything, actually.”
- 4. Residential support services and partnerships:** “We work very closely with homebuyer counselors, foreclosure prevention counselors, counseling agencies ... It’s really a broad range.”
- 5. Democratic governance:** “For me it always feels good to be in the decision-making process, to have a voice in how you live, your environment, things that go on in your life.”

“Mechanisms to Improve Health Through Community Land Trusts”
Journal of Urban Health. Full article available online: <https://bit.ly/3wBBpao>.
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