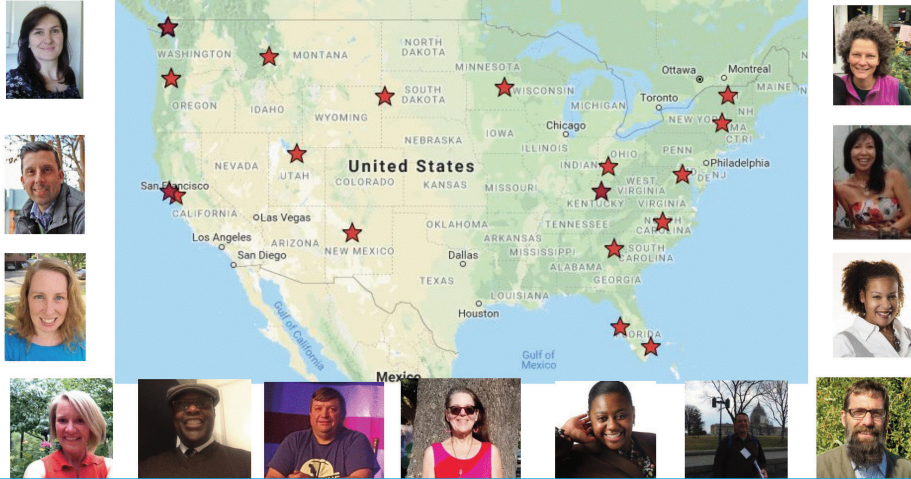




Resident Ambassadors



Resident map demonstrating the reach of the Ambassador Program. From 2014-2019, the Resident Ambassador Program brought together resident leaders from across the nation.

Housing is generally considered affordable when the cost is no more than 30% of annual household income,” says Tony Pickett. “Even before the pandemic, nearly one in six households earning less than \$75,000 annually paid more than 50% of their income for housing,” he says. The pandemic strained an already fragile situation.

Tony is the CEO of Grounded Solutions Network, an organization dedicated to cultivating equitable, inclusive communities by advancing long-lasting, affordable housing solutions. Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) awarded Grounded Solutions Network a Strategic National Grant to expand its work in the growing area of shared-equity homeownership and lasting affordability.

“The median existing house price of \$350,000 is now double what it was a decade ago, and most of our nation’s workforce cannot afford to purchase a home. Wages have not kept pace with costs,” Tony says. “With the pandemic, it has become apparent to people that permanent affordable housing is necessary,” he adds.

The basic model for such housing is a community land trust (CLT). In a CLT, a nonprofit organization owns land in perpetuity, and members of the group buy a house on the land. The buyers’ purchases are generally subsidized, and the buyers agree to sell the home to another low-income buyer at less than market rate when they move on.

“Shared-equity housing is a uniquely self-sustaining approach that ensures that homes remain affordable. One home can help multiple successive families gain an economic foothold,” Tony says.

“Although CLTs limit the amount of equity a family can take out of a home when it is sold, homeowners do build equity, and we find that most who sell go on to purchase market-rate homes,” he says.

Grounded Solutions Network was created in 2016 from the merger of two groups

Community Land Trusts: A Winning Model for Affordable Homeownership

BY BETH GRIFFIN

In the best of times, low-income families find it challenging to locate and retain affordable housing. During the COVID-19 pandemic, prices soared and inventory disappeared, even as some workers lost their jobs and others looked for safer spaces for their children to access remote learning.

Continued on page 3

**COMMITTEE ON DOMESTIC JUSTICE
AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

Most Reverend Paul S. Coakley, Chairman
ARCHBISHOP OF OKLAHOMA CITY

Most Reverend Frank J. Dewane
BISHOP OF VENICE

Most Reverend David J. Malloy
BISHOP OF ROCKFORD

Most Reverend David G. O'Connell
AUXILIARY BISHOP OF LOS ANGELES

Most Reverend Richard E. Pates
BISHOP EMERITUS OF DES MOINES

Most Reverend Timothy C. Senior
AUXILIARY BISHOP OF PHILADELPHIA

Most Reverend David P. Talley
BISHOP OF MEMPHIS

Most Reverend James S. Wall
BISHOP OF GALLUP

Most Reverend Thomas G. Wenski
ARCHBISHOP OF MIAMI

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE CATHOLIC
CAMPAIGN FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

Most Reverend David G. O'Connell, Chairman
AUXILIARY BISHOP OF LOS ANGELES

Most Reverend David P. Talley
BISHOP OF MEMPHIS

Most Reverend John Stowe, OFM Conv
BISHOP OF LEXINGTON

Most Reverend Gerald F. Kicanas
BISHOP EMERITUS OF TUCSON

Most Reverend Fernard Cheri, III, OFM
AUXILIARY BISHOP OF NEW ORLEANS

Most Reverend John P. Dolan
AUXILIARY BISHOP OF SAN DIEGO

Most Reverend Timothy E. Freyer
AUXILIARY BISHOP OF ORANGE

Most Reverend Mark O'Connell
AUXILIARY BISHOP OF BOSTON



Through the CATHOLIC CAMPAIGN FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT (CCHD) of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), Catholics and friends of CCHD

across the country help poor and low-income Americans to help themselves and their communities out of poverty.

Since 1970, the CCHD has contributed over \$400 million to nearly 12,000 low-income led, community-based projects that strengthen families, create jobs, build affordable housing, fight crime, and improve schools and neighborhoods. CCHD requires that projects develop community leadership and participation so their solutions to poverty will be long-lasting and effective, and so CCHD's investment in people will help break the cycle of poverty. CCHD also educates Catholics about the causes of poverty and seeks to build solidarity between impoverished and affluent persons.

LETTER FROM



THE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

Affordable housing is central to empowering low-income people to become agents of their own destiny. Throughout years of visits with groups funded by the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD), I have always been tremendously grateful to engage with folks who understand that housing is not just a building on a street but a building block for a neighborhood and a community.

This issue of *Helping People Help Themselves* looks closely at shared-equity housing, which is a sustainable approach to creating permanently affordable housing. It helps families get a solid foothold in the economy and undergirds their efforts to live in a safe, supportive, interactive community.

Without affordable housing, families are unable to establish equity in their homes. They may be at the mercy of unjust or neglectful landlords and skyrocketing rents. Their tenancy may be unstable, and they may find themselves living in neglected areas that invite crime. Building community is difficult in such a tenuous situation.

CCHD has long supported affordable housing initiatives and has a particular interest in community land trusts (CLTs), which are perhaps the most familiar example of shared-equity housing. Typically, a nonprofit organization owns the CLT land in perpetuity, and individuals own homes on the land. The CLT helps homeowners qualify for subsidies to purchase their units at less than the market rate and prepares them for the financial and practical challenges of homeownership. Homeowners are welcome to sell their units, but they agree in advance to limit their profit on the sale. Because the CLT owns the land, and the home prices do not spike, the model enables a succession of low-income buyers to become homeowners. The stability and affordability of the housing encourage families to get involved in the neighborhood and to create intergenerational community. Grown children can afford to start their own families surrounded by familiar faces and places.

Several years ago, CCHD announced a Strategic National Grant to address the perilous shortage of affordable housing. It was a reflection of our 50-year history of addressing the root causes of poverty and helping the

disenfranchised to develop community ownership to stabilize individuals and families.

We identified Grounded Solutions Network as our primary partner on this project. Grounded Solutions Network and its CEO, Tony Pickett, have a track record of developing long-term affordable housing in some of our country's most expensive cities. They have a special sensitivity to communities of color that have been torn apart by gentrification. I have seen how they have transformed seemingly doomed, neglected neighborhoods into healthy communities where homeowners take pride in investing in every aspect of their shared lives.

Safe, affordable housing has always been elusive for marginalized peoples. The pandemic has magnified the challenges they face. CCHD remains committed to using our resources and expertise to help funded groups meet this most basic of needs.

Renewed thanks for your generous support of our efforts.

RALPH McCLOUD, Director
Catholic Campaign for Human Development



**AN INITIATIVE OF THE
CATHOLIC CAMPAIGN FOR
HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

*More than 40 million
Americans live in poverty.*

**POVERTYUSA.ORG
POBREZAUSA.ORG**



➔ Continued from page 1

with intersecting missions: National Community Land Trust Network and the Cornerstone initiative of Capital Impact Partners. It has more than 200 member organizations in 42 states plus Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico.

“Our diverse membership includes multiple types of shared-equity affordable-housing-focused entities including community land trusts, limited equity cooperatives, Habitat for Humanity affiliates, municipal agencies who administer deed-restricted housing portfolios, individual activists/organizers, and professional housing consultants,” Tony says. Many members are located in California, the Pacific Northwest, and south Florida—areas of the country where housing costs have spiked in recent years. Grounded Solutions Network empowers its members through practical advice and advocacy for sound policies. Tony says its efforts on all fronts use the lens of racial equity to benefit communities of color, including people who were long excluded from home ownership.

Grounded Solutions Network provides technical assistance to help members understand and access shared-equity housing. It reaches more than 1,000 people each year through an online training institute, whose curriculum combines skills-building courses with content-based webinars and advocacy. Its “best practices” assistance helps nonprofit and municipal members to develop and scale affordability programs and create inclusive housing policies at state and local levels.

“Scaling the affordability sector requires more trained experts to increase the capacity,” Tony says. “They are the future leaders of the sector.”

CCHD developed the Strategic National Grant program to address urgent regional or national issues affecting low-income and marginalized communities. These grants serve as a catalyst for organizations working to address the root causes of poverty and to promote justice and economic development on a



Members of CCHD's Ambassador Program, including Grounded Solutions Network's Jason Webb (4th from the right), pose at the 50th Anniversary Celebration of CLT New Communities Inc. in Albany, GA, in 2019.

scale significantly larger than the work of community-based organizations that typically receive support from CCHD.

Grounded Solutions Network used its CCHD Strategic National Grant to expand its infrastructure and increase the understanding and use of shared equity homeownership through CLTs.

“We created and trained a group of CLT resident ambassadors,” Tony says. “These CLT homeowners from around the country participate in virtual and place-based trainings and presentations, highlighting personal stories of their lived experiences. We’ve been able to call on them to educate about the CLT model and win hearts and minds for the approach,” he says.

Northeast Housing Initiative (NEHI) is a Baltimore, Maryland, member of Grounded Solutions Network. NEHI’s executive director, Garrick Good, says its mission is to “build community one house at a time.”

Four-by-Four (4x4) is a 16-block Baltimore neighborhood that was developed in the 1920s and has since been populated by a succession of middle-class white and then African American professionals. Today it is a mixed-race enclave whose homes are mostly rental properties occupied by low-income tenants with federal Section 8 housing subsidies.

Garrick says 150 of the 660 homes in the neighborhood were vacant or abandoned

when NEHI became involved. The area was a target for crime, rodent infestation, and nonresidents’ trash-dumping. NEHI worked with residents to identify block captains to address local issues. It began an information campaign to educate residents about city services such as 311, 211, and 911, and helped Four-by-Four register as a neighborhood association.

Garrick says the registration “puts the neighborhood on the city’s radar and helps it get resources, including recycling bins and road salt.”

“We put up cameras to identify the trash-dumpers and worked with the city to fine the offenders. This was a notification to everyone that this is not a place to dump,” he said.

NEHI also bought 15 of the derelict houses and performed “gut rehabs” to rehabilitate all of them, using grants and subsidies from private and government sources. It recruited interested families and provided seminars on financial literacy, especially establishing and maintaining credit and managing all aspects of home ownership, from timely tax payments to common repairs.

“We work with families to do anything they need to become eligible, including reorganizing student loans and identifying banks that will use a record of timely rent and cell phone payments to establish credit,” Garrick says.

Continued from page 3



"Pizza & Pop" event with Sierra Garden tenants



Sierra Garden Apartment "Meet & Greet"

In 2021, NEHI moved 11 families into their new homes. One of the new owners is a pharmaceutical tech who grew up in the neighborhood and dreamed of resettling there with her young son. Another is a retired transit worker who has already established a prolific vegetable garden in her yard.

NEHI provides ongoing support to its members in large and small ways. "Life happens, and we want to be a person's first call, not their last, if they have a financial setback and need help. We want to help our members keep their credit in good standing and stay in their homes," Garrick says.

NEHI also used a grant from Home Depot to establish a tool-lending library for Four-by-Four residents and negotiated with the state of Maryland to get an all-terrain vehicle so that volunteer homeowner-drivers could collect trash between scheduled pickup days.

Garrick says NEHI relies on Grounded Solutions Network for technical assistance and legislative leadership. "They share lessons learned, so we don't have to reinvent the wheel. They also describe the 'boots on the ground' impact to us of state and local legislation," he says.

Jean Diaz is executive director of Saint Joseph Community Land Trust in South Lake Tahoe, California. The Tahoe Basin is a popular recreation destination that has a seemingly unquenchable need for workers—and a parallel shortage of affordable apartments for them to live

in. Many end up in motels that were last updated decades ago and are ill-suited to house families with small children.

"The CLT model is flexible and can reflect the needs of the local community," Jean says. In addition to its traditional CLT ownership projects, Saint Joseph established a motel-to-housing program that provides interest-free loans to families with school-age children who are living in motels or other substandard housing. The loans, repayable over 36 months, can be used to pay a security deposit and the first month's rent for safe, quality housing.

One of the families used the loan to relocate from a bedbug-infested motel room with no cooking facilities to a home with a full kitchen plus washer and dryer. Another father of a teenager with disabilities said the loan provided access to a secure, comfortable home after frightening stays in a decrepit apartment and a noisy motel.

Saint Joseph also operates the 77-unit Sierra Garden rental apartment complex for workers and has partnered with a for-profit developer to build a new 248-unit rental complex with a community building and social services.

Saint Joseph offers revolving and emergency interest-free loans, which Jean says are unique among CLTs. "We don't want our members going to payday lenders," he says.

Jean says Saint Joseph's ability to be flexible was demonstrated after the Caldor

Fire devastated the Tahoe Basin in the summer of 2021. "All of the tenants at Sierra Garden were evacuated, and many needed temporary housing. We modified our emergency loan program to provide outright grants to 22 households," he says. "We helped people cover whatever needs they had for about two weeks until they could return."

Saint Joseph is a member of Grounded Solutions Network and is itself a CCHD grantee. "There is a strong intersection between Grounded Solutions and CCHD in the area of community land trusts," Jean says. "Grounded Solutions provides technical resources, advocacy, and some grants. CCHD provides important grant funding, sometimes over several years, to establish and maintain organizations."

Tony says that although the CCHD Strategic National Grant was fully spent during the grant period, its effects reverberate throughout the ongoing work of Grounded Solutions Network. "We continue to use and expand the infrastructure we developed with the CCHD funds to advance the use of shared-equity, permanently affordable homeownership to build strong, diverse communities," he says. ✦