

# ADVANCING COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP POLICY THROUGH MULTI- SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS & COALITIONS

RESEARCH BRIEF

**GROUND  
WORKS**  
CONSULTING ● ● ●

**COLA | Lab**  
Community Ownership Learning & Action Lab

MARCH 2026

# About This Project

This document reflects research conducted by Leo Goldberg and Miriam Zuk of Ground Works Consulting in affiliation with The [Community Ownership Learning & Action Lab](#) at the University of Miami. In addition to reviewing published sources, the research team interviewed 37 community ownership advocates and practitioners from across the United States. This research focused on coalitions and partnership strategy, which will be followed by upcoming resources covering policy implementation, cultivating champions within government, policy sequencing, and coalition infrastructure.

# About Ground Works Consulting

[Ground Works Consulting](#) works at the intersection of community power-building and community development. We partner with communities to advance health equity, climate justice, and shared prosperity with a focus on housing justice and community development systems. We believe that communities can achieve more healthy and equitable futures through an honest reckoning with all forms of inequity, particularly structural racism. Operating between big vision and implementation, we work with a wide range of communities and leaders to transform aspirational ideas into positive community outcomes.

## Acknowledgements

This research is indebted to the Community Ownership practitioners from around the country who gave time to discuss their work.

This project is funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF). The views expressed here do not necessarily represent those of RWJF.

## Authors

Leo Goldberg  
Miriam Zuk, Ph.D.

# Advancing Community Ownership Policy through Multi-Sector Partnerships and Coalitions

## Contents

- Key Takeaways ..... 4
- Introduction ..... 6
- What Academic Research Tells Us About Effective Advocacy Coalitions ..... 7
- Why* Do Community Ownership Advocates Build Diverse Coalitions? ..... 9
- How* Do Community Ownership Advocates Build Diverse Coalitions? ..... 16
- United to House LA Case Study..... 20
- Emerging Challenges ..... 22
- Implications for Practice ..... 24
- Appendix A: Community Ownership Policies ..... 26
- Appendix B: Interviewees ..... 27
- Appendix C: ULA Coalition Makeup ..... 28

# Key Takeaways

This research identifies strategies for advancing state and local community ownership policies through strategic coalition-building.

## Diverse coalitions can deliver results for Community Ownership

Partnerships beyond the Community Ownership sector—with labor unions, tenant advocates, affordable housing developers, environmental justice groups, and others—provide essential resources, political legitimacy, and broader geographic reach that Community Ownership organizations typically cannot attain on their own.

## Cross-sector alliances require long-term investment

Successful coalitions build relationships years before policy windows open, viewing coalition-building as an ongoing process rather than a tactic for specific legislative campaigns.

## Building and maintaining coalitions require intentional leadership and bridge-building

For diverse coalitions to achieve and sustain wins for Community Ownership, skilled leaders must translate across sectors, build trust, and balance competing interests.



The United to House LA Coalition Rallies in support of the ballot measure. Source: unitedtohouse.com

## Balancing policy specificity and coalition breadth requires long-term thinking

Policies that are specific to Community Ownership may be impactful, but are hard to build broad coalitions around. Conversely, policy campaigns with broader constituencies (e.g., those fighting for state homeownership subsidies) are easier to build consensus around but may have less direct benefit to Community Ownership practitioners. Navigating that tension requires careful deliberation and long-term thinking.

# Key Takeaways

*Continued*

## Strategic policy framing and inclusive campaigns attract broader support

Successful coalitions carefully calibrate their policy goals and messaging based on their local political climate to maximize coalition participation while advancing Community Ownership goals.

## Maintaining coalition unity presents ongoing challenges

Diverse coalitions face tensions when budget constraints force difficult choices, when leadership turns over, or when some members prioritize their own goals over collective campaign objectives. Community Ownership advocates must balance building a "big tent" with maintaining focus on core priorities like permanent affordability and resident control.

## What is Community Ownership Policy?

Community Ownership policy includes both legal and programmatic policies directly connected to the operation of community-owned land and housing, but also policies that create a conducive legal and budgetary environment for community ownership to thrive.

Among others, policies directly connected to community ownership include:

- State and local budget measures that fund housing co-operatives
- Opportunity to purchase acts
- Legislation that reforms the taxation of community land trust homes

Broader policies that contribute to a conducive ecosystem include:

- State homeownership funding initiatives for which CLTs, ROCs, and co-ops are eligible
- Anti-corporate ownership ordinances
- Local bond measures or transfer taxes to support affordable housing development

See Appendix A for more examples of community ownership policies.

# Introduction

While Community Ownership<sup>1</sup> organizations frequently engage in policy and budget advocacy, it is rarely their top organizational focus. Running organizations, engaging with community members, and working to acquire and steward property keep staff busy. For that reason, many Community Ownership organizations are focusing on building relationships and partnerships with a broader set of stakeholders in order to achieve the policy changes they need. In some cases, this takes the form of coalitions or networks of Community Ownership-focused organizations, such as regional Community Land Trust (CLT) coalitions; in others, Community Ownership organizations join with a broader set of housing advocates in joint campaigns; and in others, Community Ownership practitioners seek partnerships beyond the housing sector.

This memo examines coalition-building strategies that Community Ownership organizations use to amplify their advocacy power, drawing on campaigns from across the country.

Findings are organized to address two questions:

- 1 Why do Community Ownership advocates build diverse coalitions?**  
These findings explore the variety of benefits that advocates have attained through coalition-building strategies.
- 2 How do Community Ownership advocates build diverse coalitions?**  
These findings look at strategies for broadening advocacy campaigns and securing the partnership of key stakeholders.

The brief includes an exploration of the challenges that arise in developing and sustaining multi-sector coalitions and the implications of this research for practitioners.

---

<sup>1</sup> We use Community Ownership to mean practices in which community members have a stake in both decision making and ownership of land and housing with the purpose of ensuring long-term community benefit rather than profit. The Community Ownership organizations at the center of this research include housing co-operatives, community land trusts, manufactured home community co-operatives, and community investment models.

# What Academic Research Tells Us About Effective Advocacy Coalitions

While little published research focuses specifically on the policy work of Community Ownership organizations, academic and nonprofit researchers have developed a body of work on the broader fields of housing justice organizing and advocacy coalitions. The most relevant insights from that literature for Community Ownership practitioners include:

## Broad and diverse coalitions provide advantages in policy advocacy

- Diverse membership can confer coalitions with legitimacy and political power that a narrower collection of participants does not provide.<sup>2</sup>
- The participation of non-housing sector groups can bring perspectives and resources that enrich policymaking and bolster campaigns. Additionally, policymakers tend to take an interest when multiple interest groups come to them with a shared ask.<sup>3</sup>
- Coalitions provide space for organizations with different expertise and orientations to combine resources and know-how in a complementary and mutually beneficial way.<sup>4</sup>

## Broad and diverse coalitions pose challenges to their members

- The more diverse the participants in a coalition, the more difficult it is to keep them united for a long and/or contentious campaign.<sup>5</sup>
- The larger and more diverse the membership of a coalition, the more skills, time, and resources will go into building consensus and guiding action.<sup>2</sup>
- While smaller and more homogeneous coalitions are able to operate more democratically, diverse coalitions require centralized and capable leadership.<sup>2</sup>

# What Academic Research Tells Us About Effective Advocacy Coalitions

## Key Conditions for Forming and Sustaining Advocacy Coalitions

- Political opportunities and threats often catalyze coalition formation.<sup>6</sup>
- Social ties between groups and among organizational leaders are an important ingredient for coalition formation.<sup>6</sup>
- Bridge-building individuals who bring stakeholders together and translate policy issues between them are critical to strengthening ties and networking stakeholders who may not have a history of working together.<sup>2</sup>
- Shared ideology can be a helpful factor, but is not always necessary (or sufficient) to bring coalitions together and/or sustain them.<sup>5</sup>
- Leadership must be adept at cultivating the support of key partners by stressing mutual interdependencies between the core campaign and their issue areas, communicating in the language of members' issue areas, and allowing for multiple campaign entry points and engagement levels.<sup>3</sup>

### Sources

<sup>2</sup> Provan, K. G., & Kenis, P. (2008). Modes of Network Governance. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*.

<sup>3</sup> Koprowski, Mike, and Chantelle Wilkinson (2012). Best Practices and Lessons Learned: Building Multi-Sector Coalitions to Influence Housing Policy. National Low Income Housing Coalition.

<sup>4</sup> Spicer, Jason, Shatan, Nicholas and Williams, Olivia (2025). Understanding Differences Between Technocratic and Transformative Community Land Trusts: A Case of Divergent Coupling? *Urban Affairs Review*.

<sup>5</sup> Lima, Valesca. (2021). Housing Coalition Dynamics: A Comparative Perspective. *Comparative European Politics*, 19(4), 534–553.

<sup>6</sup> Van Dyke, N., & Amos, Bryan. (2017). Social movement coalitions: Formation, Longevity, and Success. *Sociology Compass*. 11(7).

# Why Do Community Ownership Advocates Build Diverse Coalitions?

Interviews with 37 Community Ownership advocates have illuminated a set of advantages that multi-sector coalitions provide community ownership advocates in pursuing state and local policy change. These benefits resonate with findings from the academic and nonprofit literatures, while also exhibiting unique characteristics that reflect the specificity of Community Ownership policy and the particular contexts in which Community Ownership advocacy occurs.

## Generating Power through Multi-Sector Partnerships

Many interviewees highlighted the importance of building coalitions that extend beyond community ownership organizations. Interviewees identified tenant advocates, affordable housing developers, and nonprofit legal services providers, among others, as strategic partners for building advocacy coalitions. Broad coalitions provide advocacy power, political legitimacy, and campaign resources while facilitating peer-to-peer learning and bridge-building among members.

Frequently Cited Partners	Partners in Multiple Cases	Partners in Occasional Cases
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordable housing developers</li> <li>• Nonprofit legal services</li> <li>• Tenants rights advocates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CDFIs &amp; nonprofit lenders</li> <li>• Climate change advocates</li> <li>• Community development corporations</li> <li>• Environmental justice orgs</li> <li>• Faith-Based organizations</li> <li>• Habitat for Humanity affiliates and homeownership nonprofits</li> <li>• Manufactured housing resident coalitions</li> <li>• Philanthropy</li> <li>• Transit advocates</li> <li>• Universities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civil liberties/human rights</li> <li>• Conservation and agriculture land trusts</li> <li>• Homelessness prevention</li> <li>• Local housing agencies</li> <li>• Organized labor</li> <li>• Political party organizations and clubs</li> <li>• Worker coop advocates</li> <li>• YIMBYs</li> </ul>

## Why Do Community Ownership Advocates Build Diverse Coalitions?

The advocacy strategy of CLTs in Minnesota provides an example of building political power through multi-sector partnerships. Stymied by a lack of political clout at the state level, the Minnesota CLT Coalition has been able to win a series of substantial statewide funding initiatives by forming a coalition with Habitat affiliates, housing counseling organizations, downpayment assistance providers, and other nonprofits engaged with affordable homeownership.

In Los Angeles, CLT and co-operative advocates have joined forces with a cross-sector alliance of interest groups to pass Measure ULA (2022) which funds affordable housing through a transfer tax on high-end real estate, and Measure A (2024), a sales tax increase that funds homelessness prevention strategies. Both measures create resources for community ownership projects (see the case study on page 18) that CLT advocates would not have been able to achieve without the collaboration with tenant organizers, transit advocates, the mainstream affordable housing industry, and organized labor, which provided the funding and door-knocking capacity necessary to reach voters.

Jessica Melendez, Policy Director at T.R.U.S.T. South LA, shared that “the successes [of LA Community Ownership policy campaigns] have been due, in large part, to the diversity in membership of our coalitions.” The ULA case study details the advocacy coalition behind Los Angeles’s policy successes.

**“The successes [of LA Community Ownership policy campaigns] have been due, in large part, to the diversity in membership of our coalitions.”**

*- Jessica Melendez,  
T.R.U.S.T. South LA*

While it can be an impactful strategy, building and sustaining broad, diverse advocacy coalitions can be challenging: such formations can come under strain when political or budgetary circumstances change, or when politically influential coalition members decide to prioritize their own policy goals. The “Emerging Challenges Community Ownership Advocates Face” section on page 20 will further explore these dynamics.

## Why Do Community Ownership Advocates Build Diverse Coalitions?

### The benefits of strategic partnerships beyond the Community Ownership sector

While Community Ownership advocates are finding a wide array of advocacy partners, a few key relationships are particularly common in organizing contexts across the country:

**Affordable housing industry actors** can contribute to Community Ownership policy campaigns by providing development and financing expertise and by building trust with local elected officials. Particularly in settings where Community Ownership organizations are relatively new, the affordable housing industry, including developers, lenders, CDCs, and their advocacy coalitions, can be a critical source of legitimacy. These stakeholders were instrumental in a series of successful LA-area policy campaigns. Years of relationship-building between CLTs and CDCs led to joint-venture projects and advocacy collaborations.

Like the Minnesota CLT Coalition, the Colorado Affordable Homeownership Alliance has successfully brought together CLTs with Habitat for Humanity affiliates and other homeownership nonprofits to lobby for funding and beneficial state policies under the banner of “affordable homeownership.” Interviewees highlighted the importance of engaging organizations that serve as their area’s trusted affordable housing providers, as many elected officials will seek guidance on housing policy from those organizations.

**“If it's just CLTs advocating for legislation, it can be a tough sell to legislators who don't know their work. We are recognizing that being in partnership with tenant organizing groups and community development corporations with long track records can help bring elected officials onboard. Those partnerships matter.”** - *New York-based campaign coordinator*

**Tenant advocates** are a key ally in many Community Ownership policy campaigns, particularly in places where Community Ownership organizations work with multifamily housing stock. For example, in New York City, the NYC Community Land Initiative (NYCCLI) has spent years building connections with tenant coalitions that have provided critical support for the City Council's passage of elements of NYCCLI's Community Land Act in January 2026. A leading advocate has found that “If it's just CLTs advocating for legislation, it can be a tough sell to legislators who don't know their work. We are recognizing that being in partnership with tenant organizing groups and community development corporations with long track records can help bring elected officials onboard. Those partnerships matter.”

## Why Do Community Ownership Advocates Build Diverse Coalitions?

**Academic institutions** can provide Community Ownership campaigns with important resources unique to their position in the policymaking environment. Academic institutions can provide legal support, research, documentation, external validation, and can help shape the narrative to normalize community ownership. For example, La Clínica de Asistencia Legal at the University of Puerto Rico provided support to residents of the Caño Martín Peña neighborhood in San Juan, helping them fight back against their proposed displacement and ultimately establish a CLT.<sup>7</sup> Conversely, the lack of collaboration with academics can prove to be damaging. In Los Angeles, for instance, Community Ownership advocates have had to scramble to counter a report from a university that is critical of Measure ULA.

**Labor unions** can be a source of substantial resources to support Community Ownership campaigns. For instance, Labor was critical to the passage of Measure ULA in Los Angeles, providing a massive door-knocking force and financing the campaign.

ULA received support from construction unions, public-sector workers, healthcare workers, the United Farm Workers, and the United Teachers Los Angeles.

In addition, there are some **emerging partnerships** worth noting. In California, Washington, New Hampshire, and Montana, Community Ownership practitioners have found common ground with Yes in My Back Yard (YIMBY) advocates on bills to streamline housing production and increase density around transit. In Vermont and Minnesota, Community Ownership groups have worked with **conservation and agricultural land trusts** to find areas of mutual interest. **Political organizations**, including the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) and other local political clubs, have thrown their support behind opportunity to purchase ordinances and Community Ownership funding measures. Finally, in many contexts, **faith-based organizations** and Community Ownership advocates have come together to advocate for more housing resources.

---

<sup>7</sup> Veronesi, M., Algoed, L., & Hernández Torrales, M. E. (2022). Community-led development and collective land tenure for environmental justice: the case of the Caño Martín Peña community land trust, Puerto Rico. *International Journal of Urban Sustainable Development*, 14(1), 388–397.

## Why Do Community Ownership Advocates Build Diverse Coalitions?

### Navigating relationships with government

Advocacy coalitions are often able to take political positions that individual Community Ownership organizations cannot, for fear of reprisals and endangering future public support. While an individual organization may fear antagonizing government agencies and individual elected officials who have the power to redirect their funding, a coalition provides cover that shields Community Ownership practitioners while amplifying their voice. For example, one Community Ownership coalition staffer shared that “our housing finance agency has been an impediment to much of the work of CLTs. Since they administer funding RFPs, it is perceived that they can get retribution if a CLT publicly takes issue with how they operate. That’s why I should be the one poking and prodding, since I, as coalition staff, don’t seek funding directly from them.”

“Our housing finance agency has been an impediment to much of the work of CLTs. Since they administer funding RFPs, it is perceived that they can get retribution if a CLT publicly takes issue with how they operate. That’s why I should be the one poking and prodding, since I, as coalition staff, don’t seek funding directly from them.”

- Community Ownership Coalition Staffer



The NYC Community Land Initiative rallies for the NYC Community Land Act. Source: [neweconomyproject.org](http://neweconomyproject.org)

## Why Do Community Ownership Advocates Build Diverse Coalitions?

### Legitimacy with elected officials

Diverse coalitions also allow Community Ownership practitioners to build influence with legislators from parts of the city or state that have historically been less aligned with Community Ownership priorities. One common dynamic is that Community Ownership organizations are concentrated in one or more urban areas and have trouble gaining support from rural legislators whose votes are key in the state legislature. To combat an anti-urban bias in Minnesota, CLT advocates have intentionally balanced their membership between organizations in the Twin Cities metro and those outside it. Jeff Washburne from the Minnesota CLT Coalition put it this way: “To be successful at the statewide level, you want members with connections to both rural and urban legislators or else you're constantly having more battles than you need.”

Similarly, since its founding, the California CLT Network has intentionally pursued a board makeup that includes both urban and rural practitioners while balancing those from the Bay Area and Southern California. Geographic diversity increases the Network's influence with legislators and, as a result, the Network has partnered on legislation with elected officials across the state, not only in the urban areas where most CLTs are clustered.

This logic can be put to work at the scale of a single city as well. In New York City, advocates building a coalition in support of the Community Land Act have made a point of integrating organizations from a broad range of neighborhoods to increase their influence with the City Council.

**“To be successful at the statewide level, you want members with connections to both rural and urban legislators or else you're constantly having more battles than you need.”**

*- Jeff Washburne, Minnesota CLT Coalition*

## Why Do Community Ownership Advocates Build Diverse Coalitions?

### Abating Opposition

Coalition partners that are closer to the political center, or more identified with the mainstream real estate industry than Community Ownership advocates, can play an important role in placating powerful opposition interests. For example, a CLT-friendly realtor is best positioned to explain to their local trade group that shared equity homeownership should not be opposed at city hall or the State Capitol .

In some cases, this has taken the form of community ownership-friendly CDCs making the case for Community Ownership policy to apprehensive Low-Income Housing Tax Credit trade groups who were considering opposition. In yet other cases, mission-aligned lenders have acted as a key bridge to the broader lending community and other financial interests with which they do business. Lenders like Genesis LA (a Southern California CDFI) and the Lower East Side People's Federal Credit Union in New York City have the rare position of being in coalition with co-op advocates while maintaining business relations with mainstream real estate actors.

Well-placed professionals can play a similar role: In San Francisco, a real estate broker supportive of the Community Opportunity to Purchase Act was able to defuse opposition from fellow brokers, provide expert advice on policy design, and prevent critics from making an easy categorization like “all brokers oppose COPA.” The same is true of attorneys who can act as a bridge between their corporate clients and Community Ownership organizations.

# How Do Community Ownership Advocates Build Diverse Coalitions?

**Advocates have identified a number of strategies and practices for building and sustaining strong multi-sector coalitions whose goals center or are inclusive of Community Ownership policies.**

## Leadership and bridge-building

The larger and more cross-sectoral a coalition is, the more important the role of its leadership. Coalition leaders bring in new organizations, build trust across members, balance inclusivity with decision-making efficiency, and translate policy issues between members with differing expertise. Interviewees talked about how useful it was when coalitions hired dedicated policy staff to focus on these key functions and make it easier for practitioners to plug-in strategically while juggling the day-to-day work of running nonprofits.

Bridge-building leaders, who are able to navigate differences and create welcoming spaces for diverse stakeholders, are particularly valuable.

In coalitions that often include organizers with antagonistic relationships to local government, bridge-builders facilitate constructive conversations between the coalition and key government staff and act as a go-between for stakeholders who are not inclined to negotiate directly.

Bridge-builders can be based in a Community Ownership organization or in a stand-alone coalition or network of nonprofits. In other cases, a nonprofit itself can play the bridge-building leadership role for a coalition, as is the case for the New Economy Project in New York City, where it staffs state and local policy campaigns, convenes the NYC Community Land Initiative, and acts as connective tissue between CLTs, co-operative organizers, CDCs, tenant advocates, and city housing department officials.

## How Do Community Ownership Advocates Build Diverse Coalitions?

### Choosing Inclusive Campaign Framings

Community Ownership practitioners carefully identify campaign goals to encourage the participation of important allies. These choices are calibrated to each specific political climate and advocacy ecosystem. For example, co-operative and CLT advocates in New York City have organized under the banner of “The Community Land Act” – a framing that suggests decommodification and community control – and attracted endorsements from 150 organizations. Meanwhile, CLTs in Colorado have pursued state resources through the Colorado Affordable Homeownership Alliance, a coalition that includes Habitat affiliates and other homeownership nonprofits. The Alliance has won property tax changes, HOA reform, and spurred the Colorado Housing and Finance Authority to create a new below-market interest rate loan product for nonprofit affordable housing developers.

A number of Community Ownership practitioners emphasized how Community Ownership preserves public investment better than downpayment assistance and other time-limited subsidies while making their case for policies.

This messaging has been effective for the Florida Housing Coalition, which has found government audiences receptive to fiscal responsibility arguments.

In Boston and San Diego, “Community Wealth Building” has provided advocates with a useful framing that bridges traditional homeownership and wealth-building sensibilities with community ownership and economic justice policy goals.

While several interviewees specifically avoided polarizing terminology like “social housing” in their coalition work –Kody Glazer from the Florida Housing Coalition shared that using the phrase social housing “is the quickest way to get killed in Florida”–campaigns in Seattle, Boston, San Francisco, and New York City have found success with coalition goals that explicitly center decommodified land and housing. In those contexts, the terminology has acted as a bridge to tenant advocates and anti-displacement coalitions.

## How Do Community Ownership Advocates Build Diverse Coalitions?

### Demonstrating Success

Interviewees described how the success of Community Ownership organizations in developing decommodified housing and educating the public about their work effectively enticed other stakeholders to associate with those achievements. Deyanira Del Rio, Executive Director of the New Economy Project, shared that Community Ownership advocates in New York City have “mobilized a wide range of community groups—and not just the usual suspects—that have been inspired by the work community land trusts are doing on the ground. Tenant associations, environmental justice groups, worker co-ops, and others increasingly see CLTs and collective land ownership as a foundation on which communities can continue to build, not only to meet their housing needs but to build economic and political power.”

In regions of Minnesota, where CLTs are the most prolific developers of homeownership units and have longstanding credibility with lawmakers and financing agencies, other homeownership advocates have been keen to collaborate and increase their political clout by affiliating with the Minnesota CLT Coalition.

**“We’ve mobilized a wide range of community groups—and not just the usual suspects—that have been inspired by the work community land trusts are doing on the ground.”**

- Deyanira Del Rio, Executive Director, New Economy Project



*The California Community Land Trust Network gathers in Los Angeles. Source: cacltnetwork.org*

## How Do Community Ownership Advocates Build Diverse Coalitions?

### Creating an inclusive coalition through intentional policy design

**“I don’t think we would have been successful with a campaign to pass a tax just to fund community ownership. It would have been too niche. We were able to generate funding for community ownership by being willing to be part of a big tent coalition where funding also flowed to traditional nonprofit developers and renter protection services.”**

- Jonathan Jager, Public Counsel

It is no secret that housing developers, lenders, brokers, and all kinds of nonprofits are motivated to support policies that result in resources that will fund their operations. Designing public-sector programs to spread their benefits beyond the end-beneficiaries (i.e. low-income households, families at risk of displacement, etc.) has been a proven way to win the support of key constituencies that might be less motivated otherwise.

Doing so does not require creating bloated or wasteful programs since, in the Community Ownership space, effective policies often benefit from outreach, technical assistance, legal services support, intermediary lending, and construction expertise, among other things. When those elements are integrated into a proposed policy, a broad array of stakeholders has a material interest in supporting its success.

That includes community-based organizations that conduct outreach and education, established developers who can be contracted to lend their expertise, legal services providers, CDFIs, and the construction trades.

Jonathan Jager from Public Counsel in Los Angeles argued that this approach was key to winning resources for CLTs and cooperatives via the United to House LA campaign: “I don’t think we would have been successful with a campaign to pass a tax just to fund community ownership. It would have been too niche. We were able to generate funding for community ownership by being willing to be part of a big tent coalition where funding also flowed to traditional nonprofit developers and renter protection services.”

# United to House LA Case Study: Coalition-Building In Service of Community Ownership Policies in Los Angeles

The Los Angeles Community Land Trust Coalition (LA CLT Coalition) has leveraged partnerships and coalition-building to secure major policy victories since the beginning of the COVID pandemic. Founded in 2019, the Coalition's seven members are small neighborhood-based nonprofits with limited political reach at the city and county levels. For that reason, the Coalition has intentionally sought to build strategic partnerships to advance its policy agenda, which centers on increasing public resources and legal tools to support CLTs in acquiring and rehabilitating buildings.

The LA CLT Coalition's cultivation of relationships with community development corporations (CDCs) has been particularly important.

While CDCs have viewed CLTs as competitors in some parts of the country, LA CLTs leveraged longstanding interpersonal ties to develop strong working relationships with several well-regarded CDCs, resulting in development partnerships and policy advocacy collaborations.

Through participation in broader campaigns helmed by transit equity and affordable housing advocates, The LA CLT Coalition has also built ties with organized labor to an extent that is rare for community ownership organizations. Today's partnership is many years in the making, and by the time the United to House LA (ULA) campaign launched in the early days of the pandemic, key relationships and collaborative frameworks were already in place.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> When the LA County Federation of Labor and affordable housing advocates struck a deal on 2016's Measure JJJ ballot measure, it set the stage for future collaborations by creating a template pairing labor standards with affordable housing development requirements. This negotiation built relationships that were strengthened through subsequent campaigns including opposition to a NIMBY countermeasure, support of Measure HHH in 2016, and support of an Affordable Housing Linkage Fee in 2017.

## Measure ULA Case Study

### Measure ULA

The 2022 ULA ballot measure proposed, and ultimately won, an increased transfer tax on property sales over \$5.3 million in the City of LA, with revenues flowing to programs aimed at preventing homelessness and producing affordable housing. For CLTs and housing co-operative advocates, Measure ULA was a vehicle for providing substantial public resources—about a third of total ULA program funding—to catalyze community-owned projects.<sup>8</sup>

### Winning Measure ULA

In the face of well-resourced opposition from the real estate industry, the ULA campaign built a broad and energetic coalition that resulted in a runaway win at the ballot box on November 8, 2022. Needing a simple majority, Measure ULA received 58% of the vote. The engagement of organized labor<sup>9</sup> was key: several influential unions provided critical financing for the campaign while also powering door-knocking and public education efforts. The operation of the coalition was also supported by local philanthropies.



*The United to House LA Coalition Rallies in support of the ballot measure. Source: unitedtohousela.com*

The coalition's diversity was another strength (see Appendix C). ACT-LA, a transit justice nonprofit, brought together environmental justice groups, faith-based organizations, economic justice advocates, and a broad array of housing groups, including CLTs, YIMBYs, supportive service providers, and tenant advocates. The ULA coalition's breadth produced needed resources, expertise, and geographic reach for the campaign.

---

<sup>8</sup> One of the revenue sub-programs—"alternative models of permanent housing", receiving 22.5% of annual ULA funds—was explicitly designed by community ownership advocates to create a new subsidy source for permanently affordable housing in which residents have meaningful participation in governance, including CLTs, co-ops, and other limited equity models. The acquisition-rehabilitation sub-program—funded at 10% of ULA funds annually—was another priority for community ownership advocates and includes resale restrictions and tenant control requirements. To support these programs, revenue from ULA was slated for a LA Housing Training Hub to build capacity for community ownership models.

<sup>9</sup> Including the LA County Federation of Labor, SEIU Home Health Care Workers, UNITE HERE Hotel Workers, and the building trades.

# Emerging Challenges in Building and Sustaining Multi-Sector Coalitions

**While Community Ownership practitioners have made substantial advances in forging partnerships and building coalitions in support of Community Ownership policies, interviews also highlighted several challenges that individuals and organizations seeking to influence policy by broadening the tent can anticipate.**

Bringing non-Community Ownership stakeholders to the table has been a challenge in several regions. While Community Ownership practitioners have found Habitat affiliates and CDCs to be strong advocacy partners in some parts of the country, that hasn't been the case everywhere. For example, while individual Habitat affiliates have entered into development partnerships with CLTs in California, they have not found common ground on statewide policy efforts, at least in part because of differing perspectives on the importance of permanent affordability. Similarly, CDCs were critical partners in passing San Francisco's Community Opportunity to Purchase Act in 2019, but have been hesitant to support CLT and cooperative policy campaigns in Boston.

Interviewees also cited the difficulty of keeping diverse stakeholders united around a shared goal. In several cases, disagreements arose when external pressures forced difficult campaign strategy decisions—for example, political or budgetary constraints mean that not every interest group will get what they want. At that point, there is a tendency for stakeholders to prioritize their key issues or programs instead of centering the collective campaign. This can be exacerbated when leadership turns over and underlying tensions create cracks in coalition unity that had previously been managed.

## **Emerging Challenges in Building and Sustaining Multi-Sector Coalitions**

Many interviewees described a strategic approach: rather than leading with CLT-specific policies like dedicating public land for community land trusts, they joined broader coalitions advocating for less-specific campaign goals like increased affordable homeownership funding. This allowed them to build wider support while still advancing their Community Ownership goals. However, in some cases, Community Ownership leaders come to feel that their core interests are overly deprioritized within broader campaigns. At that point, some have chosen to break off from the broader coalition to pursue Community Ownership policies separately or have had to advocate within their coalitions to reshuffle campaign asks. As one Community Ownership coalition leader stated, “You can only get so far when you water your message down.”

Despite these challenges, the experiences documented in this memo demonstrate that Community Ownership advocates are successfully employing promising strategies for building and sustaining diverse advocacy coalitions. When coalitions invest in skilled leadership and remain flexible in their approach, they can sustain unity through difficult moments while still achieving meaningful policy gains.

# Implications for Practice

## Invest in relationships before policy windows open

Successful advocacy coalitions invest in relationship-building well before policy opportunities emerge. The years-long relationship-building between housing advocates and organized labor in Los Angeles, for instance, created the infrastructure that enabled the ULA campaign to move quickly and effectively when the political moment arose. To best position themselves for the long-run, Community Ownership organizations can view coalition-building as an ongoing process rather than a tactic to deploy when a specific legislative opportunity presents itself.

## Look beyond the comfort zone for potential advocacy partnerships

While diverse coalitions come with challenges, cultivating partners from sectors beyond community-owned land and housing can yield needed resources and political legitimacy and set the stage for future collaborations.

Environmental justice, labor, and transit justice advocates are just a few of the stakeholders beyond the housing sphere with whom practitioners have found common ground.

## Cultivate bridge-building leadership

Successful coalitions depend on individuals who can translate across sectors and stakeholder groups—whether connecting labor unions with housing advocates, linking tenant organizers with CLT practitioners, or bringing CDCs into partnerships with cooperative housing organizations.

## Anticipate and plan for coalition maintenance

Coalition unity is most vulnerable when budgets shrink, the political landscape shifts, or difficult strategic choices arise. Building resilient coalitions requires sensitive leadership, ongoing investment in trust-building, clear governance structures, and protocols for navigating disagreement. The most effective coalitions continuously build consensus among their members and sustain momentum through challenging periods.

## Implications for Practice

### Build geographic diversity to expand political influence

Community Ownership organizations are often concentrated in urban areas, but state-level policy advocacy requires broader geographic reach. Successful coalitions deliberately recruit members from both urban and rural areas to build relationships with a wider range of legislators and counter anti-urban bias. At the city level, similarly, including organizations from diverse neighborhoods strengthens influence across the entire legislative body.

### Design campaigns that appeal to diverse stakeholders

Potential coalition partners are drawn to campaigns anchored by organizations with demonstrated track records and capable leaders, as well as to campaigns whose missions align with their own goals.

Advocates can also frame campaign goals to make participation more appealing to key stakeholders.

### Navigate the tension between broad coalition goals and Community Ownership-specific priorities

While embedding Community Ownership priorities within broader housing campaigns can unlock support from diverse partners, practitioners must carefully navigate the tension between building a big tent and maintaining focus on core Community Ownership goals. The experiences shared by interviewees suggest that Community Ownership advocates benefit from entering coalitions with a clear understanding of which of their priorities are non-negotiable and which can be subordinated to broader campaign goals. When Community Ownership-specific policy proposals become too diluted, advocates may need to reassess their coalition strategy or develop parallel advocacy tracks.

# Appendix A

## Community Ownership Policies

Expanding Access to Land and Property	Strengthening CO Organization Capacity	Enhancing Legal Security and Legitimacy	Supporting Affordability (\$)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First right of refusal and opportunity to purchase</li> <li>• Land donations (including land back)</li> <li>• Discounted sales</li> <li>• Incentives for private owners to sell to community ownership organizations</li> <li>• Eminent domain authority</li> <li>• Land banking partnership</li> <li>• Inclusionary zoning with CLT options</li> <li>• Prioritize CO in public land/property dispositions</li> <li>• Tax incentives for selling property to CO orgs</li> <li>• Preferential climate adaptation, disaster recovery, and planned retreat strategy that prioritizes community ownership models</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding streams for CO capacity building and operations</li> <li>• TA programs</li> <li>• Stewardship contracts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statutory definitions of community ownership</li> <li>• Ground lease standards and guidelines</li> <li>• Removal of regulatory and statutory barriers to community ownership and perpetual affordability</li> <li>• Adjusting programs, statutory language, and materials to allow for community ownership and perpetual affordability (e.g., regulatory agreements)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adapting down payment assistance, below-market-rate mortgages and other affordable housing grants and financing products to accommodate CO structures (e.g., shared loans for co-ops)</li> <li>• Set asides or prioritization in subsidy and loan programs for community ownership</li> <li>• Tax exemption and assessment methods</li> <li>• Tax policies that recognize affordability restrictions</li> <li>• Inclusionary housing that's stewarded by land trusts</li> <li>• Creation of new government entities to finance and otherwise support CO such as Social Housing Development Authorities, Public Banks, and Community Wealth Building Initiatives</li> </ul>

# Appendix B

## Interviewees

- Charles Allison-Godfrey, Elevation CLT
- Monjia Belizaire, SHARE Baltimore
- Abby Bronson, ROC-New Hampshire
- Kelli Cicirelli, ROC-New Hampshire
- Jeff Corey, One Roof Community Housing
- Rania Dalloul, UHAB
- Peter Dean, UHAB
- Deyanira Del Rio, NYC Community Land Initiative, New Economy Project
- James DeFillipis, Rutgers University
- Julia Duranti-Martínez, LISC
- David Ellsworth-Keller, Northwest Community Land Trust Coalition
- Kody Glazer, Florida Housing Coalition
- Elise Goldin, NYC Community Land Initiative, New Economy Project
- Mary Griffin, Cooperative Development Foundation
- Arielle Hersh, UHAB
- Rick Jacobus, Street Level Advisors
- Jonathan Jager, Public Counsel
- Kristin King-Ries
- Jessica Melendez, TRUST South LA
- Minnie McMahon, Greater Boston CLT Network
- Sandra McNeill, LA CLT Coalition
- Josh Newton, Cooperation San Diego
- Victoria O'Banion, Northwest Cooperative Development Center
- Krystle Okafor, Maryland Community Investment Corporation
- Jason Paschall, CoNorth
- Doug Ryan, Grounded Solutions Network
- Colby Sledge, Grounded Solutions Network
- Jason Spicer, CUNY
- Will Spisak, NYC Community Land Initiative, New Economy Project
- Stacey Sutton, University of Illinois Chicago
- Brett Theodos, Urban Institute
- Matthew Vu, LA CLT Coalition
- Jeff Washburne, MN CLT Coalition
- Olivia Williams, Wisconsin CLT Network
- Simon Windell, Northwest Community Land Trust Coalition
- Matthew Wyman, Florida Housing Coalition

# Appendix C

## Measure ULA Coalition Makeup

- Civil Liberties/Human Rights Organizations
- Climate Change Organizations
- Environmental Justice Organizations
- Faith-Based Organizations
- Housing
  - Community Land Trusts
  - YIMBY
  - Tenants Rights
  - Homelessness Prevention
  - Affordable Housing Developers
  - Supportive Housing Providers
  - Nonprofit housing lenders
- LA County Democratic Party and Democratic Clubs
- Organized Labor
- Philanthropy

