BUILT BY US

How Nonprofits Can Lead the Charge in Local Development

August 21, 2025

Presented by
Center for Creative Land Recycling
Atlas Community Studios
Groundwork USA

CENTER FOR CREATIVE LAND RECYCLING
RECLAIM. CONNECT. TRANSFORM.

ATLAS community studios

GROUNDWORK USA
CHANGING PLACES CHANGING LIVES

CENTER FOR CREATIVE LAND RECYCLING

U.S. EPA's Technical Assistance to Brownfields Provider (TAB) for R9 & 10.

Our mission is to promote the sustainable, equitable and responsible reuse of underutilized and environmentally impacted properties. We educate, advocate, assist and convene stakeholders to revitalize communities through land recycling.

What We Do:

- Training + Resources
- Redevelopment Planning
- Grant Prep + Review
- Remediation Support
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Project Visioning

Groundwork USA

Groundwork USA is a national nonprofit that supports and strengthens grassroots efforts to build healthier, more resilient neighborhoods. We do this by working deeply with our network of place-based affiliates and by facilitating national peer-to-peer learning, technical assistance, and grantmaking programs for community-centered organizations nationwide.

Groundwork Network

The Groundwork Network is a national network of community-centered nonprofits working at the intersection of people, places, and systems to build healthier, more resilient neighborhoods

Get in Touch and Stay in Touch!

Learn More about CCLR's Services

Schedule a Technical Assistance Call

Subscribe to our Newsletter and follow us on Socials
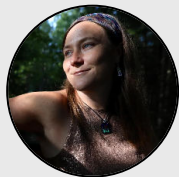
WELCOME & REFRAMING THE NARRATIVE

Introduction

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Redevelopment Director
Atlas Community Studios

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Co-Founder/Executive Director
RiffRaff Arts Collective

Session Goals

Redefine what development can look like for nonprofits and community leaders.

Build your confidence and capacity to lead your own projects.

Explore practical strategies, capital tools, and partnership models.

Learn from real-world examples and lived experience.

Why Local Ownership Matters

Outside developers often extract wealth.

When nonprofits lead, we build assets that reflect our values and protect community interests.

Local ownership helps retain wealth, foster accountability, and strengthen community resilience.

Before We Knew We Could Lead...

- At first, we assumed the City would take it on

- I saw myself as a guide or advocate - not in a developer role

- I never imagined our nonprofit owning or managing the project

- When no one else stepped up, we did because we had to

Before We Knew We Could Lead...

- We believed someone else would redevelop downtown

- Spent years trying to attract outside developers

- Threw events, polished storefronts, pushed incentives and tried to sell, sell, sell!

- Eventually realized: we should invest first

- Took the leap without all the answers

DEMYSTIFYING THE DEVELOPER ROLE

Poll: What does a developer have that you don't?

The Developer Skill Set

Project Management

Communication + Negotiation

Financial

Legal + Regulatory

Problem-Solving

Leadership

Market Analysis

Networking

Engineering, Environmental, Construction

Elements of a Development Project

What a Developer Oversees

- **Vision and purpose** defining the project (with community input)

- Site control and acquisition

- Predevelopment work (due diligence, feasibility, budgeting, entitlements, permitting, environmental remediation)

- Securing (and stacking) the capital (grants, loans, tax credits, donations, etc)

- Construction

- Marketing and tenant commitments (if applicable)

- Launching operations and ongoing asset management

Nonprofits as Developers

- Ensures the mission remains intact

- Opportunity to diversify revenue streams

- Wealth stays in the community

- Community needs drive the project

A MOMENT OF SELF-REFLECTION

What's True for Your Team?

Before you commit, reflect on a few internal drivers:

- What's your motivation for doing this? What's your why?

- What's your risk tolerance?

- Do you want the responsibility of owning the property long-term, or do you just want to influence the outcome?

Are You READY to Lead This Project?

- Project Cost - *Can you secure the funding to pull this off?*

- Internal Capacity - *Can you manage it, or do you need help?*

- **Strategic Fit - *Does leading this project advance your mission?***

- Project Complexity - *Is it a light lift or a heavy lift?*

UNDERSTANDING YOUR OPTIONS

The Development Spectrum

# Poll: What challenges do you anticipate when posing a development opportunity to your board?

Development is a team sport, but there's still individual risk involved

There are two things **core to the developer role** that can't be outsourced:

- Securing site control or ownership of the property

- Accessing and securing the capital to make the project happen

Everything else? You can build a team to support it.

The Development Spectrum

FEE DEVELOPER

DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANT

CO-DEVELOPMENT

DIY

LOW

CAPACITY

HIGH
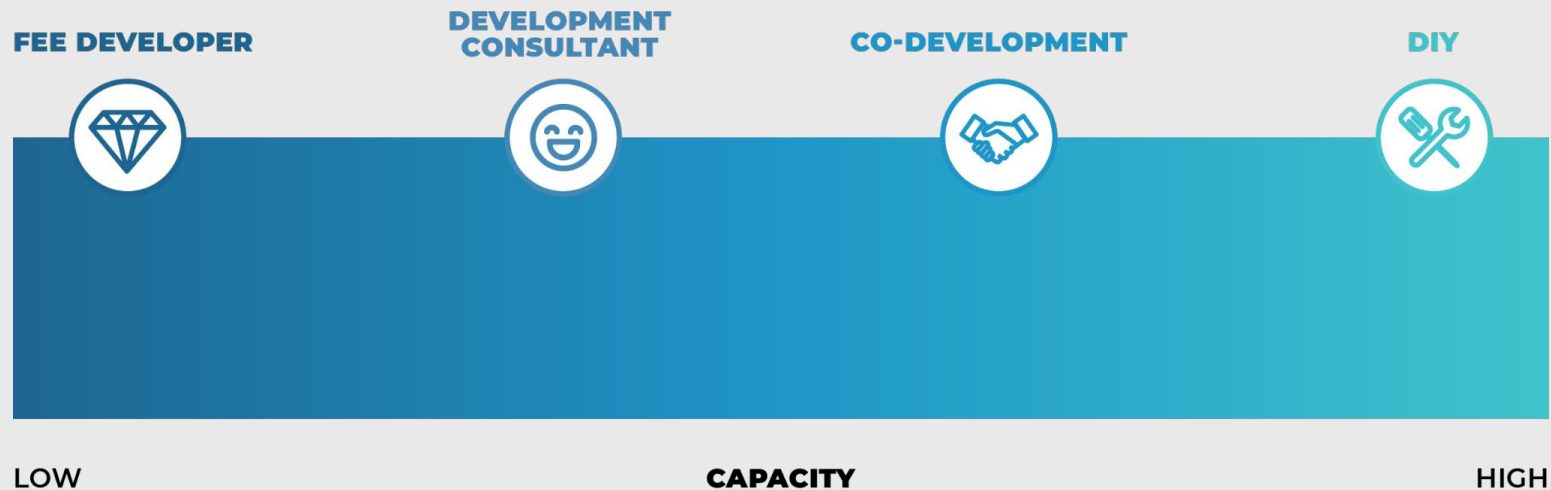
Fee Developer

- Oversee the project from start to finish

- Nonprofit remains in control

- Reduces risk for the org and increases investor confidence

- Delivers a turn-key operation at completion

- Long-term wealth stays local

Ownership and long-term wealth accumulation stay local.

Development Consultant

- You lead, they advise (they support your leadership)

- Brings technical know-how (finance, deal structuring, etc.)

- Often starts as 80/20 (consultant-heavy), then shifts

- "Train the trainer" model that builds internal capacity

- Invests in human capital and long-term local wealth

You build the project and your team's capacity to do it again.

Co-Development

- Shares risk while keeping the nonprofit at the table
- Leverages private capital + expertise for community-led outcomes

- Strengthens position to successfully access certain funding tools

- Increases funder/investor confidence

- Can ensure long-term nonprofit benefit (revenue sharing, buy-out)

- Requires trust and airtight legal agreements!

You share the risk AND collaborate to shape an outcome that reflects community values.
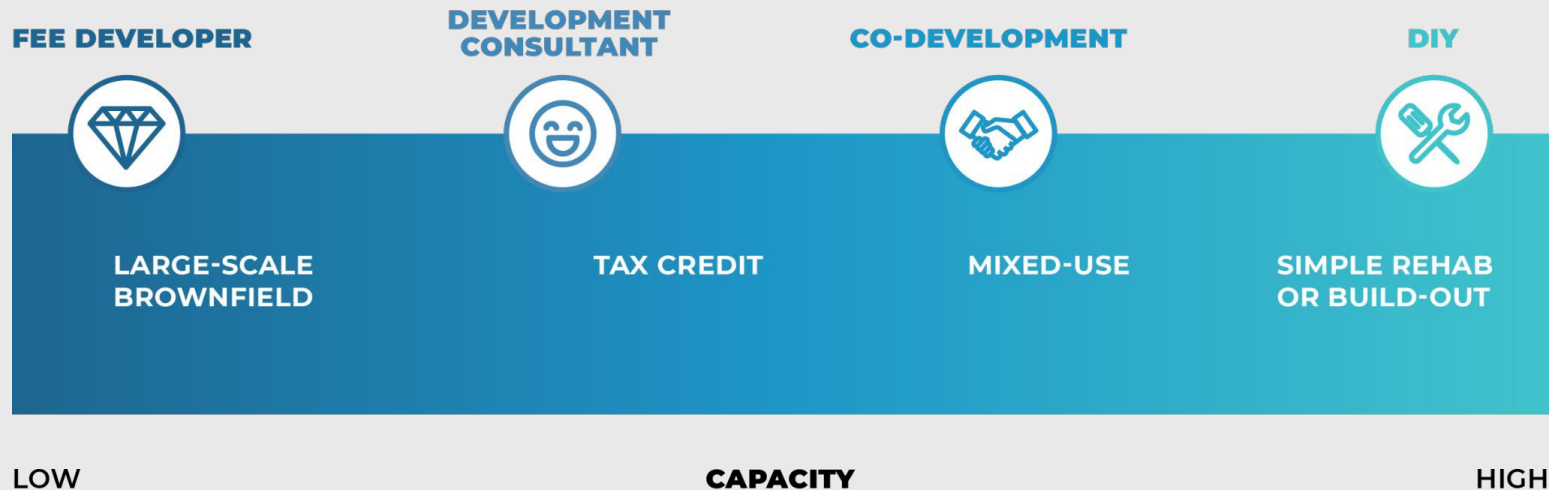
DIY Developer

- You lead the project from concept to completion

- Full control over vision, timeline, outcomes

- You're in charge of building the team

- Highest responsibility and risk

- Best suited for small-scale, phased, or less complex projects

Biggest risk, but all the rewards - revenue, credibility, and impact.

CHOOSING YOUR APPROACH

Exactly HOW Complex Is It....?

FEE DEVELOPER

DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANT

CO-DEVELOPMENT

DIY

LARGE-SCALE BROWNFIELD

TAX CREDIT

MIXED-USE

SIMPLE REHAB OR BUILD-OUT

LOW

CAPACITY

HIGH

CASE STUDY: FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATION AS DEVELOPER

Bethel A.M.E. Church

Building Blocks of a Developer

- **Operational Capacity**: Runs a well-established outreach center, demonstrating experience with programs, compliance, and community trust

- **Internal Expertise:** Leadership includes a retired public housing CEO, bringing deep knowledge of affordable housing development and finance

- **Site Control:** Holds a vacant lot adjacent to the church - one of the most critical starting points for any project

Why They Chose to Develop

Instead of Selling to a Developer

- **Protect community priorities:** Ensure housing meets urgent local needs and keeps land in service of long-term community benefit

- **Maintain mission alignment:** Retain control over affordability, design, and who the project ultimately serves

- **Create sustainable income:** Use developer fees or rental income to support church programs and future ministry work
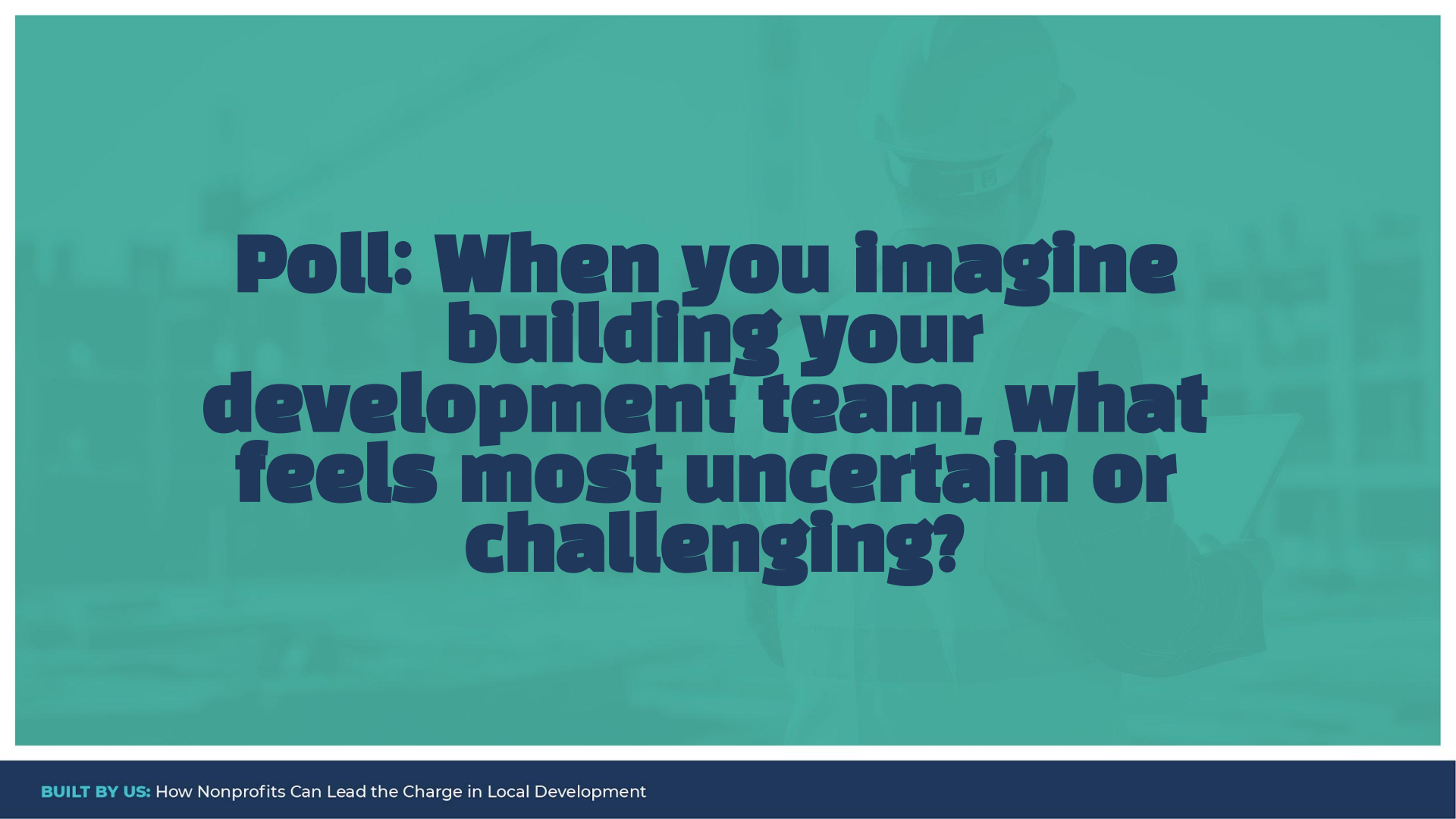
Technical Partnership

Bethel A.M.E. Church
+
Enterprise

- Joined Enterprise's Faith-Based Development Initiative (FBDI) for
  - Training on development fundamentals
  - Legal structuring support
  - Peer learning and coaching from other faith-based developers

BUILDING A DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Poll: When you imagine building your development team, what feels most uncertain or challenging?

Who You'll Need + When

Early Stage (Visioning & Feasibility)

- Architect

- Market + Feasibility Advisor

- Community Engagement Specialist

- Development Finance Advisor

- Environmental Consultant

- Legal Counsel

Who You'll Need + When

(continued)

Mid-State (Pre-Development & Capital Stacking)

- Cost Estimator/GC *(preconstruction)*

- Tax credit consultant *(if applicable)*

- Capital Partners/Funders *(letters of interest, pledges, etc.)*

Who You'll Need + When

(continued)

Final Phases (Construction & Operation)

- General Contractor

- Property/Asset Manager *(if you're holding long-term, this might also be you!)*

- Tenants/End Users *(input on space fit, agreements)*

- Funding/compliance manager

- Accountant, Bookkeeper, Grant Manager

PROJECT FUNDING

Poll: When you think about how your project might get funded, what's your biggest question or concern?

Project Funding: The Usual Suspects

Traditional Sources

- Technical assistance

- Grants / Forgivable loans

- Loans (banks, CDFIs, USDA, etc.)

- Tax Credits (Historic, NMTC, LIHTC)

- Public finance tools (TIF, CDBG funds, conduit bonds, etc)

- Philanthropic Gifts

Project Funding: The Power of Us
(continued)

Community-Based Capital Tools

- **Regulation Crowdfunding:** Raise investments from your community (and beyond) via an online platform
- **Main Street Investment LLCs:** Community investors pool capital to invest
- **Community Notes or Loan Funds:** Community members lend to the project and receive modest returns
- **Program-Related Investments (PRIs):** Low-interest loans or equity from foundations

CROWDFUNDING MODELS

DONATION   REWARD   DEBT   EQUITY

Funding Pitfalls: Presenter Discussion

KEY TAKEAWAYS + TOOLS FOR GETTING STARTED

What We've Learned...

- You don't need to do it all to be the developer

- Sometimes, the nonprofit developer is the solution for catalyzing growth

- **There are tools, models, and partners for every phase**

- Mission-aligned development is possible, even in small towns and soft markets!

Let's Do This!!!

- What project are we already dreaming about?

- What do we already control (property, leadership, momentum)?

- What do we need to explore further, and who could help?

Resources

- Development Spectrum

- Developer Readiness Assessment

- Joint Venture Worksheet

Thank You!

Time for Questions & Discussion

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