

WEBINAR

NATIONAL
BROWNFIELDS
COALITION

CLTs Reclaiming Brownfields for Community Benefit

How can Community Land Trusts support equitable brownfield redevelopment? Join us for a practical look at the CLT model and real-world examples of transforming sites into lasting community assets.



Jalisa Gilmore
Senior Manager
Groundwork USA



James Yelen
Director of Technical Assistance
Grounded Solutions Network



Colby Bentley
Assistant Director of Place
Russell: A Place of Promise



Bz Zhang
Project Manager
Los Angeles CLT



Hannah Anousheh
Director
East New York CLT



Shantanu Dew
Senior Project Manager
East New York CLT



MAY 6, 2026



2:00 - 3:00 P.M. ET





Welcome to the National Brownfields Coalition!



What is a brownfield?

“A property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant.” - EPA



Who are we?

- **National network** of public, private, and nonprofit practitioners
- Advance **brownfield cleanup and reuse to support communities**
- **Advocate for federal brownfields policy and funding**
(Reauthorization of the EPA Brownfields Program!)
- **Share tools, case studies, and peer learning opportunities**



Why Brownfields Matter for CLTs and Community Development

- CLTs working with underutilized land find themselves confronting contaminated sites
- Cleanup costs and liability can be major barriers
- Brownfields funding + policy + resources can unlock community-controlled development

Why brownfields work matters

- Brownfields remain a **bipartisan issue**
- **Federal funding is uncertain** as Congress considers reauthorization and appropriations
- Local, **community-driven action is critical** in shaping outcomes

Get involved!

Connect with the National Brownfields Coalition:

- Stay informed and advocate for policy and funding
- Share projects and lessons learned
- Join peers working at the intersection of remediation, land use, and community development



Join us! For more info: brownfields@smartgrowthamerica.org

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GROUNDING SOLUTIONS
NETWORK

SMART GROWTH AMERICA · BROWNFIELDS COALITION · 2026

CLTs and brownfields: permanent land, permanent fit.

PRESENTED BY

James Yelen
Director of Technical Assistance

AUDIENCE

Smart Growth America
Brownfields Coalition

DATE

May 1, 2026

Three numbers, one map.

The affordability crisis and the brownfields landscape overlap more than our policy silos suggest.



300k+

Federally subsidized affordable units at risk of losing their affordability over the next 5 years.

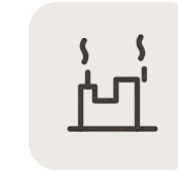
Source: National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2025



40-yr

Low in for-sale housing affordability — rent burden remains at historic highs.

Source: Harvard JCHS State of the Nation's Housing, 2025



450k+

Estimated brownfield sites nationwide — concentrated in the same neighborhoods.

Source: U.S. EPA Brownfields Program, 2024

The CLT was born in the **civil rights movement.**

Early civil rights leaders looked to international models of **collective land stewardship** — the Gramdan movement in India, indigenous stewardship in the Americas, the kibbutz and moshav in Israel — for a way to liberate Black farmers in the rural South from the cycles of dispossession.

The premise then is the premise now: *permanent, community-controlled land is the foundation of community self-determination.*

It's also why the model fits brownfields. Reclaiming contaminated land for permanent community use is the same job, in a different century.



1969

New Communities Inc. founded near Albany, Georgia — the first community land trust in the United States. *~5,700 acres held collectively for Black farming families.*

1970s

The model spreads to both rural and urban communities, evolving along the way — from agricultural land trusts to urban housing trusts.

1984

Burlington Community Land Trust founded — the first municipally-supported CLT, establishing the template most U.S. CLTs use today.

2026

330+ CLT & shared-equity entities across 46 states, DC, and Puerto Rico — same ethic, broader application.

Founders of New Communities Inc.: Bob Swann · Slater King · C.B. King · Charles Sherrod

WHAT IS A CLT?

A nonprofit* that owns the land — permanently — so the housing and other developments on it stay affordable and accessible.

A CLT separates ownership of the **land** from ownership of the **improvements**. The trust holds the land in perpetuity. A household, co-op, or business owns the building and signs a long-term **ground lease** with a **resale formula**.

The result: public investment in affordability — and in cleanup — is captured by the community, not lost to the next market cycle.



*Some municipalities have developed versions of CLTs as well, though typically with governance structures.

CLTs and Land Banks: Built for Different Jobs.

COMMUNITY LAND TRUST

Permanent stewardship

Who: community-governed nonprofit · tri-partite board (residents · community · public)

Job: hold land & affordability for decades to perpetuity

Inputs: subsidy, donated land, partnerships

Tools: ground lease · resale formula · stewardship

LAND BANK

Acquire & transfer

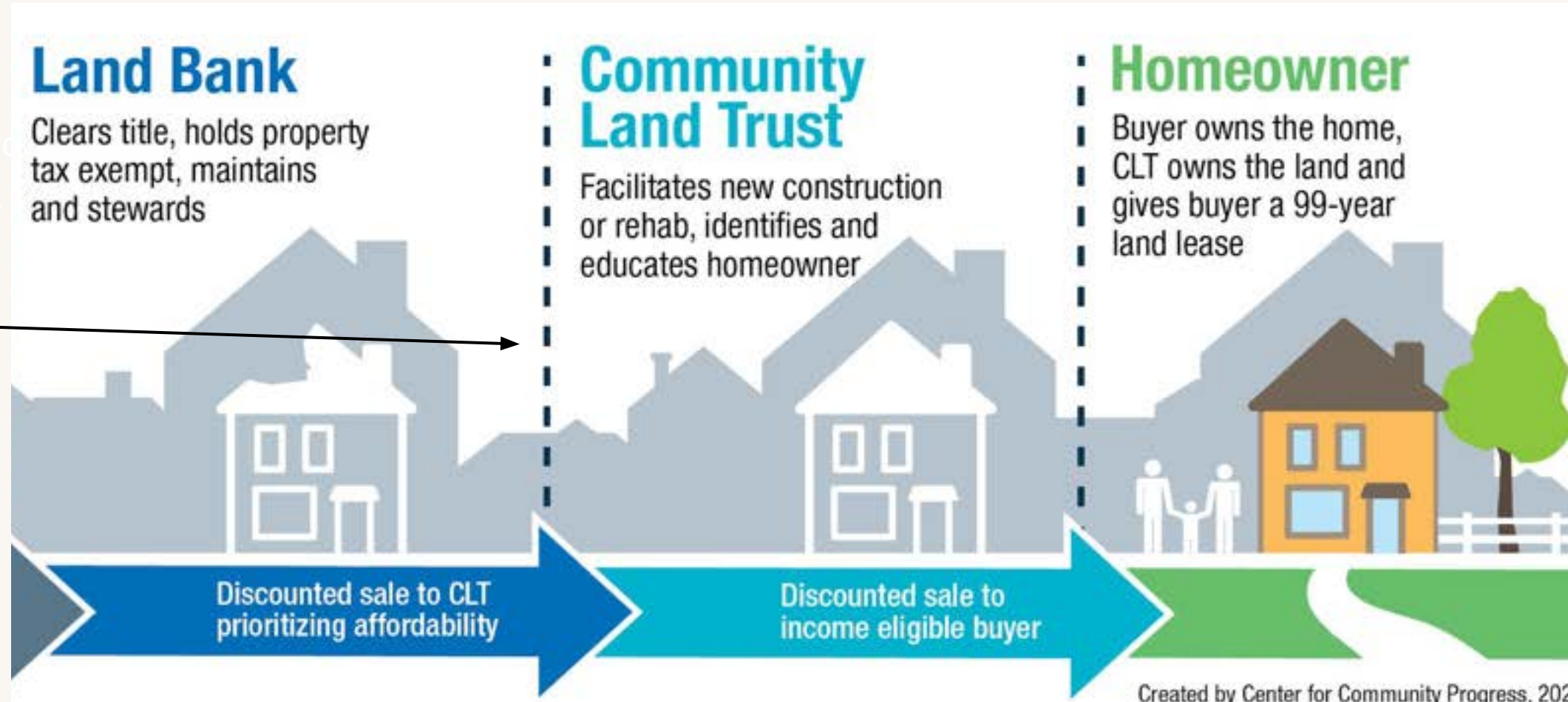
Who: governmental or quasi-governmental authority

Job: move distressed parcels into productive use, fast

Inputs: tax-foreclosed property · vacant lots · eminent domain

Tools: tax-title clearing · demolition · disposition policy

Remediation funded by EPA Brownfields grants, state revolving funds, and philanthropy may be a **joint effort** between land banks and CLTs



CLTs and Land Banks: Built for Different Jobs.

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STEP 01 · LAND BANK

Acquires brownfield parcels via tax foreclosure or donation. Clears title.



STEP 02 · JOINT

Remediation funded by EPA Brownfields grants, state revolving funds, and partners.



STEP 03 · CLT

Takes long-term stewardship. Builds permanently affordable housing or community use.

THE FIELD TODAY

330+

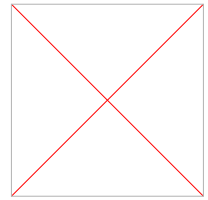
CLT and shared-equity entities across 46 states, DC, and Puerto Rico.

+30%

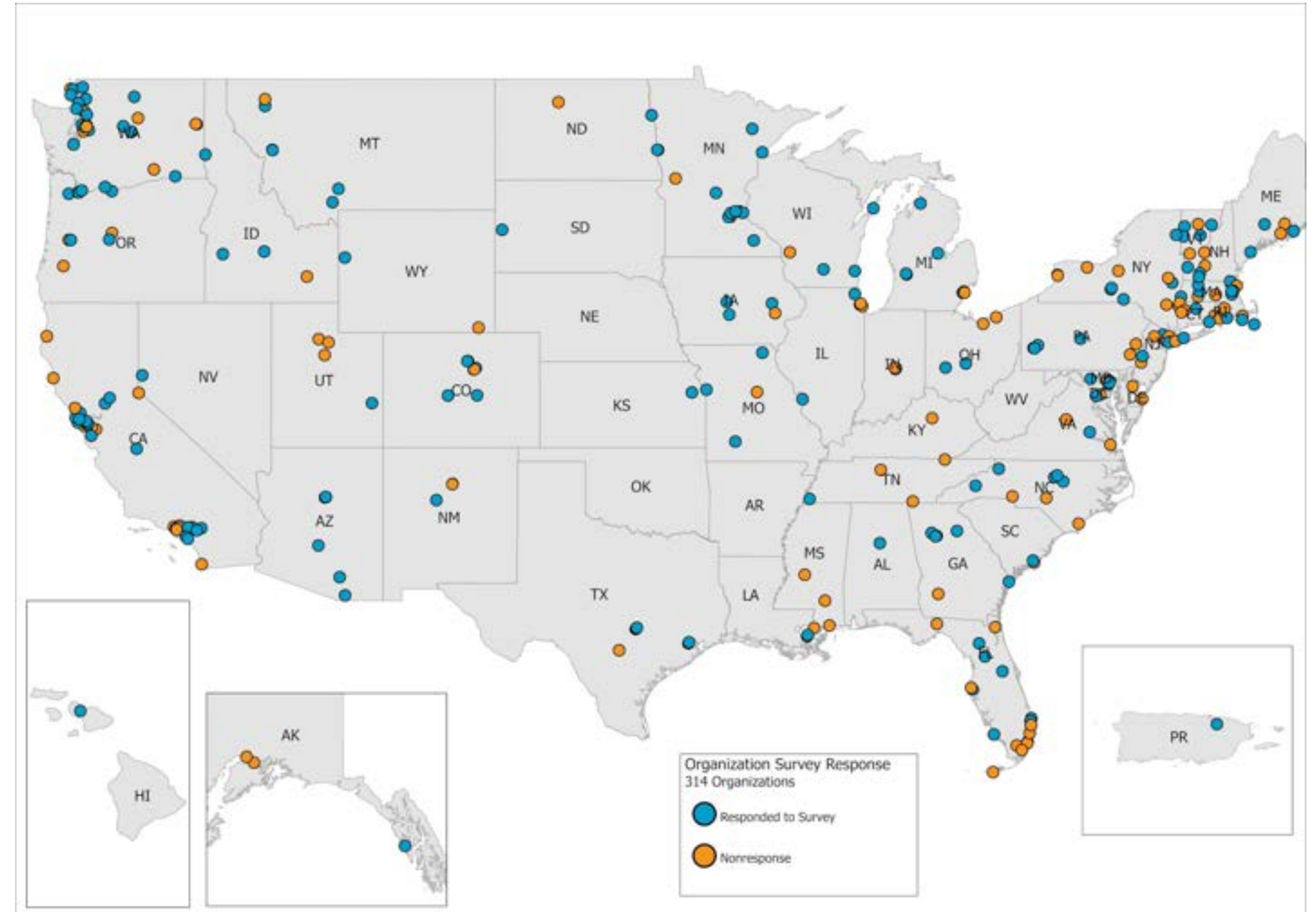
Growth in CLT entities compared to the 2011 census — and accelerating.

~45%

Shared-equity homeowners are people of color, vs. ~26% of US-market homeowners.



Diversification of approaches — multifamily, rental, manufactured, commercial, and cooperative use are all on the rise.



HOW BROWNFIELDS SHOW UP ACROSS OUR NETWORK

Contamination doesn't look the same in a former mill town as it does on an inner-ring infill lot. Our urban, suburban, and rural members are all running into brownfields — but the parcels, the partners, and the funding paths differ.


URBAN



Industrial legacy on infill parcels
Old gas stations, dry cleaners, vacant factory lots — small, scattered sites with petroleum or chlorinated solvents. Title is tangled; parcels are buildable but constrained.

Signal · partner with land bank for clean title; layer EPA assessment grants


SUBURBAN



Tear-down strips & aging shopping centers
Vacated big-box, half-empty plazas, decommissioned dealerships. Moderate contamination but complex parcel assembly and political pushback on density.

Signal · adaptive reuse + master lease structures; CLT holds the land long-term

RURAL



Mills, mines & agricultural chemicals
Former mill sites, abandoned mines, fields with legacy pesticide loading. Fewer parcels but harder to access remediation funding and skilled environmental consultants.

Signal · regional CLT consortia + USDA Rural Development funding stack

The throughline. None of these communities can wait the cleanup out. CLTs don't make them — they hold the land long enough for cleanup, financing, and community process to actually align.

Four reasons CLTs are built for this work.

01 · TIME HORIZON

Permanent stewardship matches remediation timelines.

Land use restrictions and institutional controls run for decades. CLTs are designed to still be there — monitoring, enforcing, communicating with residents.

02 · TRUST

Community governance rebuilds trust where harm happened.

The people most affected by contamination sit on the tri-partite board. Decisions about reuse get made *with* the neighborhood, not to it.

03 · VALUE CAPTURE

Resale formulas capture the public investment in cleanup.

EPA grants, tax credits, and public dollars don't get cashed out as market appreciation — they stay as affordability for the next household.

04 · STRUCTURE

Split ownership is already in the toolkit.

Sites with land-use covenants or institutional controls fit naturally into a model that already separates land ownership from improvements.

LET'S KEEP TALKING

Thanks!

CONTACT

James Yelen

Director of Technical Assistance · Grounded Solutions Network

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GROUNDINGSOLUTIONS.ORG · STRONG COMMUNITIES FROM THE GROUND UP



Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust

**Health & justice
through parks &
gardens**

- Founded in 2002
- 30 Parks & Gardens / 22 acres
- Serving 500,000 in LA County

Bz Zhang, AIA, NOMA / bzhang@lanlt.org



TATAVIAM
LAND CONSERVANCY
HERITAGE • PRESERVATION • EDUCATION

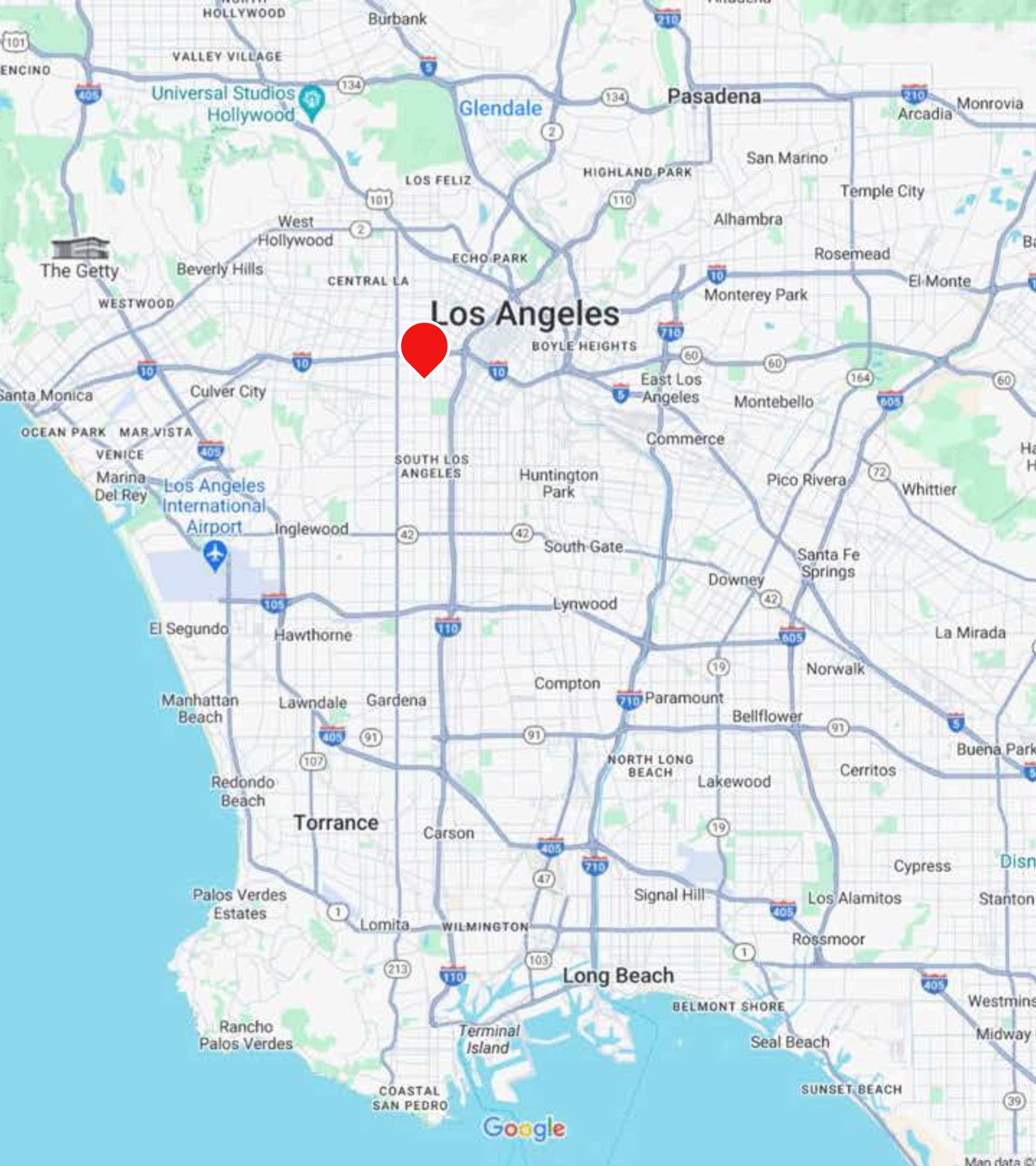


Tongva Taraxat
Paxaavxa Conservancy



www.tataviam.land

www.tongva.land



Jefferson Park & Affordable Housing Project, Los Angeles, California

1.86-acre former oil drilling site

- 2018: shut down by community partner, RCP, & communities
- 2023: acquired by LANLT





Jefferson Park & Affordable Housing

COMMUNITY PARTNERS:

- Redeemer Community Partnership (RCP)
- Stand Together Against Neighborhood Drilling Los Angeles (STAND-LA) coalition
- Affordable housing developer TBD
- Test Plot

PUBLIC PARTNERS & FUNDERS:

- Asm. Reggie Jones Sawyer (CA 57), \$10m, acquisition
- CA State Parks, \$5.8m, park development
- CA DTSC, ECRG, \$565k, remediation planning
- County of LA RPOSD, Measure A, \$500k, site planning & design
- EJ Ready, \$50k, youth-led garden
- CCLR, \$10k, technical support





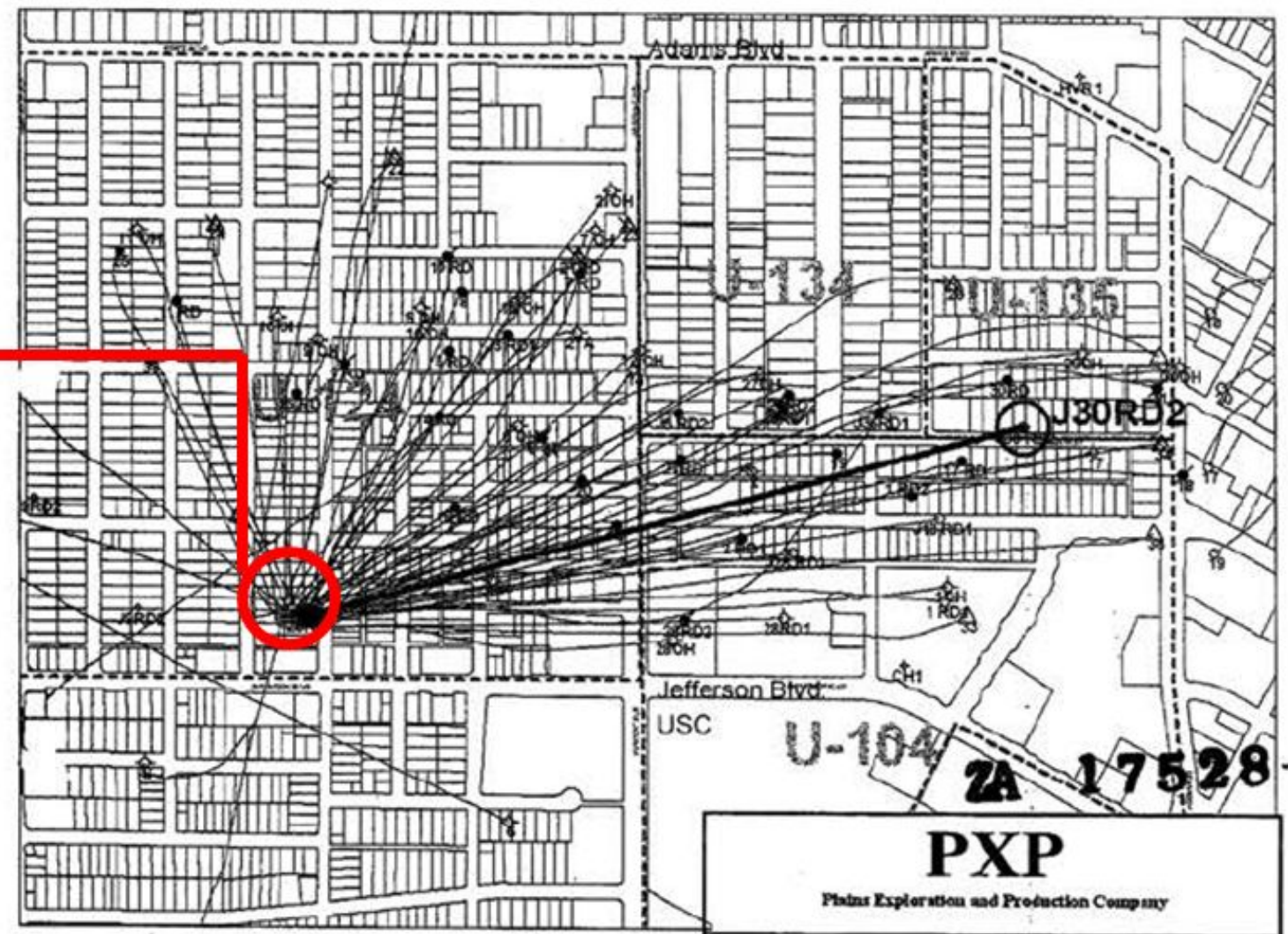
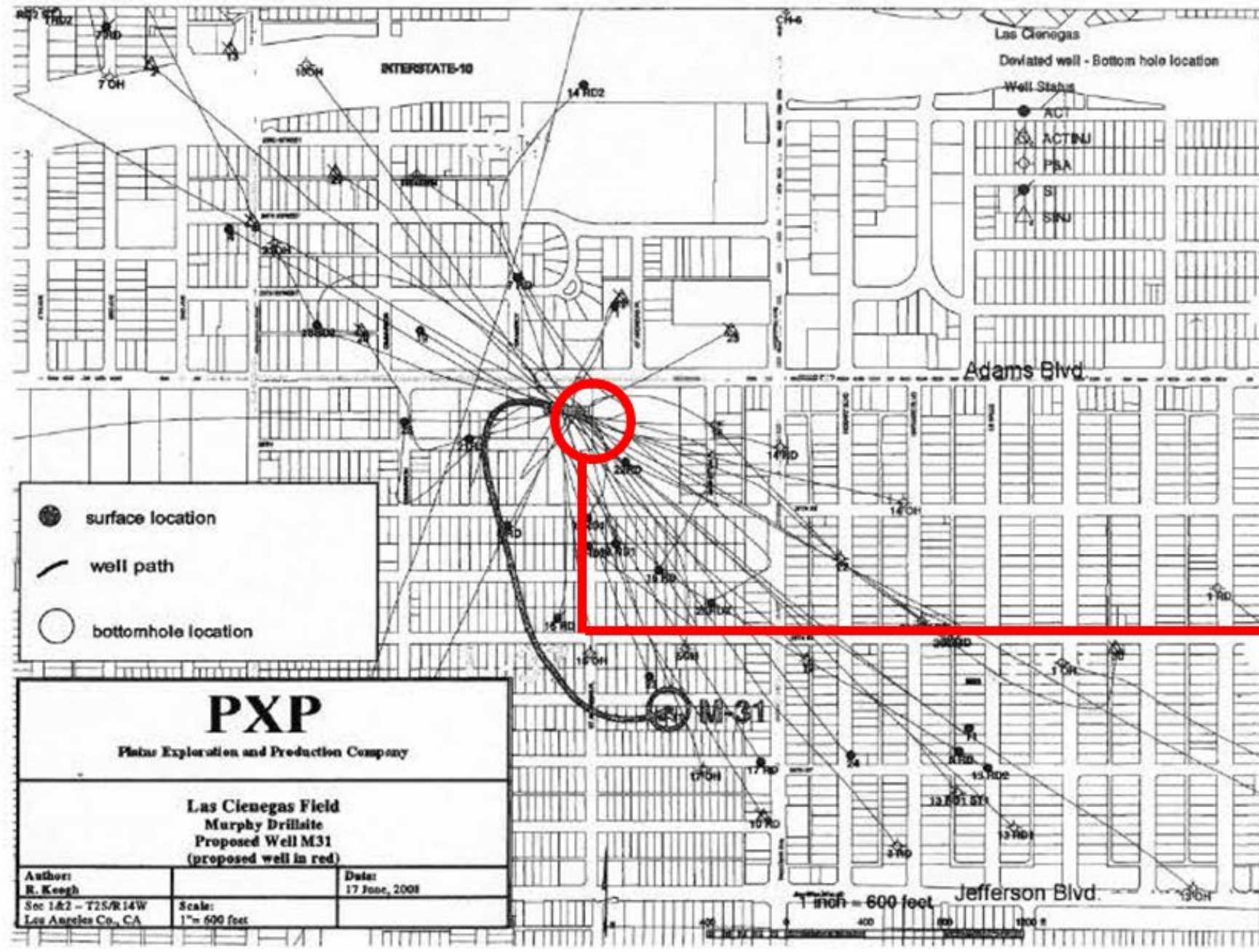


EXHIBIT "A"

LEGEND
Deviated well - Bottom hole location
● ACT
▲ ACTNU
▲ PBA



West LA



South LA





2013-2018 – Community Organizing



2019-2020 - Community Visioning*



***more forthcoming this summer!**

2022–now – Acquisition, Remediation Planning



2026-now – Youth-led Restoration Garden





<i>1965</i>	12 residential + commercial lots converted into oil drilling	
<i>1960s-2010s</i>	50 years of oil drilling 3 feet away from neighboring bedroom	
<i>2013</i>	Community organizing led by RCP	
<i>2018</i>	Community victory in shutting down the site!	
<i>2019-2021</i>	Community visioning led by RCP & LANLT identify site use	
<i>2022</i>	Oil operator begins well abandonment	
<i>2023</i>	Due diligence and acquisition by LANLT	
<i>2024-2026</i>	Remediation planning by LANLT	*we are here!
<i>2026</i>	Restoration Garden by Test Plot, RCP, LANLT	*we are here!
<i>2026-2027</i>	Site planning & design by LANLT & RCP	
<i>2027-2028</i>	Site construction	

Jefferson Park & Affordable Housing Project



Thank you!

Bz Zhang, AIA, NOMA / bzhang@lanlt.org

30th and Madison Street Redevelopment





QUICK INTRO AND ORGANIZATION

Organization

Russell: A Place of Promise

Role

Community Land Trust and Community-Based Developer

Vision

Build Black wealth through investment without displacement



WHAT WE ARE TRYING TO DO

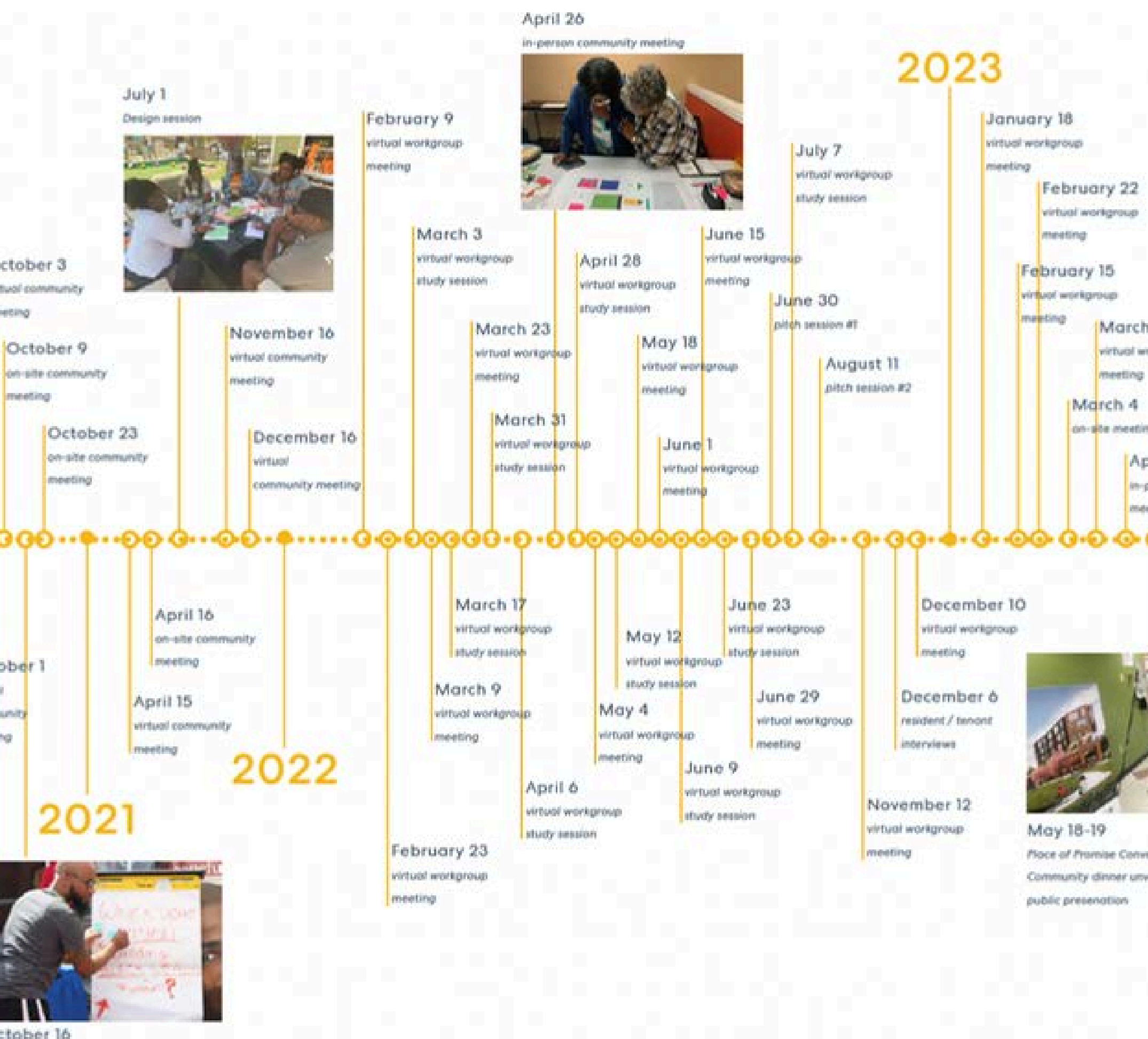
Project scope

Medical and professional office
Residential
Retail and food
Banking services

Outcome

Transform a long-abandoned brownfield into a mixed-use neighborhood anchor

SITE CONTROL AND COMMUNITY INPUT



Ownership path

Currently owned by Louisville Metro Government
 Committed to RPOP in 2022 through a memorandum of agreement and declaration of surplus property naming RPOP as future owner

Resident-driven process

- Community input since 2018
- Pitch sessions
- Community polls
- Design sessions

Community-Driven Development Since 2018



WHO WILL BE IMPACTED

Russell neighborhood residents
Predominately Black neighborhood. 81%

Economic conditions

Median income: \$26,950

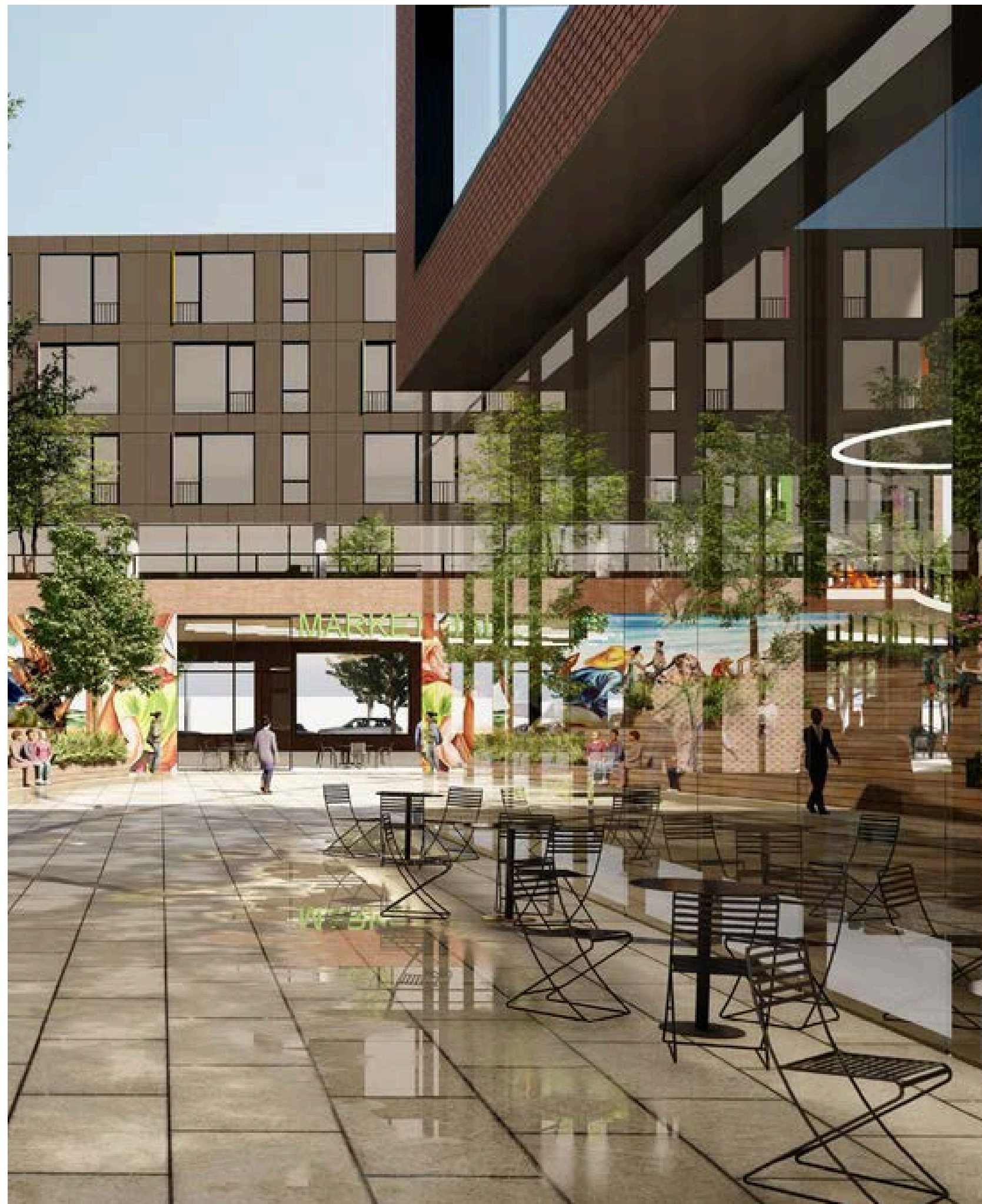
32% of elders and 44 percent of all residents live below the poverty level

57% of households receive SNAP benefits

47% of households lack vehicle access

21% of residents have a disability

Life expectancy is 8 years less than Louisville's average



HOW THEY WILL BE IMPACTED

What changes for residents

New services and amenities in the neighborhood

New jobs and sales activity

Affordable residential options included in later phases

Spaces for entrepreneurship and small business growth

Corridor momentum

Development anchors a growing corridor while supporting long-term community ownership

THE BROWNFIELD AND WHY CLEANUP MATTERS

Site history

Manufactured tobacco from early 1900s to late 1970s or early 1980s

Later hosted light manufacturing uses

Brownfield risk

Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site

Assessments indicate potential soil constituents above conservative screening levels

Primary constituents of concern

PAHs. Semi-volatile organic compounds

Metals: arsenic and lead

Cleanup enables safe reuse and long-term community benefit



WHO WE ARE WORKING WITH

Development Partner

BWI Development

Key Partner

Public, private, and nonprofit partners supporting design, environmental work, and financing



Phase 1: Early Activation

First phase program

Retail

Restaurant

Offices

Upper-floor apartments

Community green space

Resident-selected early tenants

Black-owned childcare provider

Retail marketplace tenant

Additional first phase uses being advanced

Laundromat

Outdoor recreation space

Dedicated office, co-working, and entrepreneurship support spaces



COST AND CAPITAL STACK

Total Investment

\$150M multi-phase redevelopment

Phase 1

\$27M initial phase

Funding Strategy

- Tax credit equity
- Public funding
- Private investment
- Philanthropic capital
- Brownfield remediation funding

Key Takeaway

Layered capital approach makes redevelopment feasible

TIMELINE AND READINESS

Development approvals

Site is fully entitled for intended uses
Needs review and approval of a development plan before construction plans

Milestones

2024: Site ownership transition work, research, design, maintenance
2026: Groundbreaking on first phase

Operating capacity

RPOP has raised over \$30 million since 2018 to support its work and partners, mostly used for operations and programming, plus loans held by partner organizations for neighborhood projects
Capital campaign planned to launch in 2026 to support the project



NEXT STEPS





QUESTIONS?



Russell: A Place of Promise



@russellplaceofpromise

www.russellpromise.com

EAST NEW YORK COMMUNITY LAND TRUST



EAST NEW YORK CLT

Founded in 2020, ENYCLT is a growing membership organization that works to **bring land and buildings under permanent, democratic, resident control.**

We focus on building our members' capacity to collectively own and democratically manage land and housing.



EAST NEW YORK & OCEAN HILL- BROWNSVILLE

- Median income: \$54K (30% below NYC)
- 23% below poverty line
- Many LMI homeowners
- Industrial/manufacturing presence
- Above-ground subway
- Aging buildings (~100 years)
- Designated as a Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) in 2013
- Land prices up ~10x since 2016 rezoning



WE MADE HISTORY

In 2024, ENYCLT worked with the longtime tenants of 248 Arlington Avenue to purchase their building, making history as the first CLT in NYC to privately acquire a multifamily building.

That victory was featured in [The Nation](#), [TIME Magazine](#) and [Gothamist](#).



THE EAST BROOKLYN LIBERATION CENTER



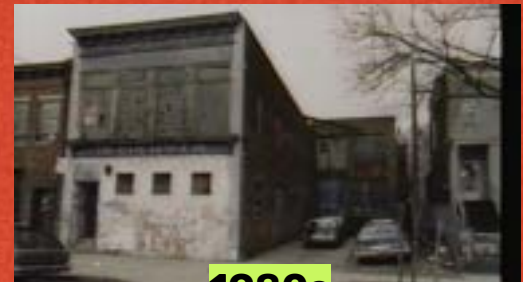
161 Jamaica Ave | 9,500 sq ft | Community-Owned Forever

THE EAST BROOKLYN LIBERATION CENTER

- 9,500 sq ft historic building on ENY's northwest edge, the frontline of gentrification
- Former manufacturing (wagon painting, steel doors) → later event/office space
- Required: 3-week environmental contingency + soil & vapor testing



1940s



1980s

THE EAST BROOKLYN LIBERATION CENTER



ENYCLT

- Member meetings and educational programming
- Know-your-rights trainings and organizing support for homeowners and tenants
- Community research hub



WORKER COOPERATIVES,
LOCAL BUSINESSES &
ORGANIZATIONS



IMMEDIATE
COMMUNITY SUPPORT
AND PROTECTION

- Trainings and rapid response to defend against ICE
- Food storage and distribution

COMMUNITY CENTER



ARTS & CULTURAL
PRESERVATION GROUPS

STEWARDSHIP: FROM THE BUILDING → NEIGHBORHOOD SCALE

JUSTICE FOR THE JEWEL STREETS





THANK YOU!



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