



**Testimony to the New York City Council
Committee on Housing and Buildings and Subcommittee on Capital Grants
Preliminary Budget Hearing for FY 2022**

March 5, 2021

Good afternoon, Committee Chair Cornegy, Subcommittee Chair Rosenthal, and members of the Committee and Subcommittee, and thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Deyanira Del Rio and I am the co-director at New Economy Project, a citywide organization that works with community groups to build a just economy that works for all.

New Economy Project coordinates the Citywide Community Land Trust (CLT) Initiative, launched in FY2020 to strengthen and expand CLTs and permanently-affordable housing, commercial and community spaces, across NYC. In less than two years, the Initiative has made major progress--helping to launch and expand CLTs in the South and Northwest Bronx, East Harlem and the Lower East Side, Jackson Heights, Brownsville, East New York, and beyond. Through this groundbreaking and truly cost-effective initiative, the City is helping to seed a new generation of neighborhood-based institutions equipped to facilitate equitable development and build community wealth. We thank the City Council for its support of CLTs, worker cooperatives, and other models that advance shared ownership and democratic control of our economy.

New Economy Project and 17 partner organizations in the CLT Initiative seek \$1.51 million in City Council discretionary funding in FY2022. We urge the Committee to support this funding request, and ensure that CLTs play a key role in stabilizing housing, combating speculation, and ensuring a just recovery in Black, brown and immigrant neighborhoods. (See attached one-pager detailing activities and participating organizations.)

Since FY2020, the CLT Initiative has engaged thousands of low-income tenants and homeowners in education and organizing; developed grassroots leadership through CLT steering committees and founding boards; provided comprehensive legal and training support; completed planning and property research in CLT catchment areas; and formalized developer

and other strategic partnerships. Two CLTs have acquired first or new properties, while others have completed feasibility studies or are negotiating for acquisitions. Expanded FY2022 discretionary funding will allow the initiative to sustain and deepen this essential work, and engage two new CLTs and an additional citywide technical assistance provider.

As this Council knows, CLTs are prevalent in communities across the U.S. and are a flexible, proven model to protect public investment in affordable housing and other development. As community-governed nonprofits, CLTs own land and control terms on which it is developed to ensure, for example, that housing remains permanently affordable and that development meets community needs. New York City CLTs are working in diverse neighborhoods to develop and preserve deeply-affordable multifamily rental housing, limited-equity cooperatives, and 1-4 family homes at risk of foreclosure, as well as commercial and cultural spaces, community gardens, community-owned solar, microgrids and other infrastructure.

Strong CLTs, coupled with concerted policymaking that supports their ability to keep land and housing out of the speculative market, will be key to preventing displacement and ensuring a just recovery in Black and brown neighborhoods hardest-hit by the pandemic. We urge the City Council to sustain and deepen its commitment to CLTs at this critical time.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today.



Community Land Trust Initiative

FY2022 Discretionary Funding Request

The **citywide Community Land Trust (CLT) Initiative** requests **\$1.51 million** in FY2022 City Council discretionary funding to support 14 community-based organizations and four citywide organizations working to develop CLTs and permanently-affordable housing, commercial and community spaces. Launched in FY2020, the initiative combats displacement and promotes community control of land and housing in Black and brown NYC neighborhoods, by incubating CLTs and providing comprehensive community outreach, education, organizing, and legal and technical support.

Throughout the pandemic, groups have sustained and deepened their work on CLTs and social housing, as a matter of public health, racial equity, and just recovery. CLT initiative funding has helped groups launch and expand CLTs in all five boroughs, develop strong grassroots leadership, engage thousands of community members, and organize for land and housing justice. Two CLTs have acquired properties, and others have completed site acquisition and feasibility plans. (The initiative received \$855,000 in FY2020 and \$637,250 in FY2021.)

In FY2022, we will continue to build CLT capacity and expand the initiative to include two new CLTs and a fourth technical assistance provider. (See map of participating organizations.)



In FY2022, the CLT initiative will engage 18 organizations to:

- Provide 100 CLT education and organizing sessions--including virtual Town Halls and workshops--for tenants, homeowners, small business owners, and other stakeholders.
- Provide capacity-building training for 50 CLT board and steering committee members.
- Provide 35 legal and technical assistance engagements related to CLT incorporation, bylaws, developer partnerships, property research and acquisition, and more.
- Publish a CLT start-up guide and popular education material.
- Complete feasibility studies and acquire first (or additional) properties.

The CLT initiative's long-term goals include creating and preserving thousands of deeply- and permanently-affordable housing units; providing affordable commercial space for hundreds of small and cooperatively-owned businesses; and ensuring that public land and subsidy are preserved for permanent public benefit.

CLTs are a proven model to protect public subsidy and facilitate community-led development. CLTs are flexible and can support rental, limited-equity and mutual housing, as well as commercial and mixed-use development and other community needs. For example, Cooper Square CLT on the Lower East Side stewards more than 320 permanently-affordable homes for families earning as low as 30% AMI, as well as storefronts for 20 local small businesses. CLTs ensure permanent affordability of housing through ground leases that establish income, resale, and other restrictions.



In the wake of COVID-19, CLTs are needed to combat displacement and ensure a just recovery. CLTs are needed to strengthen and stabilize housing in Black and brown neighborhoods hardest-hit by the pandemic. With evictions and speculation looming, NYC must invest in CLTs and progressive housing and land ownership models that promote community safety and self-determination.

For more information, please contact Deyanira Del Rio at New Economy Project (dey@neweconomy.org).