

CREATIVE COMMONWEALTH: Urban Community Land Trusts

I want to commit to one neighborhood for life, so that I can know my neighbors, make art for my community, and work with my community board. I want to build lasting relationships of trust and shared resources: cooking, childcare, knowledge-sharing, open software, and healing. What if computer engineers built open software for the neighborhood? What if artists made site-specific art, clothing, and furniture for the building? What if community organizers connected people and facilitated conversations across race and class? Relationships take time to develop, so I want to stay put. How can I, as a 30 year old surrounded by freelance gigs, dream about belonging to one neighborhood for life?

I am part of a growing community of makers, artists, internet activists, and community organizers who recognize that urban community land trusts are a reliable model for cultural production and neighborhood resilience in New York City and beyond.

With New York City To Be Determined (<http://nyctbd.com/about>) I am working toward a community land trust (CLT) for internet activists, artists, makers, and community organizers. As we are learning, by working the the New York City Community Land Initiative (NYCCLI), a community land trust is a non-profit organization that owns property, traditionally land, and leases it for truly affordable housing, local businesses, and non-profit initiatives. The deed to the land, the CLT by-laws, and the lease all require that the housing be permanently affordable. The land can never be traded or sold to the highest bidder on the private market.

I am excited about the importance of community land trusts and worker cooperatives as living examples of resilient institutions that keep individuals in dialog over time and create jobs for underemployed creative people. I am inspired by Fourth Arts Block (<http://catalystreview.net/2014/02/fourth-arts-block-leading-cultural-advancement-in-new-york-city/>) and 3B (<http://3bbrooklyn.com/>) as examples of just, democratic, and sustainable examples of solidarity economies that will remain stable options for future generations because the land is held in trust.

The \$30,000 I received as a Fellowship stipend at Eyebeam is seed funding towards a community land trust for rigorous, generous people in New York City. I built out and co-managed an 8,000 square foot studio space for 40 artists from 2008-2013 off the L train, but our 5-year lease is up. I know what I'm getting in to. I still want more collective spaces! I would love to talk to philanthropists who are interested in taking land out of real estate speculation, for the long haul, to support resilient neighborhood culture and civic engagement.

In cooperation,

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