

The Voice of the Commons



Vol. 1

The official newsletter of Charm City Land Trusts

No. 2, June 2018

This Newsletter

by Adriana Foster

Welcome to the second issue of “The Voice of the Commons,” Charm City Land Trusts’ official newsletter. CCLT is a community land trust located in Baltimore City dedicated to community-driven land stewardship. With community gardens and housing in McElderry Park and open space in Patterson Park, CCLT values a shared-equity approach to neighborhood stabilization that prioritizes collective ownership, free collaboration, and communal healing.

Presently, CCLT is participating in ongoing advocacy with the Baltimore Housing Roundtable (BHR), a coalition working to ensure that permanently affordable housing, community control of land, and resident-led development is a priority in Baltimore.

Right now, the BHR is pushing the Fund the Trust Act and is gathering petitions from registered city voters to demand that \$20 million go into the Affordable Housing Trust Fund every year. This appropriation has the potential to create 1,000 jobs and fund the rehabilitation of approximately 400 homes. It would also significantly expand the reach and effectiveness of CCLT and other CLTs around the city.

If you want to sign the petition, learn more, or help, contact United Workers organizer and CCLT board member Adriana Foster at: (210) 825-9925.

The Pilot Project

by Peter Sabonis

McElderry Park is at a crossroads. The Hopkins-driven, East Baltimore Development, Inc. (EBDI) development is radiating westward and will soon transform the neighborhood. Ensuring that long-time residents are not involuntarily displaced and have a locked-in sector of affordable housing is key to McElderry Park’s future racial and economic diversity.

Charm City Land Trusts (CCLT) is a cornerstone to this equitable development. Unlike the absentee landlords and developers who will cash in on this gentrification tsunami, CCLT owns property on behalf of the community, and we will not sell it to the highest bidder. In fact, our mission is to keep property affordable—FOREVER.

We currently own one vacant house on Luzerne Avenue and hope to acquire four others. We will renovate all five properties into homeownership opportunities in the \$90,000 range. They will be targeted to long-term renters who want to own.

If and when these homeowners resell the property, they will get a limited, shared-equity return (profit) that will allow the next homeowner to buy at an affordable price. Once we get going, we might even be able to offer quality rental housing where rents are affordable and not driven by profit.

We’ve asked the City and State to help us acquire and renovate properties in the same way they’ve helped Hopkins and EBDI. So far, they’ve given us technical assistance, a pat on the head, and some vague promises. We’ll keep you updated in future articles.

Member Spotlight

by Sharon Hunt

My name is Sharon Hunt, and I love to travel! Here you see me standing in front of the Trevi Fountain in Rome, Italy. I had just thrown the required coins over my shoulder to ensure my return to Rome and another opportunity to throw more money into the water. This photo was taken in March 2018, the last coin toss of a series that begun in the summer of 1964.



My first travel adventure was to Mexico City in 1957. We traveled from Chicago, my birthplace, by Greyhound Bus, a very long trip through the still segregated South—my first encounter with “Separate and Unequal.” The time in Mexico was sensational and life altering. The sounds of the language, the looks of the residents (descendants of Native Americans, Spanish Colonials, and African slaves), the smell and taste of the food (street vendors and restaurants) were all new and exciting to Midwestern Me.

I have been traveling ever since, as often as I can, wherever I am able. Antarctica is the only continent left to visit (not sure about visiting this one). Europe, Asia, Africa, North America, South America and Australia are already done. So many places, so many peoples, sights, sounds, and experiences have given me a profound acceptance of the connections between land and people.

Land is the basis of community. I have been visiting land in a lot of different places for a long time. Being both a member of Charm City Land Trusts and its board is a way to be connected to land, to be a steward of land, and an advocate for responsible and inclusive care of land. The land I call home is in McElderry Park in Baltimore.

State of the Commons

by Natalie Cohen

Happy summer, Baltimore! As the days grow longer and hotter with summer in full swing, The Amazing Port Street Commons is showing off its beautiful blooming flowers, buzzing with wildlife, and growing a bounty of vegetables! In the vegetable garden, there are apples, blueberries, collard greens, tomatoes, peppers, broccoli, okra, squash, and kale to name a few.

There is also a new, beautiful, native pollinator garden surrounding the Prayer Labyrinth, generously funded by the Chesapeake Bay Trust, certifying the Amazing Port Street Commons as Butterfly Garden and Habitat by the North American Butterfly Association!

Would you like to grow your own food? Surround yourself in urban wildlife? Want to learn about what you can do to “green” the community? Get involved in The Amazing Port Street Commons by contacting Natalie Cohen at NatalieCohen9315@gmail.com or call 410-276-5674.

Sacred Commons Word Find

by Beth Myers-Edwards

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          Q G G
        R H A Y O
          C T V T Z
    T O   H N D I M   E T
  T R L E   I S N   E C G R
O E R U L R P U S H A R E
N E E R G Y O M M V E P O
  S U V   B R M   G P Y
          A A C O I
  M U R A L S C P T A W
  J F Q A           J M J B
  V K V B           I T O L
    P T             I N

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WORD LIST:

COMMUNITY	GREEN	PEACE
CROPS	LABYRINTH	SHARE
GATHER	MURALS	TREES

Contact Us

Stay in touch with CCLT through our various social media and Internet accounts!

Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/charm-citylandtrustsinc/>

Twitter

<https://twitter.com/charmcityclt>

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info@charmcitylandtrusts.org

Website

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Spring Fling Recap

by Jennifer Kunze

When you think of spring, do you think of bright sunshine, colorful flowers, and the smell of fresh earth—or of lots and lots and lots of rain? We had a bit of both at the Sixth Annual Spring Fling, a yearly celebration of spring and the space that we share to enjoy it at the Amazing Port Street Commons.



The sun peeked in and out of clouds and rain as neighbors peeked around the corner from McElderry Street to eat healthy foods from the community cookout, listen to music by local singers and musicians, learn about topics ranging from fruit trees to off-shore wind development, and get connected with resources and volunteer opportunities in the community.

CCLT board members were there to talk about community ownership of land, sign up new CCLT members, and get petitions signed demanding that Baltimore City finally Fund the Trust and put resources into CLTs like ours!