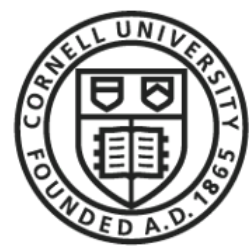


HIGHROAD FELLOWSHIP REPORTS

FB Community Land Trust Fact Sheet

July 2019

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2019 High Road Fellow
With FB Community Land Trust



ILR Buffalo Co-Lab

The ILR Buffalo Co-Lab advances an equitable economy and democratic community, collaboratively integrating scholarly and practical understanding to strengthen civic action.

Since 1946, Cornell ILR has played a vital role in Western New York, working in partnership with businesses, unions, government, education and community organizations to build an economy that works for all.

High Road Fellowships were launched in 2009, in collaboration with community-based think-tank Partnership for the Public Good. They connect Cornell undergraduates with practitioners and creative community leaders who are driving change in the local economy.

Fellows are in Buffalo, NY for eight weeks in the summer, working on projects through their host organization.



F. B. Community Land Trust



HOLDING A COMMUNITY TEACH-IN TO EDUCATE RESIDENTS ABOUT THE LAND TRUST

HISTORY OF THE FRUIT BELT

The Fruit Belt was first settled in the 1800s, meaning that the houses in the Fruit Belt are some of the oldest in the United States. The historically black neighborhood has about 2,600 residents, many of them elderly. The name “Fruit Belt” comes from the names of the streets, which are named after the orchards planted by German immigrants. Unfortunately, the area fell into disrepair, with many of the homes demolished. Today, the City of Buffalo owns more than vacant 200 lots in the community.

THE FRUIT BELT NOW

The Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus is a hub of economic development in Buffalo. It has received more than \$250 million in outside funding and employs more than 17,000 people. Meanwhile, right next door, 42% of Fruit Belt residents live in poverty, and 53% are rent burdened, meaning that they spend more than 30% of their income on housing. This means that

- Developers looking to expand the medical campus pushed up prices in the Fruit Belt, making it more difficult for longtime residents to afford to live in their homes.
- The thousands of commuters each day have severely increased air pollution and congestion in the community.
- High parking prices encouraged medical campus employees to find street parking, meaning that local residents, whose old houses do not have driveways, were unable to park near their own homes.

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY LAND TRUST?

A community land trust is a private nonprofit corporation that owns plots of land and can place restrictions on the sale and resale of the land. The land trust is responsible for controlling the sale of land and ensuring that community needs are met. This takes many forms including:

- Empowering community members to take part in the land trust and ensure their voices are heard.
- Holding teach-ins for community members to ensure they are aware of their rights and how to use their power effectively.
- Acting as a steward for the community by supporting maintenance and upkeep of houses
- Providing financial and technological assistance to residents to improve the community, i.e. winterizing assistance.
- Continuously monitoring properties to ensure that resale conditions are enforced.



RESIDENT LED PROTESTS ADVOCATING FOR THE
CREATION OF THE LAND TRUST

CREATION OF OUR COMMUNITY LAND TRUST

In 2015 the City of Buffalo declared a moratorium on the sale of city-owned lots in the Fruit Belt. This specifically helped prevent developers from further driving up land prices. In 2016, residents of the Fruit Belt partnered with local nonprofits to develop a strategic vision for the future, including a community land trust. By 2017, the Community First Alliance, a coalition of local nonprofit organizations, announced the incorporation of the F.B. Community Land Trust with the goal of restoring power to Fruit Belt residents.

The residents developed five overarching goals to be addressed by the land trust: jobs and training, parking and traffic relief, community investment, historic and cultural restoration, and affordable housing.

OUR PARTNERSHIPS

The Fruit Belt Community Land Trust is proud to partner with Habitat for Humanity and Belmont Housing. These two organizations have decades of experience building affordable housing across the country. They will help provide the resources and expertise necessary to build safe and affordable housing for residents.

We will also continue to work with the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus. The proximity to the new hospital makes it a clear source of opportunity for residents of the Fruit Belt. We hope to partner with them to create new jobs and educational programs, which will limit the traffic and congestion in the neighborhood as well as promote economic reinvestment through increased employment opportunities.

MOVING FORWARD

In February 2018 the City of Buffalo agreed to transfer more than 50 vacant lots to the land trust. The land trust and its partners will concentrate their efforts on preparing to receive ownership of these properties.

The land trust will also develop a comprehensive plan for community reinvestment, including financial support, the creation of a multipurpose community center, and revitalization of community green space.

For more information visit:
<http://fbcommunitylandtrust.org/>

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