



# Winning at the Local Level:

## 5 Housing Trust Fund Campaigns Tell Their Stories

Center for Community Change

Housing Trust Fund Project

2004



# Winning at the Local Level:

## 5 Housing Trust Fund Campaigns Tell Their Stories

Center for Community Change

Housing Trust Fund Project

2004



# Table of contents

Acknowledgements .....	page iv
Preface .....	page v
Introduction .....	page vii
Columbus/Franklin County Affordable Housing Trust Fund .....	page 9
Seattle Housing Levy-Housing Assistance Funds .....	page 23
St. Louis Affordable Housing Trust Fund .....	page 37
Los Angeles Housing Trust Fund .....	page 51
Washington, DC Housing Production Trust Fund .....	page 67
Appendix .....	page 80

# Acknowledgements

First and foremost, thanks go to the tireless efforts of all the housing advocates who make housing trust funds a reality and have helped change the future of assisted housing in this country.

The production of these case studies would not have been possible without the very generous contributions of time from those we interviewed. They are listed in the appendix. Their stories, insights and vision were invaluable. I've had the privilege of working with most of them and it was an honor to watch their victories.

The authors of the case studies were Deborah Halliday and Winton Pitcoff. I greatly appreciate their persistence, cooperation and professionalism. Deb also assisted with the preparation of the final document with her great sense of humor and proportion. Thank you.

Thanks too, to Lynn Kanter of the Center for Community Change, for her editing skills and endless support and to Karen Khan of the Center's Housing Trust Fund Project, for helping with the final data, as always, without a flinch.

Where would we be without our friends!

Mary E. Brooks

## Preface

I have had the privilege of working with housing trust fund campaigns for many years. Each is totally fascinating and instructive in its own way. The beauty of local housing trust funds lies in their adaptability: each one can be orchestrated to take advantage of its unique location, using what opportunities are there and working within the dynamics of the current political arena.

These campaigns are so clever and imaginative that it seemed just simply smart to capture some of what has been accomplished and to convey it to those who might work on housing trust funds in the future. With more than 350 housing trust funds in cities, counties and states throughout the country, it was an awesome task to select the ones to profile. I have chosen only city/county campaigns in this document; states will come later. There is a mix of campaigns that required a public vote to win and of those that needed approval from city councils. The stories belong to each locality, and were compiled from personal interviews with dozens of players in each city. In each case, the lead organization guided us through the storytelling.

When an organization begins a housing trust fund campaign, one of the first discussions we have revolves around how long will this take. I always tell advocates that it could take as much as three years, maybe more, and if they're lucky, maybe less. Each of the campaigns featured here took about three years and demonstrates how much ground work must be laid, how the political processes work, and how much labor and love must go into a winning campaign. Moreover, each campaign didn't win everything it set out to win. Compromises are often part of the process. Finally, too often the fight isn't over when the housing trust fund is won; keeping a close watch on its implementation can often be just as critical as winning it in the first place.

I believe these case studies offer many lessons for us to learn as we wage future campaigns to create housing trust funds. The challenge was to strike a balance between providing enough detail to understand the nuances of a campaign, and not providing so much that the campaign's flavor is lost. The advocates who are responsible for creating these housing trust funds can truly lay claim to altering the complexion of their cities, to providing new opportunities for households in need, and demonstrating to the rest of us what is possible. My thanks and congratulations go out to them.

Mary E. Brooks  
Housing Trust Fund Project  
Center for Community Change



# Introduction

Every housing trust fund campaign starts as someone's idea. They may have read about it somewhere; heard someone else describe their housing trust fund; or they may have searched for alternative ways to address critical local housing needs. After a few conversations, the idea takes hold and a campaign is begun. These case studies demonstrate that housing trust funds have been created by a single organization, a large coalition, or a loosely-knit band of housing advocates.

But every housing trust fund campaign shares a few basic elements. These include:

(1) A structure for running the campaign. Typically there is a lead organization that hosts most of the activities, but there may be a coalition of other supporting organizations, a steering committee of selected individuals, or various committees that work on particular aspects of the campaign. Some campaigns have dedicated staff; others assume responsibilities as part of their regular full-time jobs. Volunteers are invaluable.

(2) A proposal for the housing trust fund. There needs to be a written proposal for what the campaign is trying to win. This typically describes key components of the housing trust fund, including: how the fund will be administered; what the fund will do; and where the dedicated public revenues will come from. Other campaign materials may also be developed, including: questions and answers about the proposal; the economic benefits of a housing trust fund; examples of model affordable housing developments; and so forth.

(3) A set of allies. Bringing in allies to support the campaign can be done in a number of ways. Most common is to seek endorsements and carry this list of endorsements around to impress others. Meeting with allies can also be important to educate them about the proposal, but also to gain their support. It is smart to consider seriously who is important as an ally and to think beyond the usual suspects. Public education efforts can take many forms, but it is important to be able to explain the complexities of a housing trust fund in

a way everyone can comprehend. Events, actions, media and much more all play a critical role in a housing trust fund campaign.

(4) A completed list of homework. There are many areas that housing advocates must understand to engage in a housing trust fund campaign. These might include: outlining how the jurisdiction is currently spending its housing dollars; understanding the need for affordable housing; knowing what the capacity is to provide affordable housing; researching alternative public sources of revenue to dedicate to the trust fund; documenting the secondary benefits of providing affordable housing (such as increased jobs, income, taxes and health, education and other benefits); and understanding the political process for getting a housing trust fund adopted.

(5) An assessment of the best timing. Knowing when to conduct a housing trust fund campaign is a critical element in winning that fight. Some campaigns are structured around elections; others within the budget process; and others occur as the result of events that underscore the importance of addressing critical housing needs.

(6) An ability to stay focused. Keeping one's eye on the prize describes every successful housing trust fund campaign. Defining a clear goal and focusing on that goal is key over the life of the campaign. Being sidetracked by opposition, other events, or demands outside the campaign will doom any housing trust fund effort.

(7) A willingness to be political. Every housing trust fund becomes political. Whether it requires a public vote or approval by city council, it is going to require an understanding of and a willingness to engage in the political process and to identify the specific targets in order to win. Some campaigns hire lobbyists or political consultants, but almost all rely on developing the relationships necessary to access elected officials and to engage the public.

A list of dos and don'ts won't be enough to get you through the process. But these case studies illustrate the nuances that have to be considered, the circumstances that can get in the way, and the persistence that makes the win as cherishable as it is. The intent here is to provide the stories, the lessons they offer, and to express an appreciation for the talent and commitment of these extraordinary housing advocates who demonstrate it really is possible to win what's right.

# affordable housing trust fund

## City of Columbus statistics

Total population in 2000	711,470
Area median income in 2003 <sup>1</sup>	\$63,800
Estimated % of population earning less than 50% AMI	32%
Median sales price of single family home <sup>2</sup>	\$150,400
Fair market rent for 2-bedroom unit	\$640
Total units in 2000	326,054
% units built after 1980	34%
Renter occupied units	50.9%
Vacant units in 2000 as % of all units	7.5%

Sources: All data from US Bureau of Census unless otherwise noted.

1 National Low Income Housing Coalition. *Out of Reach*, 2003.

2 National Association of REALTORS, 2004.



*BREAD Team Assembly, Sept. 2000.*

## Campaign overview

A coalition of congregations in Columbus, Ohio used their organizing skills to create one of the nation's few multi-jurisdictional housing trust funds in the country. The Columbus/Franklin County Housing Trust Fund is operated by the Columbus/Franklin County Affordable Housing Trust Corporation and commits \$2 million in annual revenues from

the city's hotel/motel tax and the County general fund to provide affordable homes throughout the region. Half of this funding must benefit households earning no more than 60% of the area median income. None of this would exist were it not for the efforts of the local organization BREAD.

## The setting

Over the past 30 years, Columbus has transitioned into a service economy, with phone call centers, service oriented businesses, and bank processing centers. As the state's capital and home to Ohio State University, the region's jobs are all too often low wage opportunities. Between 1979 and 1997, the percentage of workers in Columbus earning \$7.90 or less an hour increased from 19.9% to 28.6%.

Housing advocates believe that the city suffers from an affordable housing shortfall of at least 33,000 families. More than 55,000 low-income households in the county spend more than 30% of their monthly income for housing. A huge proportion (some 85%) of the city's subsidized housing is located in the center city area, though most of the new jobs being created are in outer-ring areas. Home ownership rates in the city are significantly lower than national figures. Much of the older housing that rents at or below the area's fair market rent rate has deteriorated significantly. There is a deficit of 21,892 units of affordable housing for low-income families. At any given time, 3,328 families are homeless in Franklin County.

## BREAD

Founded in 1996, *BREAD (Building Responsibility Equality and Dignity)* today consists of 45 member congregations, totaling more than 40,000 Columbus residents. As an interfaith, multi-denominational group, BREAD organizes for policy change on public issues pertaining to crime, safety, jobs, poverty, and education. BREAD is a local faith-based organizing group, and a member of the DART (Direct Action & Research Training Center) network, a national network of congregation-based community organizations.

In its first few years of operation, BREAD sponsored a successful public transportation campaign that resulted in the addition of 38,000 hours of bus service connecting center city residents with suburban jobs. BREAD has also worked on the demolition or rehabilitation of some of the city's worst housing, and the adoption of a new model of education to address students' poor reading skills in ten elementary schools.

# Getting started: Taking on affordable housing

BREAD initiated and sponsored the Columbus housing trust fund campaign, building on its history of significant victories in the city. The effort began in December 1997, when BREAD congregation members held a series of house meetings that surfaced affordable housing as a significant concern. The following year, BREAD participants conducted one-on-one conversations with other people in their congregations to learn what they were passionate about and which community problems they were willing to work on. Hundreds of these meetings revealed that affordable housing was key to BREAD members.

Three factors motivated BREAD members' interest in affordable housing. First, some congregations had members living in substandard housing and experienced the problems directly. Second, in many congregations people were aware of dilapidated housing in their own communities. Finally, some congregations were members of an interfaith hospitality network in which the YWCA ran programs that assisted congregations to house homeless families. These congregations had come to know the homeless families and, as a result, were sympathetic to the struggles they faced.

In December of 1998, BREAD formed its *Affordable Housing and Reinvestment Committee*. The committee researched affordable housing issues and identified ways the group could organize around specific strategies. Members of the committee conducted more than 50 research meetings with public officials, developers, housing industry officials, and nonprofit housing specialists. Some committee members visited Pittsburgh to tour a community known for its work on revitalization and the development of mixed income housing. Literature from the *Center for Community Change's Housing Trust Fund Project* helped frame their proposal.

While BREAD had already worked on a number of issues, the affordable housing campaign engaged more active members than previous efforts. The campaign also brought the greatest amount of attention to the organization.

"We went from having meetings in small churches to holding them in large auditoriums," said Father Stan Benezki, former chair of the housing committee. "During this campaign, getting people to turn up was never much of a problem. People saw it as a real issue of justice."

BREAD's Affordable Housing and Reinvestment Committee met monthly, occasionally at the BREAD offices, but most often at the church where Father Benezki was pastor. The committee consisted of about 20 self-

**Bring Housing Home Workshop**  
**How to develop affordable housing  
in your neighborhood**

Tuesday, October 23, 2001      5:45-Registration

Broad Street Christian Church  
1049 E. Broad St.


**Purpose:** To provide a forum for BREAD member congregations to look at ways to develop affordable housing in their neighborhoods

**Panelists:** Sharon Francis (invited), Mincel CDC,  
Phil Downing, Community Development Collaborative of Greater Columbus  
David Hannon, Lutheran Social Services

**Who should attend?** Anyone affiliated with a BREAD member congregation who is interested in exploring opportunities to develop affordable housing. This workshop will introduce BREAD members to some basic understandings.

**Agenda for the Evening**  
5:45 Registration  
6:00 Pizza and Fellowship  
6:30 Review of where we are  
7:00 Community Development Panel  
8:20 Next Steps for BREAD  
8:30 Adjourn

**B.R.E.A.D. Rises...B.R.E.A.D. Rises...B.R.E.A.D. Rises**



selected people, most of whom were from member congregations and had no direct professional experience in the field of housing. Yet a few brought backgrounds and expertise that related to the committee's work. BREAD executive director John Aeschbury also participated in the Committee and, as staff, kept the process focused and on track.

The research process was time-intensive, explained Jack Chomsky, Cantor at Congregation Tifereth Israel and an active member of the committee. For example, he said, a one-hour meeting with an elected official could easily turn into a three-hour commitment because BREAD members routinely gathered before the scheduled meeting to prepare, and again afterwards to evaluate what they had learned.

Those in leadership roles had to spend even more time on the campaign, Cantor Chomsky added, preparing agendas for meetings, setting up meetings, and coordinating efforts with members. Father Benezki estimated that he regularly spent ten hours per week, and sometimes more, on the process.

Membership in the committee remained very stable throughout the two-year process. Committee member Ed Hoffman said this was due in part to the diligence of John Aeschbury and Father Benezki to ensure the meetings were productive and the assignments and expectations from members clear. "It was an unusual committee in that people took on a lot of responsibility and always followed through on the commitments they made," recalled Hoffman. BREAD's board of directors would receive reports each month on the progress of the committee.

Early on in the process, most of the focus was on city policies that supported high-end housing through tax credits and other public funds. But as the committee's work progressed, it became clear that a housing trust fund—first discussed among housing advocates in Columbus at least ten years earlier—was a more winnable goal and a good initial focus for the group's work.

The committee's research was exhaustive and produced detailed information about the city's need for affordable housing. The committee drafted its *Jubilee Housing Plan* based upon the issues explored during the research meetings. In April 1999, the plan was presented to the BREAD assembly, composed of its full membership. The Jubilee Housing Plan contained three objectives:

1. Creation of a Franklin County-City of Columbus Affordable Housing Trust Fund to provide significant local support for the creation of needed 22,000 units of affordable housing;
2. Adopt an inclusionary zoning ordinance which would require developers to include affordable and low-income housing in any development; and
3. Develop a Housing Reinvestment Plan for the Center city with a mix of incentives to spur housing.



## The campaign

On May 16, 1999, BREAD held an action meeting to present the Jubilee Housing Plan to then-mayor Greg Lashutka and the Columbus City Council. More than 1,400 BREAD members participated in the meeting where the mayor and three city council members were present. BREAD leaders met with staff from the mayor's office to brief them on the plan prior to the action. Mayor Lashutka had already announced that he would not be running for re-election in November, so the emphasis was not on securing his support, but on demonstrating the strength of the proposed plan.

The committee spent a great deal of time creating a message that presented the proposal as clearly and simply as possible. They produced a one-page fact sheet that laid out the city's housing problems on one side and described BREAD's three-part plan on the other side. BREAD members honed and revised the language throughout the course of the campaign, as the committee learned more and their plans became more specific and sophisticated. Articulating the message clearly and understandably was an important factor in earning the support of the membership.

In the following months, BREAD met with the mayor, city council members, and members of the county commission, and began to cultivate allies in the public, private and nonprofit sectors. During meetings with housing advocates and industry professionals, the committee learned a great deal more about the technical issues of trust funds, and refined its plan to include language about how the trust fund money should be spent. BREAD meetings included a wide array of housing interests, such as: the Community Shelter Board, Ohio Capital Corporation for Housing, Coalition on Housing and Homelessness in Ohio, Interfaith Hospitality Network, YWCA, Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority, Diocese of Columbus, AFL-CIO Central Labor Body, Columbus Housing Partnership, Habitat for Humanity, Columbus Urban League, Salvation Army, and many housing development corporations and others.

Fleshing out such details was particularly critical, since BREAD member congregations were learning about the plan and asking questions about the nuts and bolts of what a trust fund would look like. There was no opposition among BREAD members to the plan, but there was a great deal of interest in understanding details of the proposal.

Each congregation's representative to BREAD would report back to the congregation about the work of the Affordable Housing and Reinvestment Committee. Each congregation's team would develop strategies to inform, educate and engage the entire congregation about the issue. Many congrega-





tions included news of the proposal in parish bulletins or on bulletin boards, and some pastors talked about the trust fund during their sermons. Generally, the message framed the proposal as a justice issue. The challenge was to provide congregation members with the amount of information they needed without overwhelming them with too much detail.

BREAD relied on small groups to develop plans, meet with officials, or conduct research. As a result, the larger membership base “doesn’t get tired out,” said committee member Ed Hoffman, and when large meetings were needed, the turnout was usually impressive. During the housing trust fund campaign, BREAD had to deal with its own profile in the community. “The problem that some people have with BREAD in Columbus is that we have a reputation of being ornery,” said Cantor Chomsky. “I only wish that

---

## **Fact Sheet: Housing in Columbus**

### **Housing Problems**

- Drastic shortage of safe, affordable housing for 22,000 families in Franklin County
- Irresponsible and/or absentee landlords who don’t take care of properties or tenants
- Section 8 housing vouchers expiring and landlords not renewing

### **Concentration of low-income housing**

- Concentration of 85% of subsidized CMHA housing in the center city
- Lack of affordable housing near areas of job growth

### **Barriers to Redevelopment in Center:**

- Brownfield development is restrictive (contamination)
- Suburban tax abatements & incentives
- Mis-perceptions: Lack of quality work force (lazy or uneducated)
- Safety issues
- No economic development in sight

### **Causes**

- Lack of regional planning
- Those who do plan (e.g. MORPC) have no governing authority
- Employers not helping to plan housing for future employees
- Restrictive rehab regulations, such as lead abatement and safety rules, make existing units unavailable
- High cost of environmental clean-up makes center city development expensive
- Tax-abatements and incentives promote suburban development at the expense of center city
- Zoning laws prevent mixed-income housing in the suburbs
- Negative perceptions of affordable housing, low-income residents as neighbors — NIMBY
- Many suburbs have used zoning codes to make affordable housing illegal (e.g. Dublin allows builders to build only 3 units per acre)



the reputation were so well deserved. We have gotten it for some things that were pretty tame, I think, and I wish people were afraid of us instead of being disdainful and saying that we're rude."

"This is a wonderful community, but dissent is not something that is part of the civic culture," he observed. "Unanimity tends to be the order of the day, but that's hard when you've got a social issue that you have to move somewhere."

"In this campaign we did not turn officials from opposition to support," he explained. "We reframed the question from something they said wasn't possible, to something that was. We weren't starting by trying to overcome peoples' opposition, just trying to bring them to understand the

---

## What We Want: The Jubilee Housing Plan

- 1) Creation of an Affordable Housing Trust Fund.
- 2) Require developers to include affordable and low-income housing in any development (example, Montgomery County, Maryland).
- 3) Develop a Housing Reinvestment Plan for Center City with a mix of incentives to spur housing.

## Research Meetings

Mayor Greg Lashutka, Gale Gregory & Judy Jones, *City of Columbus-Housing*, Linda Donnelley, *Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC)*, Joel Teaford, *Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA)*, Michael Thomas, *Columbus Neighborhood Housing Services (CNHS)*, Barbara Poppe, *Community Shelter Board*, Bill Faith *Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio (COHHIO)*, Cynthia Flaherty, *Fannie Mae*, Bob Weiler, *The Robert Weiler Company*, Walter Cates, *Main Street Business Association*, David Baker & Boyce Safford, *Urban Growth Corporation*, Curtis Williams, *Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce*, Anthony Penn, *Community Housing Network*, Eldridge Edgecomb, *Columbus Housing Partnership*, Tom Hart, *President, Local BIA (4/20)*, Ralph Smithers, *City of Columbus*, Jeff LaRue, *City of Columbus*, Dennis Guest, *CMHA*, John Hahn, *CMHA*, Dorothy Teater, *Franklin County Commissioner*

## Glossary of Terms

**Affordable Housing:** Housing is considered "affordable" if a low-income household pays no more than 30% of its income for rent and utilities.

**Median income:** \$46,200.

**Low-income:** 50% of median family income (\$23,100/family of four).

**Extremely low-income:** 30% of median income (\$13,860/family of four).

**Restrictive Zoning:** Zoning (mostly in suburban areas) that prohibits affordable housing from being developed. Allows for less density in developments (i.e. one or two single family dwellings allowed per acre) with strict guidelines that drive up costs of development (i.e. brick facades only).

**Brownfields:** Land (usually in the city's core) that has prior development on it, that is expensive to build on because of possible contamination. The costly clean-up of this land is the responsibility of developer, even if it was caused by former owner.

**Greenfields:** Undeveloped land, farmland or green space beyond urban developments

**Urban Sprawl:** Investment at the edge of urban areas which eats up farmland and greenfields. This investment sucks up investments that could benefit center city neighborhoods.

**NIMBY:** Not In My Back Yard.



possibility.” While that still required a great deal of organizing and maintaining pressure on the mayor and other officials, it also called for a degree of finesse so that allies would remain supportive.

## An election as a leverage point

BREAD seized upon the upcoming election as a point of leverage for the campaign, challenging candidates to declare whether or not they would work to develop an affordable housing trust fund if elected. In September 1999, the two mayoral candidates addressed the BREAD annual assembly — attended by 600 core members from member congregations — and both expressed their support for a housing trust fund. Candidate Michael Coleman committed that, if elected, he would meet with BREAD three weeks after the election to begin work on addressing the issues outlined in the Jubilee Housing Plan.

BREAD used the time between the annual assembly and the election to develop additional allies, meeting with organizations such as the Board of Realtors and the Building Industry Association to explain the plan and ask for their support. A well-known and respected real estate professional in

Columbus is a member at one of BREAD’s member congregations and helped the campaign greatly when he agreed to make a formal presentation to the Board of Realtors. Another BREAD member who wielded substantial power in the development community also spoke out in favor of the proposal, which lent the campaign significant credibility among developers.



*Morse Glen — funded with HTF support.*

The campaign stuck to a simple message: while Columbus didn’t have

deep poverty problems or huge slums, a sizable amount of housing had deteriorated, resulting in low-income families paying high rents for substandard housing. At meetings with realtors, builders and bankers, BREAD leaders made the argument that an affordable housing trust fund would mean healthier communities, which in turn would benefit these institutions. “Building affordable housing isn’t charity work,” said Cantor Chomsky, “it’s good business. And if we could make these groups understand it’s good business to build affordable housing, that had the potential to be transformative to the way we build our communities.”

In November, Michael Coleman was elected mayor, and followed through on his promise to meet with BREAD shortly after the election.

Mayor Coleman continued to express support for a housing trust fund, but indicated that he would need some time to develop a formal proposal. “He essentially said ‘Slow down, I’ve got my own ideas about how to do this,’” recalled Hoffman, “and that was a sense of things to come, how broad support was one thing, but there would likely be tensions around particulars.” BREAD leaders met with the mayor’s staff twice in January and February 2000, but learned no details about the proposal being developed.

“Some of those meetings were tense,” said Hoffman. “That’s when we really figured out that his greatest interest was in single family home ownership and in helping the middle class return to the city. It became very difficult to keep the trust fund an ‘affordable’ housing trust fund.” Securing the mayor’s public commitment to the fund was a strategic success, he said, but the devil turned out to be in the details.

On March 27, the day of a planned BREAD assembly on affordable housing, Mayor Coleman held a press conference to announce his plans to establish a housing trust fund, and to commit \$20 million to the fund. The BREAD assembly drew more than 1,700 people — the largest gathering on affordable housing ever in the county — and challenged the mayor to devote more resources to the fund. Coleman refused to commit to additional funds, but indicated he would make an effort to seek up to \$50 million.

At the same time, Mayor Coleman announced the establishment of a task force to look at the issue of affordable housing as a whole, and examine tax incentives, neighborhood revitalization, a housing trust fund, and other possible strategies for the new administration to use to address the housing needs of the city.

Media attention of the activity around the trust fund was good, with consistent newspaper coverage of large BREAD gatherings. BREAD staff sent press releases to media outlets regularly, and submitted an op-ed piece which was published in the city’s daily newspaper in conjunction with the release of the Jubilee Housing Plan. A meeting with the editorial board also yielded a supportive editorial about the creation of the fund.

The Mayor’s Housing Task Force met from May through August of 2000. Father Benezki was a member of the task force, and other BREAD representatives participated in working groups and reported back to BREAD on the fund’s progress. The experience made it very clear that BREAD’s desire to focus on the needs of low income households was not the goal of the mayor’s task force, which was more interested in supporting housing for middle-income families. Father Benezki spoke often about rental housing and targeting resources to those with the greatest need, but he had few allies for these positions. While Father Benezki considered quitting the task force



or issuing a minority report, he ultimately remained in the process through to the end. BREAD members attended most of the meetings, often wearing BREAD t-shirts to make it clear that they were observing and participating.

“I was naive in thinking that public officials would be sincerely interested in lower income people,” said Father Benezki, “and surprised at the degree to which they were all so allied to upper class interests.” The fact that Father Benezki was never isolated in his work on the campaign, in that he always reported back to BREAD and was supported by members attending meetings and speaking out on the issue, helped him endure the process and remain an effective advocate.

When the mayor’s task force released its report in September 2000, BREAD seized on the fact that the proposal for the trust fund contained no language concerning targeting of the fund’s resources. While 500 BREAD members voted at the group’s annual meeting to endorse the task force report, they also challenged the mayor to guarantee that at least half of the trust fund’s money would support housing for households at or below 50% of the area median income. Mayor Coleman refused to make such a commitment.

The two most critical issues to BREAD at this point were how much money would be available for the trust fund, and to whom the resources would be targeted. Members decided to focus on ensuring that the trust fund supported low-income families, in part because the issue was much more tangible and understandable than the question of resources for the fund. BREAD told the mayor that they would back off on pressuring him to commit more funds if he would guarantee that half the resources from the fund would go to benefit low-income households.

## **Affordable for whom?**

BREAD leaders quickly realized that the fact that the mayor was planning to establish a trust fund did not mean the end of their campaign. They immediately began meeting with city council members and community leaders to garner support for the challenge to target one-half of the fund’s resources to support housing for households at or below 50% of the area median income.

More than 200 BREAD members attended a city council budget meeting in December to support nine speakers in favor of the one-half commitment. Each speaker ended their presentation with the campaign’s slogan, “Affordable for Whom?” Speakers included low-wage workers, a representative of a local union, and an executive from Ohio Capital Corporation for Housing. “Our message was, ‘You are proposing to create a housing trust fund with no legal requirement that poor people will be served,’ and we kept highlighting this fundamental, logical inconsistency,” said Hoffman.

One of the challenges to organizing in Columbus is the fact that all of the city council members and county commissioners hold at-large seats. BREAD's model of congregation-based organizing, with its extensive network of congregations representing individuals from all parts of the city, proved to be effective in moving issues through the two legislative bodies.

The response from the mayor's office was to portray BREAD as troublemakers and naysayers who still were not happy even though the mayor was doing what they had asked him to do before the election. The mayor also pointed out that BREAD had been represented on the task force, making some BREAD leaders wonder if that had been merely a token gesture to allow him to be able to make just such a statement later on.

While allies such as realtors and builders remained supportive of the trust fund, many of them stopped their vocal support of BREAD's campaign when they saw that it was becoming confrontational with the administration. A meeting with the editorial board of the city's sole daily newspaper yielded an editorial in favor of the targeting, however, and prompted the city council president to say that such targeting was necessary to ensure passage of the legislation establishing the fund.

That editorial, and the presentations by BREAD members at the December budget meeting, helped turn the city council in favor of the targeting measure. BREAD leaders made nine three-minute presentations that included testimonies from individuals and clergy, to professional presentations and statements from union allies and others. In January of 2001, when Mayor Coleman formally submitted his proposal to establish the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, he included a commitment that half of the fund's money would be for housing targeted at families at or below 60% of the area median income. The following month, the city council passed legislation that established the trust fund and capitalized with an initial \$3.2 million from the city plus a continuing commitment of \$1 million annually, to be raised through a portion of the city's hotel tax.

"For me it was very important that we had a grassroots, faith-based organization representing diverse congregations advocating for the housing trust fund," said city council member Charlita Tevaras, who chairs the council's housing committee. "The BREAD campaign showed that there were people from all neighborhoods, even affluent ones, interested in these issues." That effort helped when it came to convincing the council to target half of the funds to low-income households, added Tevaras.



*Waggoner Woods — funded with HTF support.*

“We celebrated, but in reality the legislation was not detailed enough,” recalled BREAD’s Ed Hoffman. “We didn’t look at the actual contract that established the fund, and that was a huge oversight. We should have had our legal council looking at that, because eventually we discovered that it was extremely broad and open to the constant pressure to make it a middle class housing fund, supporting gentrification.”

While the mayor was supportive of a trust fund from the outset, BREAD’s decision to push him aggressively to target the fund differently than he intended affected the organization’s relationship with the mayor, acknowledged John Aeschbury, BREAD’s executive director. But settling for a trust fund that had no commitment to support low-income families was not an option, and the campaign brought to light the fact that city officials were more interested in helping middle-class households.

## **Broadening the fund**

While they conducted the campaign at the city level, BREAD leaders were meeting with Franklin County commissioners to solicit their support for the fund as well. Although commissioners and staff seemed open to the idea, and at one point even seemed to consider establishing their own trust fund, Hoffman said that it was difficult to get them to commit to anything concrete.

Finally, in May of 2001 the county commission agreed to contribute \$1 million per year to the now jointly-run trust fund, expanding the fund’s reach to the 1.2 million residents of the county, which included Columbus’ 700,000 residents. More than 1,700 BREAD members attended an action meeting shortly thereafter to challenge the commission to dedicate the county’s title transfer fee — approximately \$4 million annually — to the trust fund. Commissioners declared that they were unable to do so by law.

In July, BREAD members attended a meeting of the county commission and presented commissioners with running shoes, challenging them to “go the distance” and dedicate more money to the trust fund. The commission approved the \$1 million commitment on a 3-0 vote.

## **Keeping a close watch**

As soon as the trust fund was up and running, BREAD leaders began to attend every public meeting of the fund’s board in an effort to monitor its work. In early 2002, when the first funds were allocated and much of the resources were earmarked for market-rate and luxury developments, it became clear that the focus of the fund was not on affordable housing, but on the mayor’s agenda to encourage middle-income households to return to the city.

“Everybody felt good about what we had accomplished, but in trying to follow up we discovered that the mayor had appointed a fox to manage the chicken coop of resources going into affordable housing,” said Cantor Chomsky. “We had thought that this campaign would end with establishment of a trust fund,” said Aeschbury. “Now we’re more conscious that these things can continue to evolve and that we have to stay engaged.”

Winning broad, general support for a trust fund is indeed a significant accomplishment. But without insisting upon specific targeting and goals for the fund—and applying continued pressure to ensure that these are adhered to—a housing trust fund can easily be co-opted by those who want the resources invested in housing for higher income families. “We should have asked for more details early on and been more skeptical,” said Aeschbury. “They just basically ignored us and didn’t take us seriously, and then just went and started a home ownership fund, not thinking we would pay attention to that level of detail.”

“You have to recognize that your work isn’t done when the fund is created,” said Hoffman. “That’s really when it’s just beginning. What gets created is an entity that could have a lot of power, but that needs to be constantly held accountable to their mission. Don’t be naive about the powers you’re contending with — this is a huge market with millions of dollars involved, people who make their living in that market will go after these resources. You need to build a real grassroots power base to be able to compete.”

Rather than reacting in anger and blasting the fund, the BREAD housing committee chose to undertake a thorough evaluation of the fund’s first year of operation as a way to stay involved in the process and hold the fund’s board accountable. BREAD conducted many interviews with stakeholders and participants and analyzed the grants given by the fund up to that point.

While the report stopped short of directly saying that the fund was in violation of its charter, it certainly implied as much. BREAD’s report pointed out that the number of market rate units and units targeted to those earning more than 60% of area median income far exceeded 50% of the outlays. The analysis also noted that operating expenses for the fund were sizable — nearly one-quarter of revenues, despite a stipulation in the contract with the city that administrative costs be capped at 10%. Presented at a lunch meeting attended by many key allies, the report received some attention in the local news. Elected officials and the trust fund itself never offered a formal response, despite a promise to do so.

“The report has unquestionably had an effect in terms of moving discussion and focusing dialogue, though,” said Hoffman. “In particular, there are now board members who often ask questions about affordability and who benefits from proposed grants. Our work has probably led to some








loans and projects that will be more aligned with what BREAD wants it to do.” In early 2004, BREAD’s housing committee began work on a follow-up evaluation, to measure the level of attention the trust fund is paying to the affordable housing needs of low-income families in Columbus.

Without BREAD’s involvement, the city of Columbus would still lack a housing trust fund; without their pressure the resources secured might be going exclusively to market rate housing; and without BREAD’s ongoing efforts the housing needs of low-income households in Columbus might have no voice at all in policy discussions around affordable housing.

---

## **Columbus/Franklin County Affordable Housing Trust Fund**

-  Established in 2000-2001.
-  Administered by the nonprofit Columbus/Franklin County Affordable Housing Trust Corporation. An 11-member Board of Directors is appointed by the mayor.
-  Revenue sources are \$1 million in annual revenues from the city’s hotel/motel tax and \$1 million from the County general fund.
-  Half of the fund’s allocations are earmarked to support housing targeted to families at or below 60% of area median income, with the requirement that the goal be met over a period of four years.
-  The Affordable Housing Trust has committed \$6.5 million dollars to affordable housing projects in Columbus and Franklin County to produce more than 1,000 homes and apartments.

---

## **The BREAD Campaign**

### **Staff**

BREAD staff provided support to the campaign.

### **Total Budget**

No records were maintained, but estimates are that the campaign absorbed approximately one fourth of BREAD’s resources during the peak of the campaign.

### **Coalition Partners**

BREAD (*Building Responsibility Equality And Dignity*) is an interfaith, multi-denominational group, consisting of 45 member congregations, totaling more than 40,000 Columbus residents.



# yes for homes campaign

## City of Seattle statistics

Total population in 2000	563,374
Area median income in 2003 <sup>1</sup>	\$71,000
Estimated % of population earning less than 50% AMI	31%
Median sales price of single family home <sup>2</sup>	\$293,200
Fair market Rent for 2-bedroom unit	\$923
Total units in 2000	268,697
% units built after 1980	39%
Renter occupied units	51.6%
Vacant units in 2000 as % of all units	3.8%

Sources: All data from US Bureau of Census unless otherwise noted.

1 National Low Income Housing Coalition. *Out of Reach*, 2003.

2 National Association of REALTORS, 2004.



*Levy supporters at a Mariner's game.*

## Campaign overview

Over the past 20 years, Seattle voters have approved more than \$240 million to support a continuum of housing needs, from homeless shelters to home ownership opportunities. This remarkable commitment began in 1981, when voters supported a senior housing bond. The bond was renewed in 1986 as a housing levy, which is now in its



## Seattle, Washington

fourth renewal cycle. Seattle's housing levy derives its funds from local property taxes. Property taxes are collected twice a year and the 2002 levy was estimated to cost \$49/year in property taxes for the average priced home in Seattle. It required a simple majority public vote to pass.

In 2002, a coalition of housing developers, city officials, low-income advocates, banks, labor, and faith-based organizations joined hands to ensure that Seattle voters said “**Yes for Homes.**” The coalition campaigned for voters to renew the current housing levy and continue to dedicate a revenue stream to support affordable housing initiatives. They succeeded in expanding both the parameters of funding and the size of the allocation. The City of Seattle is now administering a housing package of \$12.2 million per year for seven years — a total of almost \$86 million. Funds will go toward the production and preservation of rental units, down payment assistance for first-time home buyers, and mixed income rental housing in economically distressed neighborhoods.

## The setting

The city's prime location on Puget Sound, close to the Olympic Mountains and Mount Rainier, and its varied urban neighborhoods has made Seattle a popular destination, both for tourists — the city hosts the third largest tourism traffic in the country — and for new residents. Over the past 30 years, this sleepy northwestern town has evolved into a sophisticated and increasingly unaffordable place to live.

In the late 1970s, Boeing — one of Seattle's major employers — went through a series of major layoffs. By 1981, the aircraft manufacturer had rebounded, and the housing market took off. Rental prices doubled as residents witnessed a massive conversion of rental units into condominiums, coupled with the drastic downsizing of federal housing programs during the Reagan Administration. That year, a coalition of churches, community organizations and housing advocates came together and campaigned successfully for a \$48 million voter-approved bond measure to create 1,000 units for low-income seniors.

Seattle's fortunes soared with the dot com economy, but its crash in 2000 made little dent in the city's housing prices: the median cost of a home is reaching toward \$300,000. Since 1995, rents increased nearly 37 percent and homes prices jumped more than 67 percent. On any given night, 4,000 people are considered homeless.

# Housing Development Consortium

The Seattle housing levy has — throughout its years of campaigns — gathered an impressive number of organizations in the housing, human services, and labor communities to coalesce in the effort to win voter approval. Leading the pack — from coalition building to exerting influence in City Council, is the *Housing Development Consortium of Seattle-King County (HDC)*, a non-profit trade organization of 30 non-profit affordable housing developers in the Greater Seattle Area. They also include associate members in the banking, general contractor and architectural sectors, and government members. HDC promotes and advocates for the availability of low-income housing, through preservation and new construction. HDC is often out promoting the efficacy of the housing levy, through media work, public information campaigns, and helping to sustain housing coalition work. Collectively, HDC members have developed and preserved nearly 16,000 units of affordable housing.



## Building on success

Funds from the 1981 bond for senior housing were spent by 1986. Housing advocates decided to focus on the concerns of other groups in the community, including families with children, homeless people and those with special needs. Housing advocates joined forces with proponents of public financing for the Seattle Art Museum to run a joint campaign in 1986. The unusual combination of grassroots and black tie worked, and a \$50 million housing levy was approved by voters.

In 1995, the Seattle housing levy was again approved by the voters at \$59.2 million. This levy became a key component of the city's approach to housing its low-income residents. The 2002 campaign to renew the levy did not take anything for granted, however, and advocates developed a multi-year strategy to ensure passage of the levy.

A full three years prior to the 2002 election season, Carla Okigwe, Director of HDC, decided it was time to lay the groundwork. "We knew there were a lot of success stories out there as a result of the levy, and so we sought to maximize the public's positive impression of the levy," she said. HDC pitched the media on covering ribbon-cutting and ground-breaking ceremonies for housing developments built with levy assistance. They established a speaker's bureau to make PowerPoint presentations to local groups.

## Seattle, Washington

“We said, in essence, this is your levy. Look at all the good things it’s doing,” recalled Okigwe. “It worked well to highlight our successes, but the frustrating thing was there wasn’t a proposal for the new levy yet. So we’d go to community groups — a neighborhood council, a business, a rotary club — and they’d say, this is interesting, what do you want us to do? And we’d say, well, we’re just here to talk about it, and they’d say, why’d you come then? So that was a weird set-up that did not work very well. Still, the early work had merit of keeping the public’s awareness of the benefits of the levy high.”

The emphasis on keeping the voters aware of the merits of the levy was echoed in the *City of Seattle’s Office of Housing*, which administers the levy program. They produced a brochure and PowerPoint presentation promoting the successes of the levy: more units were built than had been promised, developments came in under cost, income levels were being met, and the quality of the developments were higher than many market rate housing units.

“The first campaign was for senior housing, a simple program,” said Rick Hooper, Director of Policy and Program Development for the Office of Housing. “It’s evolved to a much more complex program. Spokane tried in the early 1990s with a package that got so complicated that it failed. In Tacoma, they tried one with three or four programs and it failed too. You need a track record before you can ask for more. People need to know that government works.”

“We have a continuing communication strategy to keep the housing levy on people’s minds,” explained Katie Hong, Director of the Office of Housing. “We always need to be aware of the risks of going back to the voters for assistance,” she continued. “That’s why it’s so important to communicate, communicate, and communicate. We have to get out and make the case and frame the issue and help voters know outcomes and results.”

## Building institutional support

Throughout the history of the housing levy, advocates have greatly benefited from the city’s institutional support. Many key players attribute this support to the levy’s track record of dollars well spent. Eighteen months prior to the 2002 election season, then-Mayor Paul Schell established the *Seattle Housing Levy Renewal Citizen’s Advisory Council (CAC)* to make a recommendation on a new housing levy. CAC brought together community leaders, including former mayors Norm Rice and Charles Royer, who co-chaired the council. The 20-member CAC included bank officials, housing developers, social services representatives, and housing advocates. CAC was staffed by the city, and members regularly reported to the mayor and city council.

“The CAC was very dynamic,” said Don Brewer, Senior Vice President at KeyBank. “We were trained and resourced, there were study materials

that came out before a meeting, and we had good discussions and brainstorming sessions about how to best craft the levy.” CAC analyzed the city’s housing needs, and recommended the 2002 levy be increased to \$110 - \$150 million, to reflect the growing costs of housing.

## Paying attention to the details: City Council debates

Placing the levy package on the ballot had always been fairly uncontroversial, but not so in 2002. To the horror of housing advocates, the levy debate in City Council drew on for weeks. At the heart of the debate was the extent to which different income level-households would benefit from the levy. Mayor Greg Nickels took the \$110-150 million package created by CAC and decreased it to \$95 million. He then proposed policy changes to increase the home ownership allocation; increase the level of income eligibility to 80 percent of the area median income; and target selected neighborhoods in the city for home ownership initiatives.

City Councilwoman Judy Nicastro, a freshman council member with strong support from liberals, objected to the mayor’s proposed policy changes because they seemed to channel funds away from those most in need. Her opposition was widely covered in the press, and precipitated weeks-long debate in the council. The proposal was also opposed by some of the housing advocates, who saw the shift to higher income residents as turning away from the neediest, such as homeless families. In addition, many advocates felt that the parameters for home ownership were unrealistic.

“The 2002 levy mandates that half the home ownership money target households at or below 60% of area median income,” explained Sharon Lee, director of the nonprofit housing development organization *Low Income Housing Institute*. “That’s a good goal, but very ambitious. You have to put in a lot of down payment assistance to get someone at that income level into home ownership, with the median price of a home being \$330,000. It was also a matter of where the home ownership dollars would go. The mayor wanted to target only a few neighborhoods for the funds. But not all of us agreed that restricting the money would be a good thing, as low-income households and people of color want to live in all neighborhoods in Seattle.”

Other housing providers supported increased home ownership funding. Groups such as the non-profit community development corporation *HomeSight* saw the home ownership component as so vital that they hired a public relations consultant to lobby the city council to ensure its inclusion in the final package.



## New allies and new tools: organized labor

Into the fray entered a new player: organized labor. In previous years, labor had not supported the levy because there was no guarantee that developments would use contractors that employed union labor. By 2002, however, the Seattle labor community was regularly allying with other activist bases, such as environmentalists, to affect changes to improve the lives of union members. With 70 percent of Seattleites having a positive view of labor, politicians care about what labor cares about.



Denise Hunt — funded with  
levy support.

“A lot of our members can benefit from the housing levy,” says Steve Williamson, executive secretary treasurer of the *King County Labor Council (KCLC)*, which represents 155 unions and more than 150,000 members. “Hotel and service workers need affordable rents, and our higher-paid trade unionists want to see more homeownership opportunities. We also help members with down payments through the national AFL-CIO Housing Investment Trust, so it made sense for us to get involved. It was a wonderful opportunity for us to talk to both our members and elected officials about repositioning ourselves in the political community, to say that labor is part of the community and we take that role seriously and we’re advocating the interests of our members in this as in other things.”

Just as City Council was debating the levy package, KCLC was readying a new voter score card system geared to track specific votes in the council. These votes would then be published during upcoming election seasons. “We worked it hard,” says Williamson. “Unlike at the state legislature where it’s common to see voter scorecards on the final package, we were able to say if you support *this* version, you get a bad vote. The scorecard put us in the midst of the council’s discussion, whereas often we’re on the sidelines. It brought us into the mix. We spent a lot of time with council and staffers, influencing what the final proposal looked like.”

Even KCLC was surprised by the impact of the score card. “I think the idea that you’re being watched was one that council members hadn’t really experienced much before,” says Williamson. “It was very effective. We heard a lot about how key labor was to the outcome of the package.”

## Pulling together

Council spent unprecedented energy debating the levels of funding for the various components of the proposal. Housing advocates worked hard to avoid public dissent. HDC organized a forum for housing advocates to come together for policy and strategy conversations. This forum turned out to be key to mitigating some of the differences emerging as a result of the increased emphasis on homeownership in the Mayor’s proposal.

“We’d learned during the 1995 levy campaign the importance of pulling together and of not bickering in the public’s eye,” says Okigwe. But as the council’s arguing about the package became public, advocates worried that voters would begin doubting the merits of the program. Finally, a group of housing providers banded together to meet with key council people to say, “Enough! You are killing this,” recalls Okigwe. “We knew that we’d run into serious trouble if the City Council couldn’t quickly come to an agreement on the levy package, and we didn’t want to stall the campaign any longer.”

The housing advocates effort to maintain a united front and meet with key council members worked. The vote was decided when a vacationing City Council member returned and cast her vote in favor of the Mayor’s package. By continuing to work together through the stress of the council deliberations, housing advocates were well positioned to step into campaign mode as soon as the levy language passed in the council.

## The Yes for Homes Campaign



As the city was revising its levy proposal, the Yes for Homes campaign was organizing. Based on the levy’s successful track record and minimal opposition, it might have been tempting to think the renewal effort would not take too much energy. But the Yes for Homes campaign took nothing for granted.

Once the city council approved the final \$86 million initiative, the campaign had only three months until voting day. In that time they had to raise \$430,000 and implement an extensive voter turnout strategy. This would not have been possible without the substantial work begun 15 months earlier by the nonprofit housing community and city officials. The work of the Citizen’s Advisory Committee and HDC’s ongoing public relations campaign laid the groundwork for the campaign itself. Housing advocates were used to working well together and could parlay these relationships into a highly functioning campaign committee.

### Building the team

Yes for Homes hired a campaign manager, a fundraiser, an outreach manager, a media planner and a campaign strategist. Many of the campaign staff had worked together on Mayor Nickel’s election campaign, which gave them good chemistry as well as recent knowledge of Seattle’s voting population.

Popular former Mayor Rice served as the campaign chairman and committed himself to fundraising. The campaign recruited veterans from previous levy campaigns to lend their fundraising experience. Key individuals were assigned responsibility for coordinating fundraising from specific constituents. Group



## Seattle, Washington

goals were established for banks, nonprofit agencies, architects, contractors, attorneys, business organizations, individuals and faith-based organizations. These goals were adjusted to meet the groups' emerging capacities. Supportive city council members sent fundraising letters to their donor lists.

Yes for Homes' steering committee consisted of housing developers, human services, labor, businesses and community groups. The committee met regularly to vet issues related to the campaign, to keep up the pressure for fundraising, and to help move pieces of the campaign plan, such as door-to-door work, phone banks, yard signs and mailings. Many of the committee members had also been active on the Citizen's Advisory Committee, but not all were influential political powerhouses.

"Carla ran the steering committee which freed me up to run a campaign," says Chris Gregorich, Yes for Homes campaign manager. "She was basically the clearinghouse for a lot of coalition relationships, and I focused on finding the yes votes."

The relationship wasn't perfectly suited to both entities. "There were times when we felt we were in the way," explains Okigwe. "We were used to a much more grassroots approach to campaigns, based on our experience in 1995. It's clear that a campaign that is only volunteer grassroots most likely cannot succeed in a big city, but Seattle voters can smell a 'bought' campaign a mile away. The professionals cost big money, but we needed each other."

## Sustaining the coalition

The Yes for Homes campaign engaged a broad range of constituencies, and many participants have shared their insights about what made the effort successful.

"I know it's said that Seattle never met a tax it didn't like," commented Alice Woldt, then-interim director of the *Church Council of Greater Seattle*. "And I don't know that I agree with that. I think what is true is that campaigns have become very sophisticated in their targeting and their marketing and promoting the issue on their margins, and our campaign was no exception."

"You need to have all the right people in the room, the natural supporters, the developers — and ask what's a package we can agree on?" said Katie Hong, director of the city's Office of Housing. "You need to get political input early on, hire professional campaigners and treat it as a serious issue."

Sarah Jaynes, former director of *Seattle Alliance for Good Jobs and Housing for Everyone (SAGE)*, had another observation. "What made the levy so powerful," she noted, "was that everybody — all the main constituencies — supported it, which made it popular for politicians to support."



“There are people who aren’t going to come, but don’t lose a lot of sleep over derailers,” Gregorich advised. “The potential detractors that you do bring in should only be those who have some sway of some kind — and can bring something to the table. Then build as large a coalition as you can and build a package you can be happy with.” He worked to make sure that organizations that were “people strong,” including faith-based groups, were motivated to dedicate volunteer time to the campaign. “Think about who your faith allies are and who in those groups can be most influential,” recommends Woldt.

## Deciding when to run

An early strategic decision of the campaign was to determine when the levy should be brought to the voters: on the September ballot or in the November general election. There were trade-offs to either date. Voting in September was risky because it cut the campaign season short, and fewer, more conservative people tend to vote in primaries. On the other hand, the levy might be overlooked by voters in November, wearied by the number of issues on the ballot, which was expected to include multi-billion funding proposals for transportation and a new Monorail. The steering committee’s decision to go on the September ballot was later hailed as a very astute judgment call.

## Polling: Determining where you stand and developing your message

The “Yes for Homes” campaign relied on two polls. In early 2002, the city hired a firm to conduct polling and two focus groups to ascertain current public impressions of the levy. This information helped the campaign know where the levy stood in the public eye.

“This was a key piece of front-end work,” recalled Gregorich. “The City had all the analysis done, and so we just had to figure out our message and turn out our yes votes.”

“I’ve talked to other areas who’ve tried to do this,” said Okigwe. “And the first thing I tell them they need to do is a poll. Without polling, you don’t have a clue where you stand — if housing is even on people’s radar. A good poll can help you relate housing to other issues, understand how the public perceives housing and whether they see a role for voter money in housing and whether they’d pay for it.”

The second poll was paid for by the campaign itself. This poll was used to determine where their strength was and what message would resonate with voters. Polling data told the campaign that the levy was strongest among older women, which helped the campaign develop a mailing piece specifically targeted to this constituency.





## Seattle, Washington

Polling can be expensive: it's easy to spend \$20,000 on a good poll. Woldt, of the Church Council, advised that communities try to better understand their chances before they start, even if there is no budget for polling. "Have some information about whether the campaign is realistic," she urged. "If it's not through polling, at least have some way of identifying your chances, whether it's looking at previous election returns, a community's support for schools, etc."

"We knew from our polling that if Seattle sees good government at work then it supports it, and that was the message that we had to get out," said Gregorich. "We had a good idea where our support was going to come from, based on the previous levy vote in 1995. So it was a matter of, literally, identifying our Yes for Homes votes."

Hooper with the Office of Housing observed the program development in light of what was on voters' minds. "In 1986, there was a huge awareness of and interest in homelessness, and the levy included program funding to address that very real need," he said. "By 1995, hardly anyone was talking about homelessness, and the package was expanded in other areas. Being aware of voter sentiment helps to think about the best way to portray the package."

### Organizing media events

The campaign benefited from the support of the Seattle Alliance for Good Jobs and Housing for Everyone, (SAGE), a community-labor alliance that works to improve living and working conditions in Seattle. Half of SAGE's membership is composed of unions that represent lower-income service and hospitality workers.

SAGE was newly formed in 2002, and saw the levy campaign as an ideal opportunity to get the message to the public about the importance of good paying jobs and an adequate supply of housing. SAGE convened members at a downtown rally and media event to support the levy - one of the only media events organized during the campaign season. The rally drew 100 low-income workers, and featured a speech by Mayor Nickels.

"As the Mayor was speaking, he saw poor people right in front of him, and so he had to incorporate them into his speech," recalled Jaynes, of SAGE. "It was a pivotal moment for us to see our message — that people who work here have to be able to live here — adopted by the mayor. After that, he talked about the jobs component a lot, which was important — he was one of the main spokespeople in the media."

In addition to attracting free media, the campaign bought \$100,000 worth of radio time to broadcast an ad in which former Mayor Norm Rice

urged Seattle voters to support the levy. The campaign made an early judgment call that they did not have the budget to purchase enough television time to make it worthwhile.

Although both major Seattle daily newspapers editorialized against the levy, proponents were not concerned. “We had a terrific base of support,” explained Chris Gregorich. “And the influence of the papers is questionable in this town.”

## Targeted outreach and get out the vote

The campaign strategy was to identify likely supporters and encourage them to vote. To accomplish this, the campaign conducted nightly phone banks, starting in mid-July, and sent four targeted mailings to high voter turnout precincts that supported the levy in 1995.

“We made 120,000 calls in the last week — 60,000 of those in the last two days before the election,” said Gregorich. A portion of the calls were to identified “yes” voters, but by far the bulk of calls went to households in precincts that had a high percentage voter turnout in favor of the 1995 levy. Hundreds of campaign volunteers knocked on doors in targeted precincts, and the steering committee continued to conduct outreach through its speakers’ bureau.

“We may have turned out no votes too, but we figured a conservative estimate of six out of ten was going to vote with us,” explained Gregorich. The owner of the average cost of a home in Seattle would pay only an additional \$49 a year in property taxes for the levy, which made the ballot seem very reasonable when measured against the on-going benefit it would provide.

Steering committee members sought ways to invigorate their constituencies. The Church Council of Greater Seattle distributed a recommended sermon to their church network for the Sunday prior to Election Day. The King County Labor Council sent a mailing to 20,000 union members urging them to vote, conducted labor-to-neighbor phone banking of 15,000 households, and Williamson did a get-out-the-vote robocall to union households. The nonprofit HomeSight mailed to every household in their legislative district to urge voter support, and entered a Yes for Homes float in the Rainier Valley Days parade. The day before the election, supporters showed up at a Mariner’s baseball game with tee shirts and hats to promote the levy. The campaigners’ sign, “Hit a home run for housing” flashed on the stadium’s reader



*Levy supporters at Mariner's game.*






board. These efforts both raised visibility and gave proponents something direct, and fun, to do.

As part of the get-out-the vote strategy, many of the nonprofit organizations called their own lists, and volunteers baked chocolate chip cookies to keep callers inspired. “Some of it was less scientific than others,” noted Gregorich. “But it all helped and it also built a sense of community within the campaign.”

The day before the housing levy election, Seattle residents opened the morning paper to see that Seattle had the second highest unemployment rate in the nation. Campaign staff feared that voters would be reluctant to pass the housing levy in the midst of this bad news. They needn’t have worried: when supporters convened on election night to watch the results come in, they knew they were well positioned for victory. A full 54 percent of the voters voted to renew Seattle’s housing levy for a total of almost \$86 million over seven years.

---

## Seattle Housing Levy-Housing Assistance Funds

-  Established in 1981 and renewed again in 1986, 1995 and most recently in 2002.
-  Administered by the City of Seattle’s Office of Housing. The 13-member Housing Levy Oversight Committee, appointed by City Council, reviews and approves the administrative and financial plan for the levy. The Office of Housing also appoints and works with a Citizens’ Advisory Committee.
-  Revenue source is the property tax levy approved by 54% of the voters in 2002. The current 2002 seven-year levy is estimated to raise \$86 million or \$12.2 million per year.
-  The 2002 levy is committed to the following objectives:
  - ◆ \$56.1 million will provide loans to nonprofit housing groups to build or preserve affordable multi-family housing;
  - ◆ \$7.8 million will support the Operating and Maintenance Fund for housing for extremely low-income homeless and disabled persons;
  - ◆ \$7.8 million will be used for the Down Payment Assistance program for first-time homebuyers;
  - ◆ \$7.2 will fund mixed-income rental-housing projects in economically distressed neighborhoods;
  - ◆ \$2.8 million will fund an Emergency Rental Assistance program to help renters avoid homelessness; and
  - ◆ \$4.3 million will be used for administration.
-  The 2002 levy is projected to provide 2,044 units.

# Yes for Homes Campaign

## Staff

Campaign Manager  
Field Director  
Chief Fundraiser  
Communications Director  
Volunteer Coordinator  
Media Consultant  
Campaign Strategist  
Bookkeeper

---

## Total Budget

\$430,000

---

## Steering Committee Members

*Chairman: Former Mayor*  
*Norm Rice*  
Historic Seattle  
Federal Home Loan  
Bank of Seattle

Buck & Gordon  
First Things First  
Mt. Zion Church  
KeyBank  
Aide to Councilmember  
McIver  
Housing Resources Group  
Housing Development  
Consortium  
Impact Capital  
Downtown Emergency  
Services Center  
SAGE  
Downtown Seattle  
Association  
Interim Community  
Development Association  
Plymouth Housing Group

Low Income Housing  
Institute  
Fremont Public Association  
HomeSight  
AIDS Housing of WA  
Office of the Mayor Staff (2)  
Seattle City Councilmember  
Aide to Councilmember  
Steinbrueck  
Buck & Gordon  
Preston Gates and Ellis  
University of Washington  
Foster Pepper Shelfelman  
Seattle City Council Staff  
HomeStreet Bank  
Rental Housing Association  
Washington Mutual  
YWCA





# affordable housing trust fund campaign


## City of St. Louis statistics

Total population in 2000	348,189
Area median income in 2003 <sup>1</sup>	\$63,900
Estimated % of population earning less than 50% AMI	32%
Median sales price of single family home <sup>2</sup>	\$128,800
Fair market rent for 2-bedroom unit	\$695
Total units in 2000	175,825
% units built after 1980	28%
Renter occupied units	53.1%
Vacant units in 2000 as % of all units	16.4%

Sources: All data from US Bureau of Census unless otherwise noted.

1 National Low Income Housing Coalition. *Out of Reach*, 2003.


2 National Association of REALTORS, 2004.

**Vote  Yes**  
**on Proposition H**

**Healthy Families - Healthy Homes**

**Voting YES means**

- Access to Health Care
- Increased Home Ownership
- Health and Housing for Families, Seniors, and Neighbors with Disabilities



**Punch #65 on the ballot**

**This Tuesday, April 3**  
**Polls are open from 6am – 7pm**

**For more information call 314 531 7023**

or visit our website: [affordablehousingfund.20m.com](http://affordablehousingfund.20m.com)

Fund for Healthy Families, Healthy Homes, Treasurer: Laura Gilbert

## Campaign overview

Organizers and advocates in St. Louis, Missouri won a huge victory in 2001 when they took a proposal for a housing trust fund to a general election and won with 58% of the vote. Their success can be attributed to two factors: housing advocates assembled a broad and powerful coalition of community, business and civic leaders; and they struck a deal with key

city leaders that allowed the campaign for the trust fund to be carried out with virtually no opposition. As a result, the city now boasts a \$5 million per year trust fund that targets its funds to those households most in need of housing assistance.

## The setting

In the late 1990s, the city's population was declining, causing an increase in abandoned and unsafe buildings. Shrinking population also meant a commensurate drop in federal block grant support, despite the fact that those who remained in the city were disproportionately low-income and in dire need of housing subsidies.



*Ribbon-cutting at CJ's Place — funded with HTF support.*

The affordable housing that existed was rapidly disappearing. Many landlords with project-based federal Section 8 subsidies were opting out of the program, raising rents in their units to market rate. Thirty percent of the families who held Section 8 vouchers ended up returning them to the St. Louis Housing Authority because they could not find landlords willing to accept the vouchers. In 1999, the city demolished 360 units of public housing, putting additional stress on a waiting list that already included more than 1,000 families.

One study estimated that 32,000 St. Louis children lived in homes at risk for lead-based paint, and the city consistently led the nation in the number of children suffering from lead poisoning. Homeownership rates in St. Louis were significantly lower than in surrounding areas. A program that provided funds for seniors to repair their homes had a waiting list that was years long. Homelessness was on the rise.

St. Louis was not without its housing advocates, however, and when organizations like *Adequate Housing for Missourians* and *Housing Comes First* came together to do something about the crisis, the idea of establishing a citywide housing trust fund quickly became the focus of their campaign.

## The start of the campaign

St. Louis housing advocates first learned about housing trust funds in March 1993 at the annual conference of the National Low Income Housing Coalition. A panel discussion about community organizing efforts in Chicago that generated funding sources for affordable housing sparked the interest of two leaders from *Adequate Housing for Missourians*, a statewide



housing advocacy group. The following September, those leaders attended a workshop run by the Housing Trust Fund Project of the Center for Community Change. The leaders subsequently launched the **St. Louis Campaign for Housing and Jobs**, a coalition of housing advocates and other supporters dedicated to creating a trust fund in the city.

Over the next several years, the Campaign existed only in rough form, as advocates learned about trust funds and sketched out ideas of how such a fund might work in St. Louis. While these discussions helped get the ball rolling, coalition members never took the next step of “engaging the power structure,” recalled Janet Becker, the founder of Adequate Housing for Missourians and a leader of the trust fund campaign. Members of the coalition spoke to a few Aldermen during this time about the idea of starting a trust fund, but received unfavorable responses.

## Building the campaign

In 1999 the effort took on new life, as Becker raised funds from the St. Louis Archdiocese’s Campaign for Human Development and the Funding Exchange in New York City to launch a full-fledged organizing campaign. The St. Louis Campaign for Housing and Jobs became an affiliate of Housing Comes First (HCF), a citizens’ coalition working to preserve housing and neighborhoods for people with low and moderate incomes. Laura Barrett, then executive director of HCF, became Campaign director.

This injection of energy and resources into the Campaign attracted the attention of many other organizations, as Becker and Barrett capitalized on their extensive connections with housing supporters in St. Louis to build a steering committee for the Campaign. They met individually with leaders from local labor unions, social service providers, banks, churches and other supportive organizations, asking them to serve on the steering committee. Residents of low-income housing were also encouraged to join the steering committee, to ensure that the voices of those who would benefit the most from the trust fund would be heard in the governance of the Campaign.

As organizations joined the Campaign, they brought with them resources. Members of the steering committee were asked to donate or raise \$2,500 in cash or in-kind contributions, as well as to suggest new and influential endorsers who could be contacted. For example, when the local *Service Employees International Union (SEIU)* joined the steering committee, they were instrumental in securing the endorsement of the St. Louis Labor Council, the largest union in the city.

The breadth of the committee was impressive, recalled Lora Gilbert, treasurer for the Campaign and vice president and community reinvestment officer at *Commerce Bank*. Gilbert got involved because as a city resident she



was concerned about the need for affordable housing for poor families, she said, and as a bank official she was acutely aware of the challenges they faced. A coalition that included professionals, public officials, advocates, and organizers had the best chance of effecting a policy change that could help address these problems, she felt.

The full name of the initiative — The St. Louis Campaign for Housing and Jobs — reflected a concerted effort to highlight the fact that supporting the construction of affordable housing would mean not only more affordable housing for those who need it, but also the creation of jobs, particularly construction jobs. This connection with economic development further helped win supporters, including many organizations affiliated with the building trades.

The Campaign spent several months bringing everyone up to speed on the intricacies of housing trust funds and hashing out the details of what kind of fund they wanted to see for the city. The Campaign met monthly, first at the St. Louis University Legal Clinic, then at a local bank, and finally at the Office of Equal Housing Opportunity Council (EHOC) where the Campaign rented office space. The EHOC also agreed to share facilities such as their copier, in support of the effort.

## Creating a proposal

In April of 1999, the Campaign kicked off with a press conference in front of a home purchased by a low-income family. The house symbolized the benefits of homeownership opportunities, and the potential for stabilizing city neighborhoods and reducing homelessness among the working poor, Campaign representatives said. Three radio stations, two television stations, and the local daily newspaper covered the event, which announced the goal of persuading the Board of Aldermen to commit 20% of a use tax to affordable housing.

The steering committee wanted to capture the use tax as a revenue stream for the proposed housing trust fund. The tax would apply almost exclusively to large businesses and institutions, as it would levy 2.65% on annual purchases of \$2,000 or more from out of state. Organizers estimated that the tax could generate between five and nine million dollars each year for the trust fund. They also saw the use tax as a way of inducing more businesses to buy more products locally. The use tax had been in place in the city just a few years prior and had been rescinded. However, businesses that had paid the use tax while it was in effect had indicated no undue hardships as a result.

From the outset, advocates were dedicated to ensuring that the trust fund would target the needs of those who most needed housing assistance. All of the outlays would go to households earning less than 80% of the area median

income, with 40% of the resources targeting those with incomes below 20%. All units built with support from the trust fund would be required to remain affordable at the targeted level in perpetuity. The proposal's language cited a range of programs and issues that would receive support, from weatherization to lead safety, homeownership to homelessness prevention.

The breadth of the coalition was reflected in the proposed trust fund as it took shape. The influence of *ACORN* and the carpenters' union was evident in the language specifying that the grant process would give preference to projects that would create new entry-level jobs paying a living wage. The participation of a disability rights advocate resulted in language that required universal design principles promoting accessible housing for disabled individuals in all new units built with trust fund dollars.

"Expenditure of public money that doesn't benefit the entire public is discriminatory," said Colleen Starkloff, the disability rights advocate who served on the steering committee. At the time, she was co-founder and vice president of community affairs for *Paraquad*, a St. Louis-based independent organization and living center. Starkloff spoke about the need for housing for the disabled at many public gatherings organized by the Campaign. She worked to ensure that all of the Campaign's printed material included both photos of disabled people and text about the proposed fund's potential benefit to the disabled community.

Drafting the language for the proposed ordinance was a major task, completed thanks to the *pro bono* assistance of Jim Wilson. An attorney with a St. Louis law firm and previously a city attorney, Wilson brought the experience necessary to draw up the complex document and ensure that it contained the technical aspects required.

## Building support

In mid-July, just before the summer recess, the Board of Aldermen passed a bill for the November 2000 ballot. It asked the voters to approve the use tax-but exclusively for ConnectCare, the city's health care operation for low-income households. The Campaign shifted gears and launched a petition drive to collect the 20,000 signatures required to get their proposal on the ballot without the support of the Board.

The drive started on August 8, when Campaign volunteers approached voters as they went to the polls for the primary election. Volunteers with petitions staked out shopping malls, post offices, and other high-traffic public spaces. The Campaign also contracted with the local *ACORN* chapter to gather signatures. By December, the Campaign had collected more than enough signatures to ensure that the initiative would be on the March 2001 ballot, when voters went back to the polls for the mayoral primary.



The Aldermanic initiative failed in November 2000. In early December, Campaign leaders met with Francis Slay, who was then president of the Board of Aldermen and campaigning for mayor. Slay asked them to consider combining the health care and housing proposals into one measure, and to postpone placing them on the ballot until the April 2001 general election. In return, Slay agreed to support the trust fund proposal.

The Campaign steering committee discussed Slay's proposal, and decided that splitting use tax revenues between housing and health care was a reasonable compromise. "We felt it was a good fit, since the two initiatives were supporting people at the same income levels," said Barrett. "We also felt that the health care part would bring more people out to the polls in support." The Campaign responded to Slay in a letter, indicating that the Campaign would consider his proposal if he agreed to provide funding for the Campaign, commit to earmarking 75% of the funds raised for housing and 25% for health care, and help secure endorsements from other key officials and leaders.

## **A compromise brings new allies**

On December 15, 2000, Campaign steering committee member and former St. Louis mayor Vince Schoemehl arranged a meeting with Slay, the current mayor Clarence Harmon, and Greg Carter, chair of the Board of Aldermen's health committee. After much negotiation, the meeting concluded with all parties agreeing to split the use tax funds 50/50 between housing and health care, which had been the Campaign's bottom line. Mayor Harmon declared the agreement as the best Christmas present the city ever received. On his way out of the meeting, Greg Carter—who had begun the discussion utterly opposed to any compromise—was already calling Aldermen to ask for their support. In rapid fashion, 27 of the city's 28 Aldermen approved the deal.

The compromise meant a number of things to the Campaign. First, it meant a broader theme, and with it a new name — **Healthy Housing/Healthy Homes**, with the initiative to be listed as "Proposition H" on the ballot. Placing the initiative on the April general election ballot rather than the March primary ballot gave organizers a little more time. However, the general election in St. Louis had historically garnered much lower voter turnout than primaries and was far less contentious, because voters in the city are overwhelmingly Democratic.

It also meant a significant infusion of resources, as Slay — the frontrunner in the mayoral race — committed publicly to support the measure and

to provide funding as well. His campaign phone banks called all of his health care supporters to ask them to support the initiative, he lent his name and photo to much of the literature produced for Healthy Housing/Healthy Homes, and he spoke at many Campaign events between the compromise in December and the election in April.

Slay's support was followed by a number of other key endorsements, most notably that of the Regional Commerce and Growth Association, a corporate organization representing the very businesses that would end up paying the tax that would be imposed if the measure passed. "They understood that they couldn't run businesses if their employees couldn't afford to live in the city, or if people living in the city spent so much on housing that they couldn't afford to buy their goods or services," said Becker.

"We had customers that would be affected by the use tax," said Lora Gilbert of Commerce Bank. "We would be affected by it ourselves. But we saw it as something that the city needed." In addition to the support of her employer, Lora Gilbert took a personal interest in the effort. She spoke about Proposition H at her neighborhood meeting and put a lawn sign in her yard urging people to vote for the measure.

By basing the initiative on a revenue stream that would not affect individuals at all, the Campaign was able to assure voters that their support for the measure would not cost them financially. As for the businesses that would have to pay the tax, the Campaign and supportive officials were extremely effective in making them understand that affordable housing would ultimately benefit the local economy and, in turn, their own businesses.

With city officials as allies, there was virtually no opposition to the initiative for the entire duration of the Campaign. Organizers were able to focus their energy on the challenge of making voters understand the value of Proposition H and getting them to the polls.

The compromise struck between advocates and city leaders was key to the Campaign's success. Advocates had demonstrated their commitment and their power when they generated enough signatures to place their own measure on the ballot, thus forcing the Aldermen and mayor to sit down with them and work out a deal. By combining forces, officials and the Campaign gathered more resources than either side could have mustered on their own.

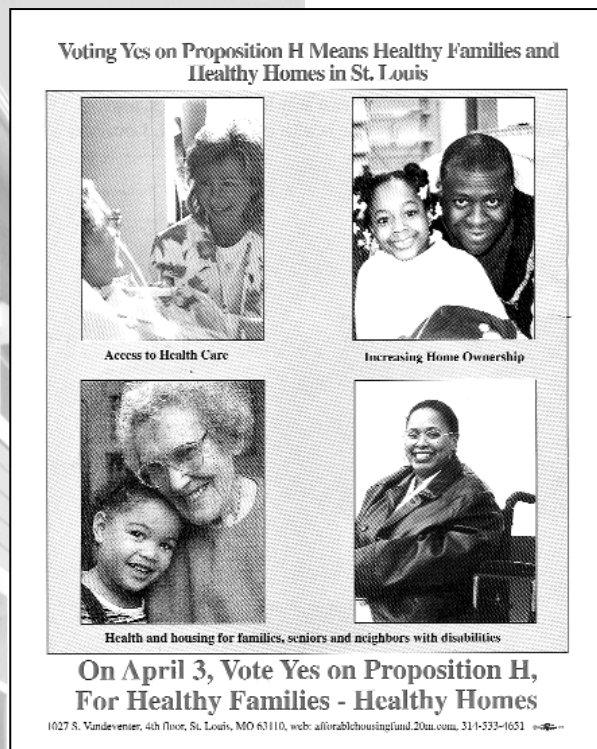


*Blueprint of Laclede and Sarah Apartments — funded with HTF support.*

# Getting the word out

## Crafting the message

Campaign organizers were convinced that voters would be overwhelmingly in favor of Proposition H if they understood that the tax being levied to fund the initiative would not cost them anything personally. “We knew that if voters don’t know what something is, but they see the word ‘tax’ in the first sentence, they’ll oppose it,” said Becker. “We had to say over and over again, ‘if you don’t already pay this tax, you never will.’” Some of the Campaign literature did not even include information on where the trust fund’s revenue would come from.



The Campaign’s message was honed down into a single sound bite, and advocates never deviated from that message through the course of the initiative: “Proposition H will help young families buy homes, make sure seniors can stay in their homes and provide better access to health care for all St. Louisans. Proposition H will provide 25,000 people access to health care every year. Proposition H will build, repair or help finance 800 homes per year.”

“The challenge of the Campaign was to clearly send out the message of what a use tax was and what it meant to the average St. Louisan,” said Dan Grandone, an organizer with *Metropolitan Congregations United*, a network of 75 congregations in St. Louis. “People were mostly skeptical about the tax part of the Campaign, and nobody really questioned any of the details like who the funds would be targeted to or how it would be run.”

## Targeting the audience

“We didn’t campaign in wealthy communities where we didn’t think we’d find support,” said Barrett. “We targeted churches, African American neighborhoods, poor communities, and other areas where we thought we could find people who would support us and vote.” Since the election was expected to have relatively light turnout, getting supporters to the polls was critical.

Events were held almost every week in the few months running up to the election. One press conference was hosted by a number of local ministers and former Mayor Schoemehl; another was staged in front of houses under construction, and featured two developers and Aldermen Board president Slay speaking in support of Proposition H. A coordinated effort with

churches resulted in thousands of fliers being distributed on a single day in 100 churches around the city, and many pastors talking about the initiative in their sermons on that day. Metropolitan Congregations United coordinated an education effort among its members. Mayoral frontrunner Slay appeared at many of the events in support of the Campaign.

## **Working with the media**

Campaign leaders met with editorial boards of local newspapers and garnered three very positive editorials in the St. Louis Post Dispatch — the city's largest daily — as well as some in the city's religious, labor, and African American newspapers. The newspaper for city employees also supported the Campaign, and every local paper ran extensive news coverage — much of it on the front page. A major employer, BJC HealthCare, endorsed the Campaign in its employee newsletter. Public officials and members of the Campaign's steering committee had numerous op-ed pieces and letters to the editor published in the city's newspapers in the months leading up to the election.

An infusion of donations toward the end of the Campaign prompted the purchase of air time for radio ads to reach an even broader audience. Ads ran on the largest station in the city, as well as on a local hip-hop station, with voice-over from a well known and well respected African American minister.

## **Developing printed materials**

But mass media was only part of the communications strategy. All printed material for the Campaign was professionally designed and produced, featuring photographs representing people who would benefit from the proposed trust fund — seniors, children, disabled individuals, and families. The Campaign produced and distributed more than 15,000 general-purpose fliers. Tens of thousands of targeted pieces were printed, with messages aimed at audiences who would be most interested in specific elements of the initiative, such as health care, housing for seniors, or housing for disabled individuals.

The printed material was kept to a single sheet and featured lists of key endorsers, as well as consistent slogans such as “Good for Families, Good for the Economy,” “Proposition H: A Unique Solution to Stop Decline and Increase Homeownership,” and “Voting Yes on Proposition H Means Healthy Families and Healthy Homes in St. Louis.” Many materials included a photo and quote from Slay. The Campaign also designed, produced, and distributed 1,500 yard signs saying “Vote Yes for Proposition H” and went door to door in many neighborhoods asking residents to place them in their front yards.





## Getting out the vote

The Campaign spent significant resources on direct contact with likely voters, particularly during the final weeks before the election. The Campaign contracted with a professional call center to make 15,000 calls to a list of very frequent voters one week before the election. According to staff at the call center, the people contacted stayed on the line longer than for any other initiative the center had ever worked for. The potential voters asked questions that indicated their desire to fully understand the issue, such as “Who will the trust fund help?” “Will it raise my taxes?” and “Won’t the companies just pass along the costs to consumers?” Slay’s campaign phone bank placed an additional 13,000 calls to his own list, with a pre-recorded message from the president of the League of Women Voters.

Five mailings were sent to all or part of a list of 27,000 “very frequent voters,” from lists generated by ACORN’s national and local staff. Supportive local groups also generated their own mailing lists, and some contributed mailings to their own constituents. A website provided detailed information about the Campaign and the proposal.

As election day grew near more organizations offered support, mailing fliers to their own list, helping the Campaign mail materials to its lists, or staffing volunteer phone banks to make additional calls in hopes of getting more voters to the polls. The Campaign’s efforts to reach potential voters through so many targeted methods — radio ads, direct mail, phone banks, fliers distributed in churches, lawn signs — paid off. In the weeks leading up to the election it was impossible not to be aware of Proposition H.

Fifty paid and 30 volunteer poll workers staffed the largest polling places on the day of the election, urging people to support Proposition H as they entered the buildings. The mayor’s volunteers placed signs at many more locations on election day. The fact that the message was clear, concise, and never wavered through the entire Campaign contributed to the victory. Campaign leaders took a complex issue and employed a persuasive message targeted directly at the voters.

## Funding the campaign

In the end, Slay and his supporters funneled \$55,000 to the Proposition H Campaign, a significant portion of the Campaign’s entire \$140,000 budget. Most of the funds were raised in only two months. Among the largest contributors were Civic Progress, a group of top business leaders, which contributed \$25,000, and the Funding Exchange, which provided a \$10,000 matching grant.



Janet Becker and Laura Barrett secured additional contributions from their contacts in the advocacy and business communities. Some individuals gave as much as \$2,000 when approached by Becker, who said that a key selling point for her fundraising was telling people that “it was a one time thing, and their contribution could help leverage millions of dollars for affordable housing.” A gospel concert and dinner fundraiser brought in an additional \$3,000.

On the expense side, much of the budget was dedicated to communications efforts — \$43,000 for radio ads, \$16,000 for the phone banks, and another \$36,000 for printing and mailing literature. Staff costs made up most of the remaining expenses; Barrett was a part-time employee through the entire campaign; and an additional full-time position was filled for 10 months.

## Victory, and another compromise

On April 3, 2001, 58% of St. Louis voters voted in favor of Proposition H. A victory party was held at the Carpenter’s District Council’s hall that night and Campaign leaders were exuberant over their win.

In an email to Barrett two weeks before the election, former mayor Schoemehl praised the Campaign’s work, writing “The coalition we’ve put together is going to pass what the politicians couldn’t do on their own.” The failure of the use tax as proposed by Aldermen only five months earlier was proof of that, as was the inability of neighboring St. Louis County to pass a use tax on the same day that Proposition H passed in the city itself.

Campaign leaders immediately began working to get steering committee members appointed to the newly-formed independent commission that would govern the housing trust fund. They were largely successful. The hiring process for the fund’s executive director — a position that reports directly to the mayor — was slow, however, and for the first six months the Commission was on its own in soliciting grant proposals and setting grant guidelines. This was challenging, recalled Colleen Starkloff, who had been tapped by the mayor to be the Commission’s first chair. Commissioners sometimes met as frequently as three times per week in order to hammer out all of the details that needed to be addressed.

A year after the victory at the polls came another surprise — the use tax had generated not the expected \$5 million, but \$20 million. That windfall made officials think again about the tax. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 meant new security expenses for the city, and Mayor Slay responded by taking funds from the city housing programs. He requested \$5.3 million from the trust fund to fill the resultant gaps in the city’s homeless serv-



ices programs and other items. Advocates were outraged and many Commission members opposed this move. The sole purpose of the trust fund was to provide new funds for affordable housing, not to allow the city to shirk its own fiscal responsibilities to address affordable housing issues.





But Starkloff felt that as appointees of the mayor, the Commissioners had to go along with his request. “Politically we had nothing to gain by poking him in the eye,” she said. Advocates picketed the meeting and submitted a formal letter of protest to the commission urging them to reject the mayor’s request. In the end, all but one commissioner voted in favor of the mayor’s request. However, several commissioners voiced their disapproval — and many of them were not reappointed when their one-year terms expired.

Mayor Slay announced that he wanted a ballot initiative to change the funding stream. He proposed to give the housing trust fund a flat \$2.5 million per year, with any revenue raised above that going to the general fund. Leaders from the Campaign came together again to fight against this proposal. They ultimately persuaded the mayor to increase the amount to \$10 million yearly, to be split evenly between housing and health care. After the first \$10 million, another \$3 million would go to demolition and the remainder to public safety. Campaign leaders also gained a commitment from the mayor not to allow public agencies to tap into the trust fund in lieu of budgetary support from the city.

“It was still the trust fund we originally proposed,” said Barrett, “so the compromise was worth it.” The mayor brought this proposal to voters in the fall of 2002 and won.

---

## **St. Louis, Missouri Affordable Housing Trust Fund**

-  Established in 2001.
-  Administered by the Affordable Housing Commission of the City of St. Louis. The 11-member Commission is appointed by the mayor and approved by the Board of Aldermen. The Commission is staffed through the City’s Community Development Administration and Human Services Department.
-  Revenue source is \$5 million annually from the use tax (sales tax on out-of-state purchases above \$2,000) approved by 58% of voters.
-  Forty percent of funds awarded must go to activities that benefit households with incomes at or below 20% of the area median income. All

units built with support from the trust fund are required to remain affordable at the targeted level in perpetuity, and new units are required to apply universal design principles in construction.



During its first year of operation in 2002, the Affordable Housing Commission awarded more than \$7.5 million dollars in grants and loans to developers and nonprofit agencies.

---

## Affordable Housing Campaign

### Staff

- 1 Part-time Campaign Coordinator (10 months)
  - 1 Full-time administrator (10 months)
- 

### Total Budget

\$140,000

---

### Steering Committee

Allstate Insurance Company  
BJC Behavioral Health  
Carpenters' District  
Council of St. Louis  
Equal Housing Opportunity Council  
Housing Comes First  
Mercantile Bank

Mercy Health Plans  
Neighborhood Housing Services  
Paraquad  
St. Louis Campaign for Housing & Jobs  
St. Louis Clergy Coalition  
St. Louis University Law Clinic  
SSC Incorporated  
Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis

---

### Advisory Council

Commerce Bank  
Grace Hill Neighborhood Services

Lutheran Family and Children's Services  
Neighborhood Enterprises in Partnership with Sanctuary in the Ordinary  
Regional Housing & Community Development Alliance  
SLACO  
St. Patrick Center  
The Salvation Army  
University of Missouri — St. Louis  
Washington University





# housing LA housing trust fund campaign

## City of Los Angeles statistics

Total population in 2000	3,694,820
Area median income in 2003 <sup>1</sup>	\$50,300
Estimated % of population earning less than 50% AMI	30%
Median sales price of single family home <sup>2</sup>	\$438,400
Fair market rent for 2-bedroom unit	\$1,021
Total units in 2000	1,332,801
% units built after 1980	28%
Renter occupied units	61.4%
Vacant units in 2000 as % of all units	4.3%

Sources: All data from US Bureau of Census unless otherwise noted.

1 National Low Income Housing Coalition. *Out of Reach*, 2003.

2 National Association of REALTORS, 2004.

## Campaign overview

The old adage, “timing is everything” proved its worth in the **Housing LA** campaign for a \$100 million housing trust fund. From the outset, campaign organizers knew they wanted to use the term limits on the sitting mayor to time their campaign with the ensuing election. Their strategy worked. Using a savvy combination of coalition



*Housing LA supporter at campaign march.*

building, candidate forums, and media events, Housing LA was able to secure a commitment for a \$100 million housing trust fund from both the leading mayoral candidates. Making good on a campaign commitment can be tricky, but Housing LA was able to push for the housing trust fund after Mayor James Hahn was elected through a series of inside-City Hall activities that kept the pressure on. What resulted is a mayoral commitment to a \$100 million housing trust fund, the majority of which goes to rental housing serving households earning no more than 60% of the area median income. Another 20% of the funds are for home ownership, with an emphasis on new construction; 5% to immediate tenant assistance and homelessness prevention; and the remaining 15% for administration and unusual costs.

## The setting

For housing advocates in Los Angeles, early 1998 was not a particularly good time to launch the largest local affordable housing trust fund campaign in the country. The scene is familiar to many housing advocates: a mayor insensitive to the housing needs of lower income families, the siphoning of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) dollars away from housing and towards pet projects, and the march of gentrification enveloping once-affordable sections of town.

A deep economic recession coupled with the 1994 Northridge earthquake and urban rioting had left the city bruised. Throughout the 1990s, housing production in LA fell by 50 percent, at a time when the city's population increased by 300,000. A full 61 percent of LA residents rent, and rents are so high that a family needs to earn almost \$20 an hour for a typical apartment. A third of all apartments are overcrowded, and an estimated 40,000 families live in garages. In this environment, there loomed a large disconnect between the growing number of LA residents locked out of safe and affordable housing options, and local government's unresponsiveness.

"By 1995 and 1996, we were racing down to city hall each year to save CDBG dollars for housing, and we were losing," said Jan Breidenbach, director of the *Southern California Association of Non-Profit Housing (SCANPH)* and a major organizer of the LA housing trust fund campaign. But then something interesting happened: a city living wage initiative passed in 1997. "It suddenly became clear you could do something here," Breidenbach remembered.



*Jan Breidenbach speaking at Housing LA rally.*

# SCANPH

The Housing LA campaign started in the offices of the Southern California Association of Nonprofit Housing. SCANPH is a nonprofit membership organization dedicated to the development, preservation and management of permanently affordable housing for low-income people. The organization was founded in 1989 when a group of nonprofit developers recognized that they had reached a level of growth that required the establishment of an umbrella organization. By 1996, SCANPH grew to more than 500 members throughout the region. This membership includes nonprofit housing developers, social service agencies and community groups, private businesses, local government agencies, lenders, and individuals—all engaged with affordable housing. Members are located in Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties.

## Getting started

“The first thing we did was research,” said Breidenbach. SCANPH contacted experts and looked at other campaigns.

Breidenbach met with the Low Income Support Corporation (LISC) and The Enterprise Foundation and posed the question: What about doing a housing trust fund campaign? There were compelling reasons why the timing was right. Housing needs were increasing at a startling rate. Allied organizations active in the living wage victory were ready for another fight. Most importantly, the mayor was term limited, meaning that new leadership was imminent.

“The mayor’s race provided us a clear timeline,” explained Breidenbach. “From day one we had a strategy to use the mayoral race as the cornerstone of our campaign.” LISC and Enterprise were intrigued.

With seed money from LISC and Enterprise and a local family foundation (totaling \$70,000), plus ongoing, substantial in-kind SCANPH staff time, the *Housing LA Coalition* was born. Housing LA hired campaign manager Beth Steckler in September 1999.

## Building the coalition

SCANPH made an early assessment that they did not have the capacity to win the housing trust fund campaign alone. Realizing they would need to build a comprehensive coalition that would have the power to shape and influence housing conditions in the city, SCANPH made a calculated decision to recruit organized labor and the faith-based community into the campaign, as well as community organizers and others. “It took a full year to



build the steering committee and honorary committee,” Steckler remembered. “Hours and hours and hours of talking with people, meeting face to face over a cup of coffee.” Literally, it took a thousand cups of coffee.

John Grant, in-house counsel for the *United Food and Commercial Workers Local 770 (UFCW)*, recalled that he’d pair a union member with a housing advocate to do outreach to labor people. “First it’s a question of access points: who do we need and who can we get on board,” said Grant. “Then, you have to show there’s a need within the union’s membership. I did a zip code analysis of our members to see where members are living — how bad is their housing? How far do they have to drive every day to get to work? House calls are a major recruitment technique in labor organizing. If an organizer has to drive 60 miles to get to a worker’s house, they’re making one or two house calls a day, not the ten or more they need to be making.”

All told, 59 people and organizations joined the steering committee, 22 of whom were executive committee members. The steering committee met monthly and was responsible for the overall direction of the campaign: messaging, political decisions, etc. The executive committee met more often — weekly towards the end — and handled all issues between larger meetings, such as immediate tactics, mobilization, and other activities. The campaign also established a blue ribbon honorary committee of bankers and employers and others whose names appeared on letterhead but who were only convened once and received campaign updates every four months or so.

The steering committee was co-chaired by the Cardinal Roger Mahony, Archdiocese of Los Angeles, and Miguel Contreras, Executive Secretary Treasurer of the LA County Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO. “It took a lot of time and energy to find the right people who knew Cardinal Mahony and Contreras,” said Steckler. “They’re very busy people. Once we were able to get the right connections, they were very glad to be on board. They were both active in letter writing, each appointed a steering committee member, and spoke during press conferences. Their moral and cultural leadership was key to establishing credibility and heft for the campaign early on.”

Allied organizations were the easiest to recruit as steering committee members, in part, Steckler acknowledged, because the campaign did not ask for specific time and financial resources from member groups. Members included groups that turn people out — labor unions, *ACORN*, the tenant’s rights organization *Inquilinos Unidos*, *LA Alliance for a New Economy* — as well as housing developers and special interest groups, such as environmentalists, seniors, immigrant groups, and homeless advocates.

For *ACORN* organizer Peter Kuhn, early and sustained involvement with Housing LA was an obvious decision. “We saw the campaign as a vehicle to build power for our members,” said Kuhn. “Housing LA laid the



ground work for our work in housing. It was practical — in that it delivered something huge for members — and it was a good way to win good policy for the LA community.”

ACORN brought low-income leaders to steering committee meetings to plan as well as to participate in campaign activities. “Organizing people around housing issues is like other forms of organizing: if we’re getting large amounts of people involved, we know we’re on to something,” observed Kuhn. “Our members’ involvement in the housing trust fund campaign just kept growing over time. We added critical people power to the campaign, and our low-income leaders stood side by side with the new mayor when he announced his proposal to fully fund the \$100 million housing trust fund. Also, ACORN is involved in housing trust fund efforts throughout the country, so it was a natural extension of our work to get involved in LA.”

The 1997 living wage campaign laid the groundwork for ongoing alliances between local organizations, and so it was a natural fit for the LAANE — a community-labor alliance which ran the living wage campaign — to join the coalition. “Housing is strongly linked to our work around community benefits,” explained LAANE organizer Roxana Tynan. “As a result of Housing LA, we built even deeper links with groups like ACORN, with whom we continue to work in alliance. The whole community of activists is strengthened when we all band together under a campaign umbrella.”

The early work of constructing a solid steering committee paid off. There were times in the campaign where it seemed that Housing LA was everywhere — Cardinal Mahony advocated for the housing trust fund in his annual address to city officials, and it was regularly featured in unsolicited newspaper articles and columns.

“It’s difficult to overestimate the amount of time it takes to do this right,” observed Breidenbach. “It took hours and hours of meeting people and eventually took one full year just to build the coalition’s key committees. But it’s this groundwork that carried us through.” The coalition had two full-time staff members, three VISTA volunteers, two interns, and a political consultant. Coalition organizations also contributed in-kind staff throughout the campaign. The in-kind contribution of SCANPH staff time and other coalition members’ staff time is difficult to accurately assess. “Let’s just say it was a lot,” said Steckler.

## Campaign strategies

The road to victory was many peopled and utilized a series of strategies. En route, labor and the faith-based community became core allies, tenant’s rights and low-income organizing groups used the campaign to build power





## Los Angeles, California

for their issues, and a whole community became aware of the irrefutable ramifications of inadequate housing. The campaign basics were clear: build allies, stay on message, and use an inside-outside campaign strategy to make the most of the election season and the first months of the new administration.

In late 1999, SCANPH released the LA-specific data from the National Low-Income Housing Coalition's *Out of Reach* report, an annual, community-based analysis of the wage a household must earn in order to afford a rental unit. A city council member read the story and helped to create a Housing Task Force to study housing needs and develop specific policy recommendations. Steckler, then campaign manager for Housing LA, staffed the 60-member task force and helped to promote the concept of a housing trust fund. "The task force placed the housing trust fund in a broader context, and we met with people we wouldn't necessarily have known," said Steckler. The task force released its report March 2000; the report's first recommendation was the formation of a city housing trust fund.

One of SCANPH's earliest tasks was a power analysis—a mapping activity to develop a matrix of the political influence and power in the community. They created a chart, in which they identified who had the most power to make the housing trust fund a reality, who was close to those in power, who would likely oppose the trust fund, and who they would need to bring on board. "The mapping of the terrain was awesome," recalled the UFCW's John Grant. "It helped us create a clear picture of who we were working to bring into the effort."

The campaign's analysis revealed that it would take multiple sources to get to \$100 million for the trust fund. Housing LA decided to focus on the amount of money needed, rather than the sources of these funds. While information about the sources and uses of the funds were appended to campaign literature, the main message — seen on tee shirts, signs, and all the literature — was "\$100 million for a housing trust fund."

"This turned out to be key," said Breidenbach. "We could get a diverse group of organizations and leaders to agree that there was a need for the housing trust fund, and not get bogged down in where the money would come from. A hundred million dollars was our bottom line, and we never veered far from that message." The campaign created a policy piece that explored different options for funding the housing trust fund, but did not try to recommend specific funding sources. "What we were going for was a mandate," said Breidenbach. "And that's what we won."

One month before election season, in December 2000, a slum building collapsed, killing a father of two children. The building collapsed at 8:10AM, ten minutes after the children living in the building had left for

school. A resident was on the phone with the city building inspectors, complaining yet again about conditions in the building, when the collapse occurred. The city was outraged — the police threatened criminal charges, the Mayor and city council approved generous relocation payments for tenants (and waived legal residency requirements). “It was such a marked tragedy,” Breidenbach said. “It made it impossible for the city to ignore the issue of housing in our community.”

Another early decision that was instrumental to the campaign was to conduct an “inside/outside” campaign. HLA organizers agreed to build the campaign *outside* city hall before and during the city election season. When the new administration was sworn in, the campaign would go *inside* to lobby for legislation. This allowed Housing LA to take full advantage of pre-election opportunities. As Breidenbach pointed out, “Candidates are much more accessible than elected officials.”

## The outside campaign

One of the most successful components of Housing LA’s efforts was how extensively they leveraged the elections to win support for the housing trust fund campaign. By the end of the election season all the mayoral candidates and the majority of city council candidates endorsed the housing trust fund.

“I knew we’d succeeded in positioning the housing trust fund as a central issue of the campaign season when I sat in on a candidate forum and the mayoral candidates were asked a real softball question about quality of life in the city and both candidates responded by talking about housing and the housing trust fund,” recalled Steckler.

Housing LA achieved this through a concentrated series of events and tactics that placed affordable housing on the political landscape.



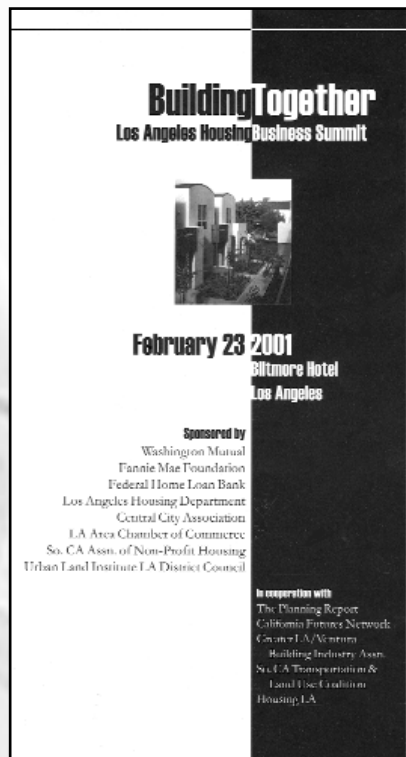
*Housing LA rally.*

## The Business Summit

“We knew we had to deal with the business community,” said Steckler. “We had to either neutralize them or, if necessary, to beat them.” Housing LA organized a housing business summit, in which business leaders convened to talk about housing from a jobs and economic perspective. The summit was underwritten by a grant from Washington Mutual Bank,

## Los Angeles, California

was co-sponsored with business establishment organizations, such as the local Chamber of Commerce, and featured the State Treasurer as the keynote speaker.



At the summit, the business community could see that Housing LA was a group of reasonable people, with whom they could talk. Participants stayed on in the afternoon to talk about sources of funding. “They did come up with one,” said Breidenbach. “It didn’t end up ever getting put in place, but it gave them a way to engage with the campaign.”

“The summit was successful beyond our wildest expectations,” recalled Breidenbach. “Participants agreed that housing was an issue we need to deal with, and the degree of dissension concerned the sources of funding for the fund, not the need for it. This was a major breakthrough for us.”

Later in the campaign, the housing business summit groundwork paid off: the city council held a public hearing, and business leaders not only attended but actively testified in favor of the housing trust fund.

## Candidate Bus Tours

During the primary season in early 2001, Housing LA took the major mayoral candidates and more than 35 council candidates on bus tours of the city’s housing. Each tour showed the good and the bad: dilapidated slum housing as well as safe, decent and affordable housing produced by SCANPH member organizations. Mayoral candidates were taken individually and council candidates were taken en masse. Aboard each van were tenants, labor representatives, a religious leader and other coalition representatives. Members of the press were not invited. “This wasn’t a photo op,” said Steckler. “This was an opportunity for candidates to really understand the issue.” At each site, the groups got off the bus, toured the housing, and talked with residents.

The tours were carefully planned by Housing LA coalition members. Tenants rights organizers from Inquilinos Unidos helped to organize the tours of slum buildings. “When they saw for their own eyes what people live in, it was a blow,” said Inquilinos organizer Maria Arroyo. “We said, ‘You hear about slums, you read about them in the paper, now you can see for your own eyes. (Then candidate, now Mayor) Hahn was shocked. Shocked at what he saw.’”

Inquilinos was going for more than shock value when they helped to arrange the site visits. They chose buildings where they were organizing around landlord-tenant issues. They were able to use the exposure of housing conditions to put pressure on landlords to clean up buildings and to stop illegally evicting tenants. Nothing like the prospect of a new Mayor coming to visit to get the attention of an errant landlord. “It was awesome,” Arroyo said. “The landlords were all so embarrassed.”

Inquilinos maintains a list of slum landlords and offers to take people on tours of slum housing owned by landlords on the list. “About a month after the bus tours, this one landlord called and begged to be taken off the list,” Arroyo recalls. “Because of this pressure, we got a few buildings fixed up and tenant problems solved so that landlords could get off the list.”

In another instance, there was a major rehabilitation project proposed for a building that would displace a number of low-income families. “We got two busloads of candidates to view the building and meet the families while we were negotiating with the landlords,” explained Arroyo. “In the end, we got \$12,000 for each tenant to leave the building — some found affordable rental units in another area of town, and some actually used the money for a down payment on a house. The bus tours really put pressure on the landlords,” Arroyo said.

Kuhn of ACORN agreed the bus tours were an effective tool for both broadening candidates’ understanding of housing and giving ACORN members powerful access to the city’s decision makers. “We took candidates to members’ homes in their own districts,” he recalled. “It was empowering for members to have council candidates in their homes. I remember there being gasps when people visited one member’s home — a one-room over a garage — when they heard she paid \$500 a month. They thought, ‘whoa!’ It really opened people’s eyes. It helped that these candidates were visiting the homes of potential constituents.”

## Candidate Forums and Candidate Questionnaires

Housing LA hosted candidate forums in key districts, and coalition members turned out hundreds of housing trust fund supporters to ensure housing was addressed. Housing LA member group *Coalition for Economic Survival* regularly produces candidate forums, and worked the housing issue into their election season forums. Housing LA also made sure that housing was included in non-Housing LA sponsored candidate forums. “We prepared a candidate questionnaire and distributed more than 10,000 copies in English and Spanish throughout the community through our coalition members,” said Breidenbach. “We published their responses extensively. Staff of individual candidates had to deal with the issue.”



## Media Relations

Throughout the campaign, Housing LA used free media to promote the housing trust fund, relying in part on media relationships that campaign members had developed over the years. For example, SCANPH had released a major media report in 1995 on the impact the Northridge earthquake had on housing in LA. And each year, SCANPH releases the LA-specific data from the *Out of Reach* report on rental housing costs. Media relationships built through these efforts were easily parlayed in the housing trust fund.

In addition, Housing LA applied the bus tour tactic to key media in the community. Housing LA took the new publisher of the *Los Angeles Times* on a bus tour, again showcasing the good and the bad, and had on board the representatives from Housing LA's constituencies.



Young tenants at HLA press conference.

There was no major media kick-off for the campaign nor was media work a significant task within the campaign. Housing LA did not conduct a press conference until October 2001, just after the September 11th tragedy. In the press conference, the mayor, Cardinal Mahony and Contreras announced continued support for the housing trust fund campaign. Housing LA's campaign strategy consisted primarily of influencing candidates and the mayoral race.

The media was not a big part of the strategy because influencing public opinion was not one of the main goals of the campaign. Housing LA's early and extensive work to develop and service a large coalition kept the "buzz" going about the campaign, so the need for additional media was limited.

For ACORN, Inquilinos Unidos, and other coalition members, Housing LA's campaign gave them a new way to access media for their own organizational work. ACORN's Kuhn remembered they had a real breakthrough with the *Los Angeles Times* during the campaign. "We actually called one of *LA Times*' editors and told him he had to come down to our offices and meet our members," recalled Kuhn. "We basically said, 'You have to deal — these are real issues with real impacts on our lower-income residents.' It turns out this specific editor had been involved in community organizing years ago, and was very open to our message. After that, they assigned an intern who came to a few of our events and did a big story on our work. They've since hired a reporter whose beat is to cover housing issues, and we've developed a great working relationship with her. What we learned is that you have to build a relationship with reporters, and you have to also hold them accountable."

Kuhn emphasized that it was important to have different members of the coalition do media, because it helped the overall campaign get more coverage. Inquilinos organizer Arroyo responded to the Spanish language media request for a tour of slum buildings, which she credits as being key to putting pressure on landlords to fix up deteriorating buildings.

Hahn won the mayoral contest, and declared in his inaugural address that the \$100 million housing trust fund was a campaign pledge he intended to keep. “I think Hahn wants housing to be one of his legacies,” observed Breidenbach. By the end of August, the campaign was ready to go inside city hall.

## The inside campaign

The decision to wait until after the election season to lobby for the passage of a housing trust fund was informed by a few factors. One, mentioned previously, was the lack of commitment to housing displayed by the outgoing mayor. “Being at city hall can consume so much time,” observed Jan Breidenbach. “And having a mayor who just wasn’t interested in housing made it seem fruitless to try.” Another factor was the coalition’s strategic decision to build power and support for the housing trust fund through the campaign season, and then work the inside game afterwards. “We decided we needed to build our coalition, and wait for the elections, before we could move any legislation forward,” said Breidenbach.

From the beginning, the housing trust fund campaign set a goal of winning the trust fund within six months after the new administration was in place. But after the election season, Housing LA had little engagement with the new mayor’s administration. In part, this was politics: many Housing LA members had actively supported Hahn’s opponent, Antonio Villiagarossa, and Hahn wasn’t appointing Villiagarossa supporters to his administration. As the first few months of the new administration wore on and little happened around the housing trust fund, Housing LA knew they had to turn up the heat. They launched a series of actions to keep the housing trust fund prominent in council members’ minds. Activities included:

### Weekly visits to city hall

Starting in late August and continuing for almost three months, Housing LA coalition members committed to weekly lobbying visits in city hall. Each visit was led by a different constituency group with its own theme: one week it was tenants, the following week it was academics, another week religious leaders, then labor. “We were ubiquitous,” said Breidenbach. “A number of staffers asked us not to bother them anymore; they’d vote on whatever we wanted. We went back anyway.”



## **A march on city hall**

ACORN organized a November 7, 2001 march on city hall to keep up the pressure. The daytime action turned out more than 350 people, meaning that many ACORN members and Housing LA constituents had to take off work to participate. “It was one of the biggest marches seen other than union marches,” recalled Peter Kuhn. “And it was a real eye-opener for the council. We marched to city hall and held a rally. Then we entered council chambers, and they stopped their proceedings to accept testimony from marchers. It was a key day for us. We showed our numbers. We thought all along that showing strength in numbers was key to getting the political support we needed. We were hopeful that the march would coincide with the vote in council for the housing trust fund, but it was clear that the issue was getting drawn out, so we took action to propel the issue forward. I think it worked.”

## **State legislative delegation**

Between Thanksgiving and Christmas, Housing LA organized a delegation of supportive state legislators to address the council and to meet with the mayor. Two of the legislators had previously been on city council, and were able to connect with their peers. The delegation also promised to work on a bond at the state level to complement the city’s work.

## **“Homes for the Holidays”**

Labor leaders and tenants joined together for a rally on the steps of city hall to deliver the message that housing production creates good-paying jobs.

## **Christmas caroling in the council chambers**

As the end of the year approached, there still was no movement towards a vote on the housing trust fund. Housing LA members were getting nervous. “We were worried that the holiday season would slow down whatever momentum we’d gained when Mayor Hahn had committed himself to fully funding the housing trust fund during his inaugural speech,” said Breidenbach. “Our tenant partners organized two caroling sessions (sample lyrics: ‘We wish we had a Housing Trust Fund/And more housing next year’) and a Los Posadas procession, a Mexican Christmas tradition of going door-to-door seeking shelter.”

Alongside Housing LA’s Christmas caroling, ACORN members wanted to do a direct action on the mayor, so they planned to carol his private residence. Mayor Hahn’s staff caught wind of the plan and called Housing LA to prevent the action. But Housing LA said they weren’t able to call it off — it wasn’t their action. ACORN members went that night to the mayor’s house and sang carols. “The very next day, as city hall carolers were doing



their rounds, we were invited into the mayor's office, and into his conference room," said Kuhn. "The mayor came in and said, 'You're going to have a housing trust fund by this specific date, and here's my point person on the job.' He was shaking with rage. 'You didn't have to come to my house to do this,' he said. It was a terrific moment of power for our effort."


Breidenbach remembered the caroling — both Housing LA's work at city hall and ACORN's independent efforts — as being key to opening up talks with the administration. One week into January, the mayor's office contacted Housing LA to review their housing trust fund proposal. On January 17, 2002, the mayor held a press conference at an affordable housing construction site and announced his proposal for a \$100 million housing trust fund. Standing beside Mayor Hahn was Jan Breidenbach and ACORN leader Alvinon Hurd. The announcement coincided with the anniversary of the 1994 Northridge earthquake which destroyed more than 25,000 units of low-income housing. In his remarks, Mayor Hahn gave full credit to Housing LA for its efforts on the campaign.

## Sustaining the coalition

Beth Steckler had observed that organizations readily joined the coalition, in part because Housing LA did not ask for specific commitments of time or money to join. How to meaningfully involve coalition members in the campaign, however, was a strategic discussion throughout the three-year campaign.

"We never lost sight of the prize," recalled Grant of the UFCW. "In some campaigns I've been on, there's a tendency to fall off the track. Without a drop-dead date, it can be harder to hold people together. But the meetings were well run, we all had tasks and responsibilities, and we'd go around the room and hold each other accountable. We had a real bond and sense of purpose. I remember sitting next to builders, environmentalists, housing nuts, and thinking, 'This is really good.'"

"If I had to describe our organizing strategy, it'd be this," said Steckler. "Develop strategies that work off of what coalition member organizations are already doing, and work within the parameters of organization's existing capacity. Coalition members were engaged in the campaign because Housing LA developed activities that overlapped with coalition members' established interests. Help each member group assess what they can pull off, and see how it will help to further the agenda of the individual group. Find the overlap."



**Housing LA & ACORN**

**Housing March**

to Support  
**\$100 million** for the  
**Housing Trust Fund**

**Wednesday**  
**Nov. 7, 2001**

March begins at 9:00 a.m.  
Los Angeles & 3rd Streets (Downtown Los Angeles)  
March to West Steps of City Hall (200 No. Spring Street)

**Housing LA** (213) 480-1249  
**ACORN** (213) 747-4211



## Los Angeles, California

For Inquilinos Unidos, the overlap opportunity came with the candidate bus tours, which allowed them to showcase bad slums, and put pressure on landlords to take more aggressive action. For Housing LA member group Coalition for Economic Survival, ensuring that housing was included in their candidate forums gave them a timely issue to tap for their ongoing work. “Everybody wins,” observed Steckler. “Housing LA gets to have housing placed prominently in the election season through candidate forums, and the coalition member has help in framing a good forum.”

For the labor community, the timing of the HLA campaign was fortuitous. Just prior to the campaign, the labor community had been in conversation about how to expect more from a mayoral candidacy and to raise the bar of labor involvement to include community issues beyond wages. “We didn’t want to just see a mayor vote right,” Grant said. “We wanted to see the mayor get active in the issues that labor cares about. Issues like housing. The HLA campaign gave labor a place to exercise this new commitment to community issues.”

ACORN, aware that it can be difficult to sustain tenant involvement in a campaign that is long and may not result in direct benefits for the participating members, developed smaller campaigns at the same time that gave direct value to members and kept them engaged. This proved both critical and successful. “Through our work with the housing trust fund campaign, low-income residents would call us up to see if we could help them when they were facing eviction,” said Kuhn. “Even if all we’re able to do is connect them with legal assistance, we’re building trust with the person, which helps us to engage them in the larger campaign around housing policies. So whether we’re organization building, or just helping someone out of a crisis, we’re building trust.”

To take advantage of its increased prominence in housing issues, ACORN developed tenants’ rights clinics during the housing trust fund campaign. “Through that work we developed new leaders,” said Kuhn, “who saw that a society that allows this kind of housing injustice to happen isn’t allocating enough money to housing. That was our link into Housing LA. As a result of getting into the housing trust fund campaign, and developing tenants’ rights clinics, ACORN’s LA office is engaging more in housing issues. It’s evolved to be more of a state-based effort, but the housing trust fund campaign was a terrific fight for us to start out with.”

These coordinated efforts paid off winning the mayor’s final commitment to a \$100 million housing trust fund to be phased in over several years. In addition, 60% of the funds are to support rental housing that must serve households earning no more than 60% of the area median income. In

addition 20% goes to homeownership, with an emphasis on new construction and can serve households earning up to 120% of the area median income. Five percent of the funds will provide immediate tenant assistance and homelessness prevention. Another 5% is available for unusual costs or for special projects. Administrative costs are limited to 10% of the funding.

## The fight doesn't stop after the votes are tallied

Despite the mayor's commitment to fully fund the housing trust fund, Housing LA's work is not yet done. The housing trust fund has yet to be fully funded, although it was launched with \$42 million of the city's money and has received funding through the budget cycle each year. The goal of housing trust fund organizers is to get three dedicated sources of revenue in the next few years — portions of existing sources.

"We didn't get a dedicated source," pointed out Kuhn. "And we may have to do another campaign to get that done."

For now, organizations once active in Housing LA are helping to ensure the administrative process for allocating housing trust fund funds goes well, and are keeping their eyes out for opportunities to get full funding. "We're in this for the long haul, but it's going to take some time," declared Jan Breidenbach.

---

## Los Angeles Housing Trust Fund



Established in 2000.



Administered by the City of Los Angeles' Department of Housing. The mayoral-appointed LA Affordable Housing Commission's charge was expanded to include oversight of the trust fund.



Revenue sources are a combination of tax increment set-aside funds, street furniture advertising revenues, program income including reprogrammed CDBG funds, and a dedicated portion of tobacco settlement funds, city business tax, and hotel occupancy tax. The fund stands at \$42 million and Mayor Hahn has committed to work to reach the \$100 million mark.




The Trust Fund has the following program guidelines:

- ◆ 60% for rental housing serving households at 60% of area median income or less;
- ◆ 20% for homeownership serving households up to 120% of area median income;
- ◆ 5% to immediate tenant assistance and homelessness prevention;
- ◆ 10% for administrative costs; and



- ♦ 5% reserve funds to cover unusual costs of a project.

 The Housing Trust Fund has committed more than \$79 million to support 2,510 units of affordable housing.

## LA Housing Campaign

### Staff

Executive Director  
Campaign Manager  
Organizer  
Research Analyst  
Three VISTA volunteers  
Two Interns  
SCANPH support staff  
Political consultant  
*Most of staff was brought on  
for final 18 months*

### Total Budget

\$375,000

### Honorary Committee Members

*Co-Chairs:* Cardinal Roger  
Mahony and Miguel  
Contreras

*Individuals from:*

LA Alliance for a New  
Economy (LAANE)  
AFSCME, District 36  
W Angeles Church of  
God in Christ  
Board of Rabbis  
HERE Local 11  
Second Baptist Church  
Valley Beth Shalom  
DGLM Consulting Group  
LA County Fire Fighters,  
Local 1014  
UFCW Local 770  
LA Family Housing  
Corporation

Asian Pacific American  
Legal Center  
Clergy & Laity United for  
Economic Justice  
SEIU State Council  
LA County Area Agency on  
Aging  
California Community  
Foundation  
LA/Orange Counties Building  
Trades Council  
Fannie Mae  
Anderson Graduate School  
of Management at UCLA  
Kaiser Permanente

### Steering Committee Members

*Individuals from:*

Inquilinos Unidos (United  
Tenants)  
Riordan & McKinzie  
Valley Economic  
Development Center  
Local Initiatives Support  
Corporation  
LA Housing Partnership  
SEIU Local 399 (health care)  
SEIU Local 347  
(city employees)  
African American Clergy  
Community & Labor  
Alliance  
LA Archdiocese Justice &  
Peace Commission  
Esperanza Community  
Housing Corporation

Urban & Environmental  
Policy Institute,  
Occidental College  
LA Coalition to End Hunger  
& Homelessness  
Coalition LA  
Thomas Safran & Associates  
Wilshire Temple  
SEIU Local 1877 (janitors)  
LAANE  
UFCW Local 770  
Coalition for Economic  
Survival  
LA Community Design  
Center  
IAF LA Metro Strategy  
Westside Center for  
Independent Living  
POWER  
LA County Area on Aging  
Housing Committee  
Washington Mutual  
CHIRLA  
McCormack Baron Salazar  
Fannie Mae  
LA's BEST  
Sierra Club  
CA ACORN  
The Enterprise Foundation  
AGENDA  
Lee Group  
Retirement Housing  
Corporation  
Little Tokyo Service Center  
SEIU State Council

# housing production trust fund campaign

## Washington, DC statistics

Total population in 2000	572,059
Area median income in 2003 <sup>1</sup>	\$84,800
Estimated % of population earning less than 50% AMI	52%
Median sales price of single family home <sup>2</sup>	\$352,400
Fair market rent for 2-bedroom unit	\$1,218
Total units in 2000	272,591
% units built after 1980	35%
Renter occupied units	59.2%
Vacant units in 2000 as % of all units	8.9%

Sources: All data from US Bureau of Census unless otherwise noted.

1 National Low Income Housing Coalition. *Out of Reach*, 2003.

2 National Association of REALTORS, 2004.



*Trust Fund Advocates Day, March 2004.*

## Campaign overview

**A** 2001-2004 campaign to support Washington, DC's **Housing Production Trust Fund (HPTF)** won dedicated resources for the trust fund and requirements that the fund would serve those most in need. Although the fund was established in 1988, it had never been fully funded or implemented. A broad coalition of advocates and activists began

in 2001 to persuade the city council and the mayor to finance the housing trust fund. Now, thanks to the ongoing vigilance of this coalition, the Housing Production Trust Fund receives 15% of the city's real estate transfer tax and deed recordation tax revenue to support housing initiatives throughout the District. Moreover, 40% of the funds must serve households earning less than 30% of the area median income; another 40% is targeted to households earning 30-50% of area median income; and the remaining 20% may serve those earning up to 80% of area median income.

## The setting

The affordable housing situation in Washington, DC is similar to that of other urban areas on the east coast, with 83,000 of the city's 250,000 households living in unaffordable or physically deficient housing. Of these, 80% live on annual incomes of less than 50% of the area median income. The average sales price for a single family home exceeds \$350,000.

The waiting list for public housing has more than 22,000 names on it, and 35,000 families wait for Section 8 subsidies. Between 1990 and 2000 Washington lost 16,149 units of rental housing. For the lowest income renters, the supply of affordable housing is short by 13,800 units. Gentrification has forced low-income families out of many communities, and substantial sprawl has taken jobs and middle- and upper-income families out of the city at a rapid pace.

The city's housing policies have long favored development aimed at creating "mixed-income" communities. Chain stores have replaced local businesses in many areas. Developers have bought up entire blocks of row houses and multifamily buildings, rehabbed them and sold them at enormous profits. Mayor Anthony Williams' effort to attract 100,000 new residents to the District with programs that seemed to ignore the needs of low-income families only raised more concern among advocates that this trend would continue unabated.

## The Mayor's proposal

In February 2001, Mayor Williams proposed a series of housing measures, eventually entitled the Housing Act of 2002, which included a wide range of proposals aimed at addressing housing concerns in the city. Among these proposed initiatives was a measure that would dedicate 15% of the real estate transfer tax and deed recordation tax to the city's Housing Production Trust Fund. The dedicated tax would generate an estimated \$19 million each year for rental and homeownership assistance, according to a consultant's report from the mayor's office.



Though the proposal came from the mayor, at least one advocacy group had the ear of the administration prior to the plan's release, and had advocated for such a move. *The Coalition for Nonprofit Housing & Economic Development (CHNED)*, an umbrella organization for the nonprofit housing and economic development industry in Washington, DC, had decided in 2000 to make it a priority to restore funding to the Housing Production Trust Fund.

## Campaigning on the proposal




The release of the mayor's proposal gave advocacy groups a plan to rally around. Some organizations began proposing changes to the bill that would become the governing statute for the fund. One of the key issues was the income limits established for the fund's beneficiaries. The mayor's proposal failed

to incorporate specific targeting to ensure that very or extremely low income households would benefit from the trust fund's activities.

While the mayor's housing proposals were the most significant piece of housing legislation in Washington in at least 20 years, the bill "missed people who were earning below 30% of the median," said Linda Leaks, executive director of *Washington Innerscity Self Help (WISH)*, a grassroots organizing group. With 40% of the city's households earning less than 30% of area median income, the Housing Production Trust Fund should reflect the needs of those families, she said.

WISH made it a priority to have the Housing Act change the income targeting of the housing trust fund to better reflect the needs of lower income households in the District. With technical assistance from Sczerina Perot, a lawyer with the *Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless*, and Nina Dastur, who at the time was a lawyer at the *Georgetown Law Center*, WISH called for an amendment to the bill. The amendment would require half of the fund's expenditures to benefit households earning 30% of area median income or less, another 30% to benefit those earning between 30% and 50%, and the remaining 20% to benefit those earning up to 80% of the area median income.

In support of this proposal, the *DC Fiscal Policy Institute (DFCPI)* drafted a policy brief showing that the income targeting proposed by advocates matched resources with actual housing needs in the District. Two key items in the brief proved particularly influential in winning the support of



### FULLY FUND THE HOUSING PRODUCTION TRUST FUND

In the Housing Act of 2002, the Council committed 15% of deed recordation and transfer taxes to the Housing Production Trust Fund to preserve and produce affordable housing. The Trust Fund should receive \$40.5 million in dedicated revenue under this formula in FY 2005. Full funding represents less than 1% of local revenues.

The Housing Production Trust Fund Addresses the City's Affordable Housing Crisis, Which Will Not Go Away On Its Own.

The 2,800 DC residents who attended the Mayor's Citizen Summit last November ranked the development of affordable housing as the 2<sup>nd</sup> most important issue among 22 budget priorities. It's easy to see why:

- The average home sales price in DC has risen to almost \$400,000, an 83% increase since 1998. The average fair market rent for a two bedroom apartment is now \$1218/month – unaffordable for half of the District's households.
- More than 36,000 DC households spend at least half their income on housing.
- The District is short 13,800 units of housing affordable for those making under \$10,000 a year – primarily, minimum wage workers and our elderly and special needs populations who live on limited, fixed incomes.

Affordable housing is critical to the District's continued economic revitalization

- The Trust Fund serves the police, teachers, and firefighters we need to build safe, stable communities, as well as residents working in the hospitality, health care, and construction sectors who help this city run.
- The Trust Fund preserves affordable housing for low and moderate income residents in gentrifying neighborhoods, keeping residents close to their jobs, schools, and social support networks.
- Only 41% of the District's residents are homeowners, compared to more than 68% nationally. The Trust Fund creates opportunities for homeownership that promote neighborhood stability and help our residents build wealth.

The Housing Production Trust Fund is an effective – and overdue – investment in our city's future.

- Even if the Housing Production Trust Fund were fully funded in FY 2005, the District would be spending less on affordable housing than it spent in 1990 – before the housing market skyrocketed – when adjusted for inflation.
- Each local dollar we invest in the Trust Fund leverages \$5-10 in outside funding from the federal government and private investors; full funding could generate an estimated \$200-\$400 million in investment for the city.
- According to the National Association of Home Builders, the construction of 1,000 multifamily units generates 1,030 full-time jobs in construction and construction-related industries, \$33.5 million in wages, and \$17.8 million in combined federal, state, and local revenues and fees. ([www.nahb.org/naehrc](http://www.nahb.org/naehrc))

Who benefits from the Trust Fund?	Average Annual Salary
Police and Clerical	\$29,087
Waste and Housekeeping	\$22,980
Restaurant Cooks	\$25,370
Food Prep Workers	\$18,302
Construction	\$19,392
Parking Lot Attendants	\$17,590
Medical Assistants	\$28,470
Healthcare	\$18,633
Child Care Workers	\$18,280
Occupational Therapists	\$62,470
Registered Nurses	\$55,300
Preschool Teachers	\$25,420
Child Care Workers	\$18,500
Receptionists and Information Clerks	\$27,340
Construction Laborers	\$29,640
Painters	\$20,440

\* The Housing Production Trust Fund is targeted to serve the spectrum of housing needs in the city:  
 • At least 40% of funds must target households earning at or below 30% of the area median income (AMI) (= \$25,620 for a family of two)  
 • At least 40% of funds must target households earning between 30-50% of AMI (\$25,621-\$40,700)  
 • Up to 20% of funds is targeted to serve households earning between 50-80% of AMI (\$40,701 - \$68,530)

city council members: first, an analysis of housing needs by income level among households in Washington DC; and second, a breakdown of who would be served by all of the proposals in the omnibus bill. “The DCFPI paper showed that there was an incredible mismatch, and that by targeting the Housing Production Trust Fund as we proposed, the whole bill would better serve the population of the District,” said Dastur.

WISH and other housing advocates also pressed the council to require that at least half of the Housing Production Trust Fund dollars be allocated for rental projects. Since more than 60% of the housing units in Washington DC are rental units, Leaks said the proposal was simply a request that the legislation be tailored to reflect the needs of the city.

## **Building momentum and support for the proposal**

Beginning in the spring of 2001, WISH worked to rally support for funding the Housing Production Trust Fund and for the income targeting and rental requirements. The group’s campaign included petition and post-card drives, testifying at city council hearings, press conferences in communities most affected by the affordable housing shortage, and protests in front of city hall. The group mobilized several hundred people during the course of the campaign, Leaks estimates. WISH quickly became known as “the group with the red t-shirts,” as members wore bright red shirts that said, “Tenants Tired of Being Screwed.”

“Wherever we went we all wore those t-shirts,” said Leaks, “so we stood out. People could see us coming.” On lobby days, when members would visit council members in their offices, it was hard to miss the bright red shirts going through the corridors of city hall. “Staff members would run when they saw a group of us coming down the hallway, but we divided up and they couldn’t escape,” said Rozanne Look, director of project development for *MANNA, Inc.*, a nonprofit housing developer. “A lot of momentum was built from that day, and we visited every council member’s office.”

The red shirts took their campaign to the front doors of two of the more resistant city council members, said Leaks, protesting outside their homes after repeated attempts to get meetings with them in their offices had failed. A housing group that had been trying for a year to get a meeting with one of those councilors was granted a meeting within a week of the protest at his home. “One council member now proudly says that seeing the red t-shirts outside his window when he was having breakfast on a Saturday morning was the moment he changed his mind and decided to champion the trust fund,” said Dastur.



The *Washington Regional Network for Livable Communities*, an organization that works on issues of smart growth and social justice in the urban area around Washington DC, worked in support of the legislation as well. While the Network had not been very involved in housing issues in the past, board member Janet Brown took up the issue herself and, by lending her organization's name to the campaign, helped boost the visibility of the Network.

Sczerina Perot coordinated a series of community education workshops that explained how the legislation would affect low-income households and neighborhoods, and how residents could get involved to strengthen and pass the bill. Perot and Dastur worked to distill the complicated language of the bills and amendments into understandable forms for residents and advocates to work with. In turn, they helped translate the wishes of advocates and residents into language appropriate for proposed legislation.

Other groups, such as the *DC Coalition for Housing Justice*, *Grey Panthers*, and *Youth Action Research Group*, also advocated for the legislation. Petitions, postcard campaigns, lobby meetings and rallies all drew the attention of council members. Small, community-based newspapers covered the campaign with some regularity, and several ran opinion pieces written by Bob Pohlman, Executive Director of the *Coalition for Nonprofit Housing and Economic Development*.

Several organizations, led by the *League of Women Voters*, met with the editorial board of the *Washington Post*, prompting an editorial in support of funding the Housing Production Trust Fund and the proposed re-targeting, two days before the Housing Act came to the council for a vote. "It makes sense to focus the housing trust fund on the neediest," read the editorial, "using public resources to help those for whom the private market is least likely to provide."

The League of Women Voters' involvement was spearheaded by Janet Brown of the Network, who said that the effort was particularly interesting to the League "because it cut across class, race, age and neighborhoods." The League's involvement was critical, agreed Dastur, who recalled that city council staff told her that involving the League was a smart move to attract support from particular council members.

On January 9, 2002, the city council passed the Housing Act of 2002, which included all of the advocates' requirements: funding the Housing Production Trust fund with 15% of revenues collected through the real



*Future site of Victory Heights — funded with HTF support.*

## Washington, DC

estate transfer tax and deed recordation tax; a targeting amendment that earmarked 40% of funds to support households at or below 30% of the area median income, 40% for those between 30% and 50%, and 20% for those up to 80% of area median income; and an amendment that targeted half of the funds for rental housing. Housing advocates had achieved a remarkable win for affordable housing in the District.

However, this victory for advocates meant the loss of ongoing support for the housing trust fund from Mayor Williams, who had opposed both targeting amendments. Though he had originally proposed funding the Housing Production Trust Fund in the omnibus bill, the changes passed by the council and backed by advocates altered the program to the point that he was no longer willing to champion funding the trust fund.

## Keeping the win: An alliance forms

The victory proved short lived. Just over a month after the legislation passed, the mayor released his budget proposal, which called for a significant cut in funding for the Housing Production Trust Fund. The budget proposal offered only half (7.5%) of the earmarked taxes, about \$11.5 million. In September 2002, when revenue projections showed even greater budget shortfalls than had been expected, the mayor cut the proposed funding even further, to a flat \$5 million. The mayor's main rationale for the proposed cuts was that the Fund was already sitting on \$25 million in unallocated resources — a special allocation from a development deal that had not yet been spent. In a further blow to advocates, the mayor proposed to alter the funding legislation permanently and change the 15% allocation to 7.5%. Advocacy groups were outraged and began mobilizing to fight a battle they thought they had already won.

In Washington DC, all legislation is subject to appropriation in an approved budget and financial plan. Each year, amendments to existing laws are compiled and submitted in the Budget Support Act to reflect proposed appropriations. The mayor's Budget Support Act proposal acknowledged that the underlying law promised to fund the Housing Production Trust Fund with 15% of the specified taxes. However, the mayor proposed to delay implementation of the dedicated revenue requirement and substituted an appropriation to support the Housing Production Trust Fund.

The groups that had fought for the legislation through 2001 began to come together as a coalition in 2002. "Nobody decided to start a coalition. It just grew up organically," said Pohlman. Individuals who were interested



*Renovated single-family home now houses six low-income, disabled residents.*

in housing issues began meeting to discuss the legislation and strategies to improve it. As their knowledge and interest grew the group began calling itself the *Affordable Housing Alliance*.

“The Alliance is an untraditional approach to advocacy,” explained Pohlman. “It isn’t about the power of organizations, but about very interested individuals who are part of organizations. It is made up of very different organizations and voices and perspectives.” There are no official leaders of the Alliance, Pohlman said, and that means no power struggles or arguments over who is responsible for what, or who gets credit for what. There was no hierarchy among members, no subcommittees, and no budget for the Alliance.

## The Alliance provides a voice for its members

While membership ebbed and flowed, during the Housing Production Trust Fund campaign the Alliance was made up of about 20 organizations, including nonprofit developers, policy advocacy organizations, tenant groups, and grassroots organizing groups. “There has never been a standing membership list,” said Pohlman. “Whoever is present participates in the discussions or signs on to whatever press release or policy decision we may be working on at the time.”

The Alliance spoke as one voice in media advisories, and held a handful of press conferences. Still, it was the independent efforts of the individual groups that constituted the bulk of the campaign in support of the Housing Production Trust Fund. Most Alliance members, in fact, cite the loose and informal nature of the coalition as the key to its success. “We don’t have to go in a certain direction just because the Alliance does, so that tension isn’t there,” said Leaks. “We can stay focused on our mission, and not get concerned about the Alliance.”

In discussing targeting issues, for instance, not all organizations in the Alliance agreed with the amendment that passed in 2001, but members who were advocating for a different formula — allocating 1/3 of the resources to each of the income categories — did not stand in the way of the groups that did, said Pohlman.

“Every group that participated had their own relationships and connections,” Pohlman continued, “and they were not expected to check with the Alliance before using them. We met with the mayor when we had the opportunity, without checking with the whole group.”

That is not to say that member groups found no value in the Alliance. Organizing and advocacy groups benefited greatly from the work of lawyers



## Washington, DC



*This building will be renovated to condos for low-income residents.*

and policy analysts who participated and made complex legislation comprehensible, said Leaks. In turn, the lobbying and attention drawn to the issues by the advocates complemented the policy efforts being undertaken by those working more closely with officials.

The Alliance allowed each group to use its own strengths to leverage the knowledge and skills of other member groups. “We have good relationships with banks, and so we could make the case to them to support the Housing Production Trust Fund,” said Rozanne Look, director of MANNNA. “The grass-roots groups in the Alliance didn’t have those relationships, but because we did, they could focus instead on broadening the base of the Alliance in the ways that they could do best.”

The broad base of the Alliance also gives its efforts a degree of credibility that could not be achieved by the groups working individually. “We’re producers of affordable housing,” said Pohlman, “so naturally people expect us to advocate for more money for production. But when groups like the League of Women Voters are on our side, it’s clear that it’s not just about self-interest.”

With no budget or staff, the Alliance was able to operate only because staff from member groups were willing to dedicate their time. “It added to my workload, with more meetings and conference calls,” recalled Look, “but it also had the potential to greatly increase a prime funding source for our work, so it was well worth it.”

## Alliance members apply pressure

As the Alliance was coming together, WISH again took its campaign directly to council members. At a “Peanuts for the Poor and Millions for the Wealthy” rally outside city hall, WISH members handed peanuts to passers-by for them to throw at a puppet of Mayor Williams. A lobby day brought dozens of residents to council members’ offices, threatening sit-ins in the offices of those who had not voiced support for full funding of the Housing Production Trust Fund. One such council member refused to return to his office to meet with the activists. They took the demonstration to the street in front of his home, where he met with them and had a change of heart, agreeing to support restoring the funding.

Such actions were strictly under the name of the individual organizations that participated, and not under the banner of the Affordable Housing

Alliance. Alliance meetings would include discussions about the ongoing efforts of each of the member groups. Nonetheless, organizations using more of an “inside” strategy — arranging meetings with council members and staff to review the bill’s language, for example — did not necessarily attend the demonstrations or lobby day visits. Regardless, they were supportive of such actions and acknowledged the role they played in the success of the campaign.

The Washington office of *ACORN*, a national organizing group that works in low-income communities, was involved with the Alliance, and participated in some of the WISH actions as well as organizing activities on its own. “There wasn’t resistance from groups that don’t do direct action,” agreed Will Ward, an ACORN organizer, “but the inherent value of having low-income resident voices in the Alliance wasn’t always easily recognized by the more mainstream advocates. When you have people working an inside strategy for some time who are used to talking an inside language, there’s a gap in language, reference, and knowledge. It takes policy folks a bit of time to see that there’s real value in having residents involved, but we earned their respect in the campaign by virtue of being able to move some people when it mattered.”

The efforts of the Alliance proved successful in fighting off the attack. The mayor and city council decided to leave unchanged the allocation of 15% of the real estate transfer tax and deed recordation tax.

## Keeping watch

### Monitoring implementation of the fund

With the legislation and funding finally in place, Alliance members turned their attention to the process of implementing the Housing Production Trust Fund. When the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), which is responsible for awarding the Fund’s resources (along with Washington’s CDBG and HOME federal block grants), announced plans to issue a request for proposals for \$13 million of the Fund’s \$25 million, the Coalition For Nonprofit Housing and Economic Development pressured the agency to release the full amount, and DHCD quickly relented. “We also played a role in helping DHCD set up a system to evaluate proposals, based on the Federal Home Loan Bank’s system,” reflected Pohlman. The Coalition and other members of the Affordable Housing Alliance were influential in recommending individuals to serve on the Fund’s advisory board — six of the nine members ultimately chosen were suggested by the Alliance.

Efforts to influence the structure of the fund were undertaken by just a few of the groups in the Alliance. “There are some folks who want to make it a priority that the fund spends its money fast and well,” said Look. “I agree in principle, but we’re developers and have to deal with loan officers at



DHCD every day, and so don't want to picket their offices." She did not try to dissuade other Alliance members from pushing for reforms, but rather worked to help them understand the complexity of how projects are developed and the value of positive relationships with DHCD.

Advocates also pressed for the funds to be awarded by the end of 2002, in order to demonstrate success before the next budget cycle, said Ed Lazere, executive director of the DC Fiscal Policy Institute and a member of the Alliance. By December, more than \$25 million had been awarded, supporting 2,000 housing units and leveraging \$145 million in other financing. All of the targeting requirements had been met.

## **Watching the budget process**

Dozens of Alliance members marched to the mayor's office in February of 2003 to demand that the mayor fully fund the Housing Production Trust Fund in his upcoming 2004 budget. When the 2004 budget proposal was released a month later, however, advocates were outraged to find that, once again, the mayor had slashed proposed funding for the Housing Production Trust fund. The 15% of real estate transfer tax and deed recordation tax allocated by the Housing Act would have amounted to roughly \$22 million. The mayor, however, claimed that at the time the law was written 15% would have netted an estimated \$10-12 million (despite the earlier consultant report projecting \$19 million) and so \$12 million should be satisfactory for the Fund. Unexpectedly high tax revenues did not mean the Housing Production Trust Fund would enjoy the benefit, the Mayor said; the additional revenue was needed for other city programs.

At a press conference held on the day of the budget announcement, Alliance groups pointed out that the arguments that the Housing Production Trust Fund should not get more money than initially promised went against the purpose of the fund. In good years the fund should be able to collect any resources available, they argued, so that those funds could be used for affordable housing in leaner years when revenue was not as great. Nina Dastur pointed out that when the real estate market is hot is precisely the time when the affordable housing market is under the greatest pressure-and when additional revenue generated by the tight market is most needed to support the fund.

Throughout the spring of 2003, Alliance members testified at council hearings, conducted lobby visits, and met with the editorial board of the *Washington Post* (prompting another editorial in support of the campaign), in an effort to ensure full funding to the Housing Production Trust Fund.

On May 6, the council voted unanimously to fully fund the Housing Production Trust Fund with \$21.5 million. Advocates filled the chambers for the vote and were able to celebrate another significant victory.

# Keeping the pressure on

With the entire city council now on record in favor of fully funding the Housing Production Trust Fund and targeting the resources to low-income households, advocates feel they can count on continued support for revenue. Lazere said that he has heard at least one council member say publicly “I don’t know why every year we fight over funding for the trust fund. This is a good program, it has public support, we should fully fund it and stop the bickering.”

Even in areas where the Alliance has not won total victories, the groups can proudly lay claim to having raised issues that otherwise would not have received any attention. “In terms of length of affordability for Housing Production Trust Fund projects, we only won five years for ownership and 30 for rental,” said Pohlman, “but we wanted ‘on a continuing basis,’ or at least ten years for ownership and 40 for rental. But until we brought the issue up, it wasn’t even being addressed at all.”

Alliance members are particularly proud of the comprehensive approach they have taken to the campaign. “Our advocacy around the Housing Production Trust Fund has been not just focused on ‘getting the money,’” said Pohlman, “but on every aspect of the fund from start to finish — legislation, regulations, budget actions, issuance of a request for proposals, recommendations on advisory board membership, and follow-up on award of funding.”

Going forward, the Alliance needs to broaden its base, said Look, and work to “make the Trust Fund a sacred cow, so that the mayor and council won’t ever think about cutting it again.” Toward that end, the Alliance spearheaded a “Friends of the Fund” petition drive, designed to garner the endorsements of 200 organizations and 5,000 individuals in favor of ensuring that the Housing Production Trust Fund allocation is not tampered with again. As of April 2004, more than 150 organizations and 1,500 individuals had signed on to the petition. Because of the way the budget process is structured in Washington DC, there is no way to truly preserve the dedicated source of revenue, but advocates have learned how to deal with the challenge each time it arises, and officials have learned to expect substantial backlash in response to any attempts at cuts.

A bigger grassroots base is needed for future housing campaigns to succeed, said Leaks. “It is critical to have people who will benefit involved in the fight,” she said. “We need to go to properties that have benefited from the Housing Production Trust Fund and get those tenants to work with us.” During the Housing Production Trust Fund campaign, the organizing groups — primarily WISH and ACORN — brought out residents from just a small part of the city, said Leaks. “Broader geographic representation should also be a priority.” As with any organizing campaign, part of this challenge includes figuring out ways to keep residents involved over the course of a lengthy effort.





## Washington, DC

Ward is optimistic that such grassroots campaigns can grow in DC. “Amongst advocates and the service sector in DC, there’s a growing realization that aggressive organizing and direct action, couching things in terms of demands, is an important piece of the progressive strategy,” he said.

Having learned that constant pressure is required to maintain support for the Housing Production Trust Fund, the Alliance kicked off its campaign to ensure full funding in the 2005 budget even before the budget proposal was released in early 2004. In February 2004, the Alliance held a “Friends of the Fund Rally,” attended by more than 250 affordable housing advocates, five council members and the director of the DC Department of Housing and Community Development. At an Advocacy Day in March, Mayor Williams even donned one of the famed “red t-shirts” and professed support for the trust fund.

But even with a free t-shirt, the mayor continued to proposed reductions for the Housing Production Trust Fund and proposed to securitize it by using deed recordation and transfer taxes to support bond issuances over a 20-25 year period. The Alliance fought back both proposals. And for the 2005 budget year, the Housing Production Trust Fund was fully funded by City Council at a projected \$40.5 million appropriation. However, because projections for the deed recordation and transfer tax revenues were so high, the Council subsequently reduced the tax rates to the level established at the time the trust fund legislation was passed. So while the budget authority is \$40.5 million for the Housing Production Trust Fund in 2005, only \$30 million or so will actually go into the fund in fiscal year 2005 because of the rate reduction in the tax. DHCD could spend up to the \$40.5 million level by using any unspent funds from 2004.

While justifiably proud of their victories and vigilance, Alliance members have taken steps to strengthen their coalition. Since the 2004 budget victory, the Alliance has grown and become more structured. Subcommittees have been formed to work on an array of issues, of which the Housing Production Trust Fund is one. The Alliance is starting to be recognized by officials as a voice for low income housing advocacy, observed Pohlman.






“We should have had an Alliance ten years ago,” said Rozanne Look. “We could have accomplished so much, but we’ve lost so much to market forces in that time.”

“I’ve been told by city council members that our activism worked,” said Pohlman. The fact that a number of council members were opposed to certain elements of the Housing Production Trust fund one day-and then voted for it and extolled its virtues the next-clearly suggests that some messages got through when it mattered. “This is more activism around housing than there has been in the history of Washington, DC,” said Pohlman.

---



# Washington, DC Housing Production Trust Fund

-  Originally established in 1988, the trust fund received funding in 2002 with passage of the Housing Act of 2002.
-  Administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development. A nine-member Advisory Board is appointed by the mayor with advice from council.
-  Revenue source is 15% of the real estate transfer tax and deed recordation tax revenue. A one-time commitment of \$25 million from the sale of District-owned land was placed into the Fund.
-  Forty percent of the fund's resources are targeted to support projects for households at or below 30% of area median income, 40% for those between 30% and 50%, and 20% for those earning up to 80% area median income. In addition, half of the funds are earmarked for rental housing projects. Homeownership projects must remain affordable for five years and rental units for 30 years.
-  During fiscal years 2003 and 2004, DHCD committed almost \$45.4 million from the Trust Fund to 27 projects that will produce or pre-serve approximately 2,700 units of affordable housing.

---

## Staff

No staff dedicated. Individual groups' staff participated.

## Total Budget

No records were maintained.

## Alliance Members

ACORN

Coalition for Nonprofit  
Housing and Economic  
Development

Council of Latino  
Agencies

D.C. Coalition for  
Housing Justice

D.C. Fiscal Policy Institute  
Georgetown Univ. Federal  
Legislation Clinic  
Grey Panthers

HERE  
Independent Living for the  
Handicapped

League of Women Voters  
Manna, Inc.

Metro Washington Labor  
Council

Operating Engineers  
Parking and Service  
Workers Union

Shaw Education for Action  
So Others Might Eat

Teamsters

Tenant Action Network  
Washington Inncity  
Self Help

Washington Interfaith  
Network

Washington Legal Clinic for  
the Homeless

Washington Regional  
Network for Livable  
Communities

Youth Action Research  
Group



# Appendix

## Columbus

John Aeschbury *BREAD*  
Mark Barbash *Development Director, City of Columbus*  
Father Stan Benecki *St. Mary Magdalene, Church*  
Cantor Jack Chomsky *Congregation Tifereth Israel*  
Bill Faith *COHHIO*  
Mark Harris *BREAD*  
Ed Hoffman *BREAD*  
Councilwoman Charlita Tevaras *City of Columbus*

## Seattle

Don Brewer *KeyBank*  
Adair Dammann *SEIU*  
Kelly Evans *Political Consultant*  
Richard Feldman *King County Labor Council*  
Chris Gregorich *Political Consultant*

Katie Hong *City of Seattle Office of Housing*  
Rick Hooper *City of Seattle Office of Housing*  
Sarah Jaynes  
Sharon Lee *Low Income Housing Institute*  
Carla Okigwe *Housing Development Consortium of Seattle-King County*  
Rita Ryder *YWCA*  
Tony To *HomeSight*  
Steve Williamson *King County Labor Council*  
Alice Woldt *SAGE*

## St. Louis

John J Ammann *Saint Louis University School Of Law*  
Laura Barrett *Gamaliel Foundation*  
Sharon Belleville

Loura Gilbert *Commerce Bank*  
Dan Grandone *Metropolitan Congregations United*  
Craig Robbins *ACORN*  
Colleen Starkloff *The Starkloff Disability Institute*  
Grant Williams *SEIU*

## Los Angeles

Maria Arroyo *Inquilinos Unidos*  
Jan Breidenbach *SCANPH*  
Sister Diane Donoghue *Esperanza Community Housing Corporation*  
John Grant *UFCW Local 770*  
Alvivon Hurd *ACORN*  
Peter Kuhns *ACORN*  
Beth Steckler *Livable Places*  
Roxanna Tynan *LAANE*

## Washington, DC

Scott Barkan *Washington, DC Office of the Mayor*  
Janet Brown *WA Regional Network for Livable Communities/League of Women Voters*  
Jeff Coudriet *Office of Councilman Jack Evans*  
Nina Dastur *Center for Community Change*  
Ed Lazere *DC Fiscal Policy Institute*  
Linda Leaks *WISH Saint Augustine Ecumenical Center*  
Rozanne Look *MANNA, Inc.*  
Sczerina Perot *Legal Clinic for the Homeless*  
Bob Pohlman *Coalition of Nonprofit Housing and Economic Development*  
Will Ward *Washington, DC ACORN*

# Center for Community Change

The Center for Community Change is a national nonprofit organization founded in 1968. Our mission is to build the power and capacity of low-income people, especially low-income people of color, to change their communities and public policies for the better. We pursue these goals by providing technical help and practical support to community-based organizations, cultivating new leaders, and linking grassroots groups into broader networks. Over the years, the Center has developed an extraordinary record of strengthening grassroots organizations and bringing them together to achieve major policy change.

**Center for Community Change** • 1000 Wisconsin Avenue N.W. • Washington, DC 20007  
202-342-0567 • [www.communitychange.org](http://www.communitychange.org)

## The Housing Trust Fund Project

The Housing Trust Fund Project, created in 1986, is a special project of the Center for Community Change. The Project operates as a clearinghouse of information on housing trust funds throughout the country and provides technical assistance to organizations and agencies working to create or implement these funds. The Project has numerous publications and other materials available, including a quarterly newsletter, "Housing Trust Fund Project News," that provides current information on the activities of housing trust funds.

**Housing Trust Fund Project** • 1113 Cougar Court • Frazier Park, CA 93225  
661-245-0318 • [Mbrooks@communitychange.org](mailto:Mbrooks@communitychange.org)

*This publication was funded by grants from the Ahmanson Foundation and the Fannie Mae Foundation.*



**Center for Community Change**

1000 Wisconsin Avenue N.W.  
Washington, DC 20007  
202-342-0567 • [www.communitychange.org](http://www.communitychange.org)

**Housing Trust Fund Project**

1113 Cougar Court  
Frazier Park, CA 93225  
661-245-0318 • [Mbrooks@communitychange.org](mailto:Mbrooks@communitychange.org)