

What is Collaboration and Why Does it Matter?

Research on Conservation and Affordable Housing Collaborations

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Background and Outline

- Researched benefits, opportunities, hurdles, and pathways to increase collaboration among conservation land trusts and affordable housing orgs (especially, Community Land Trusts).
- Today's presentation:
 - What is Collaboration?
 - Types and Examples of Collaboration
 - Pathways for Advancing Collaborative Efforts

What is collaboration?

- Facilitate affordable housing and land conservation while:
 - Centering community needs
 - Respecting existing efforts
 - Caring both for human and ecological needs

Why does collaboration matter?

Imperative given affordable housing shortages, climate change, biodiversity loss, and racial injustice.

- Shared focus on long-term public beneficial uses of land
- There will be new demands for land to meet multiple, changing needs
- Complementary expertise, tools, and perpetual timelines
- Combined advocacy would elevate importance of both

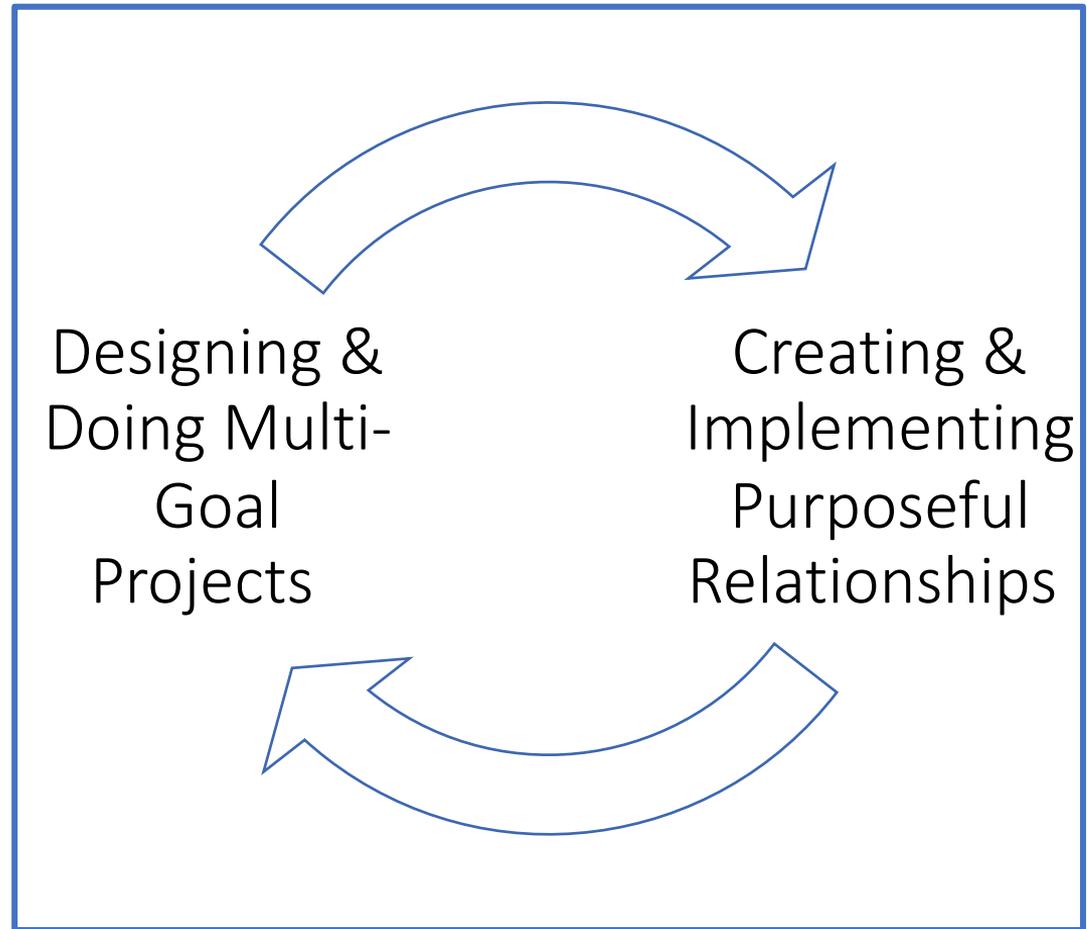
Outcomes:

- Conserving more land
- Building more high-quality affordable housing that is climate resilient
- Deeper community engagement

Collaboration should include...



Collaboration
between
conservation
land trusts &
affordable
housing
organizations
occur in many
ways

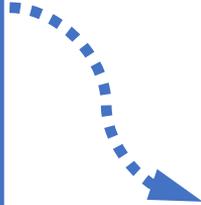


Recommendations for Building Purposeful Relationships Authentically & Equitably

- Understanding of the importance of the other's work and mission
- Willingness to think holistically about the multiple benefits land can provide
- Shifting power, acknowledging history, and listening
- Curiosity – existing solutions may not be the only answers
- Belief in the rights of humans and nature
- Trust takes time

Building Purposeful Relationships

Informal discussions, meetings, and site visits between affordable housing and land conservation interests.



- Conservation and affordable housing orgs regularly meet to align actions, perhaps with Board overlap.
- Advocacy & land use planning in which both publicly support other's goals
- Sharing of skills, staff, funding, connections.

Informal

Formal

Private

Public

Conversation and relationship-building –
Learning from each other

Creation of multi-goal organizations

Learning from each other's communities

Organizational mergers

Publicly supporting each other's work

Serving on each others' boards

Telling donors why the other's work matters

Sharing skills,
resources, funding

Joint advocacy for
policy or funding

Multi-Goal Projects

Done together from start

All phases of the project – planning, designing, and implementing.

At least the planning phase done together

Started by one

Housing group starts project with conservation element, and later consults with conservation land trust.

Conservation land trust starts project with affordable housing, and later consults with affordable housing organization.

Key Findings on Affordable Housing Work Being Done by Conservation Land Trusts

- About 8-9% of land conservation trusts have engaged in affordable housing work.
- Variety of methods and desired outcomes.
- Executive Directors doing affordable housing work because it resonates with them and is reflective of [community centered conservation](#).
- Concern about controversy from affordable housing projects.

Examples of Affordable Housing Work Being Done by Conservation Land Trusts

- 1) Purchase (pending) of three parcels of land, two for conservation and one for housing.
- 2) Land exchange with funding to create new affordable housing entity, but no further control.
- 3) Land purchased, housing approved, need housing developer.
- 4) Low value city garden plot possible sale to housing developer.
- 5) Edge of town joint project bordering national park – two possible projects.
- 6) Farmer housing: lease their farms at affordable rate for organic food including the farmhouses.
- 7) Local worker housing on their properties (resort areas).
- 8) Complements nearby affordable housing
 - Access to their trails for affordable housing property.
 - City gardens mostly serve low-income communities.

Key Findings from Conversations with Affordable Housing Practitioners

- Complementary and distinct assets
- Working separately may be as powerful as working in the same place
- Racial equity an opportunity for shared learning and work
- Land trusts can learn a lot from affordable housing partners
 - “For a CLT, unlike other housebuilders, it ultimately always comes back to people [...] When you’re building housing, there’s a point at which you stop, but there’s no point at which you stop when you’re building communities.” - Dave Smith, Brussels CLT

Collaborative efforts are in early stages

Our research identified hurdles, including:

1. Origin Story and Mission Differences.
2. Siloed Structures, Expertise, and Stakeholders.
3. Differences in Constituencies and Communities Served
4. Competition and Disagreements.
5. Multi-Goal Projects are More Complex.
6. Funders May Not Readily Support Multi-Goal Projects.

Pathways to advance collaboration

To increase land conservation and affordable housing creation:

- Variety of actions at the local, regional, state and national level.
- This meeting and hopefully subsequent discussions could be important step on the path to building purposeful relationships and multi-goal projects.



Pathways to advance collaboration - continued

- Integrated incentives and requirements from government and funders.
- Creating national and state networks, tools, knowledge and expertise.
 - E.g., guide to understanding and using incentives and grants in the Inflation Reduction Act.
- Regional and state efforts to support:
 - Building purposeful relationships.
 - Identifying and developing multi-goal projects.
- New organizations dedicated to both conservation and affordable housing.

In summary: Collaboration matters!

- Collaboration is imperative given wicked problems of lack of affordable housing, climate change, biodiversity loss, and racial injustice.
- Outcomes:
 - Conserving more land
 - Building more high-quality affordable housing that is climate resilient
 - Deeper community engagement

For more information

- [Building collaboration among community land trusts providing affordable housing and conservation land trusts protecting land for ecological value.](#)
 - A Lincoln Institute of Land Policy Working Paper. By Katie Michels and David A. Hindin, January 2023.
 - [Lincolnst.edu > Working Papers](https://lincolnst.edu/working-papers)

Thank you! Questions?

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