

# Chinatown Community Land Trust



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Community  
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**FOUNDED:** 2015

**CURRENT ORGANIZATION BUDGET:** \$480,000

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## Investment Opportunity

Because transformational and capital projects take time, Chinatown CLT sets goals in a three-year time frame within a long-term vision. The Chinatown CLT seeks \$2M in investments over the next three years to grow the Row House Preservation Fund to preserve permanently affordable homes and small businesses and to secure equity investments in the Chinatown energy microgrid. This funding will enable Chinatown CLT to continue to preserve row houses as low-income homes on 99-year ground leases and to rebalance environmental injustice by reducing emissions, increasing resiliency, and sharing cost savings through the launch of the microgrid.

Boston's Chinatown has welcomed generations of working class immigrants for close to 200 years, becoming the cultural and economic center of New England's Chinese community by the late 19th century. Its origin as an immigrant safe haven from violence and exclusion symbolizes both displacement and determination.

Today, Chinatown contains two economic realities, where an Asian household with a median income of \$17,997 strives for access alongside a white household earning a median income of \$113,678. Still the nation's third-largest Chinatown, Boston's is among the most rapidly gentrifying zip codes. First, economic development was stunted by exclusionary employment and institutional racism; later, the influx of luxury housing displaced hundreds of families. Currently, Chinatown's legacy of history, culture, and opportunity is at stake.

Chinatown Community Land Trust (Chinatown CLT) seeks to rewrite the narrative for Chinatown's future. By mobilizing people and resources, it works to ensure that residents exercise control over a vibrant neighborhood, where immigrant, working-class families, and small businesses can thrive. That commitment is shared by homeowners, tenant leaders, small business owners, and longtime activists who believe in stabilizing Chinatown's future.

## Three-Year Goals

- Raise \$1M in contributions for the Row House Preservation Fund (RHPF) to acquire properties for permanent affordability
- Secure \$1M in equity investments for the Chinatown microgrid
- Hire a full-time assistant director and a part-time microgrid manager

## Ways to Invest

### FINANCIAL

- \$250,000 (microgrid) helps install biodiesel generators in 2 major housing developments for reduced carbon use and resiliency
- \$100,000 (microgrid) keeps the lights and heat on for 24 households in an extended outage
- \$50,000 (RHPF) replaces an outdated heating system in a Chinatown row house leading to better energy efficiency
- \$25,000 (RHPF) subsidizes a low-income worker's family-sized apartment for one year

### IN-KIND

- Provide legal support for new acquisition and preservation projects
- Identify investors for the microgrid
- Prospect or donate property in Chinatown and the adjacent area

## Leadership & Governance

Prior to joining Chinatown CLT as its Executive Director, Lydia Lowe has amplified Chinatown residents' voices over three decades as Co-Director and Executive Director of the Chinese Progressive Association. She co-founded the Chinatown Master Plan Committee, Friends of the Chinatown Library, and Massachusetts Asian Pacific Islanders Civic Action Network. Residents and small business owners comprise a majority of the resident-elected board of seven members; more than half are low/moderate income; most are Chinese American. Regular meetings engage community members in strategic planning and needs assessment.

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**By collectively owning the land, we are working to preserve Chinatown as a historic and cultural center for the working families who need it.**

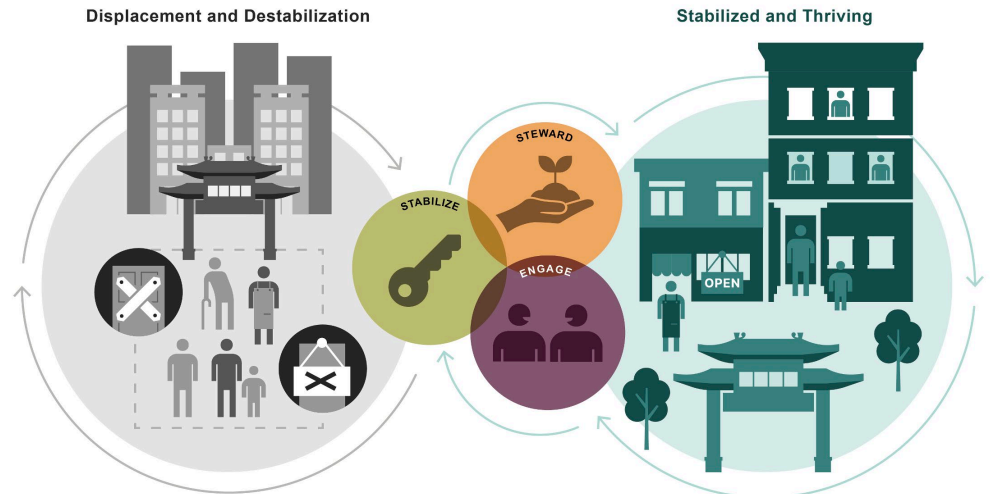
**SUZANNE LEE,**

**Chinatown CLT Board President**

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## CHINATOWN CLT'S MODEL



The Chinatown CLT is pioneering land control approaches that can serve as models for other communities across the country. The four pillars of action include:

### Investing in permanently affordable ownership

Through community land ownership, Chinatown CLT is providing permanent affordability for working-class families while reclaiming Chinatown's row houses from the speculative market. Homes and commercial spaces are transferred to low-income families and business owners, with modest appreciation, and ownership can be shared through cooperative or tenant ownership.

### Preserving Chinatown's immigrant, working-class district

Luxury development has challenged property acquisition, but policy changes can preserve Chinatown as an anchor neighborhood. With strict short-term rental regulation in place, Chinatown CLT is applying a cultural district framework to: add a Row House Protection Area to the zoning code; name Chinatown as a historic conservation district; and create a multimedia Immigrant History Trail.

### Ensuring access to a sustainable environment

As an urban heat island, flood danger zone, and near-highway community, Chinatown is vulnerable to environmental impacts. Chinatown CLT is developing a community-owned energy microgrid to reduce carbon emissions, increase resiliency, and share cost savings. The microgrid includes energy storage, solar panels, and cloud-based controls for disconnecting or islanding off and back on the grid. A pilot project will connect upwards of 300 housing units, with hundreds more to follow. This model can serve as an example for other communities.

### Engaging equitable growth resources

A decade of speculation emptied three-story row houses as they tripled in value. Chinatown CLT addresses the racial wealth gap by combining individual wealth-building with retaining communities of color in the city.

Chinatown CLT brings home ownership to low-income families as well as opportunities for investment in affordable housing, small business, and community resilience projects that will build wealth while strengthening the community.

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We feel a sense of security in our heart. Now we don't face the threat of rising rents, and can live happily as a family.

MEIDAN LIN,

First-time Chinatown CLT homebuyer

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### Key Investors

- BARR FOUNDATION
- BOSTON CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL COLLABORATION FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH
- EPISCOPAL CITY MISSION'S BURGESS URBAN FUND
- HYAMS FOUNDATION
- HERMAN AND FRIEDA L. MILLER FOUNDATION

### Partners

- CHINESE PROGRESSIVE ASSOCIATION
- E3 DEVELOPMENT LLC
- GREATER BOSTON CLT NETWORK
- LOCAL ENTERPRISE ASSISTANCE FUND
- RESILIENT URBAN NEIGHBORHOODS – GREEN JUSTICE COALITION

## IMPACTING SOCIETY

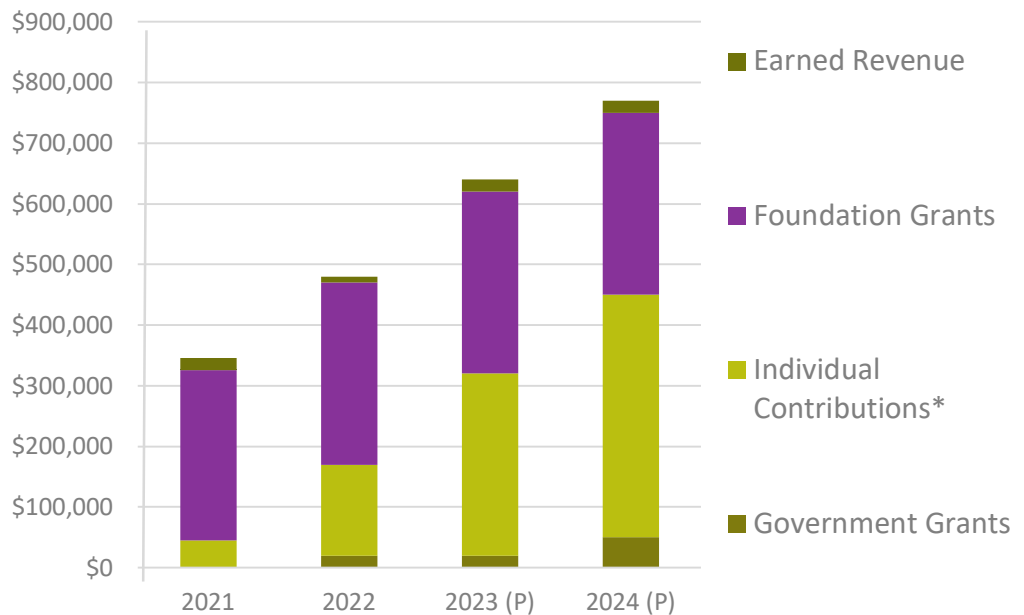
Chinatown CLT is part of a growing movement for community control of land as a way to stabilize working class neighborhoods with permanently affordable housing and shared neighborhood spaces. This approach shifts governance to residents and provides a model for urban neighborhoods facing gentrification, offering wealth-building approaches that support community stability. Key recent accomplishments include:

- Leadership of a participatory planning process involving 200 residents and stakeholders to produce Chinatown Master Plan 2020 as a shared development vision for Boston Chinatown
- Acquisition and preservation of two historic row houses, reclaimed from short-term rental use, as seven low-income, home ownership units on a 99-year ground lease
- Winning a community lease agreement to protect Reggie Wong Memorial Park and establishing a shared governance body of Chinatown and Leather District residents and frequent park users
- Working with seven partner organizations to secure the first (\$2M) Community Land Trust fund in the City of Boston FY22 budget

## FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Chinatown CLT efficiently manages income from grants, earned income, and individual contributions. In the past fiscal year total revenues more than doubled. Chinatown CLT is poised to cultivate funders in the solidarity economy arena, focusing its development efforts on raising funds for the Row House Preservation Fund and capital investment opportunities.

### Revenue by Source



Total Revenue including capital contributions

\* Individual contributions include RHPF and general operating contributions as well as membership fees

## Success Story: Ensuring permanently affordable home ownership

When the Moy family sold their longtime home to an outside investor in 2015, the sale kicked off a slew of home conversions into full-time, short-term rental properties. Tourists with roller luggage replaced immigrant families bringing groceries home. After passage of a short-term rental ordinance, and community opposition to the investor's plans for expansion, Chinatown CLT purchased the building, installed a new roof and efficient heating system, and returned this 19th century brick row house to the community's housing stock as three affordable units. The first buyer was an immigrant family of four who had been sharing an apartment with two other households. Through its 99-year ground lease under Boston's first community land trust condominium, the Chinatown CLT will keep the homes affordable for generations to come.



## PROGRAM PERFORMANCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH

Below is a summary of the key measures that Chinatown CLT will track to demonstrate progress, create internal accountability, incorporate lessons learned, and adjust strategy as necessary.

	FY 2022	FY 2023 (P)	FY 2024 (P)
<b>PROGRAM PERFORMANCE</b>			
Steps toward preservation of community-owned property	1 property re-developed, 2 negotiations undertaken	3 offers or negotiations	At least one additional acquisition in redevelopment
Steps to implement community-owned microgrid	Hire microgrid manager, partner contracts executed	Conduct focus groups & involve 50 residents in design	Installations in 3+ buildings
Establish local community investment vehicles	\$150K for Row House Preservation Fund (RHPF)	\$200K for RHPF & establish mechanism for microgrid investment	\$300K for RHPF; \$500K-\$1M in microgrid investments
<b>ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH/CAPACITY-BUILDING</b>			
Number of staff members	2	3	4
Individual investors	-	3	5
Individual donors	102	150	200
Total revenue, including capital contributions but not equity investments	\$480,000	\$640,000	\$770,000

## SOCIAL IMPACT

Chinatown CLT advances equity by creating new ownership models and preserving permanently affordable homes in a low-income, working-class neighborhood. It reclaimed historic row houses from short-term rental use, raising \$176,000 over two years to expand affordability. Its plan for a community-owned energy microgrid supports sustainability and environmental justice. Finally, Chinatown CLT's preservation efforts embody the principle that Chinatown can only be preserved if its working-class Chinese residents and small businesses remain.

Below are Chinatown CLT's key indicators to track progress over a three-year time frame.

INDICATOR	2022	2025
Number of properties negotiated, acquired, or redeveloped	Two properties acquired and redeveloped	At minimum one additional property acquired, 5 negotiated, one redeveloped
Benchmarks in microgrid development	Microgrid is a new initiative, no baseline data available at the time of publication	Microgrid equipment installed in at least three buildings
Progress in planning and implementation of community investment vehicles	\$200K raised for the Row House Preservation Fund  Microgrid is a new initiative, no baseline data available at the time of publication	\$1M raised for Row House Preservation Fund \$1M invested in microgrid