

# Building Collectively: 4 Takeaways from Movement-Led Community Ownership Models

## Executive Summary of Key Ideas

This report offers an orientation to both the tactical and transformative strategies needed to enable community ownership. It explores examples of relationships between funders and fundees, the role of communication and education in fostering and sustaining change, and the importance of building coalitions and ecosystems to strengthen and broaden bases of support.

Community ownership is a concept that has gained popularity and traction in recent years. This upswell in interest presents a vital opportunity to expand the possibilities of community ownership, but it doesn't come without risks. In order to prevent community ownership from being co-opted as yet another form of extractive development and investment, movement-aligned organizations offer us key insights into what community ownership means and who it is meant to serve. While there is no singular definition of community ownership, our working definition is guided by the principles of 1) collective governance and democratic control, wherein power is redistributed to allow those impacted by decisions to be decision makers; and 2) decommodification, ensuring that resources are controlled by people, and people are put before profits. Movement-building organizations have been critical in defining and upholding these core values of community ownership, linking the fight for housing justice to broader struggles for power.

### Takeaway #1

**Community ownership is a means to collective self-determination, and to land and housing justice**

- Language is a tool to articulate strategies, but developing a shared language and unified strategy requires time, capacity and resources.
- Home ownership alone does not guarantee safety from displacement or create financial security.
- When community ownership is rooted in values of racial and economic justice, it can prevent the ripple effects of displacement, and create pathways to long-term stability and affordability.

### Takeaway #2

**Systemic change takes time and resources, and it requires flexible and long-term strategies**

- To move from a landscape dotted with singular projects, to systems-level change, we need resources that fund more than land/housing acquisition and development; we need resources for organizational capacity, to ensure that a project can be sustained, and movements can develop long-term power.
- Coalitions, across geographies and sectors, make it easier for organizations to share resources and lessons learned, and build stronger strategies.

### Takeaway #3

**When organizing and political education work in tandem, the potential for impact can be greater than the sum of those parts**

- Organizing disrupts the status quo: it illuminates injustices, and ties the people and places facing those injustices to one another, in order to collectively resist oppression.
- Political education can deepen and broaden the impact of organizing, by allowing people to connect their injustices to each other and to broader systems of oppression, and recognize their agency to enact collective visions.

## Takeaway #4

**To be a tool for collective liberation, community ownership must be rooted in community-driven strategies, and resourced to both meet material conditions now, and a vision for the future**

- As community ownership strategies continue to be built and resourced, movements and organizers are inextricable from successful solutions.
- Movement building is shifting the conversation in philanthropy, underscoring the importance of community-led programs, and community-accountable capital strategies.

## Next Steps & Calls to Action

**Community ownership, when rooted in a vision of justice and equity, can be a strategy to redistribute capital and reclaim power. In the context**

**of land and housing justice, examples of investments that enable community control and power include:**

- removing land and housing from the speculative market
- cooperative ownership and stewardship
- the rematriation of land to Indigenous communities
- land acquisition for BIPOC farmers and land stewards
- cooperatively owned housing and real estate like community land trusts

**Movement-building organizations have historically and presently led this approach, meeting the immediate needs of the communities they represent and simultaneously establishing a collective vision for transforming our political and economic systems, while also building a base that can shift towards realizing a collective vision.** Resourcing movement-building requires:

- Mobilizing resources to support people in controlling and governing resources
- Being in relationship with the people and communities on the frontlines, to truly engage with the structural issues that perpetuate systems of oppression

- Deep learning and unlearning around the ways we have been socialized to think about resources and capital, and the role of philanthropy
- Acting against incentives to consolidate wealth and maintain the status quo
- Building alignment across institutions and fostering accountability as a sector

To fundamentally disrupt and build entirely new systems requires **base building** amongst tenants, residents, and community members, and **bridge building** with partners in the philanthropic and public sectors. As the base grows, there is a fine line between community ownership being funded as part of a broader vision for transformative change, and being co-opted as a “quick-fix” reform that perpetuates the status quo, or altogether undermines movement building efforts. In order for community ownership to be rooted in structural change, those most directly impacted by systems of injustice must be given the resources and power to lead demands. Additionally, definitions of community ownership must be clear and specific, while being nimble enough to adapt to emergent needs.



**Scan here to read the full version of the report or go to [NFG.org/Building-Collectively-4-Takeaways-from-Movement-Led-Community-Ownership-Models](https://nfg.org/Building-Collectively-4-Takeaways-from-Movement-Led-Community-Ownership-Models)**

For more information about Democratizing Development Program contact **Chimene Okere**, *he/him*, at [chimene@nfg.org](mailto:chimene@nfg.org)



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