

The Voice of the Commons



Vol. 1

The official newsletter of Charm City Land Trusts

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This Newsletter

by Mike Casiano

Welcome to the fall issue of *The Voice of the Commons*! The summer was a busy time for Charm City Land Trusts. In this issue, we recap the historic affordable housing deal reached between the Mayor's Office and the Housing for All Coalition, of which CCLT is a member; we discuss the alley gating efforts in the Amazing Port Street Commons; and we reflect on the Amazing Port Street Celebration, which was held on September 23 at Amazing Grace Lutheran Church. Additionally, we have a beautiful "Member Spotlight" written by one of CCLT's newest members, Sonita Wong.

If you are interested in learning more about our organization or becoming a member, please connect with us! You can find our contact information on the second page of this issue, but I'll highlight here that our most effective means of communication is our email address: info@charmcitylandtrusts.org. Shoot us an email if you'd like to join CCLT or its listerv!

Heaven, Earth, and I

by Sonita Wong



My name is Sonita Wong. I have lived in Baltimore since August 1991. I love studying history, anthropology, archeology, hiking, embroidery, gardening, and herbalism. I have been gardening on-and-off for years. I am now coming back and learning new techniques, acquiring new knowledge about things I did not know, and sharing what I do know with others while getting quite a few insect bites.

I enjoy harvesting fresh produce and fruit from the garden, picking weeds and herbs for food and medicinal use, and making incense and other crafts. I love gardening because it, for me, is spiritual. It is a connection to the Earth and the Universe.

I love seeing the beauty in nature. I find it very magical. I love learning about the different plants, the trees, the soil, the insects, the smells, the sounds of Earth and the Heavens, and how everything has a connection, and we are the caretakers.

Gardening is also very therapeutic. Medicine for My Mind. I have grown not only by eating healthy food, but by cultivating a healthy life--True Soul Food. Being a member of CCLT means I am a caretaker and a cultivator of the land that takes care of me. I get to work with others to give back what was given to me and hopefully, leave it a little healthier.

Heaven, Earth, and I.

I am the Land, the Land is me. I am the Universe, the Universe is me. I grow from them, I grow with them. I learn from them, they learn from me. I live from them, they live in me. I return to them, they return to me. Inseparable are we. Until One again We become. Separation Undone!

Heaven, Earth, and I. Go back to when we started because Heaven, Earth, and I have never truly parted.

Fund the Trust

by Adriana Foster

Charm City Land Trusts and the Baltimore Housing Roundtable have organized to make permanently affordable housing a priority in Baltimore and have worked to clarify the challenges facing our communities since 2013. Because of our efforts, city leaders have agreed to set aside resources for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

The agreement stipulates that:

- \$13 million a year will come from amended "Fund The Trust Act" legislation.
- \$2 million in additional funds this year will be put in the trust, increasing to reach \$7 million annually by 2023.

This recognition and agreement from the City to our \$20 million demand is an exciting step forward. One question to consider is: "What does this mean for our community?"

This agreement means that Baltimore is experiencing a shift toward reflecting the values and efforts of its residents. It means real support and real growth for CCLT's work! It means that our community can turn away from a history of displacement and disinvestment toward a future where all residents have a home and a real say in how our neighborhood is developed.



State of the Commons

by Natalie Cohen

Drug use, illegal dumping, discarded paraphernalia— these are all a common scene in alleyways all over Baltimore City. The alleys surrounding the Amazing Port Street Commons are no different. To make the Commons cleaner and safer for all who use it, the alleys abutting the Commons will be gated and cease to be a public right of way.

Alley gating is proven to decrease crime and illegal dumping. Grant monies have been secured, and a public hearing on the subject will be held on October 4, 2018 to approve the proposed alley gating project.

For questions, comments, or concerns regarding this alley gating project, contact Natalie Cohen at 410-276-5674.



Development without Displacement



On August 7, community members, CCLT representatives, and others came out to support the passage of the "Fund the Trust Act" on the front porch of 520 N. Luzerne, CCLT's residential property in McElderry Park.

Contact Us

Stay in touch with CCLT through our various social media and Internet accounts!

Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/charm-citylandtrustsinc/>

Twitter

<https://twitter.com/charmcityclt>

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info@charmcitylandtrusts.org

Website

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Amazing Port Street Celebration

by Jennifer Kunze



The day of the Amazing Port Street Celebration was cold and wet, but it didn't stop us from celebrating the space that we share! For more than a decade, Amazing Grace Lutheran Church has set aside one Sunday in September to commemorate the creation of the Amazing Port Street Commons with a special outdoor service, free community cookout, and singing and dancing.

This year, we also announced the next phase of CCLT's journey to the church and community with a special message from Pastor Karen Brau, who was pastor of Amazing Grace at the time of the Amazing Port Street Commons' founding. After the service, a communal meal cooked by church members and neighborhood residents gave us space to reflect and consider this push forward toward permanently affordable housing in McElderry Park—and time to take a reflective walk through the labyrinth, even in the rain.