

Just Cities & Regions

Housing insecurity affects tens of millions of Americans and exacerbates the country's social, economic, and political inequality. We work to build the power and capacity of those most affected by housing insecurity, including people of color, formerly incarcerated people, youth, immigrants, and those with disabilities. With stronger collaboration, research, and communications, affected communities can become powerful advocates to advance just housing solutions that protect tenants facing exploitation, eviction, or displacement, preserve what's currently affordable, and expand the supply of permanently affordable homes.

Portfolio Snapshot

Budget:
\$10.2 million

Number of Grantees:
59

BUILD Budget:
\$45 million

BUILD Grantees:
15

The Challenge

Everyone—regardless of who they are, where they come from, or how much they make—deserves a safe, affordable place to call home. It is the foundation for health, economic security, and building community. However, the United States has failed to provide adequate resources and protections to ensure this basic need is met. Today, 10 to

15 percent of households report being insecure. And of the 43 million people who rent their homes, 38 percent report being burdened by the cost. As of 2018, a minimum-wage worker would have to work 122 hours per week to afford an average two-bedroom apartment. People of color, formerly incarcerated people, youth, immigrants, and people with disabilities face disproportionate exclusion, risk of eviction, and homelessness.

Years of federal, state, and local discriminatory housing and land use policies—such as redlining, urban renewal, and the construction of the federal highway system—have created the segregated and unequal systems still in place today. Despite clearly unequal development, the current real estate system has facilitated enormous profits for financial institutions, corporate landlords, and developers through weak or missing regulations and large federal subsidies.

With the arrival of COVID-19 and a rise in climate-related disasters, the nation's housing crisis has become more visible. We must reimagine our market-driven systems of housing and community development, which too often prioritize the needs of investors over communities, and implement policies and practices that make sure everyone has a safe, affordable place to call home.

The Opportunity

For the first time in 20 years, housing has become an urgent national policy issue. Those most affected by housing insecurity are organizing to demand bolder solutions and forge coalitions and campaigns with advocates and policy makers to challenge the politics and policies driving evictions, displacement, and inequitable development. These efforts demonstrate how racially and economically diverse organizing can build the political will necessary to transform housing and development policies across the country.

In states as varied as California, Louisiana, Minnesota, and New York, new coalitions—particularly those led by people of color—have emerged to advance groundbreaking local and state policies to protect tenants against unjust eviction, preserve and expand affordable housing, and end discriminatory land use and financing practices. As a result of this growing grassroots pressure, affordable housing has re-emerged as a significant issue on the national agenda, with policy makers and political candidates advancing ambitious policy platforms to tackle this crisis at a scale not seen in decades.

Our Aim and Approach

We aim to build on this growing momentum by investing in multiracial organizations working in civic engagement, housing advocacy, and technical assistance including land and capital management. These groups are led by communities historically affected by disinvestment and policies that prioritize the profits of developers and landowners over the needs of low-income people. We focus on:

- **Advancing a national vision and public will for progressive housing reform.** We support a diverse group of leaders, advocates, and policy and community stakeholders, and foster organizing, research, communications and advocacy to strengthen the capacity of communities to advance housing policies that protect tenants, promote long-term affordability, and expand the supply of inclusive affordable housing.
- **Building a diverse, national grassroots constituency for housing justice.** We support affected communities to build their power and form coalitions with a broader set of stakeholders (education, health, labor, environment) to hold policy makers accountable and achieve equitable development. We also invest in national networks and coalitions, particularly those led by people of color, that position housing as a fundamental pillar in broader racial and economic justice agendas.
- **Expanding the range of funders to address the country's housing crisis.** We work with funder collaboratives

to mobilize resources toward housing initiatives that prioritize civic engagement and coalition-building. These collaboratives also work to identify and counter false narratives related to affordable housing by working with journalists, media partners, and other influencers.

Our Impact

By 2021, we aim to contribute to a stronger movement for housing justice across the country and to accelerate the adoption of policies and practices that promote housing stability and security.

We work toward three critical outcomes:

- **Stronger housing coalitions and campaigns.** Local, statewide, and national housing campaigns will have the capacity to engage and mobilize low-income communities and tenants to advance progressive policy reforms.
- **Housing policies that expand tenant protections.** More just policies at the local and state level will accelerate the rehabilitation and reuse of vacant or substandard housing, give tenants access to legal guidance and financial support to halt evictions, and promote development without displacement.
- **Stronger funder partnerships and collaboratives.** These collectives will use and align resources to strengthen organizations, coalitions, and campaigns working toward equitable housing.

📍 Grantee Snapshot

Building a national movement for housing justice

Public Advocates, PolicyLink, Right To The City Alliance, the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, and Poverty and Race Research Action Council formed the [Alliance for Housing Justice](#) (AHJ) to build a national movement that not only mobilizes people across the country to push back on some of the federal government's most harmful policies that undo discrimination protections, but also proposes a visionary agenda for how the nation should respond to COVID-19's impacts on housing insecurity. While the government has rolled back its housing protections, AHJ members have made progress in a number of states—including California, Florida, Illinois, Oregon, and New York—to win new policies that protect low-income people from discrimination and center the voices of those most affected by housing insecurity in decisions about development policy and investment.

Photo courtesy of: Bora Chung/Survival Media Agency

