

## HOUSING FACTS & FINDINGS

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Realizing the Promise of Manufactured Homes in Georgia: A Community Land Trust Model

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More than 10 percent of Georgia's families live in manufactured homes, many of them in parks. Families who live in manufactured homes cannot become homeowners without owning and controlling the land beneath their homes. And, without an ownership stake in the land, these families are subject to sudden eviction, high-cost financing, and other hardships. Residents of manufactured housing communities and their allies have discovered this the hard way, by experience. But they also have learned that there is hope in the form of innovative policies and practices that can bring the American dream of homeownership within reach.



Georgia has had a decade-long economic boom and many new homes are available; however, most residents with annual household incomes below \$30,000 cannot afford housing that is priced above \$86,800.

The 950,000 Georgians living in manufactured homes often lack the monetary resources, necessary documents, or credit to qualify for traditional-market housing or other forms of subsidized, affordable housing. And very low incomes, negative public perceptions, racism, lack of tenants' rights, lack of supportive legislation, lack of access to capital, and other barriers make Georgia a difficult place to fight for manufactured housing.

However, because manufactured housing parks house a large segment of Georgia's population, Georgians are showing a growing commitment to making these homes secure and permanently affordable. As illustrated by the following story, solutions include giving manufactured housing park residents the rights of notice and first refusal to purchase the property beneath their homes when an owner decides to sell the park. Further, Georgians are finding that a community land trust model ensures long-term control and affordability, improves financing options, and lets residents share in the appreciation of the value of their homes.

The story begins in June 2001, when 108 low-income families (450 people) were served eviction notices by the new owner of the Garden Springs Mobile Home Park in Athens, Ga. Even though these long-time residents collectively paid \$17,000 a month in lot fees, they were not notified that the 30-year-old manufactured housing park in which they lived was for sale. No mechanism existed to help them leverage their collective economic power to purchase the park, which was sold for \$1.7 million.

Frightened and angered by the potential loss of their supportive neighborhood, residents began to organize. Helped by their non-park neighbors, area churches, the Georgia Legal Services Program, and the law firm of Sutherland Asbill & Brennan LLP, the residents incorporated as People of Hope, Inc., a nonprofit organization.

People of Hope initially tried to buy the park back, but the new owner, who planned to build a luxury apartment complex, would not sell. Searching for other ways to keep their homes and keep their community intact, the displaced residents began developing Georgia's first permanently affordable, resident-controlled manufactured housing park.

People of Hope purchased 17.2 acres and placed it in trust with the Athens Land Trust, Inc. (ALT), a nonprofit community land trust whose mission includes providing affordable housing. ALT will give People of Hope a 99-year ground lease and will retain a right of first refusal if the land is sold, ensuring that the mobile home park will remain permanently affordable. The housing pads, streets, community center, and amenities will be owned and managed by People of Hope, Inc.

Using lessons learned from the People of Hope Park, many of the same partners who joined to solve the initial crisis in 2001 began to explore ways of changing the system statewide.

These partners have developed the Manufactured Housing Initiative, a program of the Georgia Community Loan Fund, Inc., to influence ownership, control, affordability, and financing through policy and practice.

This initiative has the potential to meet the long-term affordable housing needs of an underserved and under-represented population in Georgia. And, more important, the strategy shows great promise for sustainability precisely because it is driven by the families who need it most.

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