



Landscape Scan Summary: San Joaquin Valley Community Ownership Efforts & Recommendations for Strengthening This Work

Overview

The San Joaquin Valley Funders' Collaborative acknowledges a variety of new community-based initiatives coming forward across the Valley with the goal to own land, housing, and community assets as key strategies to establish equity and self-determination for communities of color.

CNB Consulting and the CA CLT Network conducted 12 interviews in 2022 with these emerging initiatives - with the goal to understand the challenges that are faced, the assets that community groups bring to the table, and ultimately what might be needed to grow these efforts in the coming years toward solidity and success.

We acknowledge the sheer diversity of groups, organizations, populations, geographies and goals that this scan seeks to incorporate into a unified assessment and set of recommendations. The community-based housing and agricultural arenas may in fact share similar challenges and have similar root-needs to grow (as articulated in this report).

However, the political stakeholders & strategies for advocacy, funding sources, technical expertise and the collaboratives needed for support may be completely different.

Challenges

- Lack of Knowledge of Existing Community Ownership Options
- Staffing, Infrastructure, and Cultivation of an Understanding of Community Ownership models
- Timely and Streamlined Technical Assistance
- Connecting efforts within the Valley and Connecting with successful efforts across the State
- Cultivation of Governmental and Other Stakeholder Relationships, Knowledge and Support

Assets

The assets of groups and organizations currently engaged toward community ownership is substantial and diverse. Everyone we spoke with brought remarkable strengths into developing

community ownership models. To get a sense of the diversity of assets, a few examples are provided here:

- Past experience in acquiring and rehabilitating several homes
- Existing relationships within the City government
- Current interest in shifting to community ownership models that fit community needs
- Focus on preserving cultural heritage for future generations
- Established relationships of trust within specific communities
- Indigenous land connections that are key to restoration and climate-change solutions beneficial to all
- Strong community relationships and understanding of issues affecting displacement
- Advocacy and research skills

Recommendations

The following recommendations are strategies to develop an ecosystem for successful community ownership efforts, based on 12 interviews with organizations in the San Joaquin Valley. They are envisioned together, as a multilevel, simultaneous approach, with specific recommendations on affordable housing or agricultural/food systems needs incorporated separately as needed.

The recommendations are grounded in **two fundamental aspects of success** for Valley efforts:

- A. a long term investment (5-6+ years), and
- B. an approach tailored to individual needs of organizations

1. Staffing

Provide partial salary and operations support for BIPOC organizations to hire staff focused on community ownership efforts seeking to benefit vulnerable populations. In order to support operational capacity building, consider a program that would be on a 1-year renewable term up to 3 years, should the relationship prove to be beneficial and values-aligned for all parties.

Staffing support could enable effective action in one or more of the following areas:

- Acquisition, Project Financing and Project Development
- Property and Asset Management
- Community and Resident engagement that centers on education about community ownership and resident engagement toward ownership (CLT homeownership, LEHC, or farming co-op)

2. Practitioner Consulting Pool (short-term contracts)

- Project Development technical assistance
- Technical assistance in governance, staffing, membership development, resident engagement (especially in forming Limited Equity Housing Cooperatives)

- Legal support for bylaws development, State of California applications, incorporations, and other issues affecting newer organizations
- Finance, property compliance, other issues affecting nonprofits
- Property Management and Asset Management, including reserve calculations and property management fees for housing projects
- Strategy consultants to create business plans and for timely strategic planning
- Technical assistance in organizational start-up, community ownership incubation, growth and re-organizing
- Organizational development and transitional training as roles shift, and as technical expertise needs of the board and staff increase
- Navigating federal recognition for tribal entities and funding sources, programming, and rights related to their members

3. Convening

We see convening groups across the Valley to develop collegial relationships, and connecting with relevant efforts across the state as complementary to staffing. For housing-related ownership efforts, The California CLT Network has a track record of convening through its annual conference and its monthly teach-in series, as well as other gatherings. We envision developing Valley-centric relationships while also tapping the Network’s capacities.

With agricultural ownership efforts, a strategy for convening can be further refined through additional conversations across small farms, permaculture, and farmworker efforts.

4. Targeted Stakeholder Education

Efforts to educate stakeholders are also an important and complementary strategy. It can be crucial for established practitioners to come alongside new groups in their efforts to expand stakeholder understanding and support the work. Stakeholders include governmental, financing institutions/lenders, foundations, and other partner organizations. This could have a variety of formats, and be planned out in advance, with annual education sessions for targeted stakeholder audiences, or also happen as needed, to nimbly and strategically respond to a specific need or a specific window for collaboration.

Aspects of stakeholder education with local governments could include:

- A. Outreach and education with established practitioners
- B. Case studies of local governments collaborating with CLTs and other community ownership models, with examples of specific aspects of that partnership, including Inclusionary Housing Stewarding, Anti-Displacement Projects, and partnerships for land disposition leading to community ownership, permanent affordability and agricultural land protection.
- C. Providing an overview of funding structures for community ownership, including Affordable Housing Trust Funds, State funds, etc.
- D. Potential access to funding and benefits for cities and governmental entities to invest in Equitable Food Oriented Development and protection of agricultural land for small-scale, local food systems development.

5. Explore a central hub, web, or other collaborative models with one or more groups throughout the region

As groups in a specific area (South, Central, or Northern SJV) are supported to continue promoting community ownership efforts, explore whether a shared model of staffing, resource/education sharing, or even property stewardship might be considered. Most organizations we spoke to had a geographic, neighborhood, or even property-specific focus. However, groups in a shared geographic area can benefit from resource sharing, with significantly reduced cost. Models of collaboration already exist through the Edge Collaborative in Stockton; and there are also existing models of CLT coalitions focused on collaborative approaches in the Bay Area and Los Angeles.

Summary

These recommendations seek to address the interlocking challenges faced by current community ownership efforts, and aim to establish an ecosystem of support with strong and connected organizations to hold and sustainably steward community assets for generations, while preventing ongoing displacement of local residents.

We envision that a combination of staffing support, accessible and tailored technical assistance, and regular convening of Valley efforts can promote a community of practice and strategic movement leading to stakeholder education and collaborations with government and other stakeholders. An intentional investment in a shared-resource or central hub model may also lay a strong foundation for new and existing community ownership efforts to be on a stable path of progressive growth.

In addition, these recommendations are predicated upon two fundamental aspects for success: a longer-term investment of time and support, which we anticipate is at minimum 5-6 years and a tailored approach, working with an in-depth understanding of each organization's current moment of growth, needs, and its context and goals.

List of Organizations interviewed

Apple Core Project, Bakersfield
California Rural Legal Assistance, Modesto & Fresno
Central California Land Trust, Fresno
Central California Environmental Justice Network, Bakersfield
Central Valley Empowerment Alliance, Poplar
Faith in the Valley, Stockton
Ivanhoe Community Council, Ivanhoe
Little Manila Rising, Stockton
Lowell CDC/MINT, Fresno
Reinvent South Stockton Coalition, Stockton
Salt and Light, Visalia
Wukchumni Tribe, Tulare County