

**Exploring the Potential of Community Land Trusts as a Housing Solution in L.A.'s Skid
Row**

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INTRODUCTION

The unhoused crisis is exemplified by a concentrated number of people in Los Angeles's Skid Row. This crisis is understood to stem from a multitude of factors, including a severe lack of affordable housing (Colburn and Aldern, 2022). The criminalization of being unhoused through vagrancy laws and Los Angeles Municipal Code 41.18 that criminalizes "sitting, lying, sleeping, or storing personal property in public spaces" has exacerbated the unhoused crisis in L.A., as well as Reagan-era policies of de-institutionalization and "tough on crime" approaches to interpreting the law (Herbert et al., 2025). Intense policing of unhoused people, particularly people of color and formerly-incarcerated individuals, has contributed to an ever-growing unhoused population (Colburn and Aldern, 2022). While Los Angeles is the 5th wealthiest city in the world, it also has one of the largest populations of unhoused people in the country.

Many policies and programs aimed at improving the housing crisis have either worsened conditions or done nothing but create unintended consequences. Some of these include transitional housing like Inside Safe and Project Roomkey, which have low rates of permanently housing people, and end up forcibly removing people from their communities and putting them into carceral housing (Beckner-Carmitchel, 2024 & Ray, 2021). These policies also included initiatives like public housing and "urban renewal" projects that ultimately displaced people and communities.

In addition to the criminalization of homelessness, formerly incarcerated people are often disconnected from support as a result of their incarceration. This disconnection often causes issues in finding housing and a stable job, which increases individuals' likelihood of being unhoused (Gillespie et al., 2020). Looking at the "homelessness-jail" cycle, the failure of prior policies and programs, and the lack of affordable housing directed me to explore the possibility of Community Land Trusts (CLTs) in meeting the housing needs of unhoused communities, particularly in Skid Row. This kind of housing is often used in land reclamation

efforts, and paired with social services that aim to support people holistically, establishing permanently affordable housing.

This paper focuses on identifying housing and service needs, specifically for unhoused residents in L.A.'s Skid Row, and exploring Community Land Trusts as a potential solution to meeting these needs. The research design to explore these questions includes a multi-method approach of (1) a content analysis of documents and (2) an analysis of interview data.

Documents include historical newspaper articles, interviews with members and experts of CLTs, documents and panels identifying needs, and community vision documents generated by residents in Skid Row.

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Los Angeles is known as the “homeless capital” of the U.S. (Landsberg and Holland, 2025). Different pathways and contributors to homelessness are seen at particularly high rates in L.A. (Landsberg and Holland, 2025). These include the “tough on crime” theory of policing and incarceration, stripping social services, systemic racism and zoning, de-institutionalization, urban renewal and public housing, slum clearance, rising real estate value and rent, lack of affordable housing, and a throughline of the views of housing as a commodity and people as dispensable (Sheeley et al., 2021 and Roy et al. 2022 and Shah, 2024). In a report from the UCLA Luskin Center for History and Policy, Sheeley et al. explain the state of the current unhoused crisis as worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the history of homelessness in Los Angeles (2021). Sheeley et al. identify the origins of the unhoused crisis in L.A. dating back to the 1800s, where the city kept people off the streets by locking them up or sending them to “poor farms.”

Shah expands on this in *Unbuild Walls*, detailing the history of incarceration in the U.S. She connects issues of homelessness to the prison industrial complex, which would later boom in the 1970s due to a multitude of factors, including the criminalization of homelessness and immigration (Shah, 2024). An article from the *Los Angeles Times* details how L.A. became the epicenter of America's homeless crisis, pointing to the 1970s as a turning point (Landsberg and Holland, 2025). From the mid-1970s to the 80s, manufacturing jobs held predominantly by Latino and Black People moved overseas, replaced by low-wage jobs in apparel, furniture and electronics assembly (Landsberg and Holland, 2025). This, combined with discriminatory urban planning known as “redlining” decreased economic opportunity for people of color, worsening

the housing crisis (Landsberg and Holland, 2025). The 1972 anti-vagrancy laws that criminalized street homelessness, combined with de-institutionalization under Reagan, paired with simultaneous slashing of community-based mental healthcare increased both the numbers of unhoused people on the streets, and unhoused people's subsequent incarceration (Landsberg and Holland, 2025). In 1978, Proposition 13, which limited property taxes passed, resulting in significantly decreased public tax revenue which impacted lower funding for schools, housing, and other public sector projects (Picker, 2005). This, combined with rising home prices in 1975-1979, and a growing population and inflation, continued to worsen the housing crisis (Landsberg and Holland, 2025).

Significant changes in policing also heightened the unhoused crisis. During the late 1800s, heavy policing and city sentiment vilified transient agricultural laborers upon their arrival in L.A., which laid the groundwork for stricter policing and incarceration of transient people (Landsberg and Holland, 2025). "Tough on crime" theory of policing, combined with the "war on crime" that escalated in the 1960s and 70s led to mass incarceration (Shah, 2024). This caused prison overcrowding, which prompted the federal government to build more prisons in towns with high rates of unemployment, creating prison towns (Shah, 2024, p. 26-27). The prison industrial complex, which provided jobs and generated prison labor, exacerbated the housing crisis, as it became economically advantageous to criminalize being unhoused (Shah, 2024). Police could arrest and imprison more people, and further support the prison industrial complex (Hernández, 2017). It was therefore more economical to imprison people for being unhoused than to spend federal and city funds to develop affordable housing (Shah, 2024; Colburn and Aldern, 2022). This imprisonment usually disproportionately impacted people of color who were harshly policed and served as scapegoats (Shah, 2024).

The unhoused crisis in L.A. has only worsened in recent history, spiking almost 50 percent from 2016 to 2021 (Sheeley et al., 2021). Sheeley et al. explain that the COVID-19 pandemic worsened existing disparities in income and housing, with many tenants unable to earn money and pay rent (Sheeley et al., 2021). The authors of this report explain the present crisis as a continuation of a "decades-long scarcity of affordable homes, skyrocketing unemployment, and the persistent reality of racialized violence at the hands of the state," (Sheeley et al., 2021).

This prompted the city to take a series of measures to decrease the number of people on the streets, including transitional housing programs like Inside Safe, homeless shelters, and

Measures HHH, H, A, and ULA. Inside Safe is a L.A. City program under Mayor Bass where police conduct street sweeps of homeless encampments, and place the displaced residents into transitional housing (Beckner-Carmitchel, 2024). These transitional housing sites are often far from residents' encamped communities, and require them to leave behind most of their belongings, as well as adhere to strict curfews, all of which result in very low retention rates (Beckner-Carmitchel, 2024). Measures HHH and H are two iterations of the same bond measure, funding permanent supporting housing in L.A. Measure HHH was passed in 2016 and raised revenue through property taxes, while Measure H was passed in 2017, and added a sales tax (Chief Executive Office of the County of L.A., 2024). Measure ULA is a real-estate transfer tax, where revenue is generated when property valued over \$5.3 million is sold (Dreier, 2025). These measures have seen success in their ability to generate revenue for affordable housing, but these alone are not enough to keep pace with the continually worsening housing crisis (Leano, 2025).

The history of homelessness in L.A., recent events, and efforts that have so far proved insufficient or ineffective to improve the crisis prompted investigation into land reclamation practices of Community Land Trusts (CLTs).

LITERATURE REVIEW AND PRIOR RESEARCH

Introduction

Los Angeles is known as the “homeless capital” of the US. Although the housing crisis deeply impacts most parts of L.A., the majority of L.A.'s unhoused population has been concentrated in Skid Row. This crisis evolved from a multitude of factors, with a throughline of predatory policy choices and approaches that view housing as a commodity, and people as disposable. Existing literature explains these policies, approaches, and other contributors of the housing crisis, identifying a severe lack of affordable and supportive housing to be a huge reason for why L.A. has such a disproportionate amount of people who are currently unhoused (Landsberg and Holland, 2025). In response to this lack of affordable and supportive housing, the City of Los Angeles and a multitude of service providers have tried to bridge the gap, but the issue of a still-increasing population of people experiencing being unhoused begs the question of what these programs are missing, and what can be done to connect more people with permanently affordable housing and support. The history of homelessness in L.A. and efforts that

have so far proved insufficient or ineffective to improve the crisis prompted an investigation into land reclamation practices of Community Land Trusts (CLTs).

Background

L.A.'s status as the “homeless capital” of the US is a product of centuries of the “tough on crime” theory of policing and incarceration, stripping social services, systemic racism and zoning, de-institutionalization, urban renewal and public housing, slum clearance, rising real estate value and rent, and lack of affordable housing (Sheeley et al., 2021; Roy et al. 2022; Shah, 2024). Sheeley et al. identify the origins of the unhoused crisis in L.A. dating back to the 1800s, where the city kept people off the streets by locking them up or sending them to “poor farms.” Shah and Hernández expand on this in their books *Unbuild Walls* and *City of Inmates*, respectively, detailing the history of incarceration in the US (Shah, 2024 & Hernández, 2017). Shah identifies the connection between issues of homelessness and the boom of the prison industrial complex (PIC), as the prison industry benefits from the government’s view of “imprisonment as [a] solution to economic, social, and political problems,” including people who were living on the streets (Shah, 2024, p. 18). This approach led to mass criminalization of immigration and people experiencing being unhoused, culminating in the prison boom in the 1970s (Shah, 2024; L.A. C.A.N., 2024; White, n.d).

Other experts in the field also identify the 1970s as a turning point in America’s housing crisis, including Landsberg and Holland of the Los Angeles Times (Landsberg and Holland, 2025; Sheeley et al., 2021). Pivotal moments and practices that worsened the crisis include redlining, 1972 anti-vagrancy laws, and many jobs that were predominantly held by Latino and Black people moving overseas (Landsberg and Holland, 2025). Other changes significantly impacted housing in L.A., such as the 1978 passing of Prop 13, which limited property taxes, as well as a growing population and inflation (Landsberg and Holland, 2025, and Sheeley et al., 2021). These, combined with President Reagan’s slashing of federal housing funds, left L.A. and the rest of America with rising home prices starting in 1975, and affordable housing harder and harder to find (Colburn and Aldern, 2022). In 1981, Reagan simultaneously de-institutionalized mental hospitals and stripped social services, including mental health support (Landsberg and Holland, 2025). This uprooted a population of people going through mental health crises without the necessary support to help them find housing and thrive (Landsberg and Holland, 2025).

Another large contributor that has restricted access to resources and further prevented people from finding safe, stable, and affordable housing within their communities is L.A.'s "tough on crime" theory of policing. Back in the late 1800s, heavy policing and city sentiment vilified transient agricultural laborers upon their arrival in L.A., which laid the groundwork for stricter policing and incarceration of transient people (Landsberg and Holland, 2025). This "tough on crime" theory of policing, combined with the "war on crime" that escalated in the 1960s and 70s, led to mass incarceration, especially of people of color who didn't currently have homes (Shah, 2024 and Hernández, 2017). This caused prison overcrowding, prompting the federal government to build more prisons in towns with high rates of unemployment, creating prison towns (Shah, 2024, p. 26-27). Prison towns provided jobs and prison labor to areas that were suffering economically, which incentivized mass incarceration. This involved harsh policing, predominantly of people of color who served as scapegoats. With respect to housing, it became economically advantageous to criminalize being unhoused, as police could then arrest and imprison more people, and further support the prison industrial complex (Hernández, 2017). It was therefore more economical to imprison people for being unhoused than to spend federal and city funds to develop affordable housing (Shah, 2024; Colburn and Aldern, 2022). Further, once imprisoned, finding housing upon release is much harder, with formerly incarcerated people being "10 times more likely to be homeless than the general public," with their unhoused situation again making them even more likely to end up back in prison. (Couloute, 2018).

Sheeley et al. identify the large role of unemployment in contributing to L.A.'s housing crisis (2021). When people are individually unemployed, they have decreased economic resources, and therefore decreased economic mobility (Amour, 20240). This lack of economic resources and mobility disables people from being able to pay for adequate housing, and further benefit from long-standing capitalist structures that determine one's place in society based on class (Gist-Mackey & Dougherty 2021). L.A. has long seen high rates of unemployment, with the graph below displaying a total unemployment rate that hovers between 4.3 percent and 10.8 percent between 1990 and 2007, with consistent variation (Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis).



There was a spike immediately following the 2008 economic crash through 2012, with the highest being 13.1 percent, and another spike of 18.9 percent during 2020 following the outbreak of COVID-19 (Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis). These high unemployment rates again indicate a worsening housing crisis in L.A..

Racist practices by the state are another huge contributor to the unhoused crisis. These practices, which are especially prevalent in L.A., include previously discussed racialized policing and incarceration, as well as racial economic and housing discrimination (Sheeley et al., 2021). Los Angeles and many other cities in the U.S. have historically been zoned along racial lines, essentially racially segregating people (Sheeley et al., 2021). These exclusionary zoning practices prevented people of color from being able to live in more affluent neighborhoods, leaving them out of the economic opportunities and better-funded schools of these areas (Sheeley et al., 2021). These discriminatory housing practices also made it incredibly difficult for people of color to take out mortgage loans, making it nearly impossible for people of color to buy a home and therefore, accumulate wealth in this way (Sheeley et al., 2021). As previously discussed, a lack of economic opportunity is a contributing factor towards being unhoused, and so these discriminatory practices caused people of color to have disproportionately fewer resources, and therefore higher rates of homelessness (Sheeley et al., 2021 & Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, 2018).

The unhoused crisis in L.A. has only worsened in recent history, spiking almost 50% from 2016 to 2021 (Sheeley et al., 2021). In a report from UCLA's Luskin Center for History and Policy, Sheeley et al. explain this statistic as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as systemic issues that continue to be exacerbated without change (Sheeley et al., 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic worsened existing disparities in income and housing, with many tenants unable to earn money and pay rent (Sheeley et al., 2021). The authors of this report explain the present crisis as a continuation of a "decades-long scarcity of affordable homes, skyrocketing unemployment, and the persistent reality of racialized violence at the hands of the state" (Sheeley et al., 2021).

Current Efforts

The current crisis of houselessness in Los Angeles demonstrates a huge need for housing. This has prompted the city to take a series of measures in recent years to decrease the number of people on the streets, starting in 2017. These efforts include transitional housing programs like Inside Safe, homeless shelters, Measures HHH, H, A, and ULA (Sheeley et al., 2021, and Feldstein Soto, 2025). The city has started different housing programs such as Inside Safe, Project Roomkey, Tiny Homes, and temporary shelters, but all of these have unintentionally led to harmful impacts for unhoused people, the community that they're designed to help (Ray, 2021 & Kuang, 2023). Such consequences include displacement from people's existing communities and the subsequent separation from resources and support systems (Roy et al., 2022; Beckner-Carmitchel, 2024; & Kuang, 2023). Other consequences of ineffective solutions thus far include avoidance of using programs entirely and participant-identified decreased autonomy and quality of life (Beckner-Carmitchel, 2024). This is because programs such as Inside Safe, transitional housing, and Project Roomkey often have strict curfews and rules, which cause those living there to feel they need to sacrifice their autonomy in order to have housing (Dunseith, 2021; Busch, 2021; Ray, 2021; & Kuang, 2023). Inside Safe, a program spearheaded by Mayor Bass in 2022, involves street sweeps that remove people from where they're living, and places them in hotels and motels away from their communities, often which have poor conditions and strict restrictions (Beckner-Carmitchel, 2024). Homeless shelters are also unable to meet the needs of people experiencing being unhoused, as they are often inconvenient, unsanitary, unsafe, and can impose limits on belongings and conditions on sobriety (Shapiro and Pirtle, 2012).

As alternatives to transitional housing and shelters, the city and service providers have tried to increase efforts to build affordable and supportive housing, largely through measures like HHH, H, A, and ULA. These housing efforts from the measures go in two directions: Affordable Housing Programs, which include construction, rehab, preservation, Homelessness Prevention, including rental aid, legal defense, income support for seniors and disabled people, and tenant harassment protection. As part of Affordable Housing Programs, measure funds can go to the formation and maintenance of Community Land Trusts (Los Angeles Housing Department).

Measure HHH was a 2016 bond measure that funded permanent supportive housing in L.A. through property taxes. This was later approached from a different angle with Measure H in 2017 (LAHD, 2025). Measure H instead was a sales tax that directly funded mental health care, emergency housing, job counseling, and rental assistance, with the similar overarching goal of providing support for housing and services (Chief Executive Office of the County of L.A., 2024). Measure A is designed to replace Measure H after its expiration in 2027, and doubled the sales tax from a quarter cent to half cent (Homeless Initiative, 2024). Measure A's implementation began in April 2025 (Leano, 2025). Measure A is designed to be more impactful than Measure H, with a doubled tax, a focus on bolstering affordable housing and homelessness prevention, and an oversight committee dedicated to distributing funds equitably and moving affordable housing development along (Leano, 2025). Measure ULA differs from these, as it is instead a real estate transfer tax, meaning that revenue is generated when property valued over \$5.3 million is sold (Dreier, 2025).

Community Land Trusts

In order to simply keep pace with housing tenants who are losing housing each year, L.A. would need 180,000 new housing units each year (Leano, 2025). As this only takes into account people who recently lost housing during the last year, this number of identified housing needs does not include people who have been experiencing homelessness for longer than a year. Currently, the city is able to build fewer than 100,000 each year (Leano, 2025). The different measures aimed at increasing affordable housing and supportive services are vital to keeping tenants housed and providing avenues for those experiencing being unhoused to find housing, but amidst L.A.'s severe housing crisis, it's important to imagine other avenues. This has prompted an investigation into land reclamation practices of Community Land Trusts (CLTs). A

CLT can take many different forms, but the basic model of a CLT is “an affordable, shared-equity form of housing with a dual ownership structure that enables individual ownership of the home on land leased from a community organization, usually for 99 [years]” (Cahen et al., 2022). The land in a CLT is removed from the speculative market, “while homes built on the land can be acquired through private market mortgages supplemented by federal and local housing subsidies,” (Cahen et al., 2022). This model of affordable housing that emphasizes collective ownership and control centers on foundational principles of radical care, self-determination, insurgency, and non-traditional relationships with the land and other tenants (Cahen et al., 2022; & Cahen et al., 2019). Radical care is a concept stemming from Black Feminist thought, in which dedicated care for oneself and community is centered in working against systems of oppression (O’Keefe, 2022).

There have been many examples of successful CLTs in L.A. and nationwide, in the sense that they uphold community values and autonomy, and remain affordable for people who have long been part of communities there (Cahen et al, 2022; Ramírez, 2020; & Miller, 2013). In L.A., CLTs receive part of Measure ULA funds, as part of the measure’s affordable housing component, and have been further uplifted in the County of L.A.’s Pilot Community Land Trust Partnership Program, allowing CLTs to “acquire and preserve tax-defaulted properties for long-term affordable housing” (Tafoya and Luis, 2025). This pilot program enabled nonprofits across the County of L.A. to acquire eight different properties for preservation as CLTs (Donlin-Zappella et al., 2022). This indicates that the County of L.A. is discussing and supporting CLTs, revealing the possibility of CLTs as a potential avenue for affordable housing in L.A.

Abolish Rent and a report by Roy et al. detail the events of the Echo Park Lake Rise Up movement as a reclamation of space by displaced people (Rosenthal and Vilchisis, 2024; & Roy et al., 2022). In this movement, unhoused tenants were extremely organized in how they collected, prepared, and distributed food and resources, as well as had specific jobs for keeping the area safe, clean, and sustainable (Roy et al., 2022). This case can inform what core principles and practices to center in developing a CLT. *Abolish Rent* also mentions the practice of developing affordable housing as having potential unintended consequences of further displacement, emphasizing the importance of careful consideration of where a CLT is located,

making sure to both stay within the community of those who were displaced, as well as not perpetuate further displacement (Rosenthal and Vilchisis, 2024).

Works by Ramírez, Summers, and Fields, detail the case of Oakland's Moms 4 Housing CLT (Summers and Fields, 2024, and Ramírez, 2020). In this case, a group of single mothers who grew up in Oakland were displaced due to high rent and systemic inequalities (NBC Bay Area, 2021). They were organized in their reclamation of a house in Oakland, where they built a community and were able to eventually own the land, leaving it permanently affordable and responsive to their specific needs (Ramírez, 2020 and NBC Bay Area, 2021). Ramírez investigates how Moms 4 Housing as well as Sogorea Te' Land Trust and others led by Black and Indigenous women, can push possibilities of urban space, and the relationship between urban scholars' "accountable relation to cities and their people", as well as how these movements can manifest going forward with respect to long histories of dispossession in the Bay Area (Ramírez, 2020). This work emphasizes the importance of centering Black and Indigenous land reclamation efforts in the CLT conversation. The specific methods Moms 4 Housing and the Sogorea Te' Land Trust used to aim to decolonize land and work towards housing justice are also central to this conversation.

Summers and Fields bring Black Feminist thought into the conversation regarding the Moms 4 Housing Movement in Oakland, as well as the urban geography of racialized financial violence (2024). Summers and Fields describe the Moms 4 Housing movement and the context that brought it to be through the Black Feminist lens, focusing on care and its disruption of the scale of the home and community (Summers and Fields, 2024). Through reclaiming space, Moms 4 Housing can be understood as stating that housing is a site of care "central to the survival of Black families", and part of a broader reclamation of Oakland as a Black geographic space. The authors argue that through this reclamation and founding principle of care within the space, and that Moms 4 Housing engages in speculative urban world-making, a form of "collective care and a praxis of providing an alternative present that imagines and advocates for urban futures beyond fictionalization's abstract racial violence," (Summers and Fields, 2024).

This idea of collective care as central to CLT and land reclamation efforts is further asserted by Cahen et al. (2022) in "Ethical action in the age of austerity: cases of care in two community land trusts" (Cahen et al., 2022). This paper follows the cases of two CLTs as alternatives to an increasingly few housing options for low-income and middle-income people.

The authors describe the concept of CLTs as “affordable, shared-equity form[s] of housing with a dual ownership structure” on land that has been removed from the housing market, but focus mainly on the “care that those who work with CLTs bring to the project” (Cahen et al., 2022; Miller, 2013). They argue that this care is more influential than the structure of CLTs in their ability to adapt to crises and uplift a self-sustaining community. This literature identifies how fulfilling needs in radical land reclamation through CLTs can be a new approach to the unhoused crisis.

With collective care as both a central principle and a tool to imagine urban world-making, CLTs can be understood to be a radical means of this care being realized in land reclamation efforts (Summers and Fields, 2024). The process for CLT land reclamation as a means of meeting housing and support needs, as well as going further to build a sustainable community, is detailed by Cahen et al. and Miller (2022; 2013). This application of CLT land reclamation practices that center collective care can potentially be applied to housing in Skid Row.

RESEARCH DESIGN

In this project, I aim to answer the following research questions: What are the housing and support needs of those who are currently unhoused and living in Skid Row? How can Community Land Trusts serve to meet these needs and further participate in constructive methods of support?

In order to answer these questions in this case study, I collected and analyzed data in the form of interviews and primary source analysis. The purpose of the interviews was to learn what the housing needs are in Skid Row, and what potential solutions may be. They also serve to explore the concept of Community Land Trusts, and their potential role in meeting housing and service needs of unhoused residents currently living in Skid Row. The purpose of primary source analysis is to find common themes and topics regarding housing and support needs in history, as well as in current conversations.

Interviews

Interviews include conversations with 5 CLT experts, as well as a L.A. city employee specializing in housing. These interviews aim to reveal a deeper understanding of values, practices, and goals of CLTs, as well as their potential application to meet housing and support

needs of unhoused residents in L.A.'s Skid Row. To conduct interviews with CLT experts and those familiar with this field of work, I reached out to a number of staff at different organizations.

In order to investigate how CLTs can serve to meet needs identified in existing literature and community-generated documents, as well as further participate in constructive methods of support, I interviewed people who are currently living in CLTs. These interviewees included four experts on CLTs who are currently living there, and a member of a CLT. I ask these interviewees about their experiences with CLTs, in terms of what was involved with their establishment, what housing would look like in an ideal world, and what programs, policies, or systems they consider essential to peaceful, healthy, happy, fulfilled lives. I also asked about what kind of principles they center, and why they chose to be involved with CLTs specifically, rather than any other kind of housing. I asked interviewees about their perspective on what practices and values would be necessary to apply the CLT model to serving the housing and support needs of unhoused residents in Skid Row in order to gauge the feasibility of this application from those deeply involved in this work.

Interviews also included a conversation with an employee of L.A. City who specializes in housing. This conversation provided background into how housing and CLTs specifically are discussed on a city-scale, and what would be necessary to see Community Land Trusts realized on a larger scale.

Primary-Source Analysis

To gain a better understanding of the conversation around housing in L.A., as well as housing and support needs, and potential solutions, I analyzed a series of primary sources.

First, I looked at a series of newspaper articles from the *Los Angeles Times* written in the 1980s. These include: "New Hearing Is Scheduled on Skid Row Mentally Ill," "Ballington Plaza Opens for the Forgotten," and "Housing, Jobs Priorities on Skid Row: Most Residents Are Actively Seeking Work," retrieved through Proquest Historical Collections (Overend, 1984; Scott, 1982; Ryon, 1982). These articles provide insight into historic initiatives and conversations around housing and service needs of unhoused residents in Skid Row. They also detail projects that have been tried in the area, with limited success, aiding in the understanding of what projects work and do not work.

The next set of documents helped to identify housing and support needs. These sources detail housing and service needs in L.A., and include: eight public comments by service providers and community members in response to police brutality, a housing development in Skid Row, and the Homeless Point In Time Count; two motions by L.A. City Council allocating funding to the Downtown Women’s Center (DWC), a service provider for unhoused women; a Report by the Homelessness and Poverty Committee on funding for DWC; and notes from a public panel with different tenants’ rights organizers from the L.A. Tenants’ Union (LATU), Strategic Action for a Just Economy (SAJE), the Rent Brigade, and Union de Vecinos, as well as an affordable housing provider. The eight public comments, two motions, and report from the Homelessness and Poverty Committee were retrieved through the City of L.A.’s Clerk website, and the notes are my own, taken during attendance of the public panels. The public comments are made by an owner of a soup kitchen in Skid Row, a former-resident of Skid Row and founder of a public health and harm-reduction organization, a worker at a “drug-prevention program in Skid Row,” and five other community members. Through analyzing these sources, which came from the broader community of L.A. and Skid Row, I aimed to find what common housing issues are in these areas, and what impacted communities identify as solutions, principles they center, and other values.

The last series of documents I analyzed toward understanding housing and support needs, as well as potential solutions, includes community vision documents. These include four sources: a panel called “Our City, Our Homes – New Pathways to Community Living” on housing solutions in L.A., “Our Skid Row – Skid Row Community Vision,” a Vision Document by the Skid Row Now and 2040 Coalition, and Skid Row Now and 2040 Coalition’s Response to City of Los Angeles’s Downtown Los Angeles Community Plan. Skid Row Now and 2040 Coalition is a group of grassroots organizations and unhoused residents of Skid Row. A few organizations include the Los Angeles Community Action Network (L.A. C.A.N.), Los Angeles Poverty Department, the Sidewalk Project, Inner City Law Center, the United Coalition East Prevention Project, and Skid Row People’s Market. The panel was a public event, which I attended; “Our Skid Row” is on public display in the Skid Row History Museum & Archive, which is also accessible to the public; the vision document from Skid Row Now and 2040 Coalition is accessible to the public through the Los Angeles Poverty Department’s website, as well as the coalition’s response to the Downtown L.A. Community Plan. In analyzing documents from this

coalition, I aimed to understand what the community of Skid Row identifies for themselves as their ideal housing and support programs, and what values, principles, and components they would like to uplift and see realized.

Analysis

To analyze the data, I employed a multi-method approach: a combination of discourse analysis of texts and documents using a housing justice and self-determination lens, and structural coding analysis of interview data. The housing justice framework and self-determination theory have been successfully applied across domains (Pitkin et al., 2023 & Ross and Scanes, 2025). The housing justice framework takes into consideration the pervasiveness of housing insecurity, racial injustice and oppression, and focuses on a “shift from a ‘reform’ mindset toward one of lasting structural change” (Pitkin et al., 2023). Self-determination theory (SDT) considers that people’s basic needs include “competence, relatedness, and autonomy,” which are “critically important for virtually all aspects of individual and societal functioning” (Ryan and Deci, 2017). This means that SDT centers individuals within communities being connected to each other, and communities being self-sufficient and independent. Many scholars in existing literature on Community Land Trusts, as well as community members in Skid Row, have identified concepts of self-determination and community to be central to their concepts of ideal housing (Summers and Fields, 2024). This has informed my approach to research of the connection between the two. This thinking, combined with a housing justice framework, can be used to emphasize that solutions should come from the communities impacted, as well as center a history and current reality of housing insecurity, racial injustice and oppression, and moving towards structural change.

I conducted a discourse analysis on the aforementioned documents, such as the historical documents from the *L.A. Times*, community documents, and community-identified need documents. I then employed structural coding of interview data from the interviews with CLT experts and the City employee. In this coding, I first identified the frequency in which different codes and code groups appear throughout the documents, identifying common ideas, and then grouped them together to see patterns. Code groups include “CLT components,” “components of ideal housing,” and “realities/needs.”

From there, I conducted a discourse analysis on how these common ideas are discussed as themes in relation to the research questions, as well as across different documents. This discourse analysis is intended to reveal what the housing and support needs were of unhoused residents in Skid Row in the 80s, and what approaches were used at that point in time, compared to and combined with present-day needs and approaches. This discourse analysis also aimed to understand how needs are discussed by unhoused residents in Skid Row, in order to see what principles this community centers when discussing how to address needs. This analysis also serves to identify components of both ideal housing (as identified by the community of Skid Row) and components found in Community Land Trusts. I then compared components and ideas of all three groups (needs, components of CLTs, and components of ideal housing), to see similarities and differences between groups, and potential dynamics.

DATA & ANALYSIS

Based on three different series of documents, including historical documents, those identifying needs, those identifying ideal housing, and one set of interviews, it appears that there are many different housing and supportive service needs of unhoused residents of Skid Row, many of which overlap with key components of Community Land Trusts (CLTs), and many that have been indicated as important to any kind of re-imagined space by the community of Skid Row.

Understanding Prior Efforts to Address Needs of Skid Row Residents

In order to first identify housing and support needs of those who are currently unhoused and living in Skid Row, I analyzed the prior efforts that were made by service providers and the City of L.A. to address the needs of Skid Row residents. This led to the key understanding that there has been a historic trend of insufficient mental health support, as well as insufficient economic opportunity for residents in this area. This indicated that mental health care, jobs, economic opportunity, and housing as a baseline to establish these, are key needs of unhoused residents in Skid Row. This understanding comes from examining the series of historical documents.

The first article from the historical document series, “New Hearing Is Scheduled on Skid Row Mentally Ill,” published in the *L.A. Times* in 1984, was written in response to a report on

mental health in Skid Row. In this article, the author discusses a report in which the City revealed a severe lack of mental health support for unhoused residents in Skid Row (Overend, 1984). The author of this article mentions the lack of services and adequate support for mental health in Skid Row six times, across ten total codes, indicating that there has been a pattern of the City of L.A. attempting to address the housing crisis in Skid Row through housing efforts that don't include enough mental health support. This indicates a real need for comprehensive mental health care for unhoused residents of Skid Row, as efforts that the City has made on this front have proven insufficient historically (Overend, 1984).

The next two articles from the historic document series, "Ballington Plaza Opens for the Forgotten: Skid Row: Housing complex" and "Housing, Job Priorities, on Skid Row: Most Residents Are Actively Seeking Work," indicate housing and economic needs of Skid Row. The author of the Ballington Plaza article describes a new transitional housing development intended to provide housing, as well as food, connection to social services, and economic opportunities to residents (Scott, 1982). He describes three different cases of residents who have lost their jobs due to age or other outstanding circumstances, leading into the new housing development's focus on employing residents of the building and community of Skid Row (Scott, 1982). This theme of service providers pairing housing with economic opportunity for unhoused residents of Skid Row is consistent with the contents of, "Housing, Jobs Priorities on Skid Row: Most Residents Are Actively Seeking Work," (Ryon, 1982). This article focuses on a severe lack of job opportunities available to people who are unhoused and living in Skid Row, and multiple projects by the Development Corporation to bring industry to the area, with the need for jobs and economic opportunity a strong theme in the article, mentioned 16 times out of 49 total codes (Ryon, 1982). This high number of economic opportunities being mentioned in coding indicates a strong need for economic opportunity for unhoused residents in Skid Row.

The author explains that new industries including supportive and transitional housing maintenance and building intend to employ unhoused residents of the area, indicating through these existing efforts, that there is a deep need for economic opportunity (Ryon, 1982). There were also themes of a lack of childcare and recreation from service providers in the area (Ryon, 1982). The strong theme of development in Skid Row, framed as being for the purpose of employing residents who are unhoused, reveals a recurring theme that is consistent across these

three articles: the importance of neighborhood preservation aiming to provide employment for people who live in the area.

The existing historic efforts that have been made to provide housing and support in Skid Row include large topics of mental health support and economic opportunity. This reveals that discussions of economic opportunities and jobs dominated the conversation of L.A.'s Skid Row during the 80s, as well as those of mental health. This could indicate a large need for employment and economic opportunity for people who are unhoused and living in Skid Row, as well as the role systemic poverty or high housing costs play in the housing crisis. The discussion of mental health can also indicate a large need for mental health care, as well as the role that mental health crises and their handling play in the lived-experiences of people experiencing homelessness.

Community-Expressed Needs of Unhoused Residents of Skid Row

In order to further identify what housing and support needs are of unhoused residents currently living in Skid Row, I explore what community members and those living in Skid Row have self-identified as these needs, as well as what present-day organizers see as broader issues in the housing world. I do this through examination of a series of public comments in response to police brutality, a housing development in Skid Row, and the Homeless Point In Time Count; motions by L.A. City Council to allocate funding to the DWC; a Report by the Homelessness and Poverty Committee on funding for DWC; and my notes from a panel with different tenants' rights and housing organizations. I also explore a series of community vision documents, including a panel on creative housing solutions in L.A., and Skid Row Now and 2040's redesign of Skid Row, their vision document, and their public response to the Downtown Los Angeles Community Plan. These documents include conversations around mental health care, affordable housing needs, community-driven care and safety, food justice and access, housing, and many other topics that indicate specific support and housing needs that will be discussed below.

Mental Health Needs

There is a strong theme throughout these documents of people who are currently unhoused and living in Skid Row having unmet mental health needs. This is revealed in the public comments in this series having a strong recurring theme of the City of L.A. having deeply

improper responses to mental health crises experienced by unhoused residents in Skid Row, resulting in codes for this topic occurring seven separate times over the collection (Quintanilla, 2020; Porter, C., Kiekhofner, A., Arbusto, N., A.S., O’Neill, J., & Snakeoil, S., 2020). This implies very strong community concern for the way mental health crises among unhoused residents of Skid Row are currently handled, implying a need for different responses to mental health crises.

Further, the public comments have explicit mentions of mental health needs and services, including “insufficient mental health support,” “mental health care/needs,” and usage of “solutions to mental illness and substance use issues,” which appear nine total times throughout these public comments. This reemphasizes the need for mental health crises to be handled differently, as well as unhoused residents in Skid Row having unmet mental health care needs. This is further supported in the high frequencies of instances of “insufficient mental health support,” “mental health care needs,” and usage of “solutions to mental illness and substance use issues.”

Lastly, documents from the Skid Row Now and 2040 Coalition, including their Community Vision document and a redesign of Skid Row identify comprehensive mental health care as a core component of an ideal version of the neighborhood of Skid Row (Skid Row Now and 2040, Skid Row Now and 2040 Coalition, 2021; Skid Row Now and 2040 Coalition, 2023). Codes including mentions of mental health care centers, wellness, and trauma-informed care were some of the most frequently-occurring in these documents. This identification of mental health care being a significant part of what the community in Skid Row sees as part of their ideal neighborhood, further supports the idea that mental health care is needed in this area.

Strong themes of (1) mental health needs and (2) improper handling of mental health needs by service providers and members of the community can provide insight into what the needs are of the unhoused residents of Skid Row, and how to address them, indicating that there indeed are unmet and mishandled mental health care needs of unhoused residents of Skid Row.

Affordable Housing

The need for affordable housing for unhoused residents in Skid Row is reflected in themes in the series of public comments, motions, report, and panel notes, as well as series of community vision documents. The topic of a lack of affordable housing in Skid Row came up

five times throughout public comments in community-identified needs documents (Quintanilla, 2020; Porter, C., Kiekhofner, A., Arbusto, N., A.S., O'Neill, J., & Snakeoil, S., 2020). This indicates that people who know the dynamics and experiences in Skid Row well, such as service providers and people who are part of the community, have independently identified a lack of affordable housing in Skid Row. Similarly, in the motions to approve further funding for the DWC, part of the reasoning for the need for increased funds was to support transitional and permanent supportive housing in Skid Row, indicating that service providers who are involved with the community in Skid Row have identified a need for more housing for the people there. The report by the Homelessness and Poverty Committee specifies that the City must designate emergency state funds to be used for transitional housing for unhoused women living in Skid Row, implying that unhoused residents in Skid Row have housing needs that are extreme enough to be acknowledged by the City and use state funding (Homelessness and Poverty Committee, 2019).

This need for more affordable housing is further supported by organizers and those involved with affordable housing projects speaking on the panel on housing in L.A. The most frequently occurring topic from this panel is a “lack of affordable housing” in the city of L.A. (Ferrer et al., 2025). They identified a general need for more affordable housing in the L.A. area. This idea is echoed in the second panel on housing solutions in L.A., which has an overarching theme of the most significant solution to the homeless crisis being more affordable housing (Donlan et al., 2025). This idea is further emphasized in community vision documents from the Skid Row Now and 2040 Coalition, in which affordable housing is one of the most common codes found. This implies that there is currently a lack of affordable housing in Skid Row, and therefore a need for more affordable housing.

Economic Opportunity

The need for economic opportunity for unhoused residents in Skid Row is evident in the community vision documents, motions designating funding to the DWC, and report from the Homelessness and Poverty Committee. The DWC is a service provider for many different services, including job preparedness, and the “economic opportunity” code appeared often in the one-page report. The L.A. City Council approval of funds for the DWC in the two motions that

were mentioned in the report indicates the City of L.A. found there to be enough expressed economic (and other) need in Skid Row for the DWC to receive more funding.

Findings from codes in Skid Row Now and 2040 documents reveal strong themes of economic opportunity in community members' ideal version of their neighborhood (Skid Row Now and 2040, Skid Row Now and 2040 Coalition, 2021; Skid Row Now and 2040 Coalition, 2023). This includes mention of a “community improvement district”, similar to the idea of a Business Improvement District, but rather than residents experiencing added taxes, businesses in the area would be taxed. These taxes would be used by a community-run maintenance organization, and be used to fund local job opportunities for community members. This proposal supports the idea that there is economic need in Skid Row.

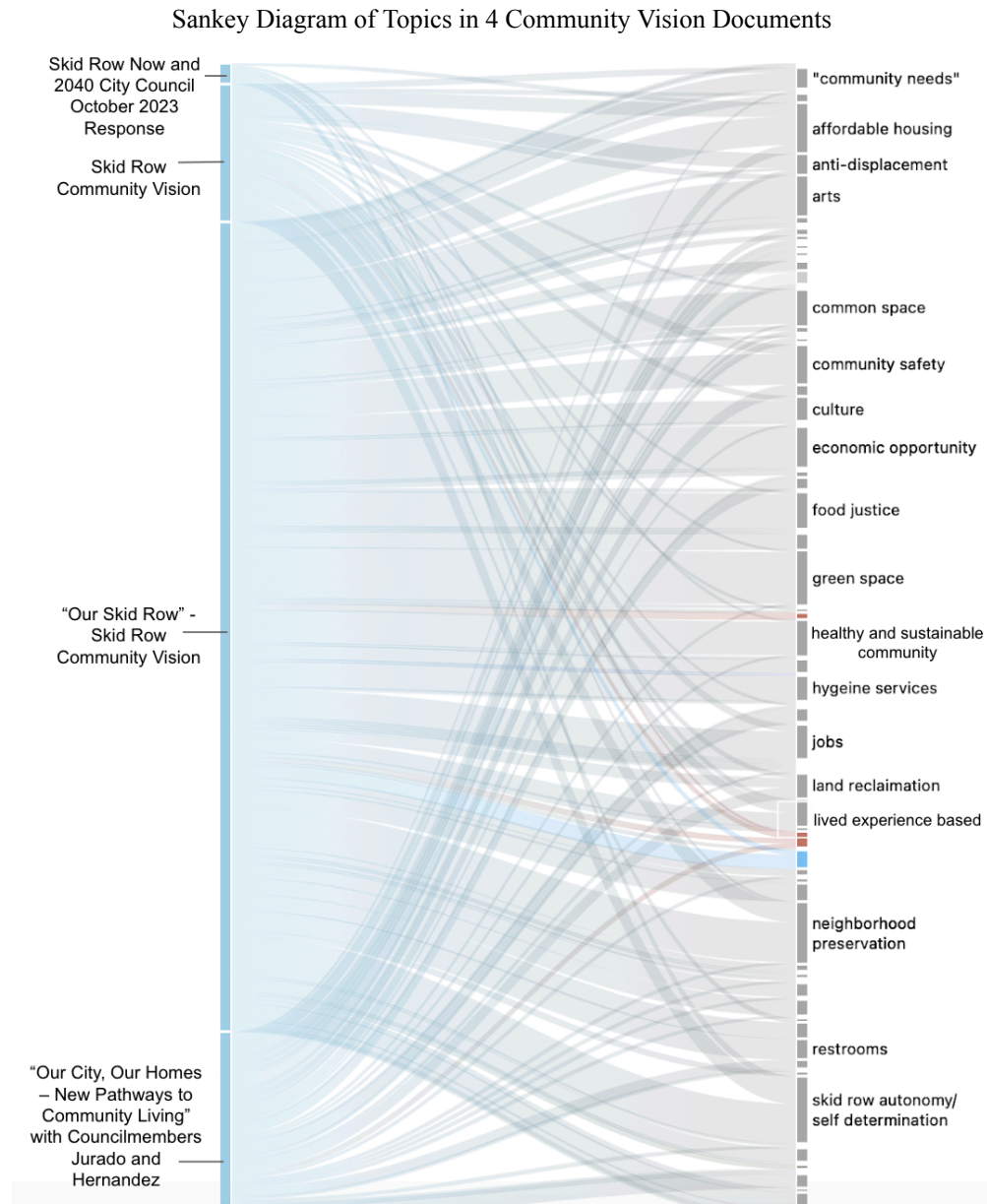
Community-Identified Components of Ideal Housing

In order to investigate how a CLT could potentially work to meet housing and support needs of unhoused residents in Skid Row, I examined documents generated by the community of Skid Row. In these documents, community members and residents describe what an ideal version of their neighborhood would look like, with detailed maps, program descriptions, and core values. Key components identified by the community of Skid Row in these documents include affordable housing, economic opportunities, comprehensive mental health care, community-run safety programs, cohesive design, and principles of self-determination and collective ownership and care.

Major topics synthesized in these community generated documents are expressed in the Sankey Diagram below. This is a flow diagram that visually represents the quantity of the “flow” between multiple stages or categories. The width of the line is proportional to the “flow” quantity, demonstrating connection between topics.

Codes present in the documents include “community needs,” affordable housing, anti-displacement, arts, common space, community safety, culture, economic opportunity, food justice, green space, hygiene services, jobs, land reclamation, lived-experience based approaches, neighborhood preservation, public restrooms, and Skid Row autonomy and self determination (Skid Row Now and 2040, Skid Row Now and 2040 Coalition, 2021; Skid Row Now and 2040 Coalition, 2023; and Donlan et al., 2025). These community-identified components of ideal

housing and space usage in Skid Row and beyond can indicate direction for what housing and support should look like in Skid Row.



The panel on housing solutions in L.A. revealed core components of ongoing organizing efforts around housing, as well as general core components to housing solution efforts. One discussion during the panel on housing solutions centered on CLTs. Main themes used to talk about CLTs include the categories depicted in the chart below.

Community Ideology	Autonomy Ideology	Land Use	Housing	CLT Origins
collective ownership	self-governance	common space	social housing	response to racism
community benefits	autonomy	healthy and sustainable community	affordable housing	decommodification project
community power	self-determination	green space	decommodification project	neighborhood preservation
furthering community ideology	community-based solutions	affordable housing		
collective interest	land reclamation	land reclamation		
collective ownership		anti-displacement		
common space		land banking		
social housing		re-imagining relationships with land		
community-based solutions				

These common themes of community ideology, autonomy ideology, re-designing the way land is traditionally used, and how housing is newly imagined, as well as origins of CLTs that center specific values of decommodification, anti-racism, and neighborhood preservation/anti-displacement can indicate main principles of CLTs, as well as principles that the greater L.A. community identifies as part of ideal housing. This contributes to the conversation around what ideal housing can look like in Skid Row, but the main focus on community-identified components of ideal housing in this paper will center documents generated directly from Skid Row community members. Themes found in core principles of CLTs identified from the housing solution panel foreshadow those identified by Skid Row community members.

Overview of Components of Ideal Housing from Skid Row Community Members

Key components of ideal housing as identified by community members in Skid Row are depicted in the table below, broken down into three categories: ideological values, physical components, and programs. These components can indicate (1) housing and support needs in Skid Row as identified by those who live there, (2) core components unhoused people living in Skid Row value as part of their ideal housing. When later compared to core components to CLTs, this identification can provide direction on whether a CLT would make sense or not in Skid Row.

Ideological Values	Physical Components	Programs
Anti-displacement and land reclamation for Neighborhood Preservation	“Community Improvement District”	Art Cultivation and Sharing
Collective Ownership and Interest	“Safety Zones”	Bike Share Program
Community-Based Ideology	Accessibility	Case Management
Healthy Living, Hygiene, and Wellness	Communal Living	Childcare
Honoring History and Culture	Inclusionary and Mixed-Use Zoning	Community Safety
Lived-Experience-Based	Lockers	Comprehensive Mental Health Care
Reimagining relationships with land	Pedestrian and Bike-Centered Cohesive Design with Public Transportation	Connection to Resources and Support
Anti-Racism	Recreation and Leisure	Economic Opportunity in Local Businesses and Jobs
Decommodification of Housing	Shared Green Space and Gardens	Education
Unique Community and Basic Needs	Social and Affordable Housing	Emergency Response
Wellness, Mindfulness and Spirituality	Sustainable Practices	Medical Care and Harm Reduction
	Welcome Centers	Resiliency Centers
	Youth Center	Skid Row Neighborhood Council
		Substance Abuse Treatment and

		Support
		Trauma-Informed Practices

These components come from the documents from Skid Row Now and 2040: the coalition’s response to the City of Los Angeles’ Downtown Los Angeles Community Plan, the coalition’s vision document, and detailed vision map. A few organizations that were involved with this work include the Los Angeles Community Action Network (L.A. C.A.N.), Los Angeles Poverty Department, the Sidewalk Project, Inner City Law Center, United Coalition East Prevention Project, and Skid Row People’s Market.

Ideological Values

	Ideological Values	
Anti-displacement and land reclamation for Neighborhood Preservation	Collective Ownership and Interest	Community-Based Ideology
Decommodification of Housing	Unique Community and Basic Needs	Wellness, Mindfulness and Spirituality
Healthy Living, Hygiene, and Wellness	Honoring History and Culture	Lived-Experience-Based
Reimagining relationships with land	Anti-Racism	

The three documents from the Skid Row Now and 2040 Coalition (the “Coalition”) have strong ideological themes, depicted in the table above. Each of the eleven themes listed above were most commonly mentioned out of all the values and themes throughout the documents.

In their vision document, the Coalition proposes an oversight committee that designates funds to Skid Row be composed of 30 percent “residents or workers with lived experience of being unhoused,” a Skid Row district council with self-representation by residents with lived experience, and elements that would foster a “healthy and sustainable” environment in Skid Row (Skid Row Now and 2040, 2021). This reveals strong values of self-determination and autonomy, as well as emphasizes centering lived experience in any kind of process. These themes appear often throughout the document, with codes regarding “self-determination” and “autonomy” being the most frequent throughout the three Coalition documents.

The second most frequent code throughout the three community-vision documents is “neighborhood preservation.” As the Coalition primarily emerged as a result of Downtown L.A.’s Community Plan that shrank Skid Row’s neighborhood boundaries, this emphasis on neighborhood preservation is closely connected to anti-displacement sentiment, which is the third most common code in these documents as well. This combination indicates that there is sentiment among the neighborhood of Skid Row around staying in place, and building up and supporting existing communities there. This value of supporting the existing community in Skid Row was consistent throughout the documents, as the fourth most common code found in community vision documents was that of “community.” This took many different forms throughout the documents, including “community space,” “collaborative efforts,” themes of collective ownership and decision-making, communal living, and community benefit and general ideology (Skid Row Now and 2040, Skid Row Now and 2040 Coalition, 2021; Skid Row Now and 2040 Coalition, 2023). This can indicate what values to center when imagining potential housing solutions in Skid Row and the potential role a CLT could play.

Programs

	Programs	
Art Cultivation and Sharing	Bike Share Program	Case Management
Childcare	Community Safety	Comprehensive Mental Health Care
Connection to Resources and Support	Emergency Response	Resiliency Centers
Economic Opportunity in Local Businesses and Jobs	Medical Care and Harm Reduction	Skid Row Neighborhood Council
Education	Substance Abuse Treatment and Support	Trauma-Informed Practices

Core programs mentioned in community vision documents from the Skid Row Now and 2040 Coalition include those listed in the table above. These programs echo the values previously outlined, and provide direction for what residents of Skid Row would like their neighborhood and housing to offer. This can further indicate whether or not a CLT would make sense in Skid Row.

Physical Components

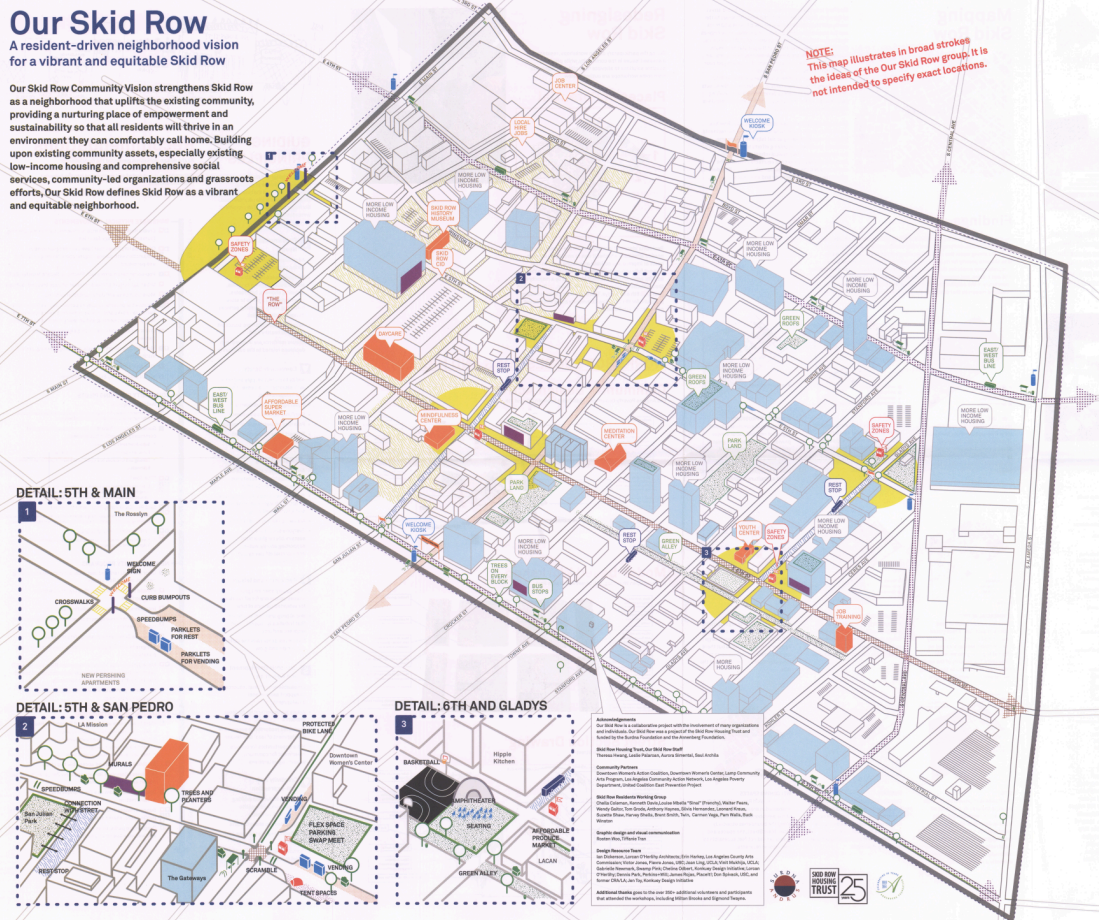
	Physical Components	
“Community Improvement District”	Inclusionary and Mixed-Use Zoning	Lockers
“Safety Zones”	Pedestrian and Bike-Centered Cohesive Design with Public Transportation	Recreation and Leisure
Accessibility	Shared Green Space and Gardens	Social and Affordable Housing
Communal Living	Welcome Centers	Youth Center
Sustainable Practices		

In addition to ideological values and key programs that residents in Skid Row identify as important to their vision of housing, residents also outline specific physical components that are essential to realizing values and programs. These physical components are outlined above. This list consists of generalizations of more specific components, including an explicit redesign of Skid Row that includes added public transportation stops, bike lanes, and abundant green space, as well as added local businesses with job opportunities for unhoused residents of Skid Row. This explicit redesign is depicted below, in the map that is Skid Row Now and 2040’s own mock-up of the area.

Our Skid Row

A resident-driven neighborhood vision for a vibrant and equitable Skid Row

Our Skid Row Community Vision strengthens Skid Row as a neighborhood that uplifts the existing community, providing a nurturing place of empowerment and sustainability so that all residents will thrive in an environment they can comfortably call home. Building upon existing community assets, especially existing low-income housing and comprehensive social services, community-led organizations and grassroots efforts, Our Skid Row defines Skid Row as a vibrant and equitable neighborhood.



-  **Safety zones** - in conjunction a community group for programming and support 24/7. No drug or alcohol use allowed. Spaces include Youth-centered area, women safe havens, and a LGBTQ haven. On-site public art installation and green space for open usage.
-  **Welcome Stations** - information kiosks for neighborhood resources, tourist information, and general orientation. Visitors can access internet, phone, cell phone charging stations, and other communication support.
-  **Rest Stops** - provide 24/7 hygiene services of showers and bathrooms, along with storage lockers and cold water drinking stations. Social service outreach areas will be on-site. Green space and areas of respite available.
-  **Open Spaces** - vacant lots will be turned into parks and urban agriculture gardens. Improve Gladys Park and San Julian Park with more seating, performance space, shade and restrooms. Include opportunities for green alleys and rooftop gardens on existing and new construction buildings.
-  **Low-income Housing** - develop and rehab buildings into more supportive housing and low-income housing to provide permanent homes for those living on the streets. Allow for greater density, mixed use and residential uses in industrial zones.
-  **DASH lines** - frequent buses running along 4th and 7th streets and Central Avenue to increase transit connections.
-  **Bus Stops** - with benches, shade structure, trashcans, bike racks, schedule updates, and cell phone charging stations.
-  **Complete Streets** - all streets shall be "Complete Streets" that support pedestrian, cyclist, motorist, and transit rider safety and multi-modal transit including bike share programs. 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th and San Pedro streets have high priority.
-  **People Streets** - converts underused portions of streets into active and accessible public spaces, plazas, parklets and bicycle corrals with seating and shade. Areas can be blocked off for parties, art festivals, swap meets, farmers markets and other public events.
-  **Parklets** - provide opportunities for street vending, micro enterprise kiosks, green space, and recreational areas. Programmatic partners to activate and maintain the spaces.
-  **Great Streets** - acknowledge the importance of San Pedro between 3rd and 7th as a major spine in Downtown LA that connects neighborhoods and invest in commercial, residential and streetscape revitalization.
-  **Slow Zones** - Car speeds are reduced. Extend sidewalks and narrow **The Row** - a mixed use corridor of economic and cultural development. This will be the major commercial corridor linking Downtown LA to the Arts District and 6th Street Viaduct. Social enterprises, job training centers, and cultural spaces that support Skid Row residents will be incentivized along this corridor.
-  **Planters/Trees** - will be planted and maintained throughout all sidewalks.
-  **Trashcans and benches** - will be on every street corner along with cleaning supplies and daily trash pick up.
-  **Public art installations and murals** - will be distributed throughout the community. Local artists living in the neighborhood will be given priority to installation.
-  **Signage** - install wayfinding signs that point out local destinations within Skid Row and connections to nearby locations, along with banners that celebrate the history and culture of the area, visibly identifying the Skid Row as a place of interest.

Summary of Components of Ideal Housing

Features that community members wanted to see in their neighborhood were paired with other themes of “lack,” including gaps in street maintenance, improvement needed to the welcome-ness of the area, lack of accessibility for multi-modal transit, lack of affordable housing, lack of arts and culture, lack of food justice, and lack of public health. When examining these together, there is a clear picture of what the community of Skid Row wants for their neighborhood: more (dispersed) affordable housing, economic opportunity and jobs, public art and culture that is meant to be shared, access to healthcare and mental health care paired with holistic wellness and spirituality, shared greenspace and third spaces for recreation, a healthy environment, and self-determination in the area, with the space being led by those with lived experience of being unhoused. They emphasize the importance of

preserving the community of the neighborhood, centering community-based solutions and self-governance, and continuing to share public space.

These features identified by the community of Skid Row as those of ideal housing are summarized under the code group “components of ideal housing,” and provide direction for housing and neighborhood design in Skid Row. To answer the question of the potential role CLTs could play in meeting the needs of unhoused residents of Skid Row, we can now turn to the findings of interviews with members and experts of CLTs, and compare solutions to expressed needs, as well as components of ideal housing to components of CLTs.

Components of Community Land Trusts

In order to compare what the community in Skid Row identifies as components of ideal housing to CLT to determine the potential of a CLT in Skid Row, I identified core components of CLTs through examining interview data. This data revealed that components traditionally found in CLTs are as follows, listed in the table below.

Ideological Values	Physical Components	Programs
Anti-displacement and land reclamation for Neighborhood Preservation	Inclusionary and Mixed-Use Zoning	Art Cultivation and Sharing
Collective ownership and interest	Recreation and Leisure	Childcare
Communal Living	Shared Green Space and Gardens	Connection to Resources and Support
Community-Based ideology	Social and Affordable Housing	Education
Healthy Living, Hygiene, and Wellness	Sustainable Practices	99 year ground lease
Honoring History and Culture		
Anti-Racism		
Decommodification of Housing		
Unique Community and Basic Needs		
Indigenous Knowledge and Practices		
Land Stewardship		
Systemic Change		

Ideological Values

Some of the most common codes from interviews with the CLT experts regarding ideological values were those of “anti-displacement” and “affordable housing,” indicating CLTs as an anti-displacement tool, and de commodified housing projects. Codes regarding community were by far the most common throughout interviews with CLT experts. The high frequency of these codes indicates that these concepts are central to other aspects of the CLT, as interviewees used language around these codes to describe other aspects of the CLTs. Interviewees used “community” as a component in almost every program and physical feature they described, indicating that a community ideology is inextricable from not only CLT values in those described, but also from their practices and physical designs. This was seen in a similar and frequent ideology of “communal living.” When asked what principle one expert thinks distinguishes CLTs from other models of living, they brought up the idea that “everyone living [there] is living there very intentionally,” and that being a part of a CLT is a commitment one makes to their space and to their community. This sentiment was echoed by the other four CLT experts, indicating that this idea of intentional community, and a space where programs and systems are built around a community ideology, was important to the CLTs experts.

Other common ideological themes CLT experts mentioned in interviews included those of “Indigenous knowledge and practices,” “anti-racism,” “health and wellness,” “responsiveness to unique needs,” “history and culture,” and broader “systemic change.” These themes occurring frequently as codes again indicate their centrality to the CLTs. Concepts of Indigenous knowledge and practices include the concept of land stewardship, which was one of the most common codes in two different interviews with CLT experts. These themes indicate the ideological bases present in the CLTs interviewees were a part of, which can provide a baseline understanding of general ideological bases present in CLT models. This understanding can be compared to needs and ideal housing as identified by people who are currently unhoused and living in Skid Row.

Programs

The two most common codes in interviews with CLT experts regarding programming were “art cultivation and sharing,” and “education.” Other common codes regarding programs in

CLT-expert interviews included “childcare,” “connection to resources and support,” and “99 year ground lease.” Again, the frequency of themes suggests their importance to the functions and ideology of the CLTs discussed, indicating a baseline understanding of general CLT models.

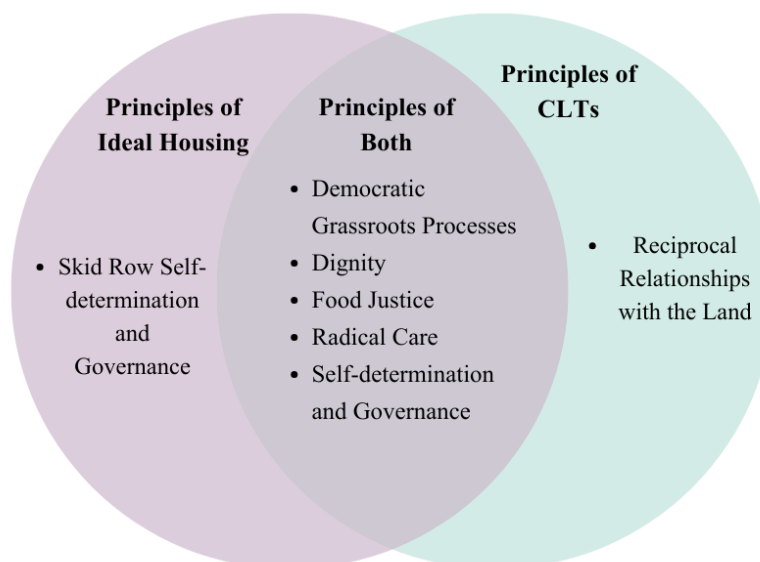
Physical Components

The most common code in interviews with CLT experts regarding physical components of CLTs was “social and affordable housing,” with “shared green space and gardens” as a close second. Other significant codes that appear in the interviews with CLT experts regarding physical components include “inclusionary and mixed-use zoning,” “recreation and leisure,” and “sustainable practices.” These physical components seem to closely align with ideological values that appeared as significant codes present in the interviews, indicating a specific vision for CLTs that centers affordable housing for people to remain in place and the zoning that would allow for this, as well as community space, green space, and sustainable practices that enable CLTs to continue to thrive.

Needs and Ideal Housing Compared to Components of Community Land Trusts

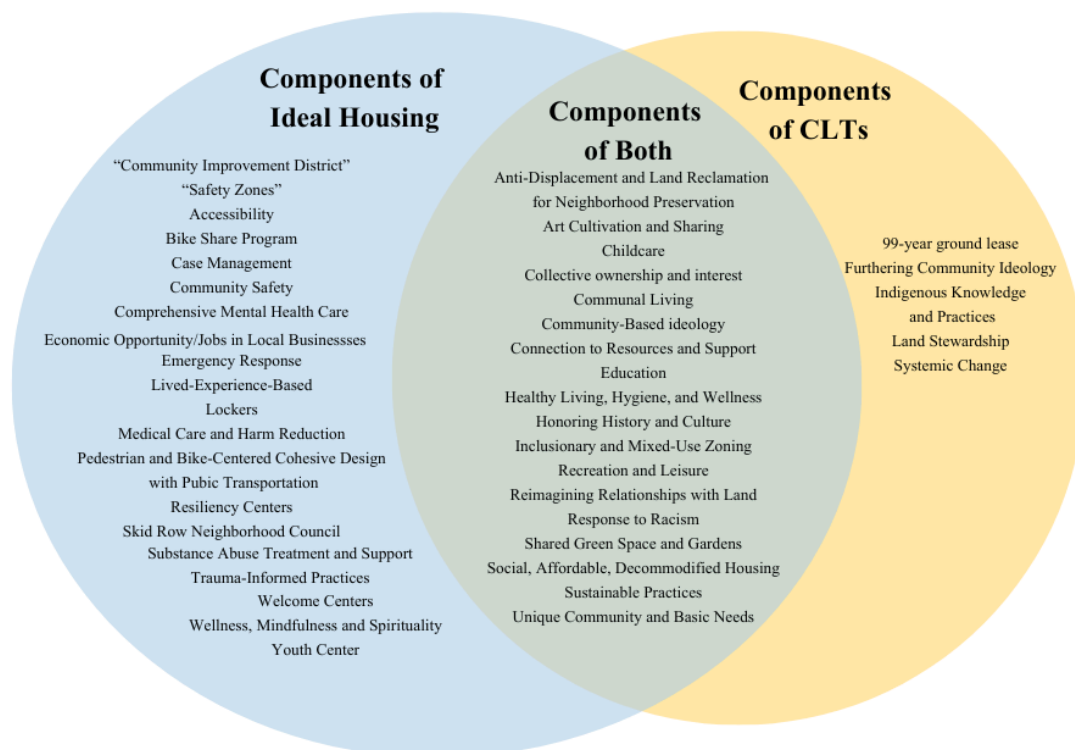
Components of ideal housing have very similar recurring topics to those found in discussions of CLTs. See Appendix A for a table depicting components of CLTs, ideal housing, and both. There are an overwhelming number of codes that overlap between components of ideal housing and those in CLTs.

Venn Diagram of Ideological Components of Ideal Housing, CLTs, and Both



The Venn Diagram above summarizes the nexus of ideological components present in interpretations of ideal housing as identified in community vision documents, CLTs, and in both. Components that are present in both traditional CLT models and ideal housing, as identified by community members of Skid Row include ideological and physical components, as well as programs present in each. A few key ideological components present in both categories include community ideology, democratic grassroots processes, radical care, and self-determination and self-governance. Other shared ideological components include dignity and food justice. One finding of note when examining shared components between ideal housing that has been identified through coding community vision documents and CLTs from interviews with CLT experts, is that there are many more shared ideological components between the two than there are unique ones. The only unique ideological values to the community vision documents, and therefore implied “ideal housing,” is Skid Row self-determination and governance. This is unique from CLT values, but similar in the sense that CLT experts emphasized general self-determination and governance. The only principle unique to CLT-expert interviews is reciprocal relationships with the land.

Venn Diagram of Physical Components and Programs Found in Ideal Housing, CLTs, and Both



The Venn Diagram above summarizes all components present in interpretations of ideal housing as identified in community vision documents, CLTs, and in both. Ideological and physical components and programs that were present in both interpretations of ideal housing and CLTs, even summarized, are numerous. Key shared components include anti-displacement and land reclamation for neighborhood preservation, collective ownership and interest, education, decommodified housing, shared communal greenspace, anti-racism, and honoring history and culture. There are a few components that I found unique to the limited group of CLTs I studied as a result of interviews with CLT experts. Such significant components included a 99-year ground lease that many CLTs use in order to preserve CLTs as affordable to tenants, Indigenous knowledge and practices and land stewardship. These components may differ from those identified by Skid Row community members as identified in community vision documents for a number of reasons, notably likely because of the legal focus CLTs experts likely navigate often. Components unique to my interpretation of ideal housing as identified in community vision documents from residents of Skid Row are numerous. This is likely due to their highly specific vision of a neighborhood catering to the needs of currently unhoused people which documents indicate can be specific and specialized, as well as the specificity of needs. Community members explicitly name exact components they would like in their neighborhood, such as lockers, welcome centers, a bike share program, and improved accessibility. Other significant components unique to ideal housing include comprehensive mental health care, economic opportunity, lived-experience based approaches, medical care and harm reduction, and substance abuse treatment and support.

As the analysis reveals, key housing and support needs of unhoused residents living in Skid Row are mental health needs, affordable housing, economic opportunity, lived-experience based approaches, and preserving existing community. Key components of ideal housing, as identified by community members of Skid Row are comprehensive mental health and health care, including substance abuse treatment and support, a Skid Row Neighborhood Council, anti-displacement and land reclamation practices for neighborhood preservation, collective ownership and interest, reimagining relationships with the land, art cultivation and sharing, and shared greenspace and gardens. Key components of CLTs are anti-displacement and land reclamation practices for neighborhood preservation, anti-racist practices, honoring culture and history, collective ownership and interest, reimagining relationships with the land, art cultivation

and sharing, and shared greenspace and gardens, anti-racist practices, honoring culture and history, wellness to promote health and mental health care, as well as Indigenous knowledge and practices and land stewardship. This indicates similarities in values, practices, and programs of CLTs and those identified by community members in Skid Row as ideal housing. This indicates that due to the design, principles, and theory behind Community Land Trusts, there are many components of CLTs that naturally match up to meet the needs of unhoused residents living in Skid Row, as well as fit community members' descriptions of what ideal housing would look like in Skid Row. This indicates that it is likely that developing a Community Land Trust in Skid Row makes sense on these levels.

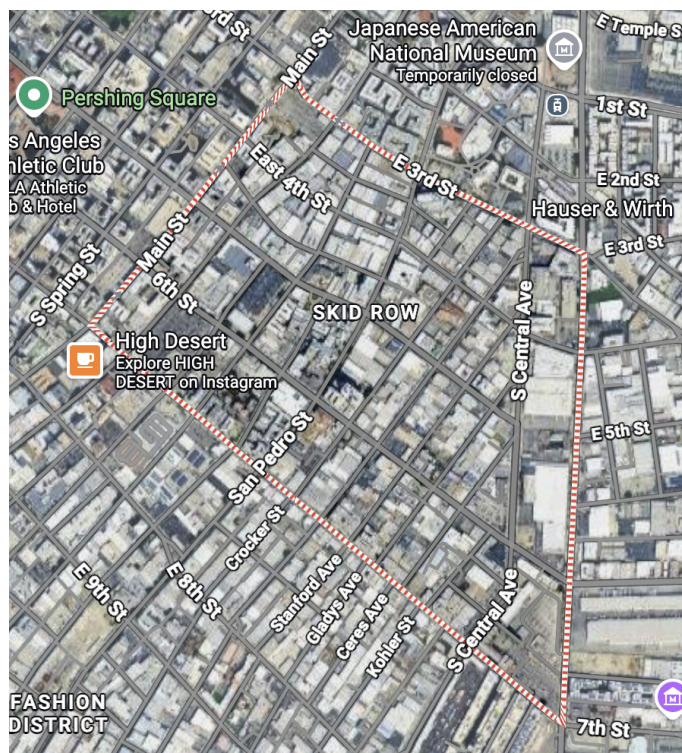
RECOMMENDATIONS

Similarities in values, practices, and programs of CLTs and what residents of Skid Row identify as ideal housing suggests that (1) developing a CLT in Skid Row would make sense on many levels, with (2) added essential aspects as identified in Skid Row Now and 2040's community vision map, and (3) adjustments to adapt a CLT for a neighborhood.

As demonstrated by the frequency of concepts of the importance of self-determination and centering the community in any kind of decisions, space planning, benefits, and consequences in both CLTs and ideal housing, there appear to be common values in components of ideal housing and CLTs. There is also overlap in concepts of neighborhood preservation – wanting to keep people in place, and centering vitality of a maintained place, whether that be through improved economic opportunity, sanitation, art or otherwise. There are also commonalities of similar physical components such as affordable housing, greenspace and gardens, sharing food and art, providing for basic needs, housing that is permanently affordable, childcare, cultural programming, community spaces, and using sustainable models. These shared components, both in values and physical aspects, indicate that a Community Land Trust would likely make sense in Skid Row, with added aspects and alterations.

Adjustments to Adapt a CLT for a Neighborhood

Based on the documents generated by unhoused community members in Skid Row, alterations to a traditional CLT model would include adapting this model to include the neighborhood of Skid Row, outlined in the image below. This adaptation would also include the



formation of a Skid Row Neighborhood Council, which would serve to ensure some representation for residents of Skid Row in L.A.'s City Council. This recommendation is again based on Skid Row Now and 2040's vision document. As a CLT in Skid Row would be adapted for a larger, neighborhood space, it should have a cohesive design that includes thriving public transit, bike lanes, and centers pedestrian mobility. Recommendations of a CLT altered to be for a neighborhood, with additional aspects as identified by Skid Row Now

and 2040's Community Vision document could be achieved in part from new zoning ordinances in Skid Row, where the area could be zoned for multi-use. Based on findings from Skid Row Now and 2040 and an interview with a city employee specializing in housing, Skid Row is currently zoned to allow for large buildings, making the land there expensive. This interview, community vision documents, and existing literature suggest that in order to encourage the creation of a CLT here, it would be important to implement a rezoning program. It would also be important to include Skid Row representation in City Council, as previously discussed.

Added Aspects

In order to adapt a CLT to truly fit the housing and support needs of unhoused residents in Skid Row as identified in community vision documents, documents suggest that many aspects would need to be added in addition to being adapted for a neighborhood, going beyond the traditional model of a CLT. These added aspects would include (1) comprehensive mental health and health care, (2) case management and connection to resources, (3) cohesive design, and (4) economic opportunity.

Comprehensive Mental Health and Health Care

In response to strong themes of improper handling of mental health crises, as well as racist police brutality, it also makes sense that a Skid Row CLT, adapted for a neighborhood, should follow a model of community safety model of public safety. Following Skid Row Now and 2040's Community Vision, this model would include comprehensive mental health care, harm reduction, substance abuse treatment, and trauma-informed practices, and come entirely from within the community. These practices would include language justice, as suggested by an organizer on the landlord struggles panel (Ferrer et al., 2025). In order to promote identified values of wellness, comprehensive care would also include culturally-appropriate care, as well as honor and cultivate spirituality for those who seek it. This suggestion again comes from community-vision documents from the Skid Row Now and 2040 Coalition, as well as the L.A. C.A.N.'s philosophy to celebrate and provide luxury beyond basic needs, as everyone deserves the dignity of celebration and luxury (L.A. C.A.N.)

Case Management and Connection to Resources

Additions to a CLT in Skid Row, based on documents generated by unhoused community members in Skid Row, should also include case management and connection to resources for residents. This connection to resources, paired with health, wellness, and comprehensive mental health and health care is implied to aim to promote a fulfilling life with access to any further needs, as identified in community vision documents.

Cohesive Design

In order to accommodate for added programs and services, community vision documents suggest that Skid Row be restructured according to a comprehensive design with other added components. Community members' map suggests that this redesign features a series of added public transportation stops and lines, and centers multi-modal transit, rather than cars. As part of this multi-modal transit basis, the map suggests that bike lanes be added, sidewalks widened, and pedestrian transportation be centered in further designing the neighborhood. In order to accommodate for high rates of bike ridership in Skid Row, the Skid Row Now and 2040 Coalition suggests the inclusion of a bike share program as a part of this redesign.

A core tenet of ideal housing as identified by unhoused residents in Skid Row is the reimagined use of land in the neighborhood. As part of this reimagining, the Skid Row Now and 2040 Coalition's neighborhood plan map includes added greenspace wherever possible, featuring gardens and edible plants, as well as space for recreation, leisure, and communal gathering. Other added aspects to the neighborhood design would also include restrooms and other hygiene amenities, also as identified by the Skid Row Now and 2040 Coalition, and further in line with the value of health and wellness.

Economic Opportunity

A key component of what historic documents, those identifying need, and those describing ideal housing included was job and economic opportunity for unhoused residents in Skid Row. This economic opportunity could take the form of a “community improvement district,” again suggested by Skid Row Now and 2040. As described by Skid Row Now and 2040, this “community improvement district” is similar to the idea of a Business Improvement District, but rather than residents experiencing added taxes, businesses in the area would be taxed. These taxes would be used by a community-run maintenance organization, and be used to fund local job opportunities for community members.

Conclusion of Recommendations

Analysis of historic documents, those identifying needs, community vision documents, and of interview data suggests recommendations that (1) developing a CLT would likely make sense in Skid Row, with (2) added essential added aspects as identified in Skid Row Now and 2040's community vision map, and (3) adjustments to adapt a CLT for a neighborhood. Added aspects include (1) comprehensive mental health and health care, (2) case management and connection to resources, (3) cohesive design, and (4) economic opportunity. These recommendations are largely in line with Skid Row Now and 2040's Community Vision document, with the addition of Skid Row's own Community Land Trust in order to ensure community ownership and permanent affordability, as well as connect the neighborhood with organizing resources used in the process of developing a Community Land Trust, of which there is a L.A. Coalition from which they could likely benefit. This basis in Skid Row Now and 2040's vision is due to all existing literature's emphasis on community self-determination.

CONCLUSION

This project explored the housing and support needs of unhoused residents in L.A.'s Skid Row and the potential role of Community Land Trusts to meet these needs. I did this through a multi-methods approach, combining content analysis and discourse analysis of four groups of documents: historical newspaper articles, interviews with members and experts of CLTs, documents and panels identifying needs, and community vision documents generated by residents in Skid Row. In documents identifying needs, the analysis found needs in affordable housing, mental health care, and economic opportunity, among others. In community vision documents, interviews with CLT members and experts, as well as existing literature on CLTs, multi-method analysis found common themes in components of community-identified ideal housing and components of CLT models. This, combined with information from interviews with CLT members, suggest that a CLT would likely make sense in Skid Row, if adapted for a neighborhood, and to include additionally identified components by unhoused residents in the neighborhood. Findings suggest that adaptation for a neighborhood-scale CLT could involve municipal-level changes conducive to establishing a CLT in Skid Row, such as a new zoning program that incentivizes multi-use zoning, and neighborhood representation in the form of a Skid Row Neighborhood Council. Additions to a neighborhood-scale CLT could also include added aspects of comprehensive mental health and health care, case management and connection to resources, cohesive design, and economic opportunity. The basis of these recommendations comes from identified core principles of ideal housing that are echoed in CLTs, with consideration of needs that are identified both by the broader housing and organizing world, but in the spirit of self-determination and uplifting existing community, focus is on narratives from the existing community within Skid Row that would be most impacted by these changes.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A

Table listing components found in CLTs, ideal housing as identified by community members of Skid Row, and in both.

COMPONENTS IN IDEAL HOUSING	COMPONENTS IN BOTH	COMPONENTS OF CLTS
"ability to rejuvenate and grow"	"community needs"	99-year ground lease
"community improvement district"	affordable housing	"community needs"
"community needs"	anti-displacement	affordable housing
"emergency" language when talking about housing need	arts	anti-displacement
"safety zones"	basic needs	arts
access to information	beautification	basic needs
accessibility	childcare	beautification
affordable housing	CLTs as a housing de-commodification project	childcare
anti-displacement	CLTs as collective ownership	CLTs as a housing de-commodification project
arts	CLTs as response to displacement	CLTs as collective ownership
basic needs	CLTs as response to racism	CLTs as response to displacement
beautification	CLTs as sustainable housing model	CLTs as response to racism
bike share program	CLTs furthering community ideology	CLTs as sustainable housing model
case management	collaborative efforts	CLTs furthering community ideology
childcare	collective interest	collaborative efforts
CLT best practices	collective ownership	collective interest
CLTs as a housing de-commodification project	common space	collective ownership
CLTs as collective ownership	communal living	common space
CLTs as response to displacement	community	communal living
CLTs as response to racism	community benefits	community
CLTs as sustainable housing model	community-centered approach	community benefits

CLTs furthering community ideology	community engagement	community-centered approach
cohesive design	community power	community engagement
collaborative efforts	community-based solutions	community power
collective interest	connection to resources	community guidelines
collective ownership	culture	community-based solutions
common space	democratic	community healing
communal living	education	connection to resources
community	dignity	culture
community benefits	emphasis on community organizing	democratic
community center	food justice	education
community-centered approach	gardens	dignity
community engagement	green space	emphasis on community organizing
community power	healthy and sustainable community	food justice
	honoring history	gardens
community safety	inclusionary zoning	green space
community-based solutions	land banking	healthy and sustainable community
	land reclamation	honoring history
connection to resources	mixed-use space	inclusionary zoning
	mixed-use zoning	indigenous knowledge
connection with residents	neighborhood preservation	land banking
culture	radical care	land reclamation
economic opportunity	re-imagining relationships with land	land stewardship
democratic	resources	mixed-use space
educational resources	self-determination	mixed-use zoning
emergency response	self-governance	neighborhood preservation
dignity	sharing art	radical care
emphasis on community organizing	social housing	re-imagining relationships with land
equal rights	water	resources
federal funding for housing or support	zoning	self-determination
food justice		self-governance
fundamental human needs		sharing art

gardens		social housing
general "support"		systemic change
green space		socialized housing
guiding principles		water
harm reduction		zoning
health care		
healthy and sustainable community		
honoring history		
housing		
hygiene services		
importance of place		
inclusionary zoning		
jobs		
land banking		
land reclamation		
lived-experience based		
local businesses		
local funds		
lockers		
mental health care/needs		
mindfulness		
mixed approaches		
mixed-use space		
mixed-use zoning		
multi-modal transit		
neighborhood preservation		
neighborhood vitality		
outer community engagement		
peace		
pedestrian-centered		
peer engagement		

permanent supportive housing		
physical improvements		
policy component		
public transportation		
radical care		
re-imagining relationships with land		
recreation		
relationship with landowners		
resiliency centers		
resources		
rest stop		
restrooms		
self-determination		
self-governance		
sharing art		
skid row autonomy/self determination		
skid row neighborhood council		
social housing		
social services		
socialized housing		
solutions to mental illness and substance use issues		
spirituality		
substance abuse treatment and support		
tenant protections		
trauma-informed practices		
unconditional support		
vision for housing		
water		
welcome stations		
wellness		

youth center		
zoning		