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Detroit Justice Center Expands Community Land Trust Services Through New Partnership With Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)

Detroit, Michigan [March 26, 2024]--The Detroit Justice Center (DJC) announces a new partnership with [Local Initiatives Support Corporation](#) (LISC) that includes grant funding to help build a thriving Community Land Trust (CLT) movement in Detroit. DJC will offer a technical assistance and capacity-building delivery system for Detroit's CLTs that will support residents in bringing their visions for their neighborhoods to life, including establishing mixed-income neighborhoods with density and permanent affordability, eliminating gentrification, and revitalizing economic corridors in Detroit's neighborhoods. A CLT is a community-owned nonprofit that acquires, holds, and sometimes manages land, leasing it to others for residential, commercial, or agricultural uses. This funding is a boost to DJC's intricate model that focuses on utilizing the law to create economic opportunities for communities which have been damaged by the systems currently in place. DJC's Economic Equity Practice (EEP) employs a comprehensive approach, partnering with community organizations to implement local, shared-economy solutions to economic inequities. A particular focus of this work lies in CLTs, which have been shown to create permanent affordable housing, promote economic diversity, prevent displacement, and foster entrepreneurship.

DJC partners with grassroots organizations that are developing real estate projects to serve Detroiters. DJC provides them with legal and now development services, from contracts and zoning to intellectual property, among other areas, enabling the CLTs, not outside interests, to act as developers. To date, DJC has provided support to establish

Detroit's first two contiguous CLTs in Detroit's North End neighborhood, launched three CLTs in total, and assisted with acquiring 60 residential lots for its CLT clients.

“DJC has long believed that CLTs could be a vital tool in our work to provide sustainable affordable housing for Detroit. This pilot program, already showing promise, has the potential to serve as a national model. We are thrilled to be partnering with LISC's Detroit office to build a more equitable, vibrant, and just future for Detroit and its residents. DJC extends an invitation to real estate service providers, including architects and contractors, to join and support this movement,” says Eric Williams, Managing Director, Economic Equity Practice, Detroit Justice Center.

“LISC Detroit is honored to partner with Detroit Justice Center, a trusted community champion, building the capacity of Detroit's Community Land Trust ecosystem,” says Tahirih Ziegler, Senior Vice President, Market Excellence Division, Local Initiatives Support Corp. “The value of the Community Land Trust model is two-fold: first, it is a promising tool to address Detroit's affordable housing crisis, and second it is a vital tool to build wealth and community power in Detroit. We are inspired by the model's potential to close systemic gaps in health, wealth, and opportunity so residents and local economies can thrive.”

With support from LISC, DJC is poised to expand its impact and become the one-stop-shop for CLTs pursuing construction—minimizing redundancy, leveraging education, refining financial models, and decreasing risks for funders. In the coming year, DJC will:

- Become a centralized technical assistance and capacity-building delivery system to support Detroit's CLT movement.
- Bring efficiency to the development process through sharing of best practices and third-party professional services providers.
- Facilitate financing through CDFIs, philanthropic sources, and economic development incentives.
- Launch a pilot initiative, in collaboration with the City of Detroit, to create new affordable housing units, and by hiring our staff attorney [Mark Bennett](#) to expand our services to support construction.
- Facilitate the growth of new CLTs across the city through increased educational [offerings](#).

The current pilot, involving the development of 40 units of permanent affordable housing on the Dream Community Land Trust (DREAM) and the Detroit Cultivator Community Land Trust (DCCLT), showcases DJC's commitment to this vision. DJC has also received a commitment from the City of Detroit to support the development pilot by providing 20

total parcels of land at little to no cost to DJC's CLT clients. Each client will also contribute 10 parcels of their own land to bring this goal full circle.

"The City strongly believes in exploring every option to create safe, affordable housing for its residents. Community Land Trusts can play an instrumental role in the affordable housing strategy. We are pleased to see DJC, community organizations, and funders collaboratively embrace this effort," says Julie Schneider Director of Housing & Revitalization, City of Detroit.

"DJC has been supporting DREAM CLT for the past several years, developing our internal capacity as we approach the reality of providing much needed permanently affordable housing to our neighborhood. It's been a valuable collaboration which we plan to continue as our CLT really comes to life," says Mansur Blackman, President, Dream of Detroit.

"The work that DJC is doing in terms of leading the movement around Community Land Trusts is necessary. It is important that we have community decision-making and control over what happens within these communities. Through Community Land Trusts this is the vehicle that allows those decisions and control to happen. This work is important," says Jerry Hebron, Executive Director, Detroit Cultivator Community Land Trust.

"I am thrilled about the expansion of Detroit Justice Center's Community Land Trust work. I've had the opportunity to advocate in solidarity alongside this fantastic team, and the expansion of their Community Land Trust work comes at a critical time when the City of Detroit is experiencing a historic shortage of affordable housing for Detroit residents, especially our families. The selection of DJC to help facilitate the creation of Detroit's first Community Land Trust demanded by residents as part of the Detroit Community Benefits Ordinance process is exciting and inspiring. DJC's success, expertise, and unwavering commitment to working alongside Detroit residents as partners will model how to expand the Community Land Trust model as an equitable affordable housing solution," says Tonya Myers Phillips, Community Partnerships & Development Director, Sugar Law.

About the Detroit Justice Center

The Detroit Justice Center is a non-profit law firm working alongside communities to create economic opportunities, transform the justice system, and promote equitable and just cities.

About Local Initiatives Support Corporation

LISC is one of the country's largest community development organizations, helping forge vibrant, resilient communities across America. We work with residents and partners to close systemic gaps in health, wealth and opportunity and advance racial equity so that people and places can thrive. Since our founding in 1979, LISC has invested \$29.7 billion to create more than 489,000 affordable homes and apartments, develop 81.4 million square feet of retail, community and educational space and help

tens of thousands of people find employment and improve their finances. For more, visit www.lisc.org.

About Dream of Detroit

Dream of Detroit is combining community organizing with strategic housing and land development to build a healthy community and revitalize its neighborhood on the Westside of Detroit.

About Detroit Cultivator Community Land Trust

Detroit Cultivator is one of the first Community Land Trusts in Detroit. What began as a multi-disciplinary effort to transform the six-acre Oakland Avenue Urban Farm into an experimental urban prototype for equitable regeneration has emerged as a collective vision that combines agricultural production, cultural activity, affordable housing and ecological stewardship.

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