



Housing Justice League Newsletter

November 2017

UPCOMING EVENTS

December 19 HJL holiday Party -
Potluck, gifts, music, and fun! - 7:00
pm Rick McDevitt Youth Center
1040 Crew St SW, Atlanta, GA 30315
Invite your neighbors!

December 21 Coalition for Community
Benefits Monthly Meeting, partner
organization of HJL - 6:30 pm - 452
Martin St SE - Contact Sherise Brown
sherise42@yahoo.com with questions.

Housing Justice League (HJL) is a community-led organization. Our mission is:

"to empower renters and homeowners to self-organize and defend their right to remain. We fight to preserve affordable housing, prevent gentrification, and build neighborhood power for an Atlanta-wide housing justice movement."

We are always looking for ways to work with and support community members dealing with housing issues. We are excited to hear your ideas and for new leadership. Come to our monthly meetings to join or start your own tenant association, volunteer for a campaign, or help with community outreach.

BE SURE TO CHECK OUT OUR NEW WEBSITE!



We believe that together we can self-organize so our communities can have economic development without displacement.

After decades of harmful development and displacement, new development is happening in the communities surrounding Turner Field and along the BeltLine, fueling the displacement of potentially thousands of people. Support the Housing Justice League - a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization - fighting to keep community members in their homes and for the future development of affordable housing in Atlanta.

HOUSING JUSTICE LEAGUE



HJL's new website is up and running! Check us out online at housingjusticeleague.org to sign up to volunteer, make a monthly donation, join mailing lists, and to find upcoming events and news updates. We are still working on the layout and functions so please forgive any technical flaws. We would love to hear any suggestions for added content or resources or how to make it more user friendly.

Send any suggestions or questions to nmclaughlin@afsc.org.

BELTLINE FOR ALL CAMPAIGN

HJL's BeltLine for All campaign is in full swing after the release of our new report and our campaign launch event last month. We held a press rally and delivered the report to City Hall on October 12, and the following week we officially launched the campaign with a community-centered event including a brief presentation of the research and interactive stations for people to learn, connect, and to start thinking about how to get involved. Through BeltLine for All we are working to model practices of real participatory planning that create spaces centering resident voices and community engagement in the development process. We are done with big developers and self-interested politicians ignoring the crucial insight and needs of long-time residents that result in exclusive development for the rich.



BeltLine for All will seek to curb Atlanta BeltLine Incorporated's irresponsible record on affordable housing through democratic participation, people pressure, and public policy. If you are interested in getting involved, speak with Alison Johnson, Richard Hunsinger, or Natalie McLaughlin, or shoot us an email at housingjusticeleagueatl@gmail.com!

On the day of the report release, participants of the research project gathered with their supporters, City candidates and elected officials, the press, and others on the steps in front of City Hall to hear from Southside Residents. All of the speakers emphasized the importance of community

involvement and accountability in city planning in order to meet the critical needs of long-time residents and avoid the historical and continuing patterns of racism, displacement, and disinvestment.

As Alison Johnson, a Peoplestown resident and HJL member who helped author this report, says,

"Communities on the Southside deserve to be a part of the process to shape and determine the neighborhoods where we live. We want the kind of responsible, democratic city building that gives us the best quality of life, not that which is done by and for the wealthy."

The report by HJL and Research|Action Cooperative, shows Southside residents are already being displaced by the Atlanta BeltLine greenway development even in neighborhoods that it has not yet touched. The research focuses largely on the three historically Black neighborhoods of Adair Park, Peoplestown, and Pittsburgh, tracking the hopes of residents for the BeltLine, how they are actually affected by it, and the forces of gentrification that, if left unimpeded, will damage the economic and racial diversity that long-term residents and newcomers alike say is a strength of the area.

The report – "BeltLining: Gentrification, Broken Promises, and Hope on Atlanta's Southside" – builds upon analysis of census data, a survey, and a year-long participatory action research project. The researchers found that:

- Residents overwhelmingly want to stay in their neighborhoods,
- Gentrification has already raised property values and displaced people in historically Black neighborhoods not yet touched by BeltLine development, and



- Atlanta failed to enact protections against displacement that have been effective in other parts of the country. It still has time to do so as the BeltLine turns its development eye to more of the historically Black Southside.

But as Atlanta BeltLine Incorporated itself acknowledges, almost midway through the 25-year-long development period, fewer than 1,000 units of affordable housing have been built in the area, far short of the original goal, even as housing prices near the greenways are rising faster than in the city as a whole. This means the area is losing far more existing affordable housing than it is creating. And there are no rent regulations or alternative property tax policies to stop the surge. To learn more about the policy BeltLine for All will push for to turn around the unjust development practices displacing residents read the full report at housingjusticeleague.org!



TENANT ASSOCIATIONS

Deborah Arnold is the president of the City View at the Rosa Burney's Tenant Association, and a Housing Justice League member. Deborah shared some updates and some of her thoughts about tenant associations' participation in Housing Justice League for the newsletter.

Here are some updates from Deborah about Rosa Burney:

"We just finished an event, a talent show, it was a social event to try to reach more tenants, and we were able to bring out at least two more tenants who have never attended a meeting. And the talent show was awesome and they were like yeah Deborah if you ever need us, we'll be there. The social events help bring other people in, not just to fight for their rights, but to relax and feel comfortable with each other so they can come together and be more powerful."

Deborah says it can be really hard to keep moving forward when there is a lot of retaliation from the property management. People become fearful and participation goes down. So the association is "always trying to keep everybody together."

Deborah is also a part of the National Alliance of HUD Tenants (NAHT). "I'm a board member now and that will help tremendously. It's going to help build more capacity, basically overall power."

Deborah sees building leadership as key in the work of tenants associations and Housing Justice League: "Building tenant leadership, good strong leadership, helps the tenant power to come together and be strong as one. HJL displays leadership and helps tenants see that they are able to do it, to stand up and fight. A lot of the tenants face retaliation and fear. HJL gives them a little shield, like yeah you can do it, helps give them that power, that confidence."

How did you first get involved with HJL?

"In May of 2015 we knew we needed to start a tenant association because of what we were experiencing at our apartment complex with the management. We started a tenant association and we had our first meeting in June 2015. Then I met someone from the neighborhood who said Deborah you may want to get in touch with a group that helps with tenant associations, that will help you in

fighting your fights. So I got in touch with a member of the NPU-V and she told me give Alison a call. I attended my first mass meeting. From that point I don't know what I got into but I love what I got into. I enjoy the allyship, I enjoy the support, they are very helpful to our tenant association and the rest is history.”

What was some of the support that HJL gave you that you found helpful?

“Refreshments, that alone helped a lot. Because we didn't have any money in our budget and we knew that refreshments draw people. I did some flyers but HJL had really good flyers that brought people into the meetings. HJL's presence showing up. HJL is bigger than me and can be more of a testimony. Tenants can see okay, we do have our ally, they feel like they get more help in our fights and struggles. HJL had a few of my tenants to participate in other activities that HJL was involved in. Tenants were like, oh this is really serious, they're really about something. HJL helped us in the struggle of changing our apartment complex to keep it

affordable for the next five years. And other organizations supporting us, through HJL, was a tremendous blessing and it got us a step further. I've been able to participate in some of the HJL campaigns, some of the tenants were able to do that and they saw more than just the four walls of the complex, they saw outside, that it's a bigger fight, not just within the complex, but City Hall and other places, that they can utilize what they were learning to help in other areas and move forward even more.”

What would be some of your visions or hopes for HJL In the long term?

“I would like to see HJL expand a lot more to other tenant associations, building more tenant associations throughout Atlanta and outside of Atlanta, even Georgia. There are so many people and residents that need this help and I would like to see HJL grow to the point where we can reach the masses.”

NEWS UPDATES

PEOPLETOWN RESIDENTS' BLOCK FIGHT

On Monday Oct. 2, 2017 Peopletown residents, Mr. and Mrs. Darden and Tanya Washington, their attorney, and supporters who are fed up with people being put out of their homes in Atlanta held



a press conference outside the Dardens' home. The Dardens and Ms. Washington are appealing an eminent domain case threatening the removal of their homes for the installation of a “Japanese garden, gazebos for community gatherings, several detention ponds, and bio retention areas to treat stormwater.” There is clear evidence from city engineers that the removal of these homes was never necessary for the planned park and pond. Further, the order prepared by the city contains false information about the evidence presented during the case hearings.

The park and pond's installation is another step in forcing Black residents from their homes in an area at-risk of gentrification in order to pave the way for profitable private development. Tanya Washington and the Dardens are fighting the City, and HJL is following their leadership and supporting them in their fight. Tanya Washington is especially concerned that the City is using

Peopletown's crumbling infrastructure, caused by its own racist disinvestment and exploitation, as a basis for arguing public necessity and thus the use of eminent domain. A recent article in The Guardian titled "Gentrification is sweeping through America. Here are the people Fighting Back," argues that this kind of legal argument "would allow almost any city to use the legacy of institutional racism and systemic neglect to further advance the displacement of low-income black residents." This is a critical and symbolic case in a fight much broader than Peopletown or even Atlanta.

On November 6, Tanya Washington delivered a powerful message in the final full city council meeting before Election Day. She spoke to voters asking, "Are we going to be visitors in the city that we helped to create?"

"Atlanta is the most unequal city in the US. It has the third highest eviction rate. The best measure of what a person will do in office is what they have already done. And so if their policies and practices have served developers, and if their policies and practices have served to build stadiums, and exploit communities, and displace people, that is what they will continue to do... Exploitation doesn't change into something else just because it's being executed and implemented by people who look like you... We have a chance to set an example of what a city can be, that it can serve the ones who are vulnerable, the ones who have made the sacrifices for decades only to be displaced by development for the progress that's coming. I

look at how our city is topping these lists that we don't want to be on, and I hear Mrs. Bottoms saying she's going to continue the progress, or excuse me "prog-MESS" of this existing administration. We cannot have a mayor who is going to continue to exploit people. We cannot have a third term of Mayor Greed. It breaks my heart to drive under our bridges and see families living, children have to live under a bridge and risk being arrested by law enforcement because they have no place else to go. But we have money for stadiums, and we're getting ready to host the Superbowl, and we're getting ready to give folks a one-way ticket out of town so we don't have to have our guests look at them when they come to stay in Atlanta a week before the game. Where are our priorities? I just read David Ritz and Tavis Smiley's book, Death of a King, and it talks about Dr. King's last year of life, where people were encouraging him to take the safe route... Stop making noise about the Vietnam War and stop making noise about poverty, and he said no. He launched the Poor People's Campaign and before he died he was planning a tent city in Washington DC. We don't want to celebrate that Dr. King. We want to celebrate the one that gave the beautiful speech at the Washington Monument. But the King who died, he spent his last year thinking about how lonely it is to advocate for people that nobody cares about, how lonely it is to stand up for people who have been abandoned by people who have benefited from their sacrifices..." -Tanya Washington

HOMES FOR ALL SOUTHERN LAND & HOUSING LEADERSHIP ASSEMBLY



Oct 17-19, 23 residents and organizers from across the South gathered in Atlanta for the first Homes For All Southern Land & Housing Leadership Assembly. Members of the Housing Justice League in Atlanta, Cooperation Jackson (Mississippi), Miami Workers Center (Florida), Kentuckians For The Commonwealth and Homes For All Nashville (Tennessee) spent three days learning from each other's local organizing, getting to know and build trust with each other, developing a collective vision for expanding land & housing organizing across the south, and planning next steps to build regional power towards land & housing liberation.

While housing as a human right and community control of land & housing were central themes of discussion, our collective vision for the south (and the nation) was not limited to land & housing. We talked about our need to fight for a broad vision with demands that include a living wage for all, ending mass incarceration and other eco-

other communities of color, the creation of federal backed GSE's to support white & suburban homeownership while redlining and dis-investing from entire communities of color, to predatory lending, the destruction of public housing and gentrification of historically black and brown neighborhoods, white supremacist ideology has shaped land &

All South and to move forward with plans to hold a bigger Southern HFA Assembly in Spring 2018 in Nashville, TN. We plan to bring together as many as a hundred residents, organizers and freedom fighters actively engaged in land & housing struggles along with allies from other movements to train & educate each other on organizing strategies, develop shared strategy and grow our movement.

Now is an exciting time to get involved with Homes for All. If you are interested in attending the Southern conference or volunteering on a planning committee, contact Richard Hunsinger at hunsinger-richare@gmail.com.

Additionally, Homes for All is planning a National Assembly for July 2018. If you are interested in volunteering on a planning committee contact Natalie at nmclaughlin@afsc.org.

Over the next years HFA South plans to recruit and support the development of new housing and land justice organizations including tenant unions, neighborhood organizations and Community Land Trusts, as well as to build deep partnerships across other sectors and movements. By building a unified land & housing movement across the south we can contribute to a broader movement to confront the rise of the neo-confederacy and win land, liberation and freedom for our people.

To see the full story written by Malcolm Torrejon Chu with Right to the City Alliance go to righttothecity.org/news/



nomic, gender and racial justice issues.

This is the first time, that we know of, that a group of southern organizers and residents have come together to plan a regional organizing strategy for land & housing in the south. Homes For All members across the country understand that to truly secure housing as a human right for all people, our movement must confront and dismantle white supremacy and other systems of oppression and power.

From the theft of indigenous land, the enslavement and exploitation of Africans, the denial of land ownership to black and

housing policy for centuries.

During day two of the #HFA-South Assembly, we dove deep together to understand the particular and specific ways white supremacy has shaped our communities' relationships to land & housing in the South. We emerged deeper clarity that Southern people and movements must lead and play a central role in building a regional, national and international movement for land & housing liberation that centers the fight to dismantle white supremacy, win reparations and transform our communities.

We decided to form Homes For