

# Women's Community Revitalization Project

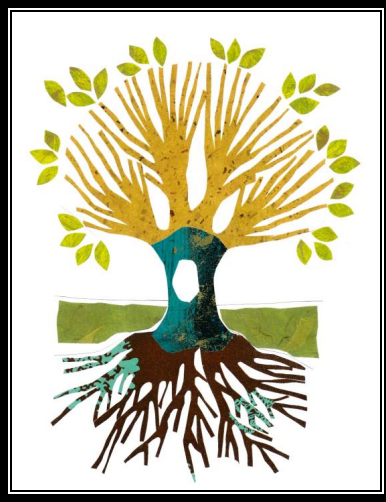


## Strategic Plan 2019-2022

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# **Women’s Community Revitalization Project Strategic Plan 2019-2022**

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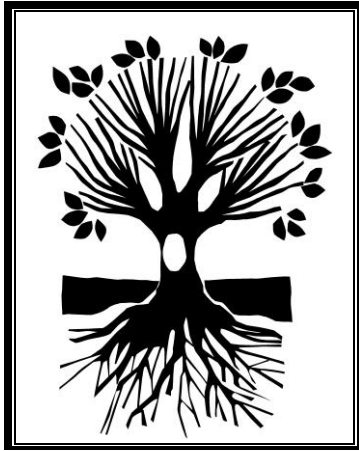
**People:** Our vision for individuals and communities we serve

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# Planning in a Time of Change

## *Overview of Our 2019-2022 Strategic Plan*

For over thirty years, the Women's Community Revitalization Project (WCRP) has done community development in a different way. We have:

- ❖ Embraced an organizational mission that places women and their families at the center of our work.
- ❖ Pursued a three-fold strategy of physical, social, and political development, believing all three to be essential, equal, and complementary in revitalizing neighborhoods and in securing equity and dignity for women and their families.
- ❖ Developed close and constructive relationships with the people we house, supporting them as they pursue personal growth and economic wellbeing.
- ❖ Developed grassroots leaders and built collective power, advocating for policies that support affordable housing and equitable development.
- ❖ Created an organization that is led by women and accountable to the constituencies and communities we serve.

Our unique approach to community development has had considerable success. We have:

- Developed 282 units of affordable rental housing and have raised the financing to construct another 35 homes in the near future;
- Supported over 2500 individuals in achieving greater economic and family well-being through our tenant supportive services;
- Engaged 50-100 individuals each year in leadership development activities, while offering opportunities to use those skills in helping to guide WCRP and in playing key roles in our advocacy campaigns;
- Spearheaded and staffed multiple coalitions that have engaged dozens of organizations in campaigns resulting in new resources for affordable housing; and
- Established the Community Justice Land Trust to ensure lasting affordability of the housing we develop.

But the environment in which we work has been changing:

- ❖ The economic circumstances of the families we serve have grown more precarious and the number of families in need of affordable housing has expanded.
- ❖ The opportunity to develop affordably priced housing has shrunk, constrained by a combination of higher costs, fewer subsidies, and greater competition for the public funding that remains.
- ❖ Gentrification in Eastern North Philadelphia, where WCRP once worked, and creeping gentrification and rising land prices in neighborhoods in which we now work, have

made finding sites for new projects serving low-income people more difficult than ever before.

- ❖ Fluctuation in federal budgets and federal policies, combined with the ebb and flow of political support for affordable housing from local officials, has added a degree of unpredictability to the development process.

## How We Developed Our Strategic Plan

We did a major re-write of WCRP's Strategic Plan in 2014, covering the period 2015 – 2018. As we entered the final year of our plan, our executive committee and senior staff reviewed that plan's format and contents. We decided to update it and to extend it, *not* to start from scratch in creating an entirely new Strategic Plan for 2019-2022. The mission, values, activities, and overall "look" of the earlier plan would be retained; its goals and objectives would be revised.

WCRP's staff, board, and advisory committee met for a day-and-a-half planning retreat on July 13-14, 2018 to consider the staff's recommendations for the goals and objectives that will guide WCRP's work in the years ahead. The retreat's participants also tackled a pair of difficult issues that are crucial for the organization's future work:

- *Should WCRP continue to be a place-based developer of affordable housing or should it be open to pursuing opportunities for developing housing and revitalizing neighborhoods throughout the city?*
- *How does WCRP operate from a "position of strength," accumulating assets and building capacity that will enable it to continue as an independent nonprofit or, should a merger someday become necessary, that would enable WCRP to negotiate from a "position of strength" in joining its assets and capacity to those of another nonprofit?*

The answers that emerged from deliberations of the retreat's participants shaped the contents of the current Strategic Plan. A preliminary draft of the Plan was reviewed by WCRP's board of directors on September 5, 2018 and was conditionally approved, subject to the incorporation of several minor corrections and board recommendations.

## Highlights of Our Strategic Plan

**Where We Work.** The most important changes in the current Plan, compared to Strategic Plans of the past, arise from WCRP's pivotal decision to focus no longer on a single neighborhood in doing development. We shall work in **multiple** neighborhoods throughout Philadelphia during the next three years, depending on the availability of buildable sites, the sufficiency of financial subsidies, and the dependability of local support from a neighborhood's residents, its civic organizations, and the councilperson who represents that area.

**Who We Serve.** We shall continue to serve, as our highest priority, low-income women and their families. We shall continue to be responsive to the needs and concerns of the people

who reside in the housing we provide, as well as listening with respect and cultivating the support of people who live in the neighborhoods in which we hope to do development. In this way, our work may range across an ever-wider geography, but it will still be embedded in place.

**What We Do.** We shall continue to do community development in the distinctive way that WCRP has always done it, pursuing the following goals:

***Real estate development*** that is aimed at (1) constructing rental housing that is truly affordable for low-income families and (2) exploring a new program to expand homeownership opportunities for low-income families.

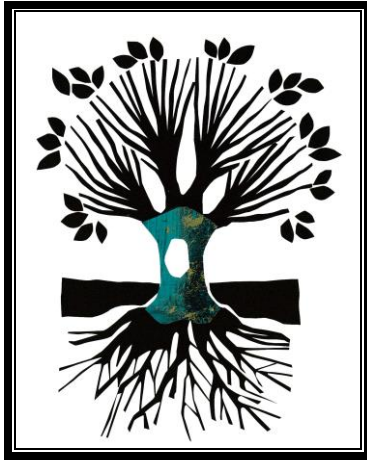
***Property management*** that is aimed at managing and maintaining a housing portfolio of 274 rentals that will grow to 309 by the end of 2022.

***Supportive services*** that are aimed at preserving the stability and improving the lives of the families housed by WCRP, as they strive to achieve their self-defined goals for the future.

***Organizing and advocacy*** that is aimed at winning new resources for affordable housing, developing a new cadre of grassroots leaders, and building a base of support for WCRP's work.

***Organizational sustainability*** that is aimed at increasing and diversifying WCRP's revenues, raising our visibility in the public eye, and solidifying our reputation as a champion for equitable and sustainable development.

**Work Plans.** WCRP's staff, board, and committees will develop annual work plans, identifying how the goals and objectives contained in our Strategic Plan are to be implemented. Our Strategic Plan is not stored away on a dusty shelf for three years after its completion, but is regularly consulted in helping WCRP to guide our work and to evaluate our progress.



# Steady Growth

## *Our Work Has Been Productive*

Over a span of three decades, WCRP has earned a unique reputation, both for developing and managing high-quality housing *and* for building collective power and grassroots leadership, especially among low-income women. Our multi-faceted approach to community development has helped to make the neighborhoods in which we work more affordable and livable. It has also sown the seeds of policy change, elevating equitable development and permanent affordability on the public agendas of our city and state. This is a solid trunk of capacity and accomplishment that should allow WCRP to weather a changing climate in the years ahead.

### **Affordable housing: *Growing & managing a sizable portfolio***

WCRP has built 282 two- three- and four-bedroom affordably priced rental homes. Eight were sold to tenants and 274 are presently managed and maintained under the direction of WCRP's staff. *Most recently*, WCRP has:

- Completed the construction of 36 lease-to-purchase homes, the first residential project in which the underlying land was conveyed to WCRP's Community Justice Land Trust.
- Gained control of three new sites on which affordable housing can be built.
- Received zoning approval and \$11 million in Low Income Housing Tax Credits for the development of 35 townhomes, with construction to begin in 2019.
- Focused increased attention on preventive maintenance and on capital improvements within WCRP's existing portfolio of rental housing.
- Developed a plan and applied for funding for a major renovation of the Lilia Crippen Townhomes, constructed more than fifteen years ago.
- Evaluated the possibility of contracting with an outside property management firm to manage and maintain WCRP's portfolio of rental housing versus continuing to do property management in-house. After careful consideration of the pros, cons, and costs, WCRP chose the latter course of action.

### **Capable constituents: *Cultivating stable families & able leaders***

Since the completion of WCRP's first housing development, we have offered customized case management services that support our tenants in achieving greater family and economic wellbeing. We have also provided employment support, case man-



agement and housing counseling to other low-income women through special initiatives and outside contracts. Together, these efforts have helped over 2500 women and members of their families to improve their immediate circumstances. Our most **recent accomplishments** include:

- Providing services to our current 274 tenant families, totaling 950 individuals.
- Supporting 100 families each year in resolving issues that threaten their housing stability, which is a mounting problem in a challenging economy.
- Completing our 2017 analysis of changes in tenant income, which showed an average increase in household income of 70% during a family's first four years of living in a WCRP home.

WCRP's tenants, along with other neighborhood residents, are encouraged to join our leadership development activities. We offer training and immediate opportunities to put new leadership skills into practice. Each year, dozens of individuals participate in our campaigns to win more resources for affordable housing.

### **Equitable development: *Sowing the seeds for policy change***

As far back as 1999, after numerous battles to secure resources for our own housing projects, WCRP realized that our efforts would have a greater impact if we joined with others to fight for systemic change. Since then, we have formed, joined, and supported multiple coalitions that have conducted successful campaigns shaping the city's Consolidated Housing Plan that guides the annual investment of \$20 million in federal and state funds in Philadelphia; creating the city's Housing Trust Fund, which has made available \$98 million in new funding for affordable housing since the Fund's inception in 2005; and creating the Philadelphia Land Bank.

**More recently**, WCRP has:

- Spearheaded the Philadelphia Coalition for Affordable Communities, a city-wide coalition of 62 organizations that pushed for developers of market-rate housing to pay their fair share toward the production and preservation of affordable housing. In June 2018, Philadelphia's City Council passed new legislation that, if signed into law by the Mayor, will more than double the funding that is currently available for the Housing Trust Fund.
- Recruited ten community partners in South Philadelphia to conduct a listening project, collecting over 300 community surveys and paving the way for neighborhood planning.
- Initiated and supported a statewide coalition of community land trusts, working in concert to raise the profile of CLTs and to attract more funding for CLT projects from state agencies and private lenders.

## **Stable organization: *Sustaining a productive & accountable CDC***

WCRP has been remarkably successful in doing what most other community development corporations have *not* been able to do, namely provide housing for *very* low-income families. At the same time, we have built a record of success in bringing our constituents and allies together to improve the neighborhoods in which we work and to advocate for policies that promote equitable and sustainable development. These results have been achieved by building and sustaining an organization with a unique set of characteristics and commitments:

- **INTEGRITY.** WCRP's reputation is built on the integrity of our leaders, who display vision, determination, and dedication on behalf of our constituents.
- **INCLUSIVENESS.** WCRP has an unwavering commitment to the participation of our constituents in planning and decision making that promote projects and programs designed to improve the lives of women and their families.
- **LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT.** WCRP provides training and meaningful opportunities to put leadership skills into practice so that low-income women are confidently prepared to participate in the fight for equitable policies in the future.
- **ACCOUNTABILITY.** WCRP is an organization that is responsive to community needs and reliable in following through on our commitments. This attitude permeates every level of the organization and plays a role in WCRP's solid standing in Philadelphia.
- **INNOVATION.** WCRP is an organization that has pioneered models of supportive services, leadership development, and equitable development. One of our most notable innovations has been the use of a portion of our developer's fee to establish an internal rent subsidy that deepens affordability. We also established the Community Justice Land Trust and have continued to promote the CLT model through trainings for policymakers, community activists, and our CDC peers.

**More recently,** WCRP has improved organizational stability by:

- Reviewing all of the assets that WCRP owns in order to better utilize them to cover the organization's own operating costs and pre-development costs.
- Strengthening our capacity for financial forecasting and financial planning.
- Downsizing our administrative staff to reduce operating costs.
- Tracking our progress in implementing the 2015-2018 Strategic Plan.
- Publicizing our achievements through various media with over 75 stories about WCRP's work, including fine coverage of WCRP's 30-Year Anniversary.



# Climate Change

## *Our Work Has Been Resilient*

During the course of preparing our 2019-2022 Strategic Plan, we examined the extent to which our environment has changed. We then weighed the implications of those changes for WCRP, crafting a Plan that adapts our programs and our capacity to an economic and political climate that has clouded prospects for the work we do, while still holding out hope for new opportunities for equitable and sustainable development.

### **A challenging environment for housing development**

Developing affordable housing has never been easy, especially housing that is within the financial reach of low-income families, WCRP's priority since the very beginning. A number of changes have unfolded in recent years, however, that make development more difficult than ever before, including:

- ***Federal funding for affordable housing has continued to decline.*** Neither the current Administration nor the current Congress has expressed much interest in supporting affordable housing. Federal funding for the Community Development Block Grant program and the HOME program has been declining for years. So far, the federal government's other housing production program has been spared, Low Income Housing Tax Credits, but the looming \$1.5 trillion deficit created by passage of the 2017 tax bill may force further cutbacks in all federal spending for affordable housing.
- ***Construction costs in Philadelphia are unusually high,*** reaching as much as 25% above the national average.
- ***Competition has increased for the tax credits used by WCRP in developing rental housing.*** In each urban cycle, there are approximately \$3.50 in requests for every \$1.00 in available credits.
- ***Costs have increased for buildable sites.*** Gentrification has come to neighborhoods where WCRP used to work and to neighborhoods where WCRP hoped to work. Luxury condominiums are being built and sold. New stores and restaurants are opening up. Affluent residents are moving in. Housing prices are rapidly rising, along with the cost of buildable land.

- ***The political environment for affordable housing development has grown more unpredictable.*** The uncertainty caused by Philadelphia’s long tradition of “councilmanic prerogative” has always made development difficult. Changing demographics, as gentrification takes root in one neighborhood after another, has undermined support for affordable housing development among several members of the City Council, making it harder to secure buildable sites, public funds, and regulatory approval for proposed projects within their wards.
- ***The cost and risk of planning new projects have increased.*** With increased competition for public funding, a nonprofit developer like WCRP may have to prepare multiple applications for tax credits and governmental grants for every one that is eventually funded. The predevelopment costs incurred in unsuccessful applications are not recoverable.

***WCRP has adjusted to this changing environment*** in three ways, all of which are reflected in our current Strategic Plan:

- **NUMBER OF PROJECTS.** We continue to pursue every development opportunity and every funding source that becomes available, but we are now budgeting for fewer projects, while setting aside more dollars to cover pre-development costs.
- **LOCATION OF PROJECTS.** We have expanded the geography in which we do development. During the past three years, we moved outside of WCRP’s previous target neighborhood of Eastern North Philadelphia to pursue projects in Northwest Philadelphia and South Philadelphia. During the next three years, we will be receptive to pursuing opportunities for affordable housing development throughout Philadelphia. (See later chapter in the current Strategic Plan entitled “Fertile Ground.”)
- **TYPE OF PROJECTS.** We have embraced the possibility of developing new housing projects that are targeted to households at a slightly higher income than households served by WCRP in the past, while still prioritizing families who are low-income. The five newly built houses being planned for the Mamie Nichols Homeownership Pilot, for example, will likely be sold to households earning above 60% of Area Median Income.

## **A punishing environment for low-income families**

The tenants in WCRP’s rental housing are more financially precarious than they’ve ever been. Philadelphia was hit hard by the Great Recession of 2007-2009. Recovery was slow. Many low-income people who lost their jobs during this period never got them back. Meanwhile public assistance has declined, public services have been reduced, and the Philadelphia school system remains chronically underfunded.

*WCRP has adjusted to the economic precariousness* of the low-income families in our housing by shifting the focus of our supportive services program toward tenant stability. We shall continue to support our tenants who request assistance in reaching self-defined goals for personal, family, and financial well-being, but our priority must be on helping tenants to solve rent delinquencies, to apply for rental and utility assistance, and to retain their housing.

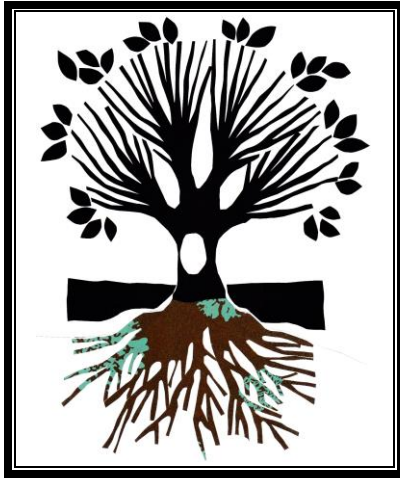
## **A destabilizing environment for nonprofit CDCs**

WCRP is hardly alone in finding it harder to fund its projects and to sustain its operations in the current economic and political environment. Most of Philadelphia's community development corporations face similar challenges. This is a difficult time for CDCs.

Cutbacks in public funding for affordable housing development have meant that any nonprofit like WCRP that depends on developer's fees to subsidize rents and to cover a portion of the organization's operating costs has been hard-pressed to replace these lost revenues. At the same time, private foundations have changed their funding priorities.

*WCRP has adjusted to this harsh environment* that has undermined the stability of many of the city's CDCs and toppled some of them by taking actions and making plans that are designed to increase the organization's resiliency and sustainability in the stormy days ahead.

- **PRESERVATION OF CORE OPERATIONS.** We have ended programs when revenue was insufficient to cover a program's costs and we have reduced personnel, primarily administrative staff, to continue operating.
- **EXAMINATION OF INTERNAL ASSETS.** We have conducted a portfolio review of all the land, buildings, and reserves on WCRP's balance sheet, evaluating various ways in which these assets might be used to cover a portion of WCRP's operating costs.
- **EXPLORATION OF NEW INITIATIVES.** The temptation in an uncertain time of climate change is to hunker down and to avoid anything risky or new, but that has never been WCRP's way. Innovation is one of the reasons we have survived so long and accomplished so much. Over the next three years, we shall explore new places and new projects. We shall look for new ways to capitalize and to grow the Community Justice Land Trust. We shall support new campaigns to secure additional funding for affordable housing and to promote policies of equitable development and permanent affordability. Resiliency isn't achieved by standing still, but by adapting in creative ways to a changing environment.



# Vital Roots

## *Our Work Is Sustained by People & Values*

Our environment has changed in challenging ways, making it necessary and prudent for WCRP to change as well. We have adjusted our plans, adapted our programs, and fine-tuned our internal capacity to ensure the continuation of WCRP's important work. What has *not* changed is WCRP's commitment to low-income women and to core values that have nourished, guided, and sustained our work for over 30 years.

### **Mission:** *What we do*

WCRP is committed to social and economic equity for low-income women and their families. We develop affordable housing; provide supportive services; advocate for policy change; and honor and promote leadership, dignity, and justice in our communities.

### **Constituents:** *Who we serve*

WCRP is working to create communities that are diverse, inclusive, and fair; places where the fruits of development are equitably shared by everyone who lives, works, or worships in a neighborhood, rather than going primarily to a fortunate few.

Equitable development does not happen by accident, however. It must be planned and promoted. And it must be fought for, often in the face of market forces that can empty neighborhoods of precisely the sort of racial, ethnic, and economic diversity to which WCRP is committed.

What this means in practice is fighting to *include* people in a neighborhood's revitalization who would otherwise be excluded or displaced.

### **We serve low-income people**

WCRP develops and manages affordable rental housing for low-income families, with a priority for serving people as far down the income ladder as a household's finances and a project's subsidies will allow. Should WCRP be successful in finding

the funds to develop *owner-occupied* housing in the years ahead via the Community Justice Land Trust, the people who are able to qualify for mortgages and to buy our homes will necessarily have a somewhat higher income than the population served by WCRP in the past. Low-income families will remain a priority, however, in both the design and implementation of WCRP's homeownership program.

### ***We serve women***

WCRP has an organizational priority on serving **women** – housing them, supporting them, advocating on their behalf, and developing their potential as leaders within their communities and within WCRP itself.

### ***We serve families***

WCRP provides housing and services for **families** – households with at least one adult and one or more dependent children.

### ***We serve people who live, work, or worship in neighborhoods in which we have already developed (or are likely to develop) affordable housing***

People with a priority claim to WCRP's resources, whether for housing development, property management, family support, or community organizing, are those who are directly connected to a neighborhood in which WCRP is developing and managing affordable housing – or is planning to do so in the next three years.

### ***We serve people of diverse backgrounds who share our values and who want to work collectively with WCRP***

WCRP encourages active participation in its activities, campaigns, and governance by people who support WCRP's mission, many of whom reside outside of the neighborhoods in which WCRP is developing or managing affordable housing.

## **Values: *How we do our work***

Values anchor, nourish, and sustain the work of the Women's Community Revitalization Project. They shape our relationship with the people we serve. They sharpen our selection of the strategies we use.

The values that are most essential to how we plan to do our work during the next three years are:

<b>Family</b>	<b>Respect</b>	<b>Honesty</b>
<b>Equity</b>	<b>Openness</b>	<b>Inclusion</b>
<b>Community</b>	<b>Listening</b>	<b>Accountability</b>
<b>Diversity</b>	<b>Learning</b>	<b>Justice</b>
<b>Unity</b>	<b>Growth</b>	<b>Leadership</b>
<b>Collective power</b>	<b>Self-determination</b>	<b>Permanent affordability</b>

***WCRP makes change happen by staying true to these values.*** They guide our work in ten particular ways:

1. We believe that equitable community development requires three strategies that are essential, equal, and complementary:
  - **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**, transforming neighborhoods with inclusive and affordable housing;
  - **SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**, supporting the self-determined goals and leadership skills of low-income people, especially low-income women whose voices have often not been heard; and
  - **POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT**, building collective power to realize our vision for neighborhood revitalization and social change.
2. We believe that land, housing, and community facilities that have been made available and affordable through public dollars or private donors should be *kept* affordable for future generations of low-income people.
3. We uphold the principle of self-determination: people who are the most directly affected should have a voice in determining the goals and paths to be pursued.
4. We believe we must build our collective power to have our voices heard and must sustain our collective strength to realize our vision of social and economic equity.



5. We welcome the participation of people of different races, ethnicities, skills, incomes, and backgrounds who can make a difference by working together.
6. We value learning, commitment, and growth as we build a sense of unity and community that is inclusive of everyone who lives, works, or worships in the neighborhoods we serve.
7. We know that people who have the lowest incomes often have the most powerful and fairest visions for creating lasting and needed social change.
8. We value the leadership, dignity, and culture of women, both in the way we work and in the community development strategies we pursue.
9. We believe in the potential of every individual to develop leadership and we seek to create an organizational environment in which established leaders share power and new leaders arise, even as we recognize a diversity of leadership roles, traditions, and styles.
10. We understand the importance of openness, honesty, and taking the time to listen – really listen – to one another, as together we learn what justice means to each of us and together we seek to transform relationships of inequality into relationships of mutuality and respect.

## **Governance: *How we remain inclusive and accountable***

WCRP has created inclusive structures and procedures for planning and governance that encourage the active participation of the people we serve. We make a particular effort to maintain an environment that is welcoming, nurturing and safe for women so they may discover and develop their leadership skills and potential.

WCRP is governed by a **Board of Directors** that has ultimate responsibility for ensuring that WCRP fulfills its mission and remains fiscally strong and institutionally sound. A majority of our current board is made up of individuals who have had first-hand experience of poverty.

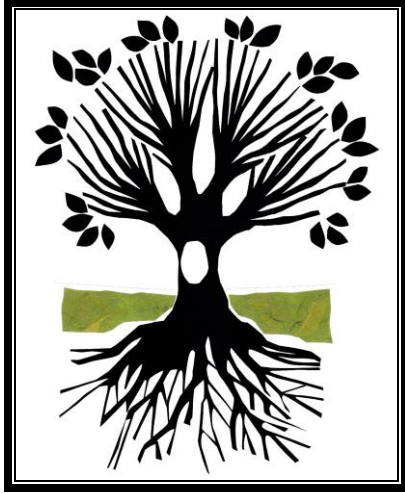
An **Advisory Committee**, recruited from the neighborhoods served by WCRP, from the rental housing managed by WCRP, and from the business, financial, and non-profit sectors, works alongside the Board, attending its meetings, participating in its discussions, and assisting with planning and decision making. Members of the Advisory Committee are also encouraged to serve on one of the Board's subcommittees:

Executive, Advocacy, Housing, Finance, or the advisory committee of the Community Justice Land Trust.

New members of the Board of Directors are drawn primarily from the organization's committees and subcommittees, all of which are open to anyone who shares our values and who wishes to contribute to our work. Active participation in the meetings of WCRP's Board, committees, and subcommittees is encouraged and enabled by:

- Providing child care, transportation, Spanish-English translation for anyone who needs these services;
- Providing dinner for participants and their children;
- Facilitating meetings to maximize participation;
- Making decisions through an inclusive process and modified consensus; and
- Offering customized training that develops meaningful and needed capacities.

These structures and procedures, in addition to promoting participation, are vehicles for strengthening the leadership skills of the participants and for building new leaders who can act and advocate on behalf of WCRP, the people and neighborhoods WCRP serves, and the campaigns it sponsors.



# Fertile Ground

*Our Work Will Occur Across a Wider Geography, But Will Still Be Embedded in Place*

During the process of preparing our *previous* Strategic Plan, we consulted a number of knowledgeable developers and funders of affordable housing in Philadelphia, asking whether WCRP should continue to concentrate its community development activities within a single neighborhood. Several of these experts urged us to relinquish our historic commitment to place-based community development and to re-position WCRP as a housing developer and property manager doing business on a citywide basis.

Despite the allure of not being defined by a single neighborhood, WCRP decided at that time *not* to become a city-wide developer, re-affirming our historic commitment to a place-based strategy of community development. We would continue to give priority to a targeted neighborhood in allocating our resources, mobilizing our constituents, and building a portfolio of land and permanently affordable housing under the stewardship of WCRP and the Community Justice Land Trust.

We knew that we would not be developing new housing in Eastern North Philadelphia (ENP) because of rapid gentrification and a changing political climate. With the adoption of its 2015-2018 Strategic Plan, therefore, WCRP began exploring new places where it might make a lasting commitment to neighborhood revitalization, leadership development, and community empowerment, similar to the commitment that was made to ENP long ago.

Using a set of criteria contained in that earlier Plan, WCRP set out to identify a new neighborhood in which to base its future work. Two areas emerged as potential candidates: Northwest Philadelphia and South Philadelphia. WCRP pursued development opportunities in both places, with mixed success.

WCRP was invited into Northwest Philly and will construct the Nicole Hines Townhomes in 2019. Despite this achievement, WCRP encountered opposition to further affordable housing development from the city councilperson who represents this area. This inhospitable political environment caused WCRP to back away from deeming Northwest Philly its new target neighborhood.

WCRP was also successful in securing control of buildable sites in South Philly and is actively engaged in pulling together financing for the Mamie Nichols Townhomes. Gentrification in the surrounding area, however, has created an inhospitable economic environment, limiting the availability of land for additional development. This has dimmed the prospects for South Philly becoming WCRP's new target neighborhood.

These political and economic realities prompted WCRP to revisit the decision as to whether to continue being a place-based developer of affordable housing. After considerable discussion by members of WCRP's staff, board, and advisory committee during the process of creating the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan, a consensus was reached that WCRP should discontinue its search for a single neighborhood in which to put down roots. Instead, WCRP's staff should be given the freedom and flexibility to pursue buildable sites throughout Philadelphia, wherever an opportunity to develop affordable housing seemed likely to match WCRP's own criteria for choosing a neighborhood in which to work.

This decision to become a city-wide developer is a reflection of WCRP's realism and prudence, as the organization adjusts its priorities, programs and plans in response to changes and challenges in its environment. At the same time, the decision to work across a wider geography is a sign of optimism, reflecting WCRP's confidence that appropriate sites **will** become available and that WCRP's reputation for doing high-quality development and providing high-quality property management services **will** attract the financial resources and political support to develop new projects in new neighborhoods.

### **Criteria: *Selecting new neighborhoods in which to work***

To declare that WCRP will be receptive in the future to pursuing housing development opportunities throughout the city is not to say that **any** neighborhood in Philadelphia is a place where WCRP will be able to work or will want to work. WCRP will carefully weigh at least seven criteria when considering whether to venture into a new area of the city.

1. **BUILDABLE LAND.** The neighborhood should have at least one vacant site with the potential of being available for constructing affordable housing and attainable by WCRP.
2. **CRITICAL MASS.** The available site(s) should be large enough to accommodate the construction of multiple units of housing, allowing WCRP to build a "critical mass" of affordable housing in that neighborhood.

3. **ECONOMIC DIVERSITY.** The neighborhood should not already be so thoroughly gentrified and economically exclusive as to make the development of affordable housing practically impossible.
4. **POLITICAL SUPPORT.** There should be a high probability of gaining *political* backing for WCRP and the project(s) it hopes to develop in the neighborhood, especially the on-going support of the city councilperson representing that area.
5. **FINANCIAL SUPPORT.** There should be a high probability of gaining *financial* backing for WCRP and the project(s) it hopes to develop in the neighborhood, whether those resources are provided through tax credits, private foundations, state funding, and/or funds controlled by city government.
6. **COMMUNITY SUPPORT.** There must be a critical mass of residents and civic organizations that welcome WCRP into the neighborhood, supporting both the organization and its project(s).
7. **ESSENTIAL SERVICES.** There must be services, facilities, and resources in the neighborhood that would serve WCRP's residents, complementing the affordable housing to be developed there.

## **Community: *Reaffirming the value of place***

WCRP's work will continue to be embedded in place, despite our recent decision to look for development opportunities throughout Philadelphia. Our whole approach to community development is one that *combines* physical development, leadership development, and grassroots empowerment, so we understand the value of place and the necessity of working hard to be welcomed into a new neighborhood and to win local support for our projects – and for WCRP itself.

In any neighborhood where WCRP proposes to develop affordable housing, we shall continue to pursue a deliberate five-fold strategy to prepare the ground for working in that place. The elements of that strategy are:

- **OUTREACH.** Meet with the neighborhood's residents, churches, civic groups, social service organizations, and other community development corporations. Build a relationship with municipal officials and political leaders who represent the neighborhood in the City Council and state government.
- **RESEARCH.** Establish the need for additional affordable housing. Study the neighborhood's patterns of land use and land ownership. Map available sites for new housing development.

- **LISTENING.** Solicit the opinions, preferences, and needs of a neighborhood's residents through door-knocking, informal surveys, and public meetings.
- **COMMUNICATING.** Convey a clear and consistent message about WCRP's mission and values, its proposed project(s), and its exemplary performance in maintaining completed projects, screening prospective tenants, and supporting the families who live in its housing.
- **ORGANIZING.** Identify, recruit, and train local leaders who are likely to support the development of affordable housing and to fight for physical, social, and political changes that improve the quality of life for everyone in the neighborhood.

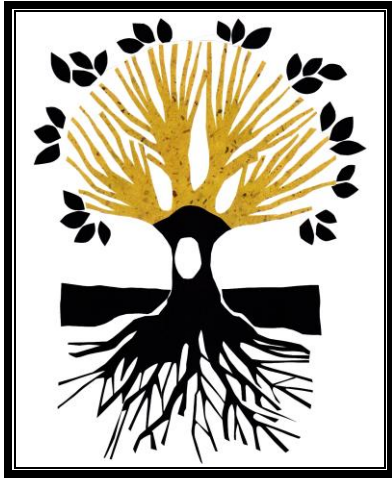
By taking sufficient time and by working diligently to pursue this five-fold strategy, WCRP has learned over the years that we gain a better sense of a neighborhood's needs, we win greater acceptance and support from a neighborhood residents, and we build enduring relationships with individuals, civic organizations, and political leaders that are essential when attempting to develop affordable housing.

WCRP recognizes, too, that our work is necessarily embedded in place when managing and maintaining the rental housing we have already built and when supporting the low-income families who occupy that housing. That will still be true as WCRP pursues opportunities for development throughout the city.

One advantage of the place-based strategy that guided WCRP's decision making in the past with regard to where new housing should be developed was that WCRP's earlier projects were built in close proximity to one another. Such geographic concentration made the delivery of property management services and supportive services more efficient and less expensive than if those residential projects had been spread across the entire city.

With the decision to become a city-wide developer of affordable housing, WCRP's real estate portfolio is likely become more widely dispersed in the future. This may require WCRP to make adjustments to the way in which property management and supportive services are staffed and delivered, but WCRP's long-standing commitment to the quality of its housing, the success of its tenants, and the vitality of the neighborhoods in which its projects are located will remain unchanged.





# Sturdy Branches

## *Our Work Is Planned: 2019-2022*

WCRP's staff prepared and proposed for consideration by WCRP's board and committees a full complement of goals and objectives to be achieved over the next three years. These goals and objectives were reviewed and refined during the planning retreat and then ratified by WCRP's board of directors on September 5, 2018. Annual work plans will be developed by WCRP's staff, board, and committees, establishing measurable outcomes and anticipated timelines for implementing each of the goals and objectives identified below.

### **Real Estate Development:** *WCRP's three-year plan*

**Development goal #1:** Expand and preserve WCRP's portfolio of affordably priced rental housing for low-income women and their families.

**Objective #1:** Complete the financial packaging, construction, and lease-up of the Nicole Hines Townhomes (35) units of housing.

**Objective #2:** Complete the financial packaging, the temporary, phased relocation of existing tenants, and the rehabilitation of the Lillia Crippen Townhomes (46 units), rental housing that is already a part of WCRP's portfolio.

**Objective #3:** Complete financial packaging for the development of the Mamie Nichols Townhomes (33 units).

**Development goal #2:** Continue to build the asset base for the Community Justice Land Trust (CJLT) through the development of rental housing and owner-occupied housing.

**Objective #1:** Research programs and cultivate relationships with PHFA and with local lenders to ensure that CJLT leaseholders will be able obtain mortgages for resale-restricted homes on land that is owned by the CJLT.

**Objective #2:** Complete financial packaging, construction and marketing of 5 houses in the Mamie Nichols Homeownership Pilot Program.



**Objective #3:** Evaluate and document what worked well in the Mamie Nichols Homeownership Pilot Program – and what did not – assessing the feasibility of replicating this program elsewhere.

**Objective #4:** If the Mamie Nichols Homeownership Pilot Program is successful, gain site control of an additional parcel of land on which to develop additional owner-occupied homes on land owned by the CJLT.

**Objective #5:** Gain site control of an additional parcel of land on which to develop rental housing on land owned by the CJLT.

## **Property Management: *WCRP's three-year plan***

**Property management goal #1:** Manage and maintain WCRP's portfolio of high-quality, affordably priced rental housing for families that are low-income or very low-income.

**Objective #1:** Develop and manage operating budgets, a preventive maintenance schedule, and complete annual capital improvements for WCRP's housing portfolio.

**Objective #2:** Maintain a monthly rent collection rate of 85% at all sites, with no more than 15% of tenants in arrears or in a payment plan at any given time.

**Objective #3:** Administer systems and procedures that achieve an average occupancy of 90% or higher across WCRP's entire portfolio of rental housing.

**Property management goal #2:** Carry out activities associated with the development of WCRP's affordable rental housing.

**Objective #1:** Manage the marketing, tenant selection, and lease-up for 35 new units at Nicole Hines Townhomes.

**Objective #2:** Assist in marketing 5 owner-occupied units for the Mamie Nichols Home Ownership pilot.

**Objective #3:** Manage the temporary relocation of tenants at Lillia Crippen Townhomes during the phased rehabilitation of this 46-unit rental project.

**Property management goal #3:** Review, assess, and strengthen WCRP's zero tolerance for violence policies.

**Objective #1:** Work with staff to identify what they need to ensure a safe work environment.

**Objective #2:** Engage tenants to get their ideas and feedback for ensuring safety for the families, the community, and WCRP's property management staff.

**Objective #3:** Conduct research to ascertain how other housing management groups and multi-family developers have successfully addressed this issue.

**Objective #4:** Work with WCRP's board and advisory committee to review and to strengthen the organization's zero-tolerance-for-violence policies.

**Property management goal #4:** Strengthen the capacity of WCRP's property management.

**Objective #1:** Assess the added challenges that are likely to arise as a result of managing and maintaining residential projects that may be dispersed across a wider geography in the future. Develop a plan for meeting these challenges.

## **Supportive Services: *WCRP's three-year plan***

**Supportive services goal #1:** Provide services to support families who rent from WCRP in achieving and maintaining housing stability.

**Objective #1:** Provide orientation and complete assessments for 70-80 new families, including:

- 10-15 families each year to fill vacancies that open up in WCRP's existing portfolio; and
- 35 families when they move into the newly constructed Nicole Hines Town-houses.

**Objective #2:** Support families who fall behind in their rent, helping them to resolve delinquency:

- Serve ~ 100 families each year who are delinquent.

**Objective #3:** Support families who are in crisis to resolve their issues.

**Supportive services goal #2:** Support families who rent from WCRP in achieving greater personal, family, and financial well-being.

**Objective #1:** Provide services to support tenants in reaching self-defined goals for personal, family, and financial well-being.

**Objective #2:** Track tenant income over time as part of measuring WCRP's impact. This objective will be met by recording the income of every WCRP tenant and analyzing this data at the end of each year.

## **Organizing & Advocacy: WCRP's three-year plan**

**Organizing & advocacy goal #1:** Through a city-wide organizing campaign, win additional resources, including money and land, that WCRP can utilize to create more permanently affordable housing for low-income women and their families.

**Objective #1:** Support the Philadelphia Coalition for Affordable Communities (PCAC) in developing and launching its next campaign. Meeting this objective shall involve identifying campaign goals and maintaining a PCAC membership of at least 50 organizations.

**Objective #2:** Develop the leadership skills of 50 current leaders and recruit 100 new leaders.

**Objective #3:** Generate 30 media stories about WCRP's issues, constituencies, organizing, and advocacy.

**Organizing & advocacy goal #2:** Build the individual and collective skills of a network of low-income women and men who will help to shape and to lead WCRP's work.

**Objective #1:** Provide support for 50 existing leaders in the neighborhoods where WCRP has already developed affordable housing or has plans to do so.

**Objective #2:** Develop 100 leaders in new neighborhoods where the opportunity arises to gain control of buildable land for the development of affordable housing in the future.

**Organizing & advocacy goal #3:** Support the work of the Development Team to ensure that WCRP is able to obtain zoning approvals and to gain community support for its development efforts. ***For each new affordable housing project in WCRP's development pipeline:***

**Objective #1:** Collect 250 community signatures in support of WCRP's proposed housing project.

**Objective #2:** Recruit at least 20 people to attend community meetings and to speak in favor of WCRP's proposed project.

**Objective #3:** Recruit at least 5 people to testify in support of WCRP's proposed project at zoning hearings.

**Organizing & advocacy goal #4:** Support the growth and development of the community land trust model, both in Philadelphia and statewide.

**Objective #1:** Recruit and retain seven (7) people to sit on the Advisory Committee of the Community Justice Land Trust.

**Objective #2:** Identify and support five (5) community residents in becoming CJLT homeowners for the Mamie Nichols Home Ownership pilot.

**Objective #3:** Support the Pennsylvania Community Land Trust Collaborative in developing its annual workplan.

**Objective #4:** Convene two statewide meetings per year of the Pennsylvania Community Land Trust Collaborative.

## **Organizational Strength & Sustainability: WCRP's three-year plan**

**Sustainability goal #1:** Stabilize WCRP's finances.

**Objective #1:** Continue to work on strengthening and stabilizing the organization's finances to sustain WCRP's operations and maintain an adequate level of staffing.

**Objective #2:** Focus on financial planning, improving the organization's ability to predict and to manage cash flow.

**Objective #3:** Develop a set of criteria to review and to monitor the organization's fiscal strength and to ensure a prudent balance between allocating revenue for WCRP's operations and allocating resources for the pre-development of affordable housing.

**Sustainability goal #2:** Solidify WCRP's local preeminence in designing policies and programs for equitable development.

**Objective #1:** Continue to play a leadership role in the Philadelphia Coalition for Affordable Communities and in partnership with other city-wide and state-wide allies to ensure a priority for permanent affordability in developing rental housing and owner-occupied housing.

**Objective #2:** Offer the expertise that WCRP has gained in establishing its Community Justice Land Trust to provide assistance to other nonprofit organizations that might be interested in creating new CLT programs of their own.

**Objective #3:** Offer the expertise that WCRP has gained in developing rental housing to established CLTs around the state that are interested in gaining skills in real estate development.

**Objective #4:** Continue to monitor and to advise the Philadelphia Land Bank to ensure the implementation of equitable policies for making vacant and blighted land available for the development of affordable housing.

**Sustainability goal #3:** Publicize WCRP's achievements.

**Objective #1:** Increase the organization's visibility among private funders, government officials, and the general public.

**Objective #2:** Continue to implement a public relations plan to raise WCRP's profile and to trumpet its accomplishments, using social media, video, television, print media, and presentations.

**Sustainability goal #4:** Implement, evaluate & update WCRP's 2019-2022 Strategic Plan on an annual basis.

**Objective #1:** WCRP's staff, board, and committees will develop annual work plans with measurable outcomes for the implementation of the goals and objectives identified in the Strategic Plan.

**Objective #2:** WCRP's staff will track WCRP's progress in meeting the goals and objectives in its Strategic Plan and will annually report on that progress to WCRP's board and committees.

**Objective #3:** WCRP's staff, board, and committees will make adjustments to these goals and objectives as opportunities arise and as conditions change.



# Green Leaves

## *Our Collective Vision for the Impact We Hope to Have*

By 2022, as our current Strategic Plan comes to an end, WCRP will have had a significant impact on the people we serve, the places we work, the policies we support, the partnerships we have formed, and the strength we hope to build within our own organization. Our collective vision for this impact was captured during a 90-minute exercise on July 14, 2018 in which members of WCRP's staff, board, and advisory committee voiced their hopes for the future and then created colorful, cut-paper panels, embodying those hopes in images and phrases.

### **People:** *Our vision for individuals and communities we serve*



We envision a diverse and inclusive community where there is respect for differences, where self-determination is possible, and where all individuals have the confidence, stability, resilience, and resources to reach their highest potential. All basic needs are met. Decent, affordable housing, food, clothing, child care, education, health care, employment, and recreation are abundant. There is creativity, group action, and joy. All people have hope for their own futures and for their children's futures. The community is built upon the idea that everyone has enough information to make informed choices and hard decisions about the future; everyone has the opportunity to participate in shaping that future, channeling righteous anger at injustice into collective power and positive change.

### **Place:** *Our vision for the neighborhoods in which we work*

Even as WCRP becomes newly receptive to working anywhere within the city limits of Philadelphia if opportunities arise to develop affordable housing – and if our criteria are met for working in that neighborhood – we recognize the value of place and shall continue to cultivate a strong base of local support wherever we work. WCRP will fight for greater social and economic equity for the people and places we serve, striving to realize our long-term vision of opportunity, prosperity, safety, and

power that are shared by all who live, work, or worship in any of the neighborhoods in which we work. By the end of our current Strategic Plan, we envision that we will have had a significant impact on creating places:



- Where the number of blighted properties, derelict buildings, and vacant lands has been reduced;
- Where low-income families are able to find housing that is stable, affordable, and secure;
- Where longtime residents and newcomers work together for the common good;
- Where people are safe in their homes and feel free to walk around the neighborhood; and
- Where people enjoy participating and contributing to all that their community has to offer.

### **Policy: *Our vision for the changes we seek***



By the end of our three-year Strategic Plan, WCRP and our allies will have fostered a policy environment that favors development that is fair, inclusive, generous, and sustainable. We will have succeeded in increasing the amount of public funding for affordable housing and in decreasing the threat of displacement that faces low-income residents in Philadelphia’s neighborhoods. We will have succeeded in weaving into public policy a priority for housing that is *permanently* affordable whenever lands, grants, or low-interest loans are provided by a governmental or quasi-governmental agency to create affordable housing.

### **Partnership: *Our vision for the coalitions we support***



WCRP is committed to creating, joining, and supporting strong, collaborative, grassroots coalitions among like-minded organizations as a means of building collective power and bringing systemic change. Our vision for the Philadelphia Coalition for Affordable Communities, in particular, is to continue to be a powerful, diverse coalition that presses for measures that compel the developers of market-rate housing to contribute their fair share toward the production and preservation of affordable housing. Our vision for the state-wide coalition of com-

munity land trusts in which WCRP has played a leading role is raise the profile of CLTs throughout the state and to increase both public funding and private financing for CLT projects.

## **WCRP: *Our vision for operating from a “position of strength”***



WCRP will create a solid foundation for organizational stability and longevity. We will have strong leadership, a capable staff, a balanced budget, and adequate reserves for our properties, all of which will be well-managed and well-maintained. We will create a housing development pipeline, aided by enough working capital to seed future projects. The Community Justice Land Trust will hold multiple parcels of land beneath renter-occupied and owner-occupied homes.

WCRP will raise up a new crop of leaders. We will draw dozens of new people into our citywide campaigns, helping them to develop individual leadership skills and to build their collective power. We will maintain strong, collaborative relationships with our partners and allies. We will welcome onto WCRP’s board and committees additional tenants and new homeowners from the housing we manage, as well as additional residents from the neighborhoods we serve. We will add new members to the advisory committee of the Community Justice Land Trust. Meetings will remain informative, inclusive, productive, and fun.

By the end of our three-year Strategic Plan, WCRP will have increased its visibility and solidified its preeminence as an innovator and thought leader to whom others can turn to learn about permanent affordability and community land trusts. We will have an engaging, up-to-date website. We will have maintained our distinctive approach to equitable and sustainable community development. We will be transparent in our dealings with others. We will remain true to the values we hold dear.