

A VISION FOR BLACK LIVES:

POLICY DEMANDS FOR BLACK POWER, FREEDOM, & JUSTICE

An End to the Exploitative Privatization of Natural Resources — Including Land and Water. We Seek Democratic Control Over How Resources are Preserved, Used and Distributed

The Movement for Black Lives respects, supports, and stands in full solidarity with the rights of Indigenous peoples to the lands currently known as the United States. We make the following demands within a broader context of respect for Indigenous sovereignty.

What is the problem?

- Because land is treated as a commodity, a minority of wealthy corporations and families disproportionately owns land in the U.S. and the resources on top of it. 60 percent of land is privately owned, with the wealthiest half-a-percent owning 35.6 percent of this land and the wealthiest 10 percent owning nearly 80 percent of it.
- While laws no longer explicitly exclude Black families and businesses from owning land in any part of the country, the failure to address past inequities only serves to perpetuate disproportionately high rates of Black poverty and landlessness.
- There are next to no laws that ensure land is used to meet human needs in an equitable way; rather, the vast majority of laws protect and enhance profit making for owners who are wealthy and mostly White.
 - Through the legal construct of private land ownership (which grants landowners a great deal of leeway to determine the use of land), land and landed resources are used primarily to derive profits for owners.
 - Unable to think outside a market fundamentalist approach to maintaining and growing the local economy, local governments offer up public money and land to private investors to “create jobs” and develop and redevelop our housing, schools and, in general, our communities, with few restrictions.
 - The vast majority of publicly owned land gets redistributed to the highest bidder, feeding speculation. Land acquired by governments through tax foreclosures are auctioned, while land owned to meet community needs, such as public housing, schools and parks are increasingly sold off. Over 300,000 public housing units have been lost since 1990.
 - Public credits (through government-backed insurance and the tax code) protect investments in the development of land from losses, allowing private owners to benefit from the profits while socializing losses.
 - Land use planning and zoning only organize uses (for instance, for commercial and residential purposes), even reinforcing segregation by separating classes of residential uses. Inclusionary zoning laws are important, but don’t go far enough: setting aside land for middle income families, but too often nothing for families living on the lowest and fixed incomes).
 - Increasingly public decisions around planning and the distribution of public land and money for economic development is being consolidated and outsourced to

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non-transparent private entities (see LA for example).

- The end results for families living in poverty – disproportionately Black and female – are economic dislocation (living far from jobs, grocery stores, and other life essentials), incomprehensible trade-offs of life's essentials and/or the constant threat of displacement.

What does this solution do?

- Fair Development makes it a clear and comprehensive policy goal of meeting the human needs of all community members through the equitable distribution of the benefits of development, which takes precedence over market imperatives.
- It considers in a coordinated way the location, investment and infrastructure needed to secure work with dignity, clean water, food security, access to healthcare, education and basic housing, and a healthy environment for all community members without exception.
- It ensures public land, money and credit are used to meet first and foremost the greatest unmet needs within and across communities.
- It prevents forced displacement and curbs speculation due to development, while putting control in the hands of the intended beneficiaries of development, particularly through prioritizing implementation of development through alternative, community-based ownership entities.
- Decisions at all stages of development – planning, implementation and monitoring and enforcement – are made accountable and transparent to the people who are most impacted by them through deepening participatory public processes supported by outreach and education, particularly to historically excluded community members

Federal Action:

- Commit to the comprehensive goal of fair development.
- In a coordinated way, review all tax credits, insurance systems and budgets concerning various elements of development (e.g., housing, schools, community, highways, and so on) and align around the goal of fair development with an emphasis on community land trusts, cooperatives and community control.
- Require states meet standards of fair development to receive pass-through funding.

State Action:

- Commit to goal of fair development.
- Use local government plans to create a comprehensive plan for fair development across the state and support statewide and regional coordination.
- Align state tax policy and budgets around goal of fair development, ensuring the greatest equitable distribution of resources across local communities within the state, with an emphasis on community land trusts, cooperatives and community control. .
- Facilitate monitoring and enforcement of fair development practices and standards, providing a user-friendly way for community members to hold their local governments accountable to their human needs and rights.

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Local Action:

- Commit to goal of fair development.
- Facilitate participatory processes for planning, implementation and monitoring development, including assessments of unmet needs, with an emphasis on community land trusts, cooperatives and community control. .
- Offer training and supportive programs for the organization of cooperative and community-based entities, such as cooperative businesses and community land trusts capable of implementing development and providing means for shared ownership of land, housing and businesses, particularly by traditionally excluded communities and community members.
- Use city resources – funds and land – to implement fair development, prioritizing community-based cooperative entities governed by traditionally excluded communities and community members.
- Claim resources for the public by enforcing and streamlining laws on “abandoned” property and using tools like public land banks, while involving occupants in future development rather than displacing them.

How does this solution address the specific needs of some of the most marginalized Black people?

- Instead of development that displaces poor Black communities, this solution puts resources in the control of these communities to meet their own needs.
- The central focus of this solution is to meet the needs of the most marginalized first. Details of legislation will be key to making this a reality.

Model Legislation

- [Baltimore Fair Development Standards](#), pending
- [H.R. 4727](#), National Comprehensive Housing Act, introduced by Congressman Ronald Dellums (D-CA) in the 100th and 101st U.S. Congress (1988 and 1989)

Resources:

- The Vermont Declaration of Human Rights, 2012, is a comprehensive human rights charter that articulates goals of fair development, http://www.nesri.org/sites/default/files/Vermont_Declaration_of_Human_Rights.pdf.
- Baltimore Housing Roundtable’s Community + Land + Trust: Tools for Development without Displacement (2016), focuses on jobs and housing, while uplifting many of the basic ingredients at the local level of fair development: <http://www.baltimorehousingroundtable.org/publications>.
- For initial information on a human rights budget to support fair development, visit <http://www.nesri.org/programs/the-peoples-budget-campaign-in-vermont>; also see this animated short video on human rights budgeting: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PR2LNYs934>.
- Comprehensive recommendations from the Vancouver Plan of Action, Habitat: UN Conference on Human Settlements, June 1976, available at



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<http://habitat.igc.org/vancouver/vp-intr.htm>.

- Both Cleveland, OH, and Springfield, MA, have initiatives that focus on supporting cooperative business development through a so-called anchor institutions strategy. In Cleveland, [Evergreen Cooperatives](#) was launched in 2008 by a working group of Cleveland-based institutions (including the Cleveland Foundation, the Cleveland Clinic, University Hospitals, Case Western Reserve University, and the municipal government). The focus is on creating living wage jobs in six low-income neighborhoods known as Greater University Circle. An initiative in [Springfield](#) has pulled in a model grant for worker cooperatives that are being developed with guidance from local anchors.

Organizations Currently Working on Policy:

- Cooperation Jackson, Miss.
- Baltimore Housing Roundtable
- National Economic and Social Rights Initiative

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