

# Affordable Housing Trusts



Everyone deserves the opportunity to live a healthy, full life — but not everyone in our country has an equal opportunity to achieve this. CityHealth, an initiative of the de Beaumont Foundation and Kaiser Permanente, promotes a package of tried and tested policies that ensure all people in our largest cities have access to healthy choices.

Together, with visionary city leaders, we can make sure that all people have access to a safe place to live, a healthy body and mind, and a thriving environment. Policy solutions like Affordable Housing Trusts can help make communities more inclusive and resolve critical health disparities — now and decades down the road.

Having a home is foundational to living a healthy, full life. But across the United States, affordable housing shortages persist, rates of homelessness continue to rise, and more people are at risk of eviction. Affordable Housing Trusts policies are a community-driven way for cities to invest in building and maintaining affordable housing for everyone. They can also make our communities more inclusive by ensuring all people — no matter their income — have access to affordable housing.

## THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING CHALLENGE

- Today, one in four renters, or 10.9 million people, spend more than 50% of their income on housing.
- More than 500,000 people experience homelessness on any given night.
- According to the National Low-Income Housing Coalition, 7.2 million more affordable housing units are needed for extremely low-income people.
- Poor health outcomes associated with housing costs, quality, stability, and neighborhood context are much more likely to affect people of color as well as low-income and vulnerable populations.

## A HEALTHY SOLUTION: AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUSTS

- **Promotes Inclusion** – Affordable Housing Trusts can help our communities be more inclusive by serving groups that experience the poorest health outcomes due to housing instability, cost, or quality.
- **Reduces Household Energy Use** – Affordable Housing Trusts can help households reduce energy use for heating and substantially reduce household contributions to climate impacts and pollution.
- **Leverages Outside Investments** – Affordable Housing Trusts are a community-driven way to invest revenue to meet a variety of community needs. Local housing trusts have also been highly effective in leveraging additional funding, with some cities multiplying funds by more than 18 times for affordable housing.



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# Going For Gold

CityHealth annually rates Affordable Housing Trusts policies in cities with criteria that set the “gold standard” in each policy area. These criteria were developed with input from national experts, are backed by evidence, and work to reduce or remove systemic barriers to health equity. Medals are awarded to cities that meet the elements necessary for the best quality policy (gold), a good quality policy (silver), and a passable quality policy (bronze). Cities with no policy, or that do not meet the minimum threshold for a bronze medal, receive no medal.

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUSTS MEDAL CRITERIA



	Bronze	Silver	Gold
1. City has established an affordable housing trust fund.	✓	✓	✓
2. City policy includes a multi-stakeholder oversight board.	✓	✓	✓
3. City policy identifies or establishes a dedicated revenue source to fund the trust, which is not tied to annual appropriations or the budgeting process.	✗	✓	✓
4. City policy references affordability levels.	✗	✗	✓
5. City policy requires regular evaluation and public reporting on how trust funds have been spent and on how those funds have contributed to affordable housing objectives.	✗	✗	✓

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUSTS IN ST. LOUIS

Since 2003, St. Louis’ Affordable Housing Trust Fund awards loans and grants to develop affordable housing projects and provide housing-related services, including accessibility modifications, home repair, and support for the homeless. The trust fund’s funding comes from a city use tax paid by businesses on out-of-state purchases, and its funds must benefit families and individuals with incomes at or below 80% of the area’s established median income (and 40% of its funds must benefit families and individuals with incomes at or below 20% of the area’s established median income). St. Louis’ trust fund has leveraged more than \$617 million in outside funding, with every trust fund dollar invested in home construction attracting \$18.77 from outside sources.