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**El Sereno Community Land Trust**

## **HOUSELESS ACTIVISTS MAKE ANOTHER BIG PUSH FOR HOUSING AS A HUMAN RIGHT**

***With Nowhere to Shelter in Place During a Pandemic, More Houseless Families and Elders to Convert Formerly Vacant, CalTrans-Owned Homes in El Sereno into Their Own***

***It is estimated that there are more vacant homes than people experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles***

(LOS ANGELES, CA – November 2, 2020) – In the wake of a global pandemic and severe housing crisis, houseless activists of the Reclaiming Our Homes (ROH) movement – which look to create safe housing during the pandemic – will make another big push to move houseless families and elders into formerly vacant Caltrans-owned homes on November 8.

Since March 2020, the ROH activists, supported by El Sereno Community Land Trust (ESCLT), the Alliance for Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE), and members from the United Caltrans Tenants (UCT) - have negotiated a solution that allows them to move into several vacant, Caltrans-owned homes in the El Sereno area.

As part of the solution, Caltrans signed a lease with the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) to operate 22 Caltrans properties in the former El Sereno 710 freeway corridor as transitional housing.

“We will keep fighting to bring these homes under community ownership and for everyone who needs shelter from the storm,” said Ruby Gordillo, ROH activist.

Reclaimers are calling on the city and state to use all vacant properties to house people immediately. The next phase of the struggle is to realize the hope of transitioning ownership of the occupied homes from Caltrans to the El Sereno Community Land Trust to keep the housing permanently affordable and under community control.

The current process Caltrans has in place to sell homes will not only take many years, but it will further reward Caltrans's behavior of demolishing affordable housing in primarily low-income communities of color to make way for freeways as the amount the homes are sold for is hundreds of thousands of dollars

more than the original cost. The process of unloading these homes would also be a lengthy process. Low-income tenants, Housing Related Entities (HREs), and other parties must be offered an opportunity to purchase; those opportunities are granted at Caltrans's sole discretion. If none of these parties wanted to buy, the state would sell the homes at auction.

Given the unprecedented housing, homeless, and public health crisis, the Reclaimers' first demand is to speed up this process and immediately turn all vacant homes owned by Caltrans into permanently affordable housing for families, elders, and those with chronic illness.

All government levels to make a massive investment in public and social housing so that everyone has a home during this housing and public health crisis. There are still dozens of vacant homes owned by Caltrans in the former El Sereno 710 freeway corridor. Caltrans homes sit empty, while many more families struggle with homelessness. The hope that Caltrans will make more houses available for move-ins and ultimately transition ownership of the occupied homes to the El Sereno Community Land Trust

Community land trusts (CLTs) are nonprofit organizations governed by a board of CLT residents, community residents, and public representatives that provide lasting community assets and shared equity homeownership opportunities for families and communities. CLTs develop rural and urban agriculture projects, commercial spaces to serve local communities, affordable rental and cooperative housing projects, and conserve land or urban green spaces. However, their work's heart is the creation of homes that remain permanently affordable, providing successful homeownership opportunities for generations of lower-income families. - [groundedsolutions.org](http://groundedsolutions.org)

The actions of the Reclaiming Our Homes movement have drawn support from throughout the state, including El Sereno Community Land Trust (ESCLT), Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE), Community Power Collective (CPC), Fidecomiso Tierra Libre Comunitaria (FTLC), Eastside LEADS, the Los Angeles Center for Community Law and Action (LACCLA), the Los Angeles Community Land Trust Coalition (LACLTC), and many more.

The Reclaiming Our Homes movement was inspired by Moms4Housing, a movement where a group of mothers occupied a corporate-owned vacant house in Oakland and successfully pressured the owner to sell the property to a community land trust. The protest drew national attention and the backing of Governor Gavin Newsom.

CalTrans acquired more than 300 properties that were set to be demolished to expand the 710 freeway. Instead, the project was held up by litigation and abandoned in 2018.

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