



## Innovative ‘Small Dollar’ Loans Can Help Bridge the Capital Gap in Middle Neighborhoods

*Best Practice from CHN Housing Capital, Cleveland*



A persistent challenge in middle neighborhoods is the lack of loan capital made available by conventional lenders. This may include home rehabilitation for buyers where appraisal gaps exist or for landlords who want to improve rental properties and abate lead, as well as home purchases by buyers with lower credit

scores or other underwriting obstacles. This gap in loan capital, if filled at all, is often bridged by non-profit lenders who pull together a variety of capital sources and subsidies to create flexible loan products that actually meet the needs of neighborhoods.

CHN Housing Capital – the lending arm of CHN Housing Partners and about to become a certified Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) – offers affordable ‘small dollar’ home purchase and rehab loans for both homebuyers and landlords. Each product uses a holistic underwriting approach and focuses closely on the needs of local borrowers and neighborhoods. Formed in 2019, the lending arm has become an integral part of CHN’s 40-year history of promoting affordable and stable homeownership and is providing critical service in the current market. **READ ON.**



## Solving Senior Housing Shortages with Vacant Commercial Spaces in Middle Neighborhoods

*Best Practice from Rochester, NY and*

*Detroit, MI*

Vacant commercial spaces can have a profoundly negative influence on communities. They represent disinvestment and can bring down property values, plus be a magnet for vandalism or unfavorable activity. Middle neighborhoods often have "excess" commercial space due to changing consumer preferences and growth patterns. Repurposing these spaces can be a challenge based on the size of the building and scope of the project but two nonprofit organizations are solving another problem in their communities-lack of quality senior housing-by retrofitting these properties for that use.

In Irondequoit, NY, a first-ring suburb of Rochester, the nonprofit organization Pathstone took on part of a vacant shopping mall for redevelopment as senior housing. In Detroit, the Grandmont-Rosedale Development Corporation is in the process of replacing an old IHOP restaurant building with senior apartments designed around the desires of senior residents as well as the input of other community members. READ ALL ABOUT IT.



1 in 15 home borrowers—  
around 7 million U.S.  
adults—currently use  
alternative financing.

TWEET 



## PEW: Millions of Americans Have Used Risky Financing Arrangements to Buy Homes

PEW Charitable Trusts released the findings of a recent study of home borrowers using alternative financing: personal property loans, land contracts, lease-to-own and seller-financed mortgages. The study outlines the risks of these methods, including predatory rates and terms, and the disparities by race, ethnicity and income in the use of

them.

Bottom line: 1 in 15 **current** home borrowers have an alternative financing method, and the figure is higher for Hispanic households and for borrowers with annual incomes less than \$50,000. [READ THE ARTICLE HERE.](#)

Join us next month for a webinar with two CoP members who are using mortgage refinancing tools to protect these borrowers, avert economic displacement and stabilize neighborhoods. [REGISTER HERE.](#)

## “Neighborhood Stewards” Gather Data and Build Community in Youngstown Middle Neighborhoods

*A Best Practice from Youngstown, OH*

After years of trying different methods to connect with residents to gather input and feedback, YNDC decided to take efforts to the next level by employing longtime residents as Neighborhood Stewards to interact with the community. They believe that meeting people where they are was the best and most effective method of reaching residents, which for YNDC means knocking on doors and getting to know people. YNDC’s Neighborhood Stewards are paid to do exactly that.

Using REGRID, a web-based, user-friendly data mapping and survey tool, YNDC’s Neighborhood Stewards travel door-to-door in their own neighborhoods and collect detailed feedback from residents about how the neighborhood is doing and what they feel are important priorities for improving the area. YNDC uses this feedback to inform and evaluate its programs and services at the neighborhood level. They also collect contact information from residents who want to get more involved in activities to improve their neighborhood. Neighborhood Stewards are an important part of an overall neighborhood revitalization or stabilization strategy and are essentially the impetus for prioritizing projects and getting work going. [READ MORE.](#)





## April Community Engagement Chat Recap

### Connecting Organizations with the Community, and Each Other

In April, the Engagement Affinity Group discussed various topics including strategies for building connections between community organizations throughout a city or region such as city departments, libraries, other nonprofits, etc. Oftentimes, we rely on a standard meeting format where presenters share information and updates, but what if meetings inspired real engagement and connection?

Here are a few ideas from the group:

- Establish a show and tell, or a place and time to share news and upcoming events
- Rotate host locations and change up the times of day – try meeting for breakfast, lunch, or a mid-day coffee break
- Create opportunities for small group work or at least small group brainstorming on certain topics of interest
- Allow the group to set the agenda for the meeting, or add items to an established agenda
- Host an informal neighborhood BBQ or other social event for staff and volunteers
- Hold the meeting at a local park or community garden
- Create peer-to-peer mentoring or skill building opportunities
- Send lunch or coffee coupons if meeting virtually
- Find macro-influencers in the network and get them involved
- Use social media
- Attend 'their' events: go to events hosted by groups you want to connect with

### Next Engagement Chat

Wednesday, June 15

Noon – 1:00 p.m. Eastern time.

We hope you can join us!

Zoom: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86858282866>

**All are welcome!**



## June Webinar - Registration Open

### Mortgage Refinance as a Tool for Stabilizing Middle Neighborhoods

June 2, 2022 ~ 12pm EST

[REGISTER HERE](#)



Homeownership is becoming more and more difficult to attain, yet it remains the most common tool for creating household wealth, combatting economic displacement, and sustaining healthy, thriving neighborhoods. Many homeowners are paying too much for their financing and/or are in very vulnerable positions because of predatory loans or land contracts.

Did you know, for example, that 1 in 15 current home borrowers are estimated to be in an alternative financing situation such as rent-to-own, land contract or personal loan? They can lose everything if they miss one payment, and they are probably paying far too much in interest and penalties. Conventionally financed home borrowers may also be paying more than they need to in financing costs, including mortgage insurance premiums that could be eliminated.

In this webinar, two practitioners will talk about how they use mortgage refinancing as a tool to stabilize households and neighborhoods, and to prevent displacement. Both are CDFIs and originate mortgages directly, but we'll also learn how one purchases originated refi mortgages from lenders, cutting out a lot of the work while achieving the same goal. Our speakers will also talk about techniques you can use in partnership with a CDFI or community bank to ensure that more of your homeowners are in a position to hang onto their homes.

**Speakers:**

**Elena Gonzales**, Senior Director, Policy and Resource Development, Homewise Albuquerque, NM

**Steven Meyer**, CEO, Renew Indianapolis Indianapolis, IN

**Moderator:**

**Marcia Nedland**, Organizer, Middle Neighborhoods Community of Practice

## Looking into the future...Webinars in the Works

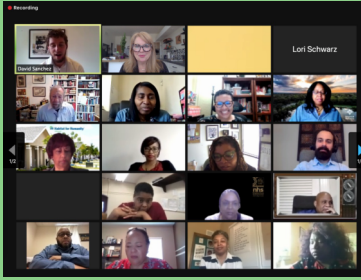
**Neighborhood-Based Strategies for Crime & Violence Prevention**

**Black Wealth & Ownership as a Goal for Black Middle Neighborhood Revitalization**

**Partnering with Community Banks**

**Developing a Data Driven Strategy - Advance Practitioner Exchange**

**Creating Compelling Stories for Social Media**



## Recent Webinar Recordings

### Using Building Conditions Data to Drive Strategy, and Engaging Residents to Collect It

#### [Watch Now](#)

With:

**Jack Dougherty**, Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation

**Becki Kenderes**, Grandmont-Rosedale Development Corporation

**Marcia Nedland**, Principal Fall Creek Consultants & Organizer, Middle Neighborhoods Community of Practice

### Middle Neighborhood Trends in the Desert Southwest

#### [Watch Now](#)

With:

**Alan Mallach**, Senior Fellow, Center for Community Progress

**Lori Schwarz**, Director of Neighborhood Services, City of Plano, TX

**Marcia Nedland**, Principal Fall Creek Consultants & Organizer, Middle Neighborhoods Community of Practice

### Beyond Zoom: Practitioner Tutorials on Fund & Effective Virtual Community Engagement Tools

#### [Watch Now](#)

With:

**Nancy Tunell**, Neighborhood Vitality Specialist, City of Garland, TX

**Melissa Nemon**, Consultant, Londonderry, NH

### Moving Middle Neighborhoods Forward: Looking Back and Planning Ahead, What Will Success Look Like in 2022?

#### [Watch Now](#)

With:

**Greg Perelka**, EVP, Lending Operations, CHN Housing Capital, Cleveland

**Lisa Potts**, Board Member, Cornerstone, St. Louis

**Kathi Thomas-Gibson**, Director, Community Services, City of Las Vegas

### Shut Out: Exploring the Impact of Institutional Investors on Middle Neighborhoods [Watch Now](#)

With:

**Timothy Kobie**, PhD, Business Process Analyst, City of Cleveland, Ohio  
**Jayme Lucas-Bauer**, Neighborhood Development Project Manager, Old Brooklyn CDC

**Sally Martin**, Housing Director, City of South Euclid, Ohio

**Jeff Verespej**, Executive Director, Old Brooklyn CDC

**Find all recordings of the Middle Neighborhoods' webinar series [HERE](#)**

Webinars are co-sponsored by the [Middle Neighborhoods Community of Practice](#), the [National Community Stabilization Trust](#), and [NeighborWorks America](#).

## In the News + Resources

Please [send us](#) links to articles about your work in middle neighborhoods or topics relevant to middle neighborhoods.

1. Former NCST CEO [Julia Gordon was sworn in as FHA Commissioner](#) on May 18! Julia is an important leader in the Middle Neighborhoods movement, having led the effort to take on the initiative as part of NCST's corporate programs with NeighborWorks America as a partner supporting the Community of Practice. We are thrilled to have her at FHA and look forward to the innovations she will employ to make homeownership available to more households.
2. NHRC held a great webinar, [Corporatization of Housing in America](#), featuring speakers David Sanchez of NCST, Andrew Park of Americans for Financial Reform, and Sandra Less, an MHAction resident leader.
3. [Seattle's middle class is vanishing. Could this idea save it?](#), Naomi Ishisaka, The Seattle Times, April 4, 2022.
- 4.



## CoP Reports + Action Items

**Out and About:** In April, Marcia led a session on Middle Neighborhoods at the Arizona Housing Coalition Conference, in Mesa, Arizona. Key issues for those participants were escalating home prices and investor purchases. Our proposal to lead a session at the September Reclaiming Vacant Properties conference in Chicago was approved! The conference is presented by the Center for Community Progress, and our session will be led by Deborah Moore, National Middle Neighborhoods Steering Committee Member and Director of Neighborhood Strategy for NHS Chicago.

**Custom Webinars:** We often get requests for custom webinars on middle neighborhoods, which we gladly deliver! Please let us know if you'd like one for your staff, board, network, or community.

**CoP Listserv:** Don't forget to use our listserv, [MiddleNeighborhoodsCoP@googlegroups.com](#), to share announcements, news articles, questions and the like. If you are in the CoP, you are already a member of the listserv. If you are not a CoP member, but would like to join the listserv, email [MiddleNeighborhoodsCoP@googlegroups.com](#).

### Actions You Can Take to Grow and Support the CoP

1. Join and participate in the Listserv, [MiddleNeighborhoodsCoP@googlegroups.com](mailto:MiddleNeighborhoodsCoP@googlegroups.com). This is the most direct way for CoP members to interact with each other. Share your questions

and successes.

2. Submit an article, news item, or resource idea for the newsletter to [middle@middleneighborhoods.org](#).
3. Host a Middle Neighborhoods 101 webinar for people in your organization or community to help them learn about middle neighborhoods and launch a discussion on local opportunities. [Middle Neighborhoods 101](#) will help you plan this and deliver the webinar with you.
4. Submit an idea for a webinar or case study topic to [middle@middleneighborhoods.org](#).
5. Convene (virtually until in-person meetings are advisable) with other CoP members in your region to discuss a particular issue, or to start creating a regional action agenda. [Regional Convenings](#) can help you contact your peers and plan your convening.
6. We can also help you convene a group of CoP members by interest rather than geography. Past convenings have included city government representatives.
7. Represent middle neighborhoods in local policy discussions. [Local Policy Discussions](#) share some talking points.
8. Propose and conduct a session on middle neighborhoods for conferences and other convenings or groups you participate in. [Local Policy Discussions](#) help with the proposal, recruiting panelists, planning, etc.