Collaboration in Unlikely Spaces:
The Characteristics and Promise of Successful Collaboration Among Affordable Housing and Environmental Conservation Proponents

by

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ABSTRACT
There is a decreasing amount of available land and competing priorities for the use of it. Land value appreciation and the effects of climate change reduce the amount of viable land at affordable prices. Sectors and stakeholders with contending interests for land parcels have a choice; they can contest the other, ignore the other and try to maximize their interests, or collaborate to maximize both of their interests on that land.

Two sectors that face this choice are affordable housing developer non-profits and conservation land trust non-profits. Both are land-based, in need of inexpensive land, and struggling to achieve their missions alone. Collaboration, I suggest, is the preferred route for these sectors to take in the face of increasing competition, as it allows each sector to simultaneously advance their own interests by leveraging the other sector's strategies and tools, and form a more powerful political coalition to further their shared interests.

I describe and analyze an action research case study I conducted on a cross-sectoral collaboration in the Hudson Valley of New York State. Hudson Valley Affordable Housing and Conservation Strategy (HVAHCS) is comprised of ten affordable housing and conservation land trust non-profits that are choosing to collaborate in the face of increasing competition. Through a review of consensus building, network building, and collective impact theories, as well as interviews and experience as a member of the HVAHCS facilitation team, I look at what enables their cross-sectoral collaboration, and how they approach obstacles to it. I conclude with recommendations for other groups considering collaboration as a means to advance their individual and shared interests in the same physical space.

Learnings from this action research case study point to the importance of employing an interests-based approach, allowing ideas and priorities to emerge from the network of organizations, balancing capacity and diffused leadership within the collaborative, using a third-party facilitator, prioritizing relationship-building, building a shared understanding, and supporting the organizations within the collaborative.

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Introduction

The Problem

There is a decreasing amount of available land and competing priorities for the use of it. The effects of climate change are reducing the amount of viable land, and land value appreciation limits the amount of affordable land. This problem exists in many states, and in many countries. Sectors and stakeholders with competing interests for land have a choice; they can contest the other, ignore the other and try to maximize their interests alone, or collaborate to maximize both of their interests on that land.

Collaboration, I suggest, is the preferred route, as it allows each sector to simultaneously leverage the other sector's skills and connections to advance their own interests, and form a more powerful political coalition to further their shared interests.

Two sectors that face this choice are affordable housing developer non-profits and conservation land trust non-profits. Both are land-based, require access to inexpensive land, and are struggling to complete their missions alone.

In this thesis, I illustrate this problem looking at a case of cross-sectoral collaboration in Vermont. I review consensus-building, network building, and collective impact theories, which underpin this work. I then describe and analyze an action research case study I conducted on another cross-sectoral collaboration in the Hudson Valley region of New York State. I conclude with recommendations for organizations elsewhere considering cross-sector collaboration as a response to the problem of scarce land and competing interests.

Learnings from this action research case study point to the importance of employing an interests-based approach, allowing ideas and priorities to emerge from the network of organizations, balancing capacity and diffused leadership within the collaborative, using a third-party facilitator, prioritizing relationship-building, building a shared understanding, and supporting the organizations within the collaborative.

Presentation Case

In the mid 1980's, Vermont's economy was growing and land value was rapidly appreciating. The effects of President Reagan removing the provision of affordable housing from the role of federal government was playing out within the state. In 1985, 142 units of subsidized housing were converted to market-rate units when the projects became eligible for HUD prepayment. One thousand two hundred units of affordable rental housing were scheduled to follow suit in 1990. Large developers were buying farmland and converting it into subdivisions. Due to a legal loophole, they were subject to little or no regulatory review, which left neighbors unaware of these purchases and unable to object in advance. Houses were being purchased by wealthy

nonresidents as vacation homes, further removing available land from the market and driving up land prices (Libby, 1989).

In this landscape of rapidly appreciating land value, two conservation organizations, the Vermont Land Trust and The Nature Conservancy, were unable to purchase land of high conservation and agricultural value without financial and technical assistance from the State of Vermont. They lobbied for the development of a state fund that would provide public money for organizations purchase land, and a board that would administer the fund (James M. Libby, Jr. & Darby Bradley, 2000). The conservation proponents invited affordable housing organizations to join their lobbying coalition as they recognized their shared challenge of increasing land prices (Libby, 1989).

They were successful in 1987, when the state had a budget surplus and the political coalition was strong. The legislature passed a statute establishing the Vermont Housing and Conservation Trust Fund with "dual goals of creating affordable housing for Vermonters, and conserving and protecting Vermont's agricultural land, forestland, historic properties, important natural areas, and recreational lands," and created Vermont Housing and Conservation Board to administer it (10 V.S.A. § 302 Conservation and Development, 1987). The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board is a quasi-public organization.

The statute dictates that the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB)'s Board of Directors is comprised of Secretaries of the state agencies of Agriculture, Human Services, and Natural Resources, the Executive Director of the Vermont Housing Finance Agency, and five members of the public appointed by different elected officials. The members of the public must include one advocate for low-income Vermonters, one advocate for farmers, one that represents conservation organizations, and one that represents affordable housing (*Board Members | Vermont Housing & Conservation Board*, n.d.).

In 1987, the State committed roughly $1.25 million for VHCB to distribute. Act 200, the Growth Management Act, passed the following year and included a one-time $20 million apportionment for the housing and conservation trust fund, and the commitment of ongoing funds that would be raised from a property transfer tax increase.[1] (Libby, 1989). Their work distributing funds and providing technical support to non-profit organizations continues today.

VHCB has had many successes as an organization in its 35 years. They have awarded $400 million to affordable housing and conservation non-profits which has leveraged $1.9 billion in private and other public funding, and supported organizations to create more than 13,880 affordable homes and conserve more than 438,400 acres (*About Us | Vermont Housing & Conservation Board*, n.d.).

[1] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Gus Seelig, April 19, 2023)

They have, though, been challenged in develop a shared learning, acting, and community network of cross-sectoral organizations. The challenges they have faced developing this network are relevant to other cross-sectoral collaboration efforts on increasingly unavailable land. Below, I articulate the challenges faced and VHCB's response.

1) *Maximizing the interests of both sectors simultaneously, and continuing to collaborate when interests are at odds*

VHCB supports both the affordable housing non-profit and conservation land trust sectors in advance their own interests. VHCB provides organizational capacity and funding to advance each sectors work, but in a way that largely maintains their siloed approach. Their work to support these organizations, though, is largely bifurcated. They do not focus on projects or policies that maximizing the interests of both simultaneously. Of the nine housing programs offered by VHCB, only one combines interest with conservation groups: the zero energy modular homes program. Of the conservation programs, none explicitly combine interests with affordable housing (*Our Programs | Vermont Housing & Conservation Board*, n.d.). They do not act as a network by convening organizations to share knowledge, brainstorm projects, or collaborate on policy.

VHCB has funded a handful of projects that maximize the interests of both sectors. Projects have included carving out land of low conservation value from a conservation easement and for Habitat for Humanity houses, and dividing donated farmland into protected farmland and community accessible land. However, as Gus Seelig, the longtime executive director said, projects that maximize the interests of both sectors are "not [the organization's] bread and butter."[2]

VHCB has not maintained alignment among member organizations in the face of competing interests. One example of this is playing out now over potential reform of Act 250, Vermont's land use and development law. In March 2023, the Senate considered, a housing bill that would expedite housing development by circumventing state and local permitting requirements (Hirschfeld, 2023a). Environmental organizations were concerned about potential resulting environmental degradation, and affordable housing developers viewed the environmental review processes as slowing or stopping needed development and discouraging smaller developers from developing (Hirschfeld, 2023b).

VHCB member organizations are coming down on differing sides of this debate, and the VHCB has stayed out of the political debate[3]. VHCB could, but has not, support its member organizations to move past this zero-sum framing of Act 250, and form a political coalition to lobby for a joint proposal.

2) *Sectoral differences, and equitably leveraging the strengths of each*

[2] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Gus Seelig, April 19, 2023)
[3] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Gus Seelig, April 19, 2023)

No two sectors are alike; they each bring their own history, tactics, knowledge, and constituencies. Some have been around longer, have stronger political bases, have access to more funding. This can create a challenge if one sector has more to lose when coming to the "collaboration table," but can also create opportunities to leverage and trade strengths. In the conservation and affordable housing non-profit collaboration, conservation groups tend to be more stable in terms of political support and access to money.

VHCB handled these sectoral differences well. The conservation groups fundraised to hire a lawyer to lobby on behalf of the jointly-drafted legislation and staff the coalition. The conservation organizations contributed the majority of the funding, and the affordable housing organizations and service providers made nominal contributions. The affordable housing groups, on the other hand, were able to contribute their experience, expertise, and constituency support. This successfully leveraged the strengths of both sectors. Gus Seelig noted that "if affordable housing organizations or community action agencies had tried to fundraise, we couldn't have raised half as much. This was a gift [the conservation organizations] gave us.[4]"

There were, of course, challenges to collaborating across differences. Each sector was originally wary of the other; the conservation organization were troubled by the civil disobedience tactics used by affordable housing organizations to publicize the housing need, and affordable housing organizations were concerned they would be used to gain political support for the fund but not ultimately receive any of the funds (James M. Libby, Jr. & Darby Bradley, 2000).

3) Learning about, building relationships with, and building trust between both sectors

The process of developing the draft legislation—which occurred via a working group meeting every two weeks—was also a process of learning about each sector and building relationships[5]. Topics that were frequently debated included identifying eligible applicants, board composition and function, allocation of funds between affordable housing and conservation groups. Finding consensus on the details and working on complicated structural issues was "painstaking, but [the process] was another part of the glue that held the project and players together (Libby, 1989, p. 1277)." The process of building trust was not seamless; affordable housing organizations considered submitting a separate housing trust fund legislation and withdrawing from the coalition when draft legislation was shared with potential sponsors without their approval (Libby, 1989).

VHCB has convened one program for two years that facilitated learning and relationship building between sectors. The VHCB Leadership Cohort brought together leaders of 25 non-profits and state agencies to strengthen collaboration between housing and conservation, and provide training on cross-cutting topics (e.g., social justice, equity, inter-generational communication, and the legislative process) (*VHCB Leadership Project | Vermont Housing & Conservation Board*, n.d.).

[4] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Gus Seelig, April 19, 2023)
[5] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Gus Seelig, April 19, 2023)

4) Maintaining the capacity and momentum at the collaborative, organization, and member organization representative levels

With regards to maintaining capacity at the collaborative-level, VHCB was able to fundraise and hire a lawyer to help finalize the legislation, lobby in in the State House, build organizational support, coordinate working groups, and maintain momentum (Libby, 1989). Because the coalition has institutionalized and become their own quasi-public organization, they have a significant staff of approximately 46 people (*About Us | Vermont Housing & Conservation Board*, n.d.). As its own organization, VHCB has a lot of capacity.

VHCB's approach to member organizations is to support them with technical and financial solution, and not to engage them regularly in a way that would strain their capacity. This is a loss in terms of relationship building, shared learning, and interest maximization, as discussed in prior challenges, but does not strain the organizations or their representative's capacity.

5) Accessing funding sources that incentivize collaboration

VHCB makes progress in terms of de-siloing state funds, but then recreates this challenge in by using separated grant programs for each sector. The conservation and housing programs, as described earlier, are not maximizing their ability to maximize the other sector's interests.

VHCB is affected by political winds, as the organization is at the will of and funded by the governor and legislature, which frequently flip political parties. They had decreased support—politically and, as result, financially –in the 1990's. State support has stabilized, likely because the organization has proven their worth to community members[6].

6) Responding nimbly as a collaborative to policy or project opportunities.

VHCB does not move nimbly as a collaborative to support policies or projects. They are set-up to respond as their own organization, but not as a network or collaborative of organizations, and they lose out on potential political might and interest maximization as a result. One way this plays out is through the debates over Act 250 reform, described above. A coalition of organizations is not ready to respond to the Act as a political unit.

7) Conducting community engagement

VHCB's initial outreach to elected officials to lobby for the statute which established it in 1987 is a strong example of the strength of political coalitions, and the power of doing state lobbying. A quote from then Senator Scudder Parker, chairperson of the Finance Committee, illuminates the power of the coalition: "it was the first time I've seen a low-income advocate and a farmer supporting the same bill (Libby, 1989)." Since their formation, VHCB has not conducted community or political engagement as a network of organizations.

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[6] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Gus Seelig, April 19, 2023)

VHCB adopts a typical response to the issue of sectors with contending interests operating in the same shared physical space: they choose to ignore each other. VHCB acknowledges the importance of both sectors and advocates for resources and capacity for each, but does little to build community, build shared understanding, and facilitate collaboration that maximizes the interests of each sector. This generic response to the climate and housing crises is not sufficient.

In the remaining portion of this thesis, I describe my methods, review theoretical framing, and then analyze an action research case study of an effort between the same sectors in the Hudson Valley region of New York State to see how they navigate the challenges to cross-sectoral collaboration faced in Vermont.

Methods

I first lay out the context of collaboration between the affordable housing and conservation sectors. I describe affordable housing and conservation non-profits, identify their interests, what incentivizes them from collaboration, and what dissuades them from collaboration. I do this through interviews with the Hudson Valley collaborative planning team members, Hudson Valley collaborative meeting materials, as well as research on and an interview with Vermont Housing and Conservation Board. A list of conducted interviews is in Table 1.

Table 1. Interview List

Person	Collaborative	Role	Date
Al Bellenchia	HVAHCS	Affordable housing organization; Planning team member	April 18, 2023
Sophie Carrillo-Mandel	HVAHCS	Facilitation team member; Planning team member	April 18, 2023
Rebecca Gillman Crimmins	HVAHCS	Co-convener; Planning team member	April 18, 2023
Ona Ferguson	HVAHCS	Facilitation team member; Planning team member	April 12, 2023
Steve Rosenberg	HVAHCS	Co-convener; Planning team member	April 14, 2023
Gus Seelig	VHCB	Executive Director; Founding member	April 19, 2023
Seth McKee	HVAHCS	Conservation organization	April 21, 2023

Theoretical Framing

This thesis draws on theories articulated in consensus building, coalition and network building, and collective impact schools of thought.

Consensus Building

Consensus building is a type of group decision-making that seeks to satisfy all parties' primary interests and concerns. It is an alternative to traditional top-down decision-making, as well as an alternative to distributive negotiation. Consensus building puts a premium on (1) maximizing the value to all sides of the agreement, (2) leaving parties in a better position to deal with each other during implementation, (3) reducing transaction costs, and (4) adding credibility and trust to the agreement in the eyes of the community (L. Susskind et al., 1999).

Consensus building uses a mutual gains approach to negotiation, which prioritized identifying interests and creating value. Understanding the difference between interests and positions is a foundational concept in the mutual gains approach. Position are what people say they want, and interests are the underlying reasons, needs, desires, concerns, or fears that explain *why* they want it. Behind opposed positions lie shared and compatible interests, as well as conflicting ones. Basic needs (e.g., security, economic well-being, a sense of belonging, recognition, agency) are the most powerful interests (Fisher et al., 2011).

Many solutions are possible when a conflict focuses on interests rather than positions because parties usually have multiple interests. Creating value—or finding ways to "increase the pie" rather than just distribute it—allows parties to exceed the value they would achieve in a distributive bargaining approach. Parties can "trade" options that they value differently to meet each parties' interests. With creativity and persistence, it then becomes possible to identify an agreement that meets interests identified by each party. Consensus building focuses on the invention of "packages" of options that advance one's self-interest while meeting interests of all parties. If "packaged" together properly, an agreement can exceed the value of each party's "walk away" option. (L. Susskind et al., 1999).

A consensus building model is comprised of a few critical stages: convening, assigning roles and responsibilities, facilitating group problem solving, reaching agreement, and holding people to their commitments (i.e., implementation). Convening, or the gathering together of parties, includes defining the problem, determining who needs to be at the table, hiring a third-party facilitator, and conducting a conflict or situation assessment. Facilitating group problem solving is where the focus on interests (L. E. Susskind & Cruikshank, 2006), creating value, and creativity are center stage. Durable agreements that withstand the challenges of implementation are possible "only when parties feel that their core interests have been met, they have been treated fairly and they know everything possible is being done to maximize joint gains (i.e., through consensus building) (L. Susskind, 2009)."

Consensus building is strengthened by and strengthens relationships. Relationships – group, between parties, and systemic – are central to consensus building. Building relationships and trust are critical to consensus building processes and their implementation. "The likelihood that long-term relationship will be maintained increases the confidence of the parties that agreements will be implemented. (L. Susskind et al., 1999)"

Values, of course, also have a role in consensus building. “Values involve strongly held personal beliefs, moral and ethical principles, basic legal rights and, more generally, idealized views of the world. While interests are about what we want, values are about what we care about and what we stand for. In value-laden debates, to compromise or to accommodate neither advances one’s self-interest or increases joint gains. Compromise, in its most pejorative sense, means abandoning deeply held beliefs, values or ideals. To negotiate away values is to risk giving up one’s identity. (L. Susskind, 2009)”

Criticisms of consensus building often focus on its inability to counter systemic power dynamics within the effort. They problematize the idea of one individual representing a group, and the that working through conflict prevents justice being sought in a legal system (Smyth, 2005). Criticisms problematize the ability of a third party facilitator or mediator to be neutral in guiding a process, and problematize the extent to which neutrality as a goal perpetuates the status quo of oppression (Mayer et al., 2012).

Network Building

Networks, or webs of relationships, focuses on the relationships between individual elements. Networks are multi-organizational and can do more to tackle complex social and ecological issues than one entity can do alone. Network building involves increasing connectivity through trust building and learning, increasing alignment through shared value proposition, and collective action on efforts such as advocacy, education and/or resource leveraging (Plastrik & Taylor, 2006). Elements of community networks include a shared purpose, commitment to use the network’s collective knowledge to achieve shared purpose, decentralized and dispersed power, dissemination of knowledge, and a focus on relationships and trust (Penn State Extension, 2018), (brown, 2017).

Network building theory embraces the idea of emergence, or the “new and unexpected phenomena emerging from interaction” (Ogden, 2013). Emergent strategy is a relationship-focused practice of being “in right relationship to our home and each other, to practice complexity, and grow a compelling future together through relatively simple interactions (brown, 2017).” Networks should have clarity on what they are doing, but let the approach be emergent and flexible. “The network creates the conditions for collaborative stewardship by spending time together, building relationships, and sharing information. That is how projects emerge—not always right away, but over time (Skybrook, 2018).” Emergent strategies emerge through the partnership, rather than being defined by individuals or without input. An important factor in helping networks avoid defaulting to organization-centric habits is to make the network do the work rather than hiring staff or becoming institutionalized (M. Taylor et al., 2014).

Spence et al., 2018 identify a roadmap for effective collaboration via network building. The first step is to clarify the purpose. The second is to convene the ‘right’ people, which can include those with the authority to act, those with stake in the outcome, those who have expertise and information, and those who can consider diverse perspectives. The third step is to cultivate trust, which Spence et al, 2018 state to be “the single most important ingredient to effective

collaboration". The fourth step is to coordinate existing activities and give participants the opportunity to share what they need to get out of and give to the effort. The fifth step is to collaborate for systems impact, which necessitates a "focus on systemic and structural issues such as racism, sexism, and income inequality".

Collective Impact

Collective impact theory posits that large-scale social change results from improved cross-sector coordination rather than single organizations, no matter how powerful or innovative they may be. Where network building theory emphasized decentralization, collective impact initiatives include centralized infrastructure, dedicated staff, and structured processes. Five characteristics of collective impact processes are a common agenda, shared measurement of its impact, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and backbone support through dedicated staff (Kania & Kramer, 2011).

Two critiques of collective impact have been made since the emergence of the theory. The first is around absence of equity. In a response to their 2011 article on collective impact, Kania and Kramer published anew in 2022 to say that "the single greatest reason why collective impact efforts fall short is a failure to center equity." They go on to share a revised definition of collective impact: "a network of community members, organizations, and institutions that advance equity by learning together, aligning, and integrating their actions to achieve population and systems-level change." To do this, they recommend grounding the work in data and context, and target solutions; focus on system change, in addition to programs and services; shift power within the collaborative; listen to and act with community; and build equity leadership and accountability (Kania et al., 2021).

The second critique is that collective impact theory ignores the fact that the social problems the approach tries to solve arise from the "fragmenting of services in neo-liberalism" and the privatization of these services. Caterino, 2022, shares that collective impact "takes over the role that should have been carried out by elected governments."

Sectoral Context

To understand why collaboration is a useful approach for affordable housing and conservation proponents to consider, I set the stage by *briefly* describing each sector's mission, history, tools for change making, funding sources, and challenges faced. I then build a case for collaboration between the two sectors by looking at what discourages it and its potential. I look at each sector's interests and the tools and strategies they use to achieve their goals.

Affordable Housing Non-Profit Developers

Mission. Affordable housing non-profit developers ("affordable housing organizations") are mission driven; they aim to provide below-market rate housing for "the needy, the elderly, working households, the disabled, and others that the market does not serve adequately" (*ULI Community Catalyst Report Number 3: Best Practices in the Production of Affordable Housing*, 2005). They "concern themselves with a spectrum of social issues—economics, food, health

insurance, child care, jobs, education, affordable housing, and community investment. They focus on distribution and economic justice. (James M. Libby, Jr. & Darby Bradley, 2000)"

Affordable housing organizations can develop and operate affordable rentals, and/or develop and sell affordable houses. Some organizations provide supportive housing, which provides social services in addition to rental units.

They are increasingly run as businesses so that profit generated can serve as a capital base for future projects (*ULI Community Catalyst Report Number 3: Best Practices in the Production of Affordable Housing*, 2005). It is important to note that these mission-based, tax-exempt organizations differ from for-profit affordable housing developers, whose profits go to the owners and shareholders, rather than funding other projects.

History. The affordable housing sector has roots in the early 1900 reform movement and private businesses, but was revolutionized in 1959 with the federal Section 202 program began. Section 202 sought participation from non-profit organizations in providing subsidized housing for the elderly and disabled. Affordable housing non-profit organizations heeded the call, and the program remains in effect today. Federal housing programs continued to provide roles for nonprofits in the 1960s[7]. The importance of affordable housing non-profits in the sector was a reflection of a growing negative perception of public sector-provided housing (Bratt, 2006).

The current housing crisis is characterized by a shortage in housing supply at all levels (affordable, workforce, market rate, transitional). Rental and sale prices have skyrocketed as a result of labor and land costs, building materials supply chain issues, stymied construction, wages not keeping paces with housing costs, and single-family homes being purchased for short term rentals and by corporate buyers. The housing crisis we see today is delayed reaction from the mid-2000 recession, which halted housing construction, and the COVID-19 pandemic. (Joe Czajka, 2022).

Funding. Affordable housing nonprofits finance projects through public subsidies and tax incentives. They use federal programs[8] and federal funds passed through to states and local jurisdictions[9] (Schwartz, 2021).

Challenges. Affordable housing non-profit developers face challenges that prevent them from meeting their mission. First, perhaps, is the scale of the need. Individuals working in this sector have described the challenge in metaphor: "this is no longer a housing crisis; it is housing

[7] For example, the Office of Economic Opportunity's Model Cities program created housing development corporations.
[8] Federal funding sources include Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, Section 8 project-based assistance, Section 202 and 811 HUD program capital grants.
[9] Federal funding sources include Community Development Block Grants and housing trust funds.

Armageddon[10].” Their work can feel insignificant given the need; one affordable housing representative described some projects as “a drop in an ocean, not a drop in a bucket.[11]”

Sectoral collaboration and funding are challenges to the affordable housing sector. Affordable housing non-profits do not typically collaborate within their sector due to funding mechanism limitations. A common funding source for the development of affordable rental units is Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC). To receive tax credits, the organization must own the property for a certain amount of years. Additionally, LIHTC and other federal funding sources are increasingly competitive since the available funding has not kept pace with the increasing needed (Joe Czajka, 2022). As one affordable housing representative said: “a challenge in collaboration within the sector is that there is a finite amount of funds for housing, and securing funding is not a collaborative effort.[12]”

Affordable housing projects face can opposition from community members who oppose affordable housing in their neighborhood (*New York State Association for Affordable Housing*, 2023). Established residents, particularly property owners, are often wary of neighborhood changes that could negatively impact their property value. This opposition is visible through exclusionary zoning practices, which are maintained at municipal zoning board-level, and opposition to specific projects voiced by neighbors. The NIMBY syndrome, i.e., Not In My BackYard, refers to local opposition to an affordable housing project from opponents who generally view the project as worthwhile but do not want it in their neighborhood (Scally & Tighe, 2015), (Iglesias, 2002).

In addition, affecting policy changes that would incentivize – or least not disincentivize – affordable housing is a challenge for the sector. On the local scale, zoning practices can be a real barrier to affordable housing projects, but can be challenging to change given the opposition described above. State or national policies, funding sources, and capacity support programs are challenging to affect given the limited capacity these organizations have to lobby[13].

Conservation Land Trust Non-Profits

Mission. Conservation land trusts are non-profit organizations that protect, conserve, and/or enhance environmental amenities (Dominic P. Parker & Walter N. Thurman, 2019). Conservation land trusts non-profits (“conservation land trusts”) conserve multiple types of land including land with scenic views, scenic roads, natural habitat (especially for unique plant communities, threatened and endangered species, forests, and wetlands), ecological value, working farmland, future inundated lands (including lands that will be subject to sea-level rise), climate resilience, useful for biodiversity and connectivity, and land of high community value (Seth McKee, 2022). Most operate at a local scale.

[10] (*Hudson Valley Affordable Housing and Conservation April Meeting*, personal communication, April 2023)
[11] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Rebecca Gillman Crimmin, April 18, 2023b)
[12] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Al Bellenchia, April 18, 2023a)
[13] (*Hudson Valley Affordable Housing and Conservation January Meeting*, personal communication, January 2023)

Conservation land trusts use multiple conservation tools to achieve their missions. They acquire land, through donations (which are tax deductible for the donor), purchase land at market-price, purchase land below market-value (i.e., through a "bargain sale" which is tax deductible for the seller), and/or partner with municipalities and other non-profits to acquire land.

Conservation land trusts often use conservation easements to conserve other's land. Conservation easements are legal agreements in which landowners cede a portion of their property rights (e.g., those that allow them to subdivide or mine). Easements may permit activities such as recreation, farming, and research. These legal agreements remain in place even if the land is sold (Dominic P. Parker & Walter N. Thurman, 2019; Seth McKee, 2022). Conservation easements are voluntary and exist in perpetuity. That conservation easements existing in perpetuity is both a strength and challenge; it gives the agreements power against lucrative development trends, but does not allow for changes that reflect evolving conservation practices. For example, one conservation organization noted that there is some land held in conservation easements that is not of high conservation value and if encountered today by a conservation land trust it may be identified for a different land use[14]. In addition, there is a push include access to Indigenous communities on access-restricted conservation easements (Susan Vaughn, 2016), which cannot be enacted on already established access-restricted conservation easements.

History. The environmental conservation movement in the United States arose in the late 1800's partially in response to industrialization, and was dominated by upper- and middle-class white men. Their activism, politics, and outdoor recreation shaped the movement, along with their American nationalistic and white supremacist beliefs. Early environmental activists "were divorced from the inequities prevalent in society… they did not challenge social injustices such as slavery, the appropriation of land from indigenous people, the expulsion of Native Americans from their traditional territories… (D. E. Taylor, 2016)."

The 1970s and 1980s saw the emergence of conservation land trusts as a response to suburban sprawl (Seth McKee, 2022). The Land Trust Alliance, a national organization that supports land trusts, formed in 1982 to provide support to the quickly growing number of organizations (*Land Trust Alliance History*, 2023). The period from 1990 and 2010 saw rapidly increasingly popularity for land trusts, and a 1,588.6% increase in the number of acres preserved in land trusts (793,137 acres in 1990 to 13,392,500 acres in 2010) (Dominic P. Parker & Walter N. Thurman, 2019). They are now politically known entities, and receive a fair amount of political and financial support[15].

[14] (*Hudson Valley Affordable Housing and Conservation November Meeting*, personal communication, November 2022)
[15] (*Hudson Valley Affordable Housing and Conservation January Meeting*, personal communication, January 2023)

Funding. Land trusts use a mix of private philanthropic money and government funds[16] to achieve their mission (Dominic P. Parker & Walter N. Thurman, 2019). Some states have funds that raise money to fund conservation. For example, Environmental Protection Funds raise money through real estate transfer fees and tire disposal taxes on houses above the area median home price.

Challenges. Conservation land trusts face a variety of challenges in meeting their mission. Chief among their challenges is the appreciation of land values. While fluctuation has occurred over time, one interviewee noted that "since the pandemic, it's been ridiculous. [17]" Land value appreciation affects conservation land trusts' ability to purchase land or have land donated for conservation easements; "We've had landowners pull out of agreements because they can make so much more money [selling their land at market value].[18]"

Conservation land trusts struggle to meet their mission and use conservation tactics as tools to counter climate change[19]. There is a divide among conservation land trusts about the degree to which their work should focus on climate change. One interviewee from the conservation sector noted that during their time on the national Land Trusts Association board of directors, they encountered land trusts in conservative states not interested in talking about or focusing on climate change[20].

One challenge conservation land trusts face in meeting their missions is creating more equitable benefits of their work, and being relevant to a diversifying nation. For some land trusts, the Trump election in 2016[21], the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020, and the inequitable effects of the COVID-19 pandemic[22] were wake-up calls for the conservation land trust movement about the need to better serve Black and Brown communities and communities of lower incomes. In the wake of the Black Lives Matter protests, conservation land trusts took on specific action such as "staff and board trainings, naming trails after formerly enslaved people and not just white people, land acknowledgements and recognizing the history of land, outreach and engagement of marginalized groups, and working in urban areas.[23]"

Not only are conservation land trusts concerned with creating more equitable outcomes of their work, they are also challenged in maintaining "relevance [to] the future of land conservation in a rapidly diversifying country. Younger generations are less connected to our outdoor world, and so many of our Black and Brown communities don't have access to our open space. If the conservation movement wants to be relevant and responsive to community

[16] Government funding sources include the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program.
[17] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Seth McKee, April 21, 2023)
[18] *Ibid.*
[19] (Abby Fullem, personal communication, April 21, 2023)
[20] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Steve Rosenberg, April 14, 2023)
[21] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Seth McKee, April 21, 2023)
[22] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Steve Rosenberg, April 14, 2023)
[23] *Ibid.*

needs it has to adapt to those new realities as well.[24]" One interviewee noted that there is "a tension between 'staying in your lane' and collaborating creatively. We need to be true to our missions *and* collaborate outside of our missions in ways that advance society. Many conservation leaders think we have to collaborate if we want to be effective, relevant, and making conservation continue to be part of meeting community needs.[25]"

The focus on increasing the equitable outcomes of conservation work is not yet unanimously adopted in the sector. Within the sector, there are different emphasizes on this as a challenge and priority in politically conservative and liberal states, and in conservative and liberal regions within states[26,27]. As one interviewee noted: "land trusts in red states don't even mention 'climate change' [so I] cannot imagine they would see a relationship with affordable housing.[28]" Within conservation land trusts that are taking on this work, there is a split in their motives; "some are eager to work on these values, maybe already are. Others feel like they need to do this.[29]"

There is generally a division between staff and boards of directors of conservation land trusts about how much to focus on equitable outcomes of their work. One interviewee shared that "staff has been very enthusiastic. The board is largely enthusiastic but with an undercurrent of it not being the most important aspect of our work. They want to know if it's effective, and if it's 'mission creep'. We've heard [from the board] 'you cannot be social service providers.'[30]" One interviewee noted that "newer organizations, like Kingston Land Trust[31], have equity and people clearly in their mission and as a focal point for their boards,[32]" and thus do not need to navigate this tension within their organization.

Conservation land trusts navigate this tension as they engage with the philanthropic community as well. One interviewee noted that "we need to be creating more equitable benefits of our work. The foundation world is also asking this of us and holding us accountable.[33]" We see this playing out in emerging funds for conservation work that advances equity and justice[34]. In contrast, conservation land trusts solicit and receive philanthropic dollars from private donors.

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[24] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Seth McKee, April 21, 2023)
[25] *Ibid.*
[26] *Ibid.*
[27] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Steve Rosenberg, April 14, 2023)
[28] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Seth McKee, April 21, 2023)
[29] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Steve Rosenberg, April 14, 2023)
[30] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Seth McKee, April 21, 2023)
[31] Kingston Land Trust was established in 2008. Their mission reads: "The Kingston Land Trust is a nonprofit organization that protects environmentally and socially significant land for the common good. In addition to traditional land conservation, we work collaboratively to address inequities by making land accessible to the community through urban agriculture, commuter trails, recreation, heritage sites, and affordable homes. Our innovative and inclusive programming encourages our diverse community to live in a sustainable and healthy relationship to the land and other living beings. Land for all, all for land!" (Our Work | Kingston Land Trust, 2019).
[32] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Steve Rosenberg, April 14, 2023)
[33] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Seth McKee, April 21, 2023)
[34] For example, The Nature Conservancy's Common Ground fund, which supports projects advancing equity, justice, and sovereignty in conservation ("Where Are All the Hunters of Color?," 2022).

In the Hudson Valley region of New York State, this often means New York City dwellers spending time in or moving to the Hudson Valley. One interviewee noted that "people of means coming into the Hudson Valley have fueled a lot of great conservation but we have to make sure we're staying true our mission of meeting the needs of residents across the whole Hudson Valley.[35]" Navigating the extent to which conservation land trusts will prioritize equitable outcomes of their work is a challenge to defining their scope and priorities, and it will continue to play out in the sector, within the organizations, and in their funding sources.

Building a Case for Collaboration

So, why should these two sectors collaborate? What do they stand to gain? What do they stand to lose? This section first looks at factors that may discourage collaboration between these sectors, and then at the potential of collaboration between the two sectors.

Discouragement from Collaboration

The affordable housing non-profit and conservation land trust non-profit sectors are land-based, meaning that both are tied to specific geographic areas and both deal with specific parcels of land. The affordable housing non-profit sector requires land to develop, and the conservation sector requires land to conserve. If these interests are treated as mutually exclusive, competition over parcels of land can result, especially when land is scarce and expensive.

In collaboration with the affordable housing sector, conservation land trusts have the potential to lose philanthropic and constituent support. Conservation land trusts receive private donations from wealthier, private property-owning constituents (D. E. Taylor, 2016). The interests of these donors can be seen as at odds with affordable housing. If a conservation land trust voice public support for an affordable housing project, which some view as threatening to property values, they may lose financial or constituent support from those constituents.

One example of this challenge playing out: neighbors to a proposed affordable housing project in the Hudson Valley region of New York State attempted to block a project using an environmental rationale – the alleged presence of an endangered species. While the opposition did not come from conservation land trust organizations – and, in fact, when asked, the conservation land trusts did not join the neighbor opposition because they did not find the claim legitimated and thought the opposition was related to NIMBYism[36],[37] – conservation interests were used as a direct counter to affordable housing interests. The conservation land trusts did not join the neighbors opposing the complaint, but did not publicly support the project out of concern of upsetting their constituent base.

[35] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Seth McKee, April 21, 2023)
[36] (*Hudson Valley Affordable Housing and Conservation Policy Small Group Meeting*, personal communication, October 2022)
[37] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Rebecca Gillman Crimmins, April 18, 2023b)

In collaborating with the conservation land trust sector, the affordable housing sector has the potential to lose the ability to push for the ability to streamline environmental review processes. In Vermont, we see ACT 250 form a wedge between the two sectors over the possibility of streamlining environmental review processes. The affordable housing sector may determine that what they have to gain in being able to bypass this review outweighs what they could achieve through collaboration.

A potential discouragement from collaboration is the lack of capacity within both sectors. As non-profits, each sector faces staff and resource capacity limitations. If collaboration is perceived as a time and resource burden, they are not likely to continue their involvement or dedicate staff time[38].

Potential for Collaboration

The same feature – their land-based nature – that poses a potential challenge to collaboration is also one of the strongest potential draws for collaboration between these sectors. Organizations within each sector are tied to a specific place and operating in the same physical space, which makes their connection to and relationships within that region incredibly important. Their place-base nature means organizations from each sector "tread thoughtfully and carefully[39]" because they are neighbors and will run into each other frequently. This high valuation of relationships is a strength in their potential collaboration[40].

Both sectors have a strong shared interest in maintaining lower land values. Appreciating land values challenges both sectors' ability to do their work, as they are both non-profits who need to purchase inexpensive land or be able to convince land owners to donate it in exchange for tax credits, which becomes increasingly challenging as prices increase.

In addition, both sectors are increasingly interested in affordable housing not just as a service to provide. As one conservation interviewee noted "affordable housing now touches everyone, even wealthy donors. Even they have kids who are unable to afford living here. There is more sensitization to the economic reality. We tell our board that it is hard for our staff to find housing even with a professional wage.[41]" The executive director of a conservation organization noted that increasing home prices has made it challenging to hire staff that can afford to live in the region[42].

Each sector has something to gain from partnership with the other, and the political coalition they can form as a united offers them potential to meet these interests. As one interviewee noted, conservation land trusts "are learning about and prioritizing equity and racial justice, and this collaborative [between the sectors] is one way for them to meet those objectives.[43]"

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[38] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Seth McKee, April 21, 2023)
[39] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Ona Ferguson, April 12, 2023)
[40] *Ibid.*
[41] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Seth McKee, April 21, 2023)
[42] (*Hudson Valley Affordable Housing and Conservation April Meeting*, personal communication, April 2023)
[43] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Ona Ferguson, April 12, 2023)

Affordable housing organizations affordable housing groups shared that "they wish they had the ear of some of the more affluent people in the region, and the conservation groups often have those relationships.[44]" In helping the other sector meet their interests, the two can form a network; "there is power in networks, and they can allow for actions that cannot be done by one organization or one sector.[45]" The opportunity for this coalition has the power to outweigh what each sector thinks they have to lose, as described in the above section.

Both sectors are challenged by the enormity of their missions; working to be part of the solution to climate change and the housing crisis. Collaboration can be one answer to this challenge as it offers organizations the opportunity to "work smarter, not harder[46]," and leverage the work of other organizations and sector. Each sector faces unique challenges that the other can help navigate. For example, the affordable housing sector faces external challenges (e.g., limited available funding sources, restrictive zoning, neighbor opposition to projects, state policies) that might benefit from a broad political coalition with conservation organizations. Conservation organizations face internal challenges, namely the negotiation in the prioritization of their work and equity with their boards of directors. The affordable housing sector can help achieve their goal of prioritizing equitable outcomes.

Collaboration between these sectors offers promise in meeting the need for affordable housing in rural areas. An affordable housing interviewee, in describing opposition to affordable housing in rural regions, noted that the standard "development template does not work for rural areas. Smaller development, that is in line with town character, will have more appeal to smaller municipalities.[47]" They then noted that "big housing organizations cannot operate at that small of a scale to make [their investment] worthwhile,[48]" which opens an opportunity for smaller affordable housing organizations to partner with conservation land trusts. In collaboration, conservation land trusts could provide space on their land, help garner political support in zoning changes, and/or develop farmworker housing on their easements.

While both sectors have the potential to collaborate with other sectors, one interviewee noted that collaboration between the affordable housing and conservation land trust sectors is important because both are directly connected to land, and there is an absence of organizations or initiatives working in this space[49]. The mission-driven aspect of both sectors is an important connecting theme. Another pairing that might be considered and has two land-based sectors is for-profit affordable housing developers and conservation groups, but the mission-driven aspect of the work is important[50]. Another interviewee noted that the collaboration among non-profits in these sectors is important as they are both mission-driven organizations. For the conservation land trusts to collaborate with for-profit affordable housing

[44] (Abby Fullem, personal communication, April 12, 2023)
[45] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Ona Ferguson, April 12, 2023)
[46] (*Hudson Valley Affordable Housing and Conservation April Meeting*, personal communication, April 2023)
[47] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Al Bellenchia, April 18, 2023a)
[48] (Abby Fullem, personal communication Al Bellenchia, April 18, 2023a)
[49] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Rebecca Gillman Crimmins, April 18, 2023b)
[50] *Ibid.*

developers would not lead to a shared purpose or vision for their work. As one interviewee noted, "we also shared an understanding that the market-based real estate market was broken, and non-profit delivery of services was needed.[51]"

Sectoral Interests

Some affordable housing and conservation proponents are considering options for collaboration rather than conflict in response to the increasingly competitive shared space in which they operate. Conflict can play out in policy development, land procurement for projects, and/or competition over funding. Collaboration, I suggest, is the preferred route, as it allows each sector to simultaneously advance their own and their shared interests. A mutual gains approach to negotiation and collaboration offers a reframe on their seeming gridlock.

Shared interests that are strong for each sector form the foundation of sector's motivation to collaborate. Out of these shared strong interests is the common ground for their shared purpose and values. This is a fruitful area around which to form a wide and powerful political coalition. In the VHCB case, the two sectors joining forces to advocate for a shared interest of state-appropriated funds for both sectors, garnered the attention of senators and was ultimately successful (James M. Libby, Jr. & Darby Bradley, 2000).

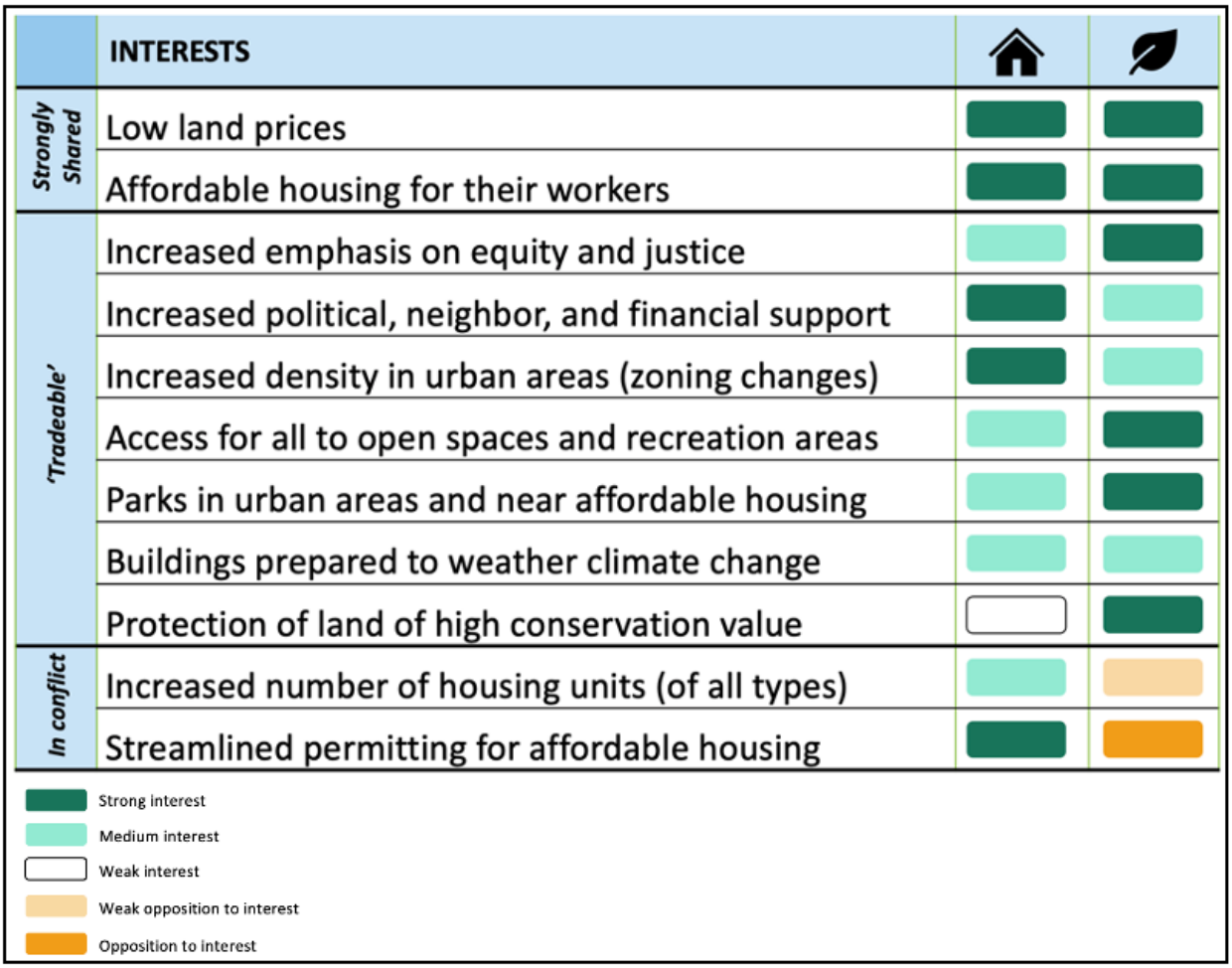
'Tradeable interests' are those that are strong for one sector and less shared but less strong or neutral for the other. While these interests are not the basis for a political coalition because they are not strongly shared, they are an important and valuable opportunity for trading and package creation. Sector A could support Sector B on a specific topic in exchanged for support on a topic in which Sector A has a strong interest.

The last category of interests is where sectors have interests that are in direct conflict with each other. Collaboration has the potential to provide a space to discuss those conflicts and understand the other. There may be no movement or action taken, but each sector will have the opportunity to understand the interests of the other.

A graphic depiction of the interests of the affordable housing non-profit and conservation land trust sectors is in Figure 2. The analysis to identify interests stems from interviews and meetings.

[51] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Gus Seelig, April 19, 2023)

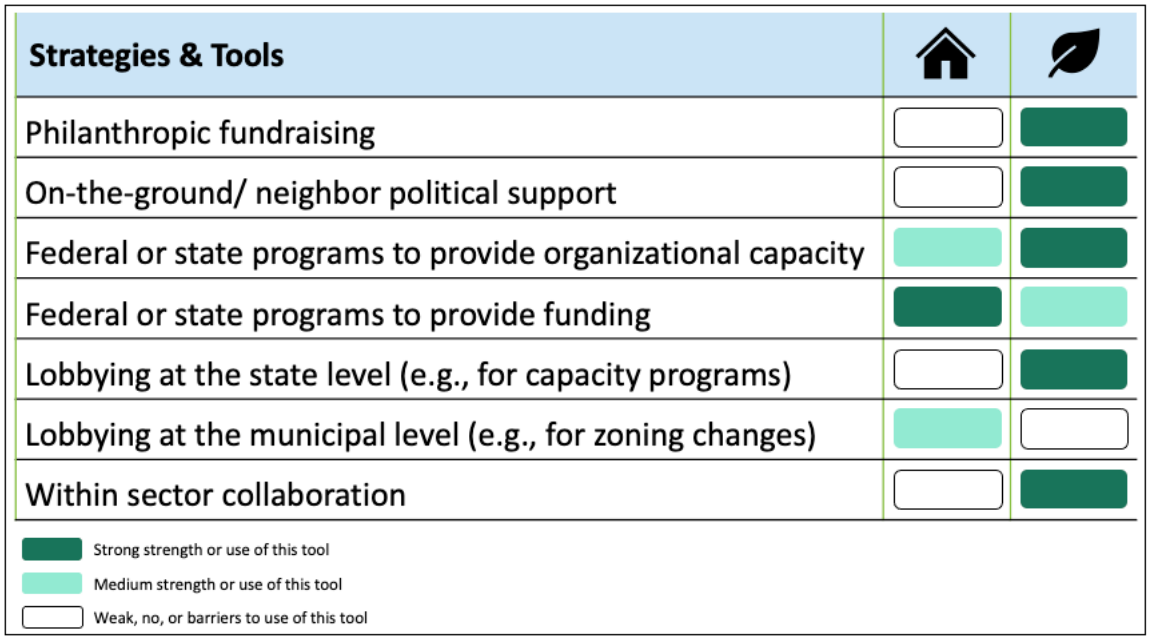
Figure 1. Comparison of interests between affordable housing non-profit and conservation land trust sectors.



Sectoral Strategies & Tools

Collaboration offers each sector the opportunity to leverage the other's strategies, tools and strengths to pursue their own interests. Each sector has a toolbox they draw from to advance their missions. Collaboration between sectors provides an opportunity to learn about and employ other tools, whether it be policy, organizing, or fundraising. A graphic depiction of the strategies, tools and strengths of each sector is in Figure 2. The analysis to identify strategies and tools stems from interviews and meetings.

Figure 2. Comparison of strategies and tools employed by the affordable housing non-profit and conservation land trust sectors.



Action Research Case Study: Hudson Valley Affordable Housing and Conservation Strategy

This section is an action research case study in which I describe and analyze another cross-sectoral group's approach to the problem of increased competition over land. This case study is on the Hudson Valley Affordable Housing and Conservation Strategy (HVAHCS), a nascent coalition of affordable housing and conservation land trusts non-profits in the Hudson River Valley of New York State. It begins with a brief exploration of the local context; details the effort's history, structure, and process; and then analyzes the enablers of collaboration and how it fares against the cross-sectoral collaboration challenges faced by VHCB in Vermont.

This is an action research case study in that I have been a member of the HVAHCS facilitation team since July 2022. Through this role I support the HVAHCS process with meeting support, small group facilitation, strategy, and materials development. My integration into this effort has granted me an inside vantage of the process, the players, and the context.

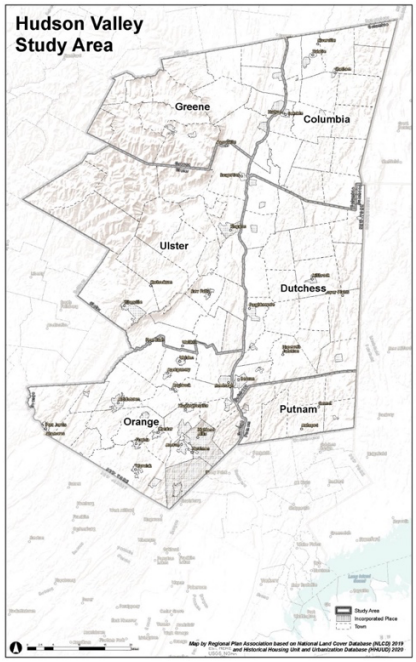
Background

Regional Context

The Hudson River Valley in New York State lies between New York City and Albany and straddles the Hudson River (Figure 3). There are differing geographical definitions of the area, but for the purposes of HVAHCS, it has been defined as Orange, Putnam, Ulster, Dutchess, Greene, and Columbia counties.

Figure 3. HVAHCS boundary

Developed by Regional Plan Association using data from the National Land Cover Database and Historical Housing Unit and Urbanization Database.



The region is home to an estimated 1,093,197 people, with county populations ranging from 48,061 (Greene County) to 405,941 (Orange County). Density, ethnic and racial diversity, and area median income generally increase with proximity to New York City (Table 2).

Table 2. Demographic information for the six counties.

Data from the United States Census Bureau Quick Facts. (U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts, n.d.)

Fact	Greene County	Columbia County	Ulster County	Dutchess County	Orange County	Putnam County
Population Estimates, July 1, 2022	48,061	61,286	182,319	297,545	405,941	98,045
Population per square mile, 2020	74.1	97	161.8	371.9	494	424.3
Median household income (in 2021 $), 2017-2021	62,810	73,065	71,040	87,112	85,640	111,617
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	84.20%	85.80%	78.20%	69.70%	61.10%	75.30%
Hispanic or Latino	6.80%	5.50%	11.10%	13.80%	22.60%	17.70%
Black or African American alone	6.30%	5.10%	7.30%	12.30%	13.90%	4.50%
Two or More Races	2.40%	2.30%	3.00%	2.80%	3.20%	2.20%
Asian alone	1.30%	2.20%	2.20%	3.70%	3.10%	2.40%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	0.50%	0.30%	0.50%	0.50%	0.90%	0.50%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	0.01-0.05%	0.10%	0.10%	0.10%	0.10%	0.10%

The Hudson Valley has ten major categories of industry: construction; manufacturing; transportation and warehousing; information; financial activities; professional and business services; educational services; health care and social assistance; arts, entertainment, and recreation; and accommodation and food services. The region is a transportation hub due to its connections to New York city and transit networks. Orange County is home to several big-box retailer distribution centers, and newly an Amazon fulfillment center. Two industries with the lowest salaries in the region are arts, amusement, and recreation; and accommodation and food services (annual average salary of $38,200 and $36,800, respectively). Both experienced significant job losses during the COVID-19 pandemic (between 2015 and 2020, employment in arts, amusement, and recreation industry declined by 34.2%, and employment in the accommodation and food services industries declined 17.6%) but are experiencing significant grown since pandemic-related restrictions lifted (*2021 Hudson Valley Significant Industries: A Report to the Workforce Development System*, 2021).

There is a housing shortage in the Hudson Valley region for all housing typologies (i.e., affordable, workforce, market rate, transitional, and shelters). Influencing factors are labor and land costs, building material costs and supply chain issues, wages not keeping pace with increasing housing costs, and single-family homes being purchased for short-term rentals and by corporate buyers. Thirty percent of homeowners and 51% of renters live in in unaffordable or severely unaffordable housing (Joe Czajka, 2022). A geospatial analysis conducted by the

Regional Plan Association (RPA) for HVAHCS reveals increasing median home values (Figure 4), and increasing median rents between 2010 and 2020 (Figure 5). Notably, these data do not reflect trends from the COVID-19 pandemic, which exacerbated the crisis due with an influx of people moving into the region, economic instability, and supply chain issues (Joe Czajka, 2022). As many affordable housing organizations shared throughout the process, the situation in the Hudson Valley is "no longer a housing crisis, but a housing Armageddon.[52]"

Figure 4. Comparison between 2010 and 2020 Median Home Values.
Analysis conducted by the Regional Plan Association.

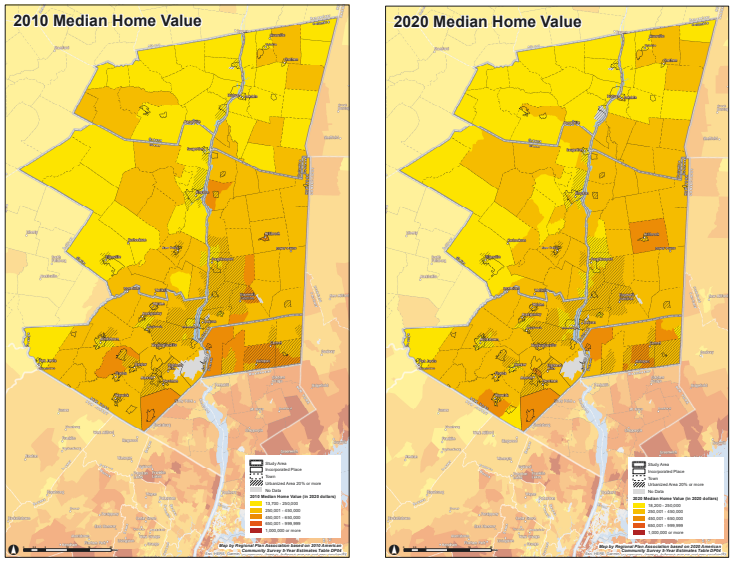
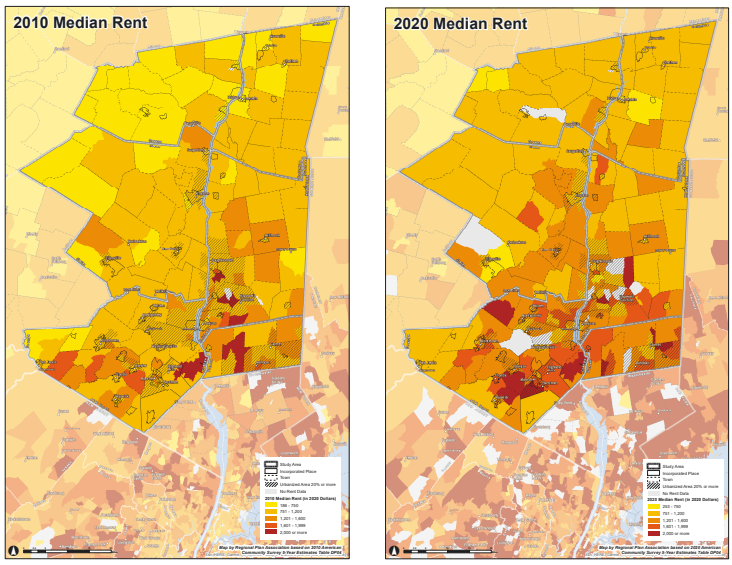


Figure 5. Comparison between 2010 and 2020 Median Rents.
Analysis conducted by the Regional Plan Association.

[52] (*Hudson Valley Affordable Housing and Conservation*, personal communication from April 2023 Meeting, April 2023)



The Hudson Valley region is one of the most species-rich regions in the Northeast. It includes many habitat types, globally significant hotspots of certain species, populations of federally endangered species, and critical migratory bird and wetland habitats. The region is facing unprecedented changes from climate change, habitat fragmentation, sea level rise, and loss of productive farmland (J.P. Mudd & Tabak, 2017).

Formation

HVAHCS was conceived of and convened by two individuals acting as themselves, i.e., not in association with any organization. Steve Rosenberg represents the conservation sector and Rebecca Gillman Crimmins represents the affordable housing sector. They met only six months before convening the effort, but each had long-standing connections to the region and concerns about the 'business as usual' approach. In his prior work with Scenic Hudson, Steve was concerned about negative externalities resulting from affordable housing and conservation land trust sectors working in siloes. He also identified "the overlap [between the sectors] as a rich space in which to make change, and the gaps that need to be filled in the overlap are not naturally filled; this kind of engagement across sectors can help to fill them[53]." He observed that "small NGOs are often focused on stopping the leaks in roofs, responding to the crisis of the day" and a "collective impact strategy can help them look out on a higher-level scale and build relationships and trust that can be a vehicle for accomplishing more together over time[54]."

Rebecca Gillman Crimmins was increasingly concerned with the housing crisis in the region as the COVID-19 pandemic raged. She was looking for "proactive approaches and options for people to stay in the area" should they no longer be able to afford their homes[55]. Unlike Steve,

[53] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Steve Rosenberg, April 14, 2023)
[54] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Steve Rosenberg, April 14, 2023)
[55] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Rebecca Gillman Crimmins, April 18, 2023)

Rebecca was not thinking of this cross-sectoral pairing as the solution, but knew that "what we were doing was not working.[56]" She was familiar with the strength of conservation groups in the Hudson Valley, and familiar with conflict between the sectors around the use of environmental rationale being used to stop affordable housing projects. Seeing the COVID-19 pandemic stress both housing and access to outdoor and recreation spaces, though, she saw the shared challenges and needs of the two sectors. She also noted the absence of groups working in this overlap[57].

The COVID-19 pandemic – and the increasing inequities in the region in terms of housing costs, economic security, public health outcomes, and access to open space and outdoor recreation – was a catalyzing factor for the conveners. The cumulative effects of the 2016 Trump presidency and the Black Lives Matter highlighted the need for attention to racial justice. For both conveners, there was a sense of need change and an eagerness to be part of it.

As becomes clear through the case study, the conveners' relationships in the region – to organizations, funders and the region – have been critical. Their relationships were even critical to the formation of HVAHCS: both reached out to the Chief Executive Officer of RUPCO, a large regional affordable housing non-profit developer to talk about the possible interventions in the region. The Chief Executive Officer connected Steve and Rebecca, and the two quickly acted. They hired a neutral facilitator, fundraised, and identified organizations to participate.

For the organizations, their reasoning to join HVAHCS varied. There had been little cross-sectoral collaboration in the region, but the organizations were interested in the possibility. For some, the importance of collaboration was clear; one representative shared that "change-making must be collaborative to respond to growing complexity and difficulty. [58]" Another organization representative shared that while they had not identified affordable housing-conservation land trust collaboration as a burning interest, they recognized its potential and thought that they needed to be involved as a regional leader[59]. The fixed nine-month timeline was helpful; "it was long enough to complete deliverables while not trying the patience and commitment of organizations and the individuals participating in the process[60]."

One of the conservation organizations shared that HVAHCS was an opportunity to act on their growing focus on being "more equitable about how we conserve." This emphasis evolved out of the 2106 Trump election "which revealed the power of the rural voter who was positioned as 'anti-city.' [Our] organization realized that 1) we need to serve communities left behind by the new government (likely Black and Brown communities), and 2) we cannot ignore the red Hudson Valley communities (likely white rural communities). Both are being economically left

[56] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Rebecca Gillman Crimmins, April 18, 2023)
[57] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Rebecca Gillman Crimmins, April 18, 2023)
[58] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Al Bellenchia, April 18, 2023a)
[59] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Seth McKee, April 21, 2023)
[60] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Steve Rosenberg, April 14, 2023)

behind. One of our pillars in the strategic planning process became building community (both rural and urban), and bridging the whole Valley.[61]"

Another important factor in the formation of HVAHCS was a shared sense of urgency among organizations and conveners. In the shared purpose statement they developed (Appendix A), they explicitly highlight the scale and urgency of the challenges, and the need for a collaborative solution that drives their work:

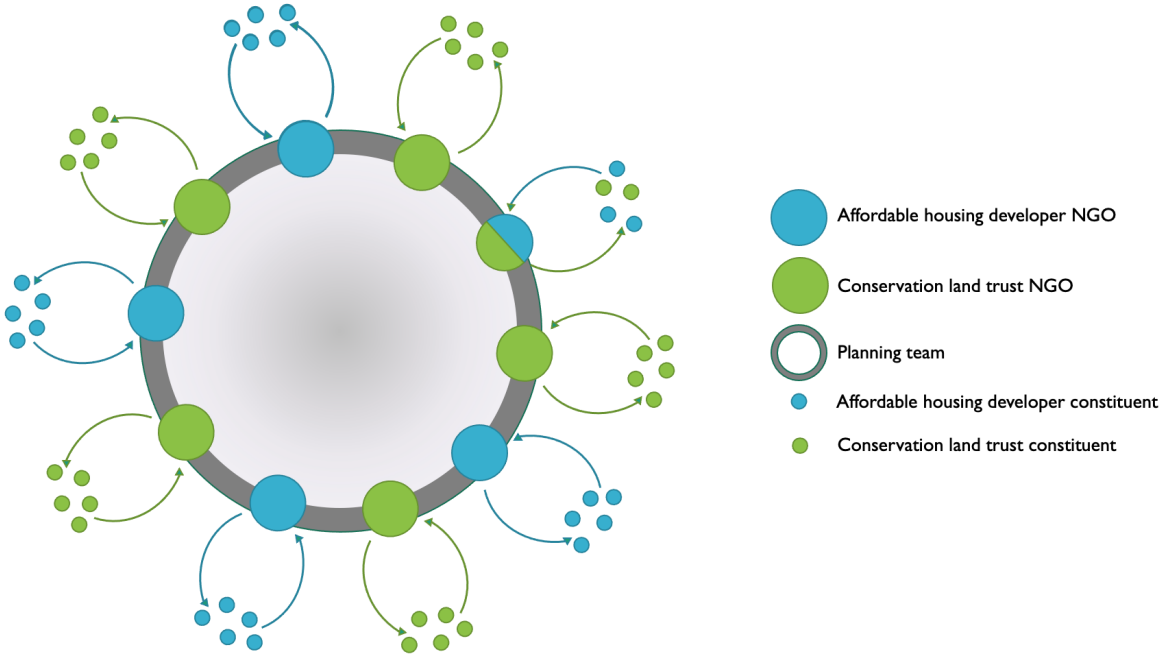
> *"…the problems we face are too urgent, massive and intertwined to be solved alone. The current siloed approach is not accomplishing enough… We are banding together to take a holistic approach to these complex and urgent problems, and have a larger-scale impact… We hope that our collaboration will contribute to a thriving Hudson River Valley region that is more welcoming, inclusive, affordable, accessible, and sustaining to all who live here now and in the future."*

Structure

HVAHCS is comprised of ten non-profit organizations, five affordable housing developers, four conservation land trusts, and one land trust which sits squarely in both sectors. Each organization has a representative ("organization representative") that actively engages in HVAHCS. Each organization representative is intended to share information about HVAHCS with its organization, and collect and share back information from its organization with HVAHCS. Similarly, the organizations are intended to share information about HVAHCS with its constituents and collect and share back information from its constituents with HVAHCS. HVAHCS is supported by a planning team, which constitutes two conveners, a technical team, a facilitation team, and two organization representatives. Figure 6 illustrates HVAHCS' structure.

[61] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Seth McKee, April 21, 2023)

Figure 6. Hudson Valley Affordable Housing & Conservation Strategy Structure



Organizations

HVAHCS member organizations (Table 3) were selected by the conveners. The conveners first identified the larger regional organizations in each sector (i.e., Hudson River Housing, RUPCO, Scenic Hudson), and then added organizations to ensure the entire geography was covered. The affordable housing organizations consist of both affordable housing rental unit developers and affordable housing home ownership developers (i.e., both Habitats for Humanity).

Table 3. HVAHCS Organizations

Organization	Representative Title	Geographic Scope	Mission
Affordable Housing Organizations			
Columbia County Habitat for Humanity	Executive Director/CEO	Columbia County	We transform the lives of working families by building safe, sustainable and affordable homes, working in partnership with qualified families, community volunteers, local organizations and area businesses.
Community Preservation Corporation	Senior Vice President, Regional Director for Hudson Valley	New York State	At CPC, we believe that housing is central to transforming underserved neighborhoods into thriving and vibrant communities. That's what we're about: providing innovative capital solutions, fresh thinking, and a collaborative approach to the often complex challenges that owners and developers of multifamily housing face.
Habitat for Humanity of Greater Newburgh	Executive Director	Greater Newburgh, Orange County	Seeking to put God's love into action, Habitat for Humanity of Greater Newburgh brings people together to build homes, communities and hope.
Hudson River Housing	Director of Community Development and Impact	Dutchess County, greater Hudson Valley	Hudson River Housing provides a continuum of services that improves lives and communities through housing with compassion and development with vision. We create pathways out of homelessness through empowerment, education, and advocacy. We strengthen communities by developing and preserving affordable housing and creating opportunities for people and places to thrive.
RUPCO	Assistant Vice President of Community Development	Hudson Valley	To create homes, support people and improve communities.
Conservation Land Trust Organizations			
Columbia Land Conservancy	Director of Farm, Forest & Land Use Programs	Columbia County	The Columbia Land Conservancy works with our community to conserve the farmland, forests, wildlife habitat, and rural character of Columbia County, strengthening connections between people and the land.

Dutchess Land Conservancy	Director of Conservation	Dutchess County	Dutchess Land Conservancy (DLC) is dedicated to preserving the scenic, agricultural and environmental resources of Dutchess County, New York, and the surrounding area.
Hudson Highlands Land Trust	Executive Director	Putnam County, Orange County	The Hudson Highlands Land Trust is a community-based, accredited land conservation organization devoted to protecting and preserving the natural resources, rural character, and scenic beauty of the Hudson Highlands.
Scenic Hudson	Executive Director of the Scenic Hudson Land Trust, Inc. and Land Programs	Hudson Valley	Scenic Hudson preserves land and farms and creates parks that connect people with the inspirational power of the Hudson River, while fighting threats to the river and natural resources that are the foundation of the valley's prosperity.
Joint Conservation Land Trust and Affordable Housing Organization			
Kingston Land Trust	Director, Board of Directors	Kingston, Ulster County	The Kingston Land Trust is a nonprofit organization that protects environmentally and socially significant land for the common good. In addition to traditional land conservation, we work collaboratively to address inequities by making land accessible to the community through urban agriculture, commuter trails, recreation, heritage sites, and affordable homes. Our innovative and inclusive programming encourages our diverse community to live in a sustainable and healthy relationship to the land and other living beings. Land for all, all for land!

Facilitation and Technical Teams

The conveners determined that a process facilitator would be useful as they recognized they could not facilitate the process in an unbiased way. They considered selecting an organization that develops and advocates for specific policies, but ultimately decided to hire a neutral, third-party facilitation team that would not push its own agenda. Both conveners had been members of efforts facilitated by a neutral third-party, and saw it as an important role. One of the conveners shared that "facilitation would also help get to values and interests, which does not just magically happen.[62]" The conveners ultimately brought on the Consensus Building Institute (CBI), a non-profit based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, which facilitates and mediates environmental and public policy processes. Again, the importance of relationships is clear. One of the conveners had worked with (CBI) previously and reached out about the project.

The facilitation team began by conducting a situation assessment by speaking with all organization representatives, a critical step in building trust in the effort and clarifying regional dynamics and context. The facilitation team helps design the process, develop materials, keep the process moving through action tracking and meeting scheduling, and facilitates meetings with an eye to focusing on interests and navigating challenging discussions[63]. One organization noted that facilitation "helped organizations 'plug-in' to the process, get past platitudes, spot issues, and facilitate dialogue[64]." One of the facilitators identified some of the facilitation strengths as "moved things forward between meetings via facilitating and coordinating small groups, drafted documents, solicited feedback, developed summaries, and 'held the center'.[65]" One of the facilitators believes they could be more actively involved in developing work products if there was additional budget and scope[66].

The conveners hired Regional Plan Association (RPA) to provide technical support. RPA was tasked with supporting the development of two deliverables: mapping of locations with high collaboration potential and developing a website. RPA also acted as a fiscal sponsor, providing financial oversight for HVAHCS. This allowed the nascent effort to not go through the demanding process of becoming its own 501c3 non-profit organization. One of the conveners shared that involvement in the process was also helpful to RPA in that they wanted to expand into the Hudson Valley Region[67].

The facilitation and technical teams together offered important capacity to maintain momentum and move work products along. HVAHCS organizations struggled to maintain capacity to engage in the effort, and these paid teams made it easy for organizations to contribute their expertise efficiently[68].

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[62] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Rebecca Gillman Crimmins, April 18, 2023b)
[63] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Sophie Carillo-Mandel, April 18, 2023c)
[64] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Seth McKee, April 21, 2023)
[65] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Ona Ferugson, April 12, 2023)
[66] (Fullem, Abby, personal communication with Sophie Carillo-Mandel, April 18, 2023)
[67] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Rebecca Gillman Crimmins, April 18, 2023b)
[68] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Seth McKee, April 21, 2023)

Conveners

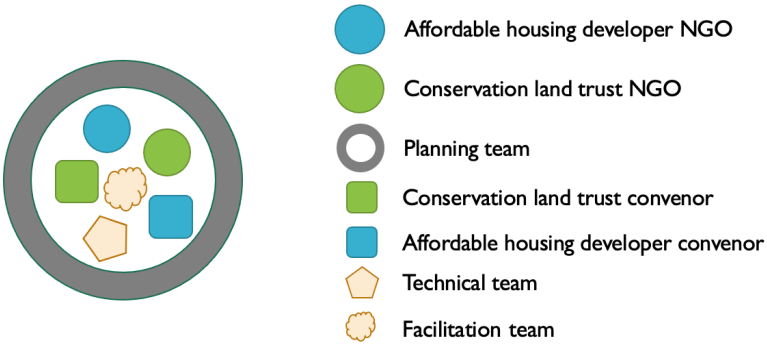
HVAHCS was conceived of and convened by two individuals acting as themselves, not on behalf of any organization. Steve Rosenberg represents the conservation sector. He recently retired from his roles as Senior Vice President of Scenic Hudson and Executive Director of Scenic Hudson Land Trust. Rebecca Gillman Crimmins represents the affordable housing sector. She is currently a Senior Vice President of Real Estate and Development at Institute for Community Living.

The conveners played very active roles in the HVAHCS effort. They had the idea ("Steve and Rebecca had a great idea[69]"), identified organizations, fundraised, hired facilitation and technical teams, identified and coordinated presenters, and presented about the work to external parties. One member of the facilitators noted that "one of drivers of the successes of this effort is the conveners' energy and motivation.[70]" It was especially helpful that Steve had recently retired and thus had some additional capacity to take on this work. One of the facilitators shared that the conveners provided "a lot of ongoing support, which made it easier for organizations to engage in the process.[71]" The conveners were active members of the group, which was beneficial as they have deep relationships in the region and sectoral expertise, but also gave their voices extra weight in defining the process[72].

Planning Team

The planning team (Figure 7) is comprised of the conveners, the facilitation team, the technical team, and two organization representatives. The planning team met two times between HVAHVS meetings to debrief each meeting, prepare for the next one, and check-in on deliverables, funding, and the process. The planning team has provided critical glue for HVAHCS as it adds capacity to an effort of capacity-limited non-profits. The two organization representatives volunteered to join the planning team and have provided critical feedback to inform the process.

Figure 7. HVAHCS Planning Team

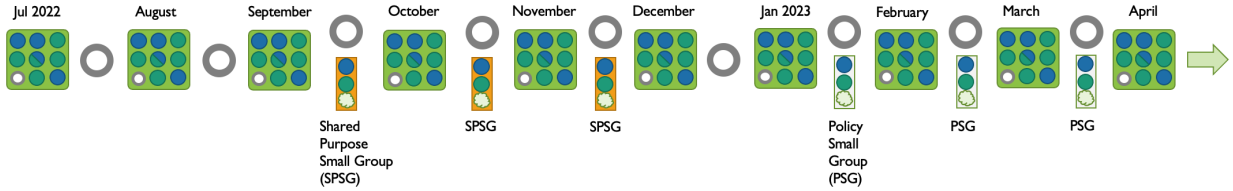


[69] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Al Bellenchia, April 18, 2023a)
[70] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Sophie Carillo-Mandel, April 18, 2023c)
[71] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Ona Ferguson, April 12, 2023)
[72] *Ibid.*

Process

Phase 1 of the HVAHCS process (Figure 8) involved monthly meetings of the full group, coordination and meetings among the planning team between the monthly meetings, and ad-hoc small groups. Phase 1, originally set-up as a nine-month process extended into ten months. Three of the meetings occurred in-person: the first (July 2022), the November meeting, and the last (April 2023).

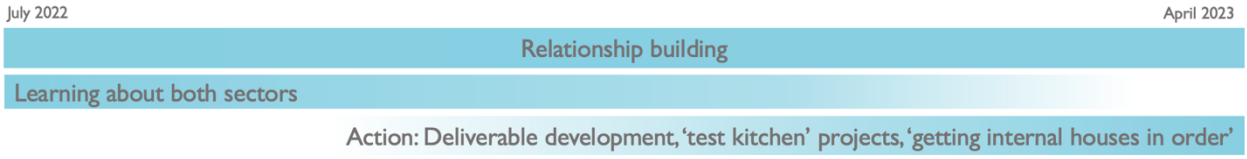
Figure 8. HVAHCS Phase 1 Process Diagram.



The process, as well as the meetings, was framed around three components (Figure 9): relationship building, learning about both sectors, and action. The action component included deliverables development, 'test kitchen' projects, and 'getting internal houses in order.' Importantly, these components were named by the facilitation team based on organization representatives' objectives for the process.

Figure 9. Process Framing.

The color scale indicates the emphasis placed on each during Phase 1.



The learning about both sectors component consisted of presentations by organization representatives and outside organizations. Presentations shared are listed in Table 4. One of the presentations was delivered by VHCB, in an effort to enable cross-collaborative learning.

Table 4. Presentations shared

Presentation	Presenter	Date
Affordable Housing 101	NeighborWorks	July 2022
Land Conservation 101	Scenic Hudson	July 2022
VHCB	VHCB	August 2022
Farmland Conservation	Columbia Land Conservancy	September 2022
Arc of a Conservation Project	Hudson Highlands Land Trust	September 2022
Affordable Housing 101	Hudson River Housing	October 2022
2023 Affordable Housing & Conservation Policy Landscape	Scenic Hudson and New York State Association for Affordable Housing	January 2023
Community Land Trusts	Grounded Solutions Network and Taproot Community Land Trust	February 2023

During the first meeting, organization representatives emphasized the importance of taking action on policy or projects in addition to building relationships and having theoretical discussions[73]. There is no one project all participants could collaborate on due to each organization's geographic boundaries. Then can, however "consult or advise on projects[74]," which occurs through the 'test kitchen.' The test kitchen is a space to share potential collaborative projects, and brainstorm on approaches. As one organization representative said, "each project will have its own challenges and issues, and it's helpful for this to be a laboratory to troubleshoot projects[75]." The test kitchen allows organizations to identify specific on-the-ground projects ripe for collaboration, and take abstract concepts and makes them concrete.

Another focus area that falls into the action component is 'getting internal houses in order.' This focus area is about organization representatives are in step with their organizations (staff, boards of directors, and constituents) to maintain support and buy-in. Organization representatives are tasked with sharing updates about the HVAHCS effort and opportunity in collaboration with their organizations and sharing feedback from the organizations with HVAHCS. The planning team has supported this focus area by developing a presentation for representatives to share with staff and board of directors, and hosting an Open House for staff and boards of directors in April 2023 [76]. It is intended that this focus area will also include sharing information and eliciting feedback with each organization's constituents.

Deliverables

During Phase 1 of HVAHCS, the effort was charged with developing four deliverables: 1) shared purpose statement, 2) map of locations of high collaboration potential, 3) list of policy recommendations, and 4) website. Deliverables made the collaboration appealing to funders and organizations because they made an ephemeral goal concrete[77]. Unlike the process framing components, which were shared by organization representatives and codified by the facilitation team, the deliverables were identified by the conveners. The process was designed around their production, which gave the conveners' vision a strong role in shaping the process.

The shared purpose statement (Appendix A) was developed in a small group of two organization representatives and facilitated by one member of the facilitation team. The large group reviewed the document twice, and each organization representative shared it with their organization to ensure buy-in. The effort moved easily[78], and members were eager to develop this statement. The process of developing the shared purpose statement clarified the purpose of the group, ensured there was consensus, and surfaced conflicting goals. Multiple

[73] (*Hudson Valley Affordable Housing and Conservation*, personal communication at July Meeting, July 2022)
[74] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Ona Ferguson, April 12, 2023)
[75] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Seth McKee, April 21, 2023)
[76] (*Hudson Valley Affordable Housing and Conservation*, personal communication at April Meeting, April 2023)
[77] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Steve Rosenberg, April 14, 2023)
[78] *Ibid.*

interviewees cited this process as a critical success of the group[79,80]; "it was powerful to develop and get agreement on the shared purpose statement.[81]"

The map of locations of high collaboration potential (at least two per county) was developed by RPA with multiple rounds of feedback from organization representatives. RPA developed a collaboration potential index through weighted criteria of various geospatial data and qualitative data from participants on political viability. One organization representative noted that the mapping "effort was initially confusing and needed some more work to make it effective. Ultimately it became helpful. It went more from the outside in, not the inside out, i.e., it did not start with the organizations.[82]" This process revealed the lack of consistent sewer data in the region, which has prompted RPA develop a sewer atlas for the region should funding become available[83].

The list of policy recommendations (Appendix B) was developed by a small group, with input from all organization representatives. The development of this deliverable did not emerge in the same way the shared policy statement did. Organization representatives that volunteered for the group acknowledged that they were not versed in policy. As one of the facilitators shared, "the policy universe that influences their projects is so huge and requires such a large amount of knowledge. We realized we didn't have enough time to make significant direct progress on policy nor the people with the expertise to help steer us on that.[84]" One organization representative thought policy work is a fruitful path to embark on[85], while another shared that he was "not sure how productive policy work will be. Policy gets to politics very quickly, and is then fraught[86]."

Lastly, the website is in development by RPA with content input from the planning team. It is intended to be a resource to share information about HVAHCS, and store relevant information for HVAHCS members.

Funding

There were three main sources of funding for Phase 1 of HVAHCS: contributions from member organizations, private funders, and a grant from The Nature Conservancy's Common Ground fund. All of the member organizations contributed funds to the effort in a pay-as-you-can fashion. The conveners initially debated if they member organizations for their time or have them contribute funds. They initially decided on the latter, partly to demonstrate to potential funders that the organizations were literally 'bought in' to the effort[87].

[79] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Sophie Carillo-Mandel, April 18, 2023c)
[80] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Seth McKee, April 21, 2023)
[81] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Ona Ferguson, April 12, 2023)
[82] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Al Bellenchia, April 18, 2023a)
[83] (*Hudson Valley Affordable Housing and Conservation*, personal communication at April Meeting, April 2023)
[84] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Ona Ferguson, April 12, 2023)
[85] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Seth McKee, April 21, 2023)
[86] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Al Bellenchia, April 18, 2023a)
[87] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Rebecca Gillman Crimmins, April 18, 2023b)

The conveners raised money from private funders. Most were conservation-minded donors with whom Steve had personal relationships. “While many potential supporters were willing to provide for funding for this initial trust and relationship-building work, for some potential private funders, the project was too ephemeral, even with the clear deliverables, and they were hoping for very near term, concrete outcomes that we couldn’t promise at this early stage[88].” The last half of the budget came from The Nature Conservancy (TNC)’s Common Ground fund, which is a new fund that supports projects advancing equity, justice, and sovereignty in conservation (“Where Are All the Hunters of Color?,” 2022). This fund, which is not available on TNC’s website, became a possible option through a personal relationship between one of the conveners and a TNC staff. TNC staff were active observers of the process. As one facilitator noted, “In the beginning, there were questions about TNC, as funder, participating in the meetings beyond an observing role but ultimately it was helpful.[89]”

Approach to Cross-Sectoral Collaboration Challenges

This section is an analysis of the HVAHCS’ approach to the challenges faced by VHCB in its cross-sectoral collaboration. The assessment is preliminary given that HVAHCS is only in its first year of existence.

1) Maximizing the interests of both sectors simultaneously, and continuing to collaborate when interests are at odds

HVAHCS is poised to be able to meet this challenge, but the extent to which they will do has yet to be seen. The development of the shared purpose statement (Appendix A) was an important step in identifying a shared vision. The shared purpose alludes to shared interests, but more targeted conversation about interests and goals among organization representatives would help in understanding shared, tradeable, and conflicting interests.

The ‘test kitchen’ has facilitated the identification of projects that maximize both sector’s interests by providing space to discuss and brainstorm on projects for potential collaboration. A project on the Cookingham Farm in Red Hook, NY, was identified through this process. Described below, this project is a fruitful proof of concept of the political might that results from multiple weighty non-profits from different sectors joining forces.

[88] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Steve Rosenberg, April 14, 2023)
[89] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Sophie Carillo-Mandel, April 18, 2023c)

Collaborative Project that Maximizes Interests of Both Sectors:
Cookingham Farm, Red Hook, NY

Cookingham Farm straddles the village and town of Red Hook and became available for sale in spring 2023. The 100-acre farm, which marks the transition point from urban to rural has high conservation value and municipal sewer infrastructure.

Scenic Hudson approached the owner about a potential sale or conservation easement. The owner opted instead to sell to the highest bidder (i.e., not Scenic Hudson) to maximize their return. Scenic Hudson shared this news during the December 2022 'test kitchen' session, which spurred follow-up discussions among Scenic Hudson, RUPCO, and the Dutchess Land Conservancy (DLC) about the opportunity for a joint affordable housing, conservation, and preserved farmland project on the property. The organizations worked to jointly bid on the land but could not act quickly enough to purchase it.

The three weighty organizations met with the Town Supervisor to share the project vision. The Town Supervisor's proclivity for pushing the envelope, their access to financial resources via an established Community Preservation Fund, and the knowledge that HVAHCS was underway, led the Town to purchase the land for the joint project. The project, which is still in negotiations, will maximize the organization's interests by having affordable housing (developed and managed by RUPCO), conserved land (managed by Scenic Hudson), and preserved farmland (managed by DLC).

Negotiations are still underway with regards to how many units of housing will be built and zoning requirements, but it is looking favorable. As one organization shared, "this is a model for the path forward… This project is the right size for Red Hook, and the right size for a pilot project for this group."

[90,91,92, 93]

HVAHCS' ability to collaborate when sectoral interests appear to be at odds is still playing out. The groups encountered their interests being in conflict on two occasions: (1) on the use of the term 'NIMBY' in the shared purpose statement, and (2) around discussions over Governor Hochul's proposed Housing Compact.

During the development of the shared purpose statement, the group was conflicted about whether to explicitly list 'NIMBY' (Not In My Back Yard) beliefs – i.e., the stereotypically white, wealthy, politically-progressive homeowner who is generally supportive of affordable housing but not in their neighborhood – as a barrier to their shared work. All organizations agreed about the challenge, but some conservation organization representatives were concerned

[90] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Seth McKee, April 21, 2023)
[91] (*Hudson Valley Affordable Housing and Conservation December Meeting*, personal communication, December 2022)
[92] (*Hudson Valley Affordable Housing and Conservation January Meeting*, personal communication, January 2023)
[93] (*Hudson Valley Affordable Housing and Conservation February Meeting*, personal communication, February 2023)

about using a polarizing term that might alienate their boards of directors, constituents, and donors, who tend to be white and wealthy homeowners[94,95]. This tension highlighted a challenge faced by conservation land trusts: the possibility of losing political and financial support as they prioritize their work having increasingly equitable outcomes. Facilitated discussion by CBI helped the organizations air their concerns and make a decision[96]. Ultimately, the groups kept sentiment but left out the term. This tension about conservation land trusts navigating board of director and constituent concern will likely continue to evolve. The Scenic Hudson representative noted that their board of directors was generally supportive of the Cookingham Farm project, but likely would have "pumped the breaks" should there have been community outcry[97]."

In spring 2023, Governor Hochul introduced the Housing Compact, a set of proposals included in the state budget that would incentivize 800,000 new units. One of the more controversial proposals was the addition of a 'stick' in addition to a 'carrot' to encourage growth. If municipalities did not meet growth targets set by the state, they would be subject to a builder's remedy-type process in which developers could be granted approval for projects too dense for local zoning around transit stations. This process would override local zoning and the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQR), which requires an environmental impact analysis (Brenzel, 2023), (Janaki Chadha & Joseph Spector, 2034).

The Housing Compact emerged as a 'ripe' topic during the March HVAHCS meeting when participants identified it as a tremendous opportunity for joint advocacy. In the March and April meetings, there was confusion on behalf of conservation land trusts about the content of the proposal, and concerns about a 'one size fits all' approach in the Hudson Valley[98,99,100]. The conservation land trusts were especially apprehensive about bypassing SEQR review processes. One conservation organization representative shared that they cannot support the proposal to waive SEQR; "SEQR is a cherished environmental win. We've actively fought attempts by for-profit developers to strip it down. This is hard for us to support.[101]" Ultimately, conservation land trusts did not come out in support of the housing compact, and – in response to a lot of political pressure from others – the housing compact was not included in the state budget. One of the smaller affordable housing organizations that operates in one of the more rural regions was also hesitant about a one-size-fits-all approach being applied to rural areas; exploring interests has the potential to benefit within sector collaboration as well.

[94] (*Hudson Valley Affordable Housing and Conservation November Meeting*, personal communication, November 2022)
[95] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Rebecca Gillman Crimmins, April 18, 2023b)
[96] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Steve Rosenberg, April 14, 2023)
[97] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Seth McKee, April 21, 2023)
[98] (*Hudson Valley Affordable Housing and Conservation March Meeting*, personal communication, March 2023)
[99] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Al Bellenchia, April 18, 2023a)
[100] (Abby Fullem, personal communication, April 21, 2023)
[101] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Seth McKee, April 21, 2023)

While HVAHCS was not able to undertake a joint advocacy on the Housing Compact at this time, if the organizations can discuss each sector's interests that were at play – the "why" – they may be able to propose an alternative policy that they could all advocate for. The Housing Compact is a similar policy to Act 250 in Vermont, over which VHCB was not able to respond to in a unified way. HVAHCS has the potential to respond to a policy like the Housing Compact in the future if they continue the identification of their shared local and state policy interests now.

2) Sectoral differences, and equitably leveraging strengths of each sector

HVAHCS has navigated and leveraged the differences among and within sectors well in Phase 1. The pay-as-you-can model for organizations allowed organizations to contribute in a more equitable way. The conservation organizations were more solid in their political and financial support. Private philanthropic funds were largely sourced from conservation-minded donors, which leveraged the sector's access to wealthy donors. There is a "mismatch of capacity for policy work; affordable housing organizations do not have in-house policy expertise.[102] This was leveraged during the April meeting when two conservation organizations offered support from their policy staff in advancing HVAHCS' policy work.

Sectoral differences, and the mismatch of strengths and strategies in each's toolbelt, are what allows the two sectors to leverage the other and trade skills. Despite the focus of the policy and mapping work "sitting 'off center' in affordable housing[103]" and "affordable housing proponents having more to gain from the partnerships," the "conservation groups have continued to be supportive of the collaboration, which is great.[104]" Conservation organizations are trading this focus with the ability to collaborate with the affordable housing sector, which furthers their interest in creating a just and equitable world is strong.

3) Learning about, building relationships with, and building trust between both sectors

There were minimal established relationships among organizations from different sectors at the offset. HVAHCS has prioritized and been successful in building relationships and trust, and learning about each sector.

The HVAHCS process dedicated a significant amount of time to learning about both sectors, which allowed organization representatives to understand the other sector's processes, tools, and strategies. The sectors did not know a lot about the other so a good amount of information sharing was needed. One of the facilitators shared that "it took longer than expected" to build a

[102] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Ona Ferguson, April 12, 2023)
[103] *Ibid.*
[104] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Sophie-Carillo Mandel, April 18, 2023c)

shared knowledge base[105]. Multiple interviewees shared that the opportunity to learn about each sector has been a strength of the effort[106,107,108,109] and had lasting outcomes; one organization representative shared that "I think about projects differently now. If a project is not great for conservation, I now think: maybe it would work for affordable housing.[110]"

The importance of relationships – both of existing relationships in the region and of the emphasis placed on building them within the collaborative – was an important enabler and outcome of collaboration for HVAHCS. Existing professional relationships connected the conveners, facilitated conversations with potential member organizations, helped the conveners raise funds through donors they knew and a grant, and hire facilitation and technical capacity.

Relationships, which enabled the collaborative to form, are also a critical outcome of the collaborative. One of the facilitators noted that a "strength of coalition also comes from that they are both land/place-based, and grounded in the region. This means they will be neighbors for a long time, which means they will run into people frequently, which places bounds on the behavior they'll exhibit and makes them tread thoughtfully and carefully." She continued to say that organization representatives have "built strong relationships with a lot of respect. Member can and do now call each other. This alone will serve them for the next five to ten years. [111]" During most monthly 'test kitchen' discussions, at least one organization representative reveals that they called another about a potential project or partnership. One organization representative shared that "HVAHCS has strengthened collaboration across sectors, especially within the same geographical area[112]." With regards to the Cookingham Farm project, one member stressed that he "credits [HVAHCS] with knowing who to call, getting a meeting, and not needing to convince them that this was a good idea.[113]"

These in-person meetings were important for building relationships among organizations. "The pandemic gave people tunnel vision, and this collaborative gave people the opportunity to meet in-person – for some, the first meeting was their first larger in-person one since the pandemic began – and leave the tunneled place[114]." Each in-person meeting featured food and ample opportunity for chatting outside of formal discussion topics. Additionally, each meeting began with an extended personal check-in question, making time to know organization representatives as people not just colleagues. The process of developing the shared purpose

[105] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Ona Ferguson, April 12, 2023)
[106] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Seth McKee, April 21, 2023)
[107] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Al Bellenchia, April 18, 2023a)
[108] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Ona Ferguson, April 12, 2023)
[109] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Sophie Carillo-Mandel, April 18, 2023c)
[110] (*Hudson Valley Affordable Housing and Conservation*, personal communication at April Meeting, April 2023)
[111] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Ona Ferguson, April 12, 2023)
[112] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Al Bellenchia, April 18, 2023a)
[113] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Seth McKee, April 21, 2023)
[114] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Ona Ferguson, April 12, 2023)

statement and navigating the tension around the inclusion of the term "NIMBY" ultimately helped build trust by airing it and discussing it respectfully.

One unexpected, positive externality of HVAHCS was that it allowed organizations within the affordable housing sector who had not worked together to build relationships[115] Affordable housing organizations are less likely to collaborate within the sector than conservation land trusts. Property ownership is a critical component for affordable housing financing through federal tax credit programs, which disincentivizes collaboration. As described by one affordable housing representative, "there is a finite amount of funds for housing, and securing funding is not a collaborative effort.[116]"

HVAHCS has begun to share this learning and relationship building beyond organization representatives through its 'getting internal houses in order' component. This has included the development of a HVAHCS overview presentation for representatives to share with their organizations, and an HVAHCS Open House for boards of directors and staff. Continuing to expand the learnings and connections to organizations, and eventually to constituents, will be critical to ensure full organizational support. One promising early indicator that the effects of HVAHCS are seeping out into organizations is that a staff person from Scenic Hudson – not the representative – identified the Cookingham Farm as having potential for an HVAHCS pilot project[117].

4) Maintaining capacity and momentum at the collaborative, organization, and organization representative levels

HVAHCS has capacity at the collaborative level due to paid time from one of the conveners, a facilitation team, and a technical team. This capacity to keep the effort moving forward – in a logistical and visioning way – has been incredibly important for Phase 1. It will be important to strike a balance between having capacity at the collaborative level and becoming overly institutionalized. VHCB has a lot of capacity as its own organization, but has struggled to maintain its identity as a network of organizations.

At the organization level, some of the organizations are more present than others in terms of their boards of directors and staff involvement and interest. HVAHCS is currently thinking through the potential involvement of additional organizations. Expanding to include additional counties or organizations within the current region could have a trade-off between a "big tent approach and a focus on relationship building.[118]" In becoming a big tent with a lot of potential political power, there is the possibility of losing a shared purpose and vision of the region.

[115] (*Hudson Valley Affordable Housing and Conservation April Meeting*, personal communication, April 2023)
[116] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Al Bellenchia, April 18, 2023a)
[117] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Seth McKee, April 21, 2023)
[118] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Rebecca Gillman Crimmins, April 18, 2023b)

At the member organization representative level, HVAHCS is encountering the tension of including executive director level staff as the representatives. The conveners sought executive directors or senior staff to represent each organization because "we needed them to buy in so that they would commit organizational capacity." The trade-off is that high-level staff are quite busy. Two organizations substituted another staff person as their representative part way through the process. "The larger non-profits have busier executive directors, so we're less likely to get them. We need to continue proving why this is important so executive directors continue to commit to it." The time and capacity question is not just applicable to executive directors; one executive director organization representative shared that he was hesitant to assign an additional staff person to the effort due to staff capacity concerns.[119].

There were capacity challenges for organization representatives to engage on deliverables between meetings. Multiple requests were made for feedback on the policy recommendation and mapping deliverables between sessions that received limited responses. This could reflect capacity limitations on behalf of the organization representatives, or that the deliverables on which feedback was requested were not seen as worthwhile, or that the planning team needs to streamline requests for feedback and plan for less to occur between sessions.

Leadership at each of these levels – collaborative, organization, organization representative – has been an important factor throughout the process. The conveners exhibited leadership in initiating the process, and having clout to bring together these organizations and obtain funding. They are now challenged to figure out how to not be individual drivers of the process. As one of the conveners shared, "we don't want individual personalities making this collaborative. That is not sustainable[120]." Ensuring diffused leadership, rather having one person masterminding the process, will make HVAHCS more stable as a network, and leave space for other organizations to step-up and be more actively involved.

At the organization level, there was a focus on including the leading regional organizations, and then filling in the geographic area with smaller organizations. The mismatch in size and regional weight could result in larger organizations having more of a say in shaping the process. This dynamic was raised as a concern during the situation assessment conducted by the facilitation team in which a few organizations shared that one of the larger organizations could be a bully.

Regarding leadership at the organization representative level, there is a tension of including executive directors due to their expertise and organization buy-in and their capacity to fully engage. This is described in more detail above.

5) Accessing funding sources that incentivize collaboration

[119] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Seth McKee, April 21, 2023)
[120] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Rebecca Gillman Crimmins, April 18, 2023b)

One of the challenges to collaboration identified in the project description is siloed state and philanthropic funds that do not incentivize cross-sectoral collaboration (Steve Rosenberg & Rebecca Gillman Crimmins, n.d.). In this siloed funding context, accessing money to support collaboration, becomes challenging. For Phase 1, HVAHCS successfully secured funding for collaboration from the member organizations, private donors, and The Nature Conservancy. The Nature Conservancy (TNC)'s Common Ground fund, which is a new fund that supports projects advancing equity, justice, and sovereignty in conservation ("Where Are All the Hunters of Color?," 2022).

In Spring 2023, HVAHCS was awarded $100,000 from the New York State Conservation Partnership Program (NYSCPP), which offers matching grants to qualified New York land trusts. NYCPP is a public-private partnership between New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the Land Trust Alliance that began in 2002 (*Grant Partnerships with the Land Trust Alliance - NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation*, n.d.). Within the grant program, HVAHCS received funds from the Catalyst Grant, which supports collaborative projects and catalyzes new partnerships (*New York State Conservation Partnership Program*, n.d.).

The 2016 presidential election, Black Lives Matter movement, and the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted inequities and injustices across the United States. Private donors and government funding responded by having an increased appetite in work that prioritized equity and justice. The emergence of these funding opportunities speaks to increasing interest in work that incentivizes collaboration.

6) Responding nimbly as a collaborative to policy or project opportunities.

HVAHCS had three opportunities to issue a collective response to specific opportunities during Phase 1. It was unable to facilitate a collective response to the Housing Compact and updated language for the town of Philipstown's comprehensive plan, but it did facilitate a joint response to the Cookingham Farm project. HVAHCS has a lot of potential to respond nimbly to future policies or projects as they identify their interests and develop shared policy goals.

In the November HVAHCS meeting, one conservation representative shared that the town of Philipstown had requested language on conservation and affordable housing to include in their comprehensive plan. The representative requested support from HVAHCS to develop the affordable housing language, but ultimately did not receive this support. This may be a reflection of limited capacity or of the group not being ready so early in the process to develop and agree to language for model zoning. Being able to respond to similar requests for advice or expertise would be a meaningful contribution of HVAHCS, and help their ideas proliferate. Identifying language for model zoning as group proactively would allow them to respond nimbly to future requests.

In March, HVAHCS had the opportunity to respond as a collaborative to the Housing Compact. They could, but were unable to, throw their political weight behind it, or a set or refinements to the policy. If HVAHCS continues to flesh out its policy recommendations, it would be ablet o better respond to these types of policy proposals more cohesively.

The Cookingham Farm project is an example of multiple organizations successfully responding jointly to a project. This project is described in more detail above.

7) Conducting community engagement

Discussions about the role of community engagement in the HVAHCS process have evolved throughout Phase 1. In the first two meetings, multiple representatives shared an interest in conducting community engagement to ensure action taken by HVAHCS reflected the populations the group was trying support through affordable housing provision.

HVAHCS was wrestling with the scope of the collaborative, and the role of community engagement in relation to the scope. One interviewee shared the tension: "I'm unsure how much community input is needed when the goal is for organizations to partner together.[121]" During a specific conversation about the role of community engagement at the third meeting, the group decided to focus on organization-organization collaboration. Engaging community members at this stage would be premature, they decided, and the budget and scope of the relationship-building phase would not allow for meaningful six-county engagement. One interviewee recommended conducting community engagement to address and dismantle NIMBYism.[122]"

The conveners clarified the intention that the organizations would engage, and share and elicit feedback from their constituents, rather than HVAHCS developing its own constituents and functioning like a separate organization. As one of the conveners shared, "we can't do community engagement. We don't have the resources or connections. This needs to be put back on the organizations – who do have the resources, connections, and local knowledge[123]."

Underlying the tension about the role of community engagement was the concern that the organization representatives do not reflect the diversity of the region nor the target population for affordable housing. Organization representatives are senior-level staff in non-profits, which "tends to be a white, educated, and older population[124]" As one of the conveners noted, "the lack of diversity [in HVHACS] is a reflection of the lack of diversity in the organizations. All of the organizations should be thinking about this. There is a tension between working with existing

[121] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Ona Ferguson, April 12, 2023)
[122] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Sophie Carillo-Mandel, April 18, 2023c)
[123] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Rebecca Gillman Crimmins, April 18, 2023b)
[124] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Ona Ferguson, April 12, 2023)

leadership of these organizations, and wanting more diversity in the group.[125]" HVAHCS could act as a resource and brainstorming arena for organizations to think about increasing their internal diversity.

Over the course of Phase 1, conversations about community engagement shifted to municipal elected officials and staff engagement. One organization representative suggested forming outreach teams to meet with town supervisors, and zoning and planning boards to share a list of recommended zoning or local policy changes that all HVAHCS organizations endorse. The intention would be to provide "resources for elected officials who don't have the expertise. Education is important for countering the fear-based angry mob[126]." The VHCB case reveals the political power two sectors can have when jointly lobbying. Senator Scudder Parker noted the power of the sectors lobbying for new legislation: "It was the first time I've seen a low-income advocate and a farmer supporting the same bill (Libby, 1989)." HVAHCS, acting as a coalition, has the potential to educate and impact local elected officials and government staff.

The value of having municipal officials and staff engaged in educated about the opportunity of this cross-sectoral intersection became clear during the Cookingham Farm project in Red Hook. The town supervisor was a critical player in the project in that he purchased the land when the three non-profits were not able to in time. If the town supervisor had not been interested in "pushing the envelope[127]" and in the work of both sectors, the project would not have occurred. Engaging local elected officials and staff has the potential to facilitate similar actions in other towns. HVAHCS could act as a resource for municipal officials and staff on zoning and planning questions should they want input from a range of weighty regional non-profits.

Once HVAHCS determines how to approach community or municipal official engagement, the collaborative has the potential to offer capacity to the organization representatives conducting the engagement. HVAHCS could be a venue in which to share best practices for engagement[128], and the planning team could help in the development of materials development and contact lists.

HVAHCS is well poised to respond to the cross-sectoral collaborations challenges faced by VHCB if it proceeds in a thoughtful manner. It emphasizes consensus building, network building and collective impact principles in its approach, which sets it up well to not over institutionalize itself. As it proceeds, it will be important HVAHCS to:

- Discuss each sector's interests and opportunities for trading and packages. This could be done through the development of criteria for projects each side could support.

[125] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Rebecca Gillman Crimmins, April 18, 2023b)
[126] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Al Bellenchia, April 18, 2023a)
[127] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Seth McKee, April 21, 2023)
[128] (*Hudson Valley Affordable Housing and Conservation September Meeting*, personal communication, September 2022)

- Continue providing opportunities to build relationships and trust, and facilitate cross-sectoral learning.
- Support organizations with community engagement and internal diversity work.
- Support organizational representatives with sharing information and soliciting feedback from their boards of directors and staff.
- Be mindful of the needed balance between collaborative capacity and over institutionalization of HVHACS. Foster diffuse leadership.
- Identify shared interests and policy goals proactively to be able to respond to opportunistic policy or project opportunities.
- Develop an engagement strategy for municipal officials and staff.
- Provide capacity and encouragement for organization representatives to conduct constituent engagement about HVAHCS.
- Focus on emergent ideas that arise from the organization representatives. The three process framing components that emerged from the organization representatives – relationship building, learning about both sectors, and the 'test kitchen' – were referenced as successes by interviewees.

Recommendation for Others Considering Cross-Sectoral Collaboration

This final section is a list of recommendations for other groups considering initiating or participating in cross-sectoral collaboration elsewhere.

As I argue in this thesis, collaboration (or, collective impact initiatives, network building, and consensus building) is the preferred choice for sectors in shared and increasingly competitive spaces. There is much to learn from consensus building, coalition building and collective impact theories, as well as the two cased of collaboration discussed in this thesis. Through HVAHCS' emphasis on these principles, it has potential to maximize mutual gain for each sector and have a wide impact. Though just beginning, this is an opportunity full of potential to make meaningful change for those involved and the region.

If you are heartened to hear of alternative options to fighting or ignoring other sectors operating in the same shared physical space, this type of collaboration can be replicated elsewhere. As one of the HVAHCS conveners shared, "people often have the perception of these interests being at odds with each other, and are usually heartened to hear this is happening and that relationships are being built. When people are excited about it, we say go and do it in your region! There is no need to wait for someone else to do it[129]."

As you embark on this journey, I share the following recommendations based on this action research case study:

- Use an interests-based approach to cross-sector collaboration and coalition building. Don't shy away from disagreement; look to understand interests and opportunities to trade options.

[129] (Abby Fullem, personal communication with Rebecca Gillman Crimmins, April 18, 2023b)

- Provide collaborative capacity through paid staff while avoiding the over institutionalization of the collaborative. Prioritize the power of the network rather that the familiar independent organization model. Foster diffuse leadership.

- Use a third-party facilitation team to design and facilitate the process.

- Allow ideas, priorities, and approach to emerge from the organizations. Avoid predetermined deliverables and goals. Collectively develop and determine goals for on-the-ground projects, state-level policy change, local-level policy change

- Prioritize relationship building among organization representatives, and organization boards of directors and staff.

- Shared understanding is important. Take time to understand the histories, practices, and tools of each sector.

- Support organizations with conducting community and organization engagement. Support them to increase their internal diversity.

- Prioritize time to brainstorm and share ideas on projects.

Appendix A. HVAHCS Shared Purpose Statement

The Current Context

The Hudson River Valley region that we call home is becoming an increasingly unsustainable and inequitable place to live. A variety of factors have contributed to the present reality: single family sprawl over denser, smart growth development; the COVID-19 real estate boom; vulnerable existing rental housing, and the perception that affordable housing brings unwanted change to communities. These factors have contributed to untenable real estate appreciation, the displacement of low-income and Black and Brown communities, and dwindling housing stock for families with modest incomes. Natural assets such as the Hudson River and its tributaries, hunting and fishing areas, and informal community open spaces are increasingly at risk due to unfettered real estate development. Climate change is threatening the environment. The loss of biodiversity, threats to sustainable agriculture and local food supply, urban heat islands, storm surges, and flooding are impacting our residents, infrastructure and resources. These challenges affect us all.

Affordable housing and land conservation organizations have made progress addressing these issues within their own sectors. Yet, the problems we face are too urgent, massive and intertwined to be solved alone. The current siloed approach is not accomplishing enough.

Our Vision

The Hudson River Valley is a sustainable and inclusive home to an economically and racially diverse community. Our work helps the region develop a holistic, equitable and proactive approach to housing, climate change, and land conservation.

Our Work Together

We are banding together to take a holistic approach to these complex and urgent problems, and have a larger-scale impact. Collectively, we can better serve Hudson Valley residents and communities by meeting the need for affordable housing, conserving important lands for human and ecological benefit, and adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change. This collaborative approach allows us to leverage and learn from each sector's successes, resources, methods, and constituencies. We hope that our collaboration will drive progress, serve as a model for change within and across sectors, and result in increased collaboration among our organizations and stakeholders. Our network makes us more nimble, equitable and expansive in serving our collective constituencies and realizing our vision.

We expect our work to include:

- Learning about each sector's best practices and outcomes;
- Identifying shared interests and opportunities for collaboration;
- Leveraging our collective strength to pilot new approaches;
- Advocating for changes in public policy; and
- Communicating our shared priorities to our respective organizations, constituents, policy makers, and the public.

We hope that our collaboration will contribute to a thriving Hudson River Valley region that is more welcoming, inclusive, affordable, accessible, and sustaining to all who live here now and in the future.

Appendix B. Policy Ideas Warranting Further Exploration

State laws and funding programs are currently designed exclusively to support either affordable housing or land conservation in isolation from the other. New or enhanced state policies have the potential to incentivize collaboration between the sectors and leveraging of resources to address some of our most pressing public concerns, including the supply of affordable housing and climate resilience. The participating organizations have identified several ideas warranting further exploration:

State Legislation to Support Affordable Housing & Conservation Together:

- Authorize municipalities to hold referenda to create combined Community Preservation Funds (CPFs) that would be used to support both conservation and affordable housing projects. Three Long Island communities secured legislative authorization from Albany and then voted to create Community Housing Funds by a transfer fee in November 2022. Massachusetts allows municipalities to use a property tax add-on for its combined Community Preservation Act that funds open space, affordable housing and historic preservation projects.
- Create state matching funds for combined CPFs, similar to what already exists in Massachusetts, and include additional incentives for projects that involve both sectors.
- Prioritize and increase funding via existing state programs for projects that advance both goals in tandem, such as open space projects that set aside land for affordable housing (consistent with smart growth principles) or affordable housing projects that include meaningful access to open space, community gardens, and/or street trees.

Other Legislative Strategies:

- Encourage Hudson Valley's elected, state representatives to serve on legislative committees for both sectors.

Land Trusts and Affordable Housing Groups Create Principles for One Sector to Support Projects/Initiatives of the Other. As a practical tool, establish land use and environmental principles that can be the basis for organizations in each sector supporting the other sector's projects and initiatives. Such projects and initiatives might include:

- <u>Affordable housing:</u>
  - Tax credits for adaptive reuse of non-historic structures for affordable housing.
  - Tax credits for creating affordable housing in remediated Brownfield Opportunity Areas.
  - Increase state subsidies to encourage ownership of affordable homes (not just rentals).
  - Reduce property taxes for price-restricted homes.
  - Create a program similar to DEC's Conservation Partnership Program with the Land Trust Alliance to provide re-grant funds to affordable housing organizations to increase capacity.

- <u>Conservation</u>:
  - Fund and provide waivers of liability to accredited land trusts to acquire land located in Brownfield Opportunity Areas for open space/community gardens/trails and outdoor recreation and education.

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