

FACES OF HOME

Everything Changed

When she was a single mother of four young children, homeownership was so far out of reach for Crystal Bailly, she didn't even dream about it.

Bailly and her children, the youngest only one-year old at the time, moved to Brookings, SD, to be closer to her father after her divorce. Two years later, Bailly and her children moved again, this time to Grand Forks, ND, just across the river from East Grand Forks, MN, the community she grew up in.

A variety of things brought Bailly to the state she's called home since 2005. "My youngest son has some special needs and a broader range of services are available in Grand Forks. I was also interested in pursuing a degree at the University of North Dakota (UND) that would allow me to teach high school art. And, with my boyfriend at the time living here and me being familiar with the community, I decided to make the move," said Bailly.

The Grand Forks Housing Authority (GFHA) provided a safe and affordable place to live that allowed Bailly to begin taking college classes right away.

In the fall of 2011, during her final semester of college, Bailly began



Crystal Bailly stands in the front yard of the home she bought with the support of the Grand Forks Community Land Trust. When she was a single parent of four young children focused on earning a college degree, homeownership was something that Bailly never thought would be possible.

working part-time at a local department store. After graduating with her Bachelor of Fine Arts, she became a full-time sales associate, and a couple months later, Bailly was promoted to a position as a visual manager.

While she didn't finish UND's education program, "At that point in my life, everything changed," Bailly said, "I was finally earning an income that allowed me to support my family."

Something Bailly hadn't planned or

really ever even considered would happen one year later.

While Bailly was raising her family and pursuing her degree, GFHA was exploring a way to provide families like hers with greater economic stability by offering them homeownership opportunities through a Community Land Trust (CLT).

A CLT allows households of modest means to buy a home while the organization retains ownership of the land. The arrangement reduces the cost of a mortgage. On average, CLT homeowners earn about 40 percent of the area median income. Today, in Grand Forks County, for a four-person household, that's about \$32,000 per year.

"The model was born out of the need to address rising housing costs, limited land, and the growing number of abandoned or substandard buildings that

affect the overall quality of a community's housing stock," said Emily Contreras, executive director of the Grand Forks Community Land Trust.

Benefits to CLT homeowners include the security of owning their own home and use of the land much like a market-rate homeowner. Additionally, the CLT provides homebuyer education, foreclosure prevention and a guaranteed sale if the homeowner chooses to move on.

“More than 90 percent of CLT homeowners stay in their homes for at least five years,” said Contreras. “When a family moves, over 70 percent of the households go on to purchase a market-rate home.”

To ensure the long-term affordability of the property, CLT homeowners are required to sell to another CLT-qualified household. The Grand Forks organization maintains a waiting list of eligible parties from which the next buyer is chosen. If no one is waiting, the CLT purchases the home and retains ownership until a qualified individual or family is ready to buy.

About a year after her promotion, Bailly learned about the CLT program from the resident services coordinator at her apartment building.

“That fall I interviewed for and joined GFCLT’s board of directors as a community member and hopeful future homeowner,” said Bailly. “I actually had my interview in the house that would eventually become mine!”

Homeowners and community members each make up one-third of GFCLT’s board of directors, ensuring they have an active voice in the organization’s governance.



Emily Contreras (left), executive director of the Grand Forks Community Land Trust, visits with Crystal Bailly on the front porch of her home. More than four years after learning about the CLT, Bailly serves as a homeowner representative on the organization’s board and is also its secretary.

Because of various reasons, neither one of the two families on the list ahead of Bailly were able to purchase when their names rose to the top, so she was next.

When Contreras surprised Bailly with the news that she was next on the list, “I was super excited and really nervous,” said Bailly.

More than four years later, Bailly continues to live in her CLT home. Her sons, the two youngest of her children, are both in high school. Her oldest daughter has a child and

lives on her own. Her younger daughter just started college. Bailly now manages a retail women’s clothing store. She continues to serve on the GFCLT board,

now as a homeowner representative and as the board’s secretary.

Reflecting back on the path that led her to homeownership, Bailly said, “I didn’t search at all, I didn’t believe I would ever be able to purchase a home in Grand Forks given the market. Even though I was a manager and making a fairly decent wage, everything except very dilapidated or small homes were out of my price range and affordability.”

When Grand Forks’ CLT was incorporated in 2010, it became the first in North Dakota. Today, through the North Dakota Community Land Trust Partnership, Contreras has helped Minot start its own CLT and is working to build the capacity of and be a resource for other local communities interested in providing more affordable homeownership opportunities.

To learn more about North Dakota’s Community Land Trusts, www.gfclt.org or www.minotclt.org.

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Community Land Trust Programs

North Dakota Housing Finance Agency (NDHFA) supports the work of the state’s Community Land Trusts (CLT) two ways.

Through its participating lender network, NDHFA offers affordable mortgage loans, and down payment and closing cost assistance to CLT homebuyers.

A program being piloted by the agency supports the development of more single-family housing for low- to moderate-income households by offering local CLTs access to a low-cost line of credit. These funds can be used to finance the acquisition, rehabilitation, demolition and/or new construction of homes on in-fill lots and in higher density neighborhoods for resale to qualified homebuyers.