



Community Opportunity News

► INFORMING THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FIELD

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National Voice

COA Rallies Members to Protect the Community Reinvestment Act

Community development associations across the country have signed COA's letter to federal regulators urging them to keep the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) strong. The letter sets out seven principles "to ensure that federally insured banks help meet the credit needs of their entire communities, including low- and moderate-income neighborhoods." [Read the letter](#) and see which associations have signed the letter so far.

The letter responds to a proposal regulators released on August 12. The changes would narrow bank accountability. They would weaken the infrastructure that moves billions of bank dollars into low- and moderate-income communities. Executive Director Frank Woodruff has led sessions at the COA's national summit, state and regional conferences, and online convenings to help community developers prepare their input. Strong comments from the field protect the resources community development organizations rely on. Organizations can use our [CRA Advocacy Toolkit](#) to submit comments by the October 13 deadline.

Court Temporarily Protects HUD Counseling Funds; 3 COA Members Among Plaintiffs

A federal judge paused the cancellation of \$56 million in HUD housing counseling funds on September 30 while the court considers the full case. Three COA members are among 10 nonprofit plaintiffs: Housing Action Illinois, the Housing & Community Development Network of New Jersey, and National CAPACD.

Sharon Legenza, executive director of Housing Action Illinois, said, "If these essential funds are withheld, local housing counseling agencies will not be able to provide critical financial literacy, rental, and homeownership education, making it even harder, especially in this economic climate, for families seeking guidance on some of the most complex, important financial decisions of their lives."

Staci Berger, president and CEO of the Housing & Community Development Network of New Jersey, stated, "We are pursuing this action to protect our neighbors and communities, so that they are able to access affordable, safe and stable housing using the wide array of HUD housing counseling services that Congress authorized." Read the Housing Action Illinois [press release](#).

Capacity

COA and Wells Fargo Foundation Target Barriers to Workforce Housing

The Wells Fargo Foundation selected COA to launch the Workforce Housing Solutions Collaborative. This national initiative will help state and regional housing and community development associations translate promising workforce housing strategies into practical, local action. The goal is to remove structural barriers that prevent middle-income people from having adequate housing in the communities where they work.

The initiative builds on work by three COA members: The Coalition DC, the South Carolina Association for Community Economic Development, and the Texas Association of Community Development Corporations. They identified, tested, and shared solutions across diverse markets, then recommended eight reforms to expand workforce housing. Read their recommendations in [Housing for Workers in the Middle](#).

Convening



Learn How to Guide OZ Investments: November 16–17 in San Antonio, Texas

COA will host [Opportunity Zones & Your Influence](#), a convening that prepares community developers to guide Opportunity Zone (OZ) investments toward local priorities. New OZ designations and significant program changes will take effect in January 2027. The convening will be held on November 16–17 at the San Antonio Branch of the Federal Reserve.

View the [agenda](#). Day one starts with a close look at OZ 2.0, covering key program changes, new features, and examples from investors. Participants will practice building a pro forma and work through real-world case studies with investors. On day two, participants will tour a successful San Antonio OZ project and meet the people who led it. The closing session will examine how community development networks can help ensure OZ investments benefit low- and moderate-income communities. [Register now](#).

Our Field Calendar Provides Professional Development Opportunities

Use our Community Development Field Calendar to find [upcoming events](#) across the country. [Submit your events](#) for us to post on the calendar.

Identity

Robert Zdenek and Matt Hull Receive National Leadership Awards



Robert Zdenek, interim director of the California Community Economic Development Association, and Matt Hall, executive director of the Texas Association of Community Development Corporations were presented with the awards by Paige Carlson-Heim, Head of US Social Impact at TD Bank, and Stephen Glaude, President & CEO of The Coalition DC and Chair of the COA Board of Directors.

The Diane Sterner Award for Community Development Association Leadership was presented to Robert Zdenek and Matt Hull at the COA Summit. Named for our organization's founder, the award is presented to association leaders who demonstrate exceptional commitment to the community development field.

Robert Zdenek has over 45 years of leadership experience in community development and co-authored the book, *Navigating Community Development*. When he was president of the National Congress for Community Economic Development (COA's predecessor), Zdenek helped launch community development associations around the country.

In addition to leading the Texas association, Matt Hull is senior administrator of the Texas Community Capital, a CDFI. He assisted in the the development of Community Loan Centers, a small dollar loan program that offers workers an affordable alternative to payday and auto title loans. COA members in Missouri, Michigan and Indiana have brought the program to their states. Hull has served on our board of directors for over 10 years, most recently as Treasurer.

Research

Two COA Reports Equip the Community Development Field to Grow



COA has released two new reports, each with practical resources for community development organizations and funders.

[Supporting Emerging Leaders for Community Development](#) — This study and action plan lays out how our field can build rewarding, lasting career paths. Author Joseph McNeely maps the training resources already available and the barriers that keep people from accessing them, making the case for a stronger, better-funded professional development system. He provides eight recommendations to support people at every career stage, from onboarding newcomers to preparing future executive directors.

[Partnership Dynamics in Community-Based Development Organizations](#) — This report explores how community developers can increase equity and balance in their partnerships. Written by ThirdSpace Action Lab, it includes the [Equity Fit Screen tool](#). Use this tool to assess whether your partnerships advance racial equity, strengthen organizational sustainability, and benefit residents first.

Urban Institute Report Uses COA Census Data to Study Climate Work

Community and economic development (CED) organizations are well positioned to help residents respond to climate change, according to a new Urban Institute report. [How Community and Economic Development Organizations Engage with Climate Change](#) draws on a national survey of senior leaders at CED organizations. Researchers reached them using contacts from [COA's national census](#) of community-based development organizations.

The report shows how COA census data is helping build broader awareness of the field's value. It states, "The communities most exposed to climate change are largely the same ones CED organizations have served for decades, giving them the trust, relationships, and local knowledge that outside groups can't easily replicate."

University Partnerships Expand COA Research

This year, COA partnered with master's capstone teams from George Washington University's Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration and the University of Michigan's Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning. Students examined emerging challenges facing

the community development field while gaining firsthand exposure to the work of community development organizations and the career opportunities within the field.

“Academic partnerships introduce students to the community development field,” noted COA Applied Research Manager Chanse Sonsalla. “They bring fresh analysis and help build a pipeline of new talent.” The students’ findings helped COA identify topics to bring to our Staying Rooted Funders Network and our regional research focus groups. In turn, those conversations are shaping COA’s research agenda and strategic priorities.

Funding

Community Compass Technical Assistance & Capacity Building Program | HUD

Deadline: February 3

HUD released a notice of funding opportunity. The estimated posting date is November 15. Grantees will be awarded up to \$86,000,000 to provide technical assistance to the people and organizations HUD serves.

Rural Capacity Building Program | NALCAB

Deadline: October 16

NALCAB's financial capabilities program will award grants of up to \$14,000 each to four organizations with established affordable housing programs in rural communities. The selected organizations will also receive targeted technical assistance.

Members Can Get Weekly Funding Alerts Through GrantStation

The *GrantStation Insider* is available to COA members at no cost. The weekly publication highlights national, regional, and federal funding opportunities. Non-members can access it with a \$25 donation. [Sign up for GrantStation.](#)

Funding Opportunities

View [grant opportunities](#) and sign up for the GrantStation Insider newsletter.

Job Opportunities

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