



# B.R.E.A.D. Quarterly Newsletter

Building Responsibility, Equality, and Dignity

Columbus, Ohio Affiliate of The DART Center:  
A National Network of Congregation-Based Justice Organizations

Q2 ISSUE

AUGUST 13, 2025

Editor: Helen Anne Sweeney

## RENTAL REGISTRY UPDATE: B.R.E.A.D. FOLLOWS UP TO MAKE SURE PROMISES MADE ARE PROMISES KEPT!

By CATHY LEVINE

Following through on his commitment, Council Member Bankston met with B.R.E.A.D. on June 6 and July 31. In June, he assured us that City staff were working to develop an outline of the ordinance and were on track to draft proposed ordinance language by the August Recess. They were trying to figure out how and when to do periodic inspections. We shared with them our priorities for the registry and for housing inspections.

At B.R.E.A.D.'s July 31 meeting with city staff, we learned that they are trying to incorporate our suggestions for the rental registry and housing inspection. They are still developing details before the proposed ordinance language is completed. According to Council Member Bankston, all rental units will be required to be registered. City staff are trying to determine how to prioritize inspections. They shared their considerations and research as well as their schedule for holding hearings and introducing legislation.

### **Rental Registry Public Hearing**

Tuesday, September 16, 2025 at 5:00 PM

Columbus City Hall:

90 W Broad St

Columbus, OH 43215

Council Member Bankston asked us to show up  
in large numbers to support the rental registry!

B.R.E.A.D. representatives will provide  
testimony at the hearing.

*"Stop Predatory Landlords! Protect Renters Now!"*

## COUNCILMEMBER NICK BANKSTON MAKES COMMITMENT TO INTRODUCE RENTAL REGISTRY

By CATHY LEVINE



*Cathy Levine & Mr. Bankston  
at Nehemiah Action 2025*

One thousand three hundred people gathered at the Nehemiah Action and bore witness as Council Member Nick Bankston made a commitment to introduce an ordinance to Columbus City Council to create a rental registry by August 2025. Before Council Member Bankston made his commitment, Cathy Levine, co-chair of the "Stop Predatory Landlords! Protect Renters Now!" committee, provided the audience with background information concerning the importance of the rental registry and the meetings held with Mr. Bankston.

According to Ms. Levine, a rental registry should provide the name, physical address, and contact information of a local agent in charge. A tenant or other party, such as a city housing inspector, will be able to contact the local agent in charge about making needed repairs. The rental registry should also provide other data, such as the size of each unit, ranges of rental prices and eligibility criteria for housing vouchers, that can be easily accessed by renters, city employees, and the public. →

According to a national expert, who met with the committee, a rental registry alone will not help the thousands of renters who move in, only to discover plumbing, heating, electrical and other serious problems. Renters are afraid to call Code Enforcement when landlords fail to make repairs, for fear of retaliation — higher rents or even eviction. Rather, the national expert explained that rental units should receive periodic inspection to ensure that they meet the City's Housing Code requirements, optimally before the renter moves in. Renters need PRO-ACTIVE inspections, not just inspections that result from complaints from desperate, frightened renters.

Ms. Levine told the assembly that Columbus is a big city. Getting every rental unit in Columbus inspected before a tenant moves in might be impractical. Plus, many landlords have demonstrated that they are both valuable and responsible. For these reasons, some cities have schedules of periodic inspections (including inspections before the tenant moves in). This schedule takes into consideration the age of the building, the buildings history of previous code violations, especially REPEAT OFFENDERS, and other factors that might predict bad conditions.

B.R.E.A.D. members, according to Ms. Levine, were delighted to hear, in February 2025, that Council Member Bankston and Council President Hardin had developed an “appetite” to create a full rental registry and that they were working with the Department of Development to design and write the ordinance. On April 30, 2025, B.R.E.A.D. met with Council Member Bankston at the Church of Christ on Genessee Avenue, where he emphatically reaffirmed this commitment.

Besides agreeing to introduce an ordinance to create a rental registry by August 2025, Mr. Bankston made two other important commitments at the Nehemiah Action. He agreed to include in the rental registry a regular schedule of inspections, including pre-rental inspections. He also made a commitment that he and/or his staff would meet with B.R.E.A.D. beginning 30 days from the Nehemiah Action and monthly until the ordinance is passed.

*“B.R.E.A.D. Rises!”*

## B.R.E.A.D. CELEBRATION 2025

By ANTOINETTE KOOLEMANS-BEYNEN

It was a celebration, worthy of B.R.E.A.D.! One hundred ninety-seven network members, representing 32 congregations, gathered at the Noor Islamic Center on June 30, 2025. Network members partook of the food and drink, had fun, and connected with new and old friends. However, that was not the whole story!

Cathy Levine of “*Stop Predatory Landlords! Protect Renters Now!*” related in detail the path the committee followed in securing Councilmember Nick Bankston’s commitment to introduce an ordinance to establish a rental registry at the City of Columbus’s August special session. Mr. Bankston also made a commitment at the Nehemiah Action to meet with the committee in June and July about the upcoming legislation. Ms. Levine noted that the committee had met with Mr. Bankston after the Nehemiah Action and will be following up with Mr. Bankston in July.

Tom Tichenor provided a summary of the progress with “*Trees Protect Us! We Protect Trees!*” on obtaining a commitment from Councilmember Nancy Day-Achauer to introduce an ordinance to protect trees on public property. Before introducing an ordinance, Ms. Day-Achauer is convening a work group of developers and community members, including B.R.E.A.D., to study the issue and determine what City laws exist to protect trees. No date has been set for the committee’s first meeting. B.R.E.A.D. will continue to push for an ordinance to be passed by December 2025.

Best of all, network members gave a heartfelt welcome to B.R.E.A.D.’s newest member congregation, the Noor Islamic Center. With Co-President W. D. Smith presiding over the ceremony, the Noor Islamic Center entered into the membership covenant.

Special recognition was given to congregations that turned out 50%, 75%, or 100% of their Average Worship Attendance to the Nehemiah Action. These congregations are:

- 50%: Just North UCC; Rhema Christian Center.
- 75%: Redeemer Lutheran (*to be announced at the 2025 Annual Assembly*).
- 100%: New Beginning Christian Center; Church of Christ on Genessee Avenue, Congregation Tifereth Israel!



*Noor Islamic Center signing ceremony*

## MORE ISSUE UPDATES

### KEEPING THE PRESSURE ON: “TREES PROTECT US! WE PROTECT TREES!”

By JUANA HOSTIN

In the fall of 2021, nearly one thousand B.R.E.A.D. network members gathered for their congregational house meetings to discuss problems that either they, their family members, or their community are facing. Many members reflected on the negative environmental impacts of climate change. They shared their experiences with more violent rainfall, flash flooding, unbearable summer heat, poor air quality, and financial costs, such as higher utility bills and property damage.

B.R.E.A.D. network members at the Annual Assembly held in November 2021 adopted environmental justice as a problem to pursue and formed a research committee to investigate possible solutions for managing the environmental impacts of climate change on Columbus neighborhoods. The committee learned through its research process that large, mature trees were effective in countering these negative environmental effects. Unfortunately, Columbus has a poor track record in preserving mature trees. Overall, Columbus has 22% tree canopy coverage, with some neighborhoods, like Franklinton, having even less. In comparison, cities like Charlotte, Pittsburgh and Cincinnati, have tree canopy coverage of 40% or more.

The City of Columbus commissioned the creation of a strategic plan for our urban forest as part of the Columbus equity agenda. In 2021, the City of Columbus adopted the Columbus Urban Forestry Master Plan. Its objectives are to:

1. Attain citywide tree canopy coverage of 40% by 2050.
2. Stop the net canopy losses by 2030.
3. Invest in equitable canopy across all neighborhoods by 2030.



*B.R.E.A.D. Members at the Doo Dah Parade*

The Master Plan called for the formation of a working group, comprised of City departments and community leaders like B.R.E.A.D. to revise Columbus tree regulations within two years. The plan also identified the need for legislative protections for trees on both public and private property. At last year's Nehemiah Action, network members celebrated the passage of an ordinance protecting trees on public property. Approximately 70% of all existing Columbus trees are on private property! Private property includes commercial, manufacturing, and industrial properties in addition to individual-owned properties.

In the fall of 2024, the City of Columbus hired a consulting firm to assess the need for protection of trees on private property. In their report, the consultants called for an ordinance to protect trees on private property. According to the consultants' report, 21 cities nationally and internationally already have private tree protection ordinances. The passage of tree protection ordinances in other cities demonstrates that the developers and stakeholders are willing to adopt such regulations.

Columbus City Council is dragging its feet! The City has not formed the working group to revise tree regulations and City Council has not passed an ordinance to protect trees on private property.

B.R.E.A.D. met with Councilmember Nancy Day-Achauer, chair of Neighborhoods, Recreation, and Parks Committee, on April 29. Councilmember Day-Achauer informed B.R.E.A.D. that she was forming a work group that would include B.R.E.A.D. as a member.

- No date has been identified as to when the working group will be up and running.
- No target date has been set for when the working group will be completed.
- No date has been identified for when a tree protection ordinance for private property will be introduced.

To raise public awareness about the need to protect mature trees on public property, the “Trees Protect Us! We Protect Trees!” committee held a press conference on May 27 at Good Shepherd Baptist Church, the site of a majestic tree which used to protect the congregation and its neighborhood from the adverse effects of climate change. Also, B.R.E.A.D. marched in the annual July 4 Doo Dah parade to highlight the importance of trees!

## COLUMBUS VIOLENCE REDUCTION (CVR) UPDATE

By MARY COUNTER

In a July 20, 2025 Columbus Dispatch article, Rena Shak, Director of the Office of Violence Prevention, stated that there were 104 homicides this year to date. City officials also reported in June that the murder rate is at a 15 year low! Let us pray a moment for all families who have been impacted by violent crimes.

Columbus Violence Reduction (CVR) Assistant Director, Molly Robbins has moved on to other opportunities. Assistant Director Robbins was instrumental in organizing the interconnected violence reduction resources now in place. Our “*Stop Violence! Build Trust!*” committee valued her tireless commitment to keeping those most vulnerable safe, alive, and out of prison. This B.R.E.A.D. leader will miss her expertise and willingness to stay in the tough job of breaking the cycle of violence.

We welcome Dr. Terrance Hinton as the new Assistant Director of CVR. Dr. Hinton is also joining the CVR Team with years of engagement in criminal justice reform. B.R.E.A.D. Leaders will have an opportunity to join him and his team on Thursday, August 28, at the next CVR Call in. We will have our invitation to join as part of the community support shortly. Community members are always welcome at the Call-in Meetings. If you can offer car repairs, financial assistance, or fulfill other immediate and urgent needs of CVR participants, contact Mary Counter: (614) 459-8133. We will connect you immediately with CVR.

*“Stop Violence! Build Trust!”*

### MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

**RENTAL REGISTRY PUBLIC HEARING:**  
**TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2025**  
 Columbus City Hall:  
 90 W Broad St, Columbus, OH 43215  
 5:00 PM

**HOUSE MEETINGS: SEPTEMBER 15 - OCTOBER 25**  
*Check with your congregation's team for details!*

**ANNUAL ASSEMBLY, MONDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2025**  
 Location & Time TBA

**RESEARCH KICK-OFF: MONDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2025**  
 Location & Time TBA

*We look forward to seeing you at these upcoming events!*

### MAKE YOUR INVESTMENT IN B.R.E.A.D.!

In 2024, half of B.R.E.A.D.'s total income was raised by investments from network members. This helped to provide the necessary resources to train staff and team members, invest in supplies, and to build the power to do justice and to build a strong community. We celebrated many recent victories which included:

- A commitment from Councilmember Nick Bankston at the Nehemiah Action to submit an ordinance to create a rental registry on the August City agenda;
- The continual increase in the number of individuals served in the Columbus Violence Reduction program.

This year, B.R.E.A.D. has set a goal to raise \$210,000 from network members by December 2025, but at the Celebration only \$68,000 has been pledged so far. We need to hear from you. If you have not yet made your 2025 investment in B.R.E.A.D, you can choose your preferred payment option by accessing:

<https://breadcolumbus.com/invest/>.

### OUR MISSION

“He has told you, O mortal, what is good and what the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your GOD?” – Micah 6:6 (NRSV)

### CONTACT US

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## THE IMPORTANCE OF HOUSE MEETINGS

By ANTOINETTE KOOLEMANS-BEYNEN

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The Justice Ministry/Rodef Tzedek networks of B.R.E.A.D. are getting ready for their annual house meetings in the fall. B.R.E.A.D. will be identifying a new issue to tackle this year, and house meetings are an integral part of identifying the most common problems among our congregations and building power. When B.R.E.A.D. decides to work on a new problem, motivation and enthusiasm typically increases among house meeting participants and brings out large groups of organized people to the Nehemiah Action.

### What is a House Meeting?

The house meeting is not a problem-solving or a counseling session. A house meeting is a focused conversation within a congregation, lasting about 90 minutes. It usually involves about 11 people who may or may not be members of the congregation, and is meant to uncover problems that may align with important community issues. Depending upon the number of people that express an interest in attending a house meeting, your congregation may hold one meeting or many meetings in the weeks between September 15 and October 25. These meetings can be held in someone's home or in a congregational meeting space or via online conferencing. During the discussion, attendees reflect on their values and experiences with injustice, and receive an invitation to be part of their congregation's Justice Ministry/Rodef Tzedek network for the upcoming year.

### How does a House Meeting build power?

By uncovering community problems in small groups, members may identify common concerns about their community, motivating members to join their Justice Ministry/Rodef Tzedek network. When motivated to engage with other participants about identifying common community concerns, attendance increases at the Annual Assembly in November where all the network members from the various congregations are getting together to vote for a particular problem to become the focus of the action.

Joining your Justice Ministry/Rodef Tzedek network is therefore the first step in building B.R.E.A.D.'s People Power, which is critical for finding a solution to the problems that will be uncovered at the house meetings. And most importantly, house meetings help network members focus on building and strengthening new and ongoing relationships.

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## UPCOMING ANNUAL ASSEMBLY: NOVEMBER 17, 2025

By ANTOINETTE KOOLEMANS-BEYNEN

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A minimum of four times a year, B.R.E.A.D. convenes its Team members for its quarterly assemblies. These meetings serve to keep the staff and each other informed of the activities and involvement of the network members and the member congregations. The most important of those meetings is the Annual Assembly, usually called in the second half of November, and it is the only assembly where network members are invited to participate in the business of the organization. Like house meetings, the Annual Assembly is an integral part of building power, and network member turnout at the Annual Assembly is a good barometer of how many organized people will attend the Nehemiah Action in the spring.

The agenda for this year's Annual Assembly includes:

1. Cutting a new issue, based on the discussions at the house meetings in each congregation;
2. Voting for a new Co-President, a new Vice-President, a Recording Secretary, a Corresponding Secretary, and a Treasurer;
3. Approving the proposed amended bylaws, recently approved by the Board. (The B.R.E.A.D. bylaws are reviewed every five years and updated as needed. The current amendments have been drafted by a committee of five team members and were vetted by an outside agency as well.)
4. Sharing updates on current issues: the "*Stop Predatory Landlords! Protect Renters Now!*" and the "*Trees protect us! We protect Trees!*" campaigns.

A package containing agenda information will be emailed to all network members early in November. In preparing for this year's Annual Assembly, please be sure you **attend one of the house meetings in your congregation** this fall. See also the article on House Meetings in this issue of the Newsletter.

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## DIRECT ACTION RESEARCH AND TRAINING (D.A.R.T.) NEWS

### JUSTICE MINISTRY CONFERENCE



*B.R.E.A.D. leaders attended the Justice Ministry Conference in July 2025.*



### WELCOME PHILLIP KIMBROUGH AND ORLANDO ALSTON

By YOLANDA SMITH



*Orlando, John, and Yolanda present at the 2025 Celebration*

This year, the B.R.E.A.D. Organization hired two new Associate Organizers, Phillip Kimbrough, B.R.E.A.D.'s most recent addition, and Orlando Alston. Yolanda Smith, Church of Christ on Genessee Avenue Co-Chair was pleased to introduce them at the 2025 annual Celebration.

Phillip is a native of Chicago, who knows what it's like to live in situations of intense socioeconomic pressures. At an early age, he developed a sense of justice and says he "feels honored to be called upon to serve the Greater Columbus Ohio community". He has served in the Marines and was awarded an honorable discharge in 2012. He loves hiking, camping, listening to music, reading, prayer, and meditation. With his wife, he has trekked 2,198 miles through 13 states from Georgia to Maine and over 15,000 miles in America's awe-inspiring backcountries, and more.

Orlando is a family man and husband with a love for music and a commitment to his Christian faith. He has a passion for justice which was born from witnessing the loss of a family member to racial violence at an early age. He loves skating, singing, karaoke, D-Jing and producing original music compositions. We recently found out that he is also a poet! His love for God, family and community are the impetus for all that he is and what he does.

Both Phillip and Orlando are excited to work with our B.R.E.A.D. congregations to hold our officials accountable for a more just and fair community. We look forward to working with them as we work toward making Columbus more like the city God intends us to be.