

Martha Davis

August 3, 2022

The Cooperative Hall of Fame Committee

RE: Application for Induction of Linda Leaks into the Cooperative Hall of Fame

To Whom It May Concern:

Linda Leaks has been a fighter for resident co-op ownership in Washington D.C. for over 30 years. She combines a tenacious will to help tenants battle and negotiate with powerful landlords plus the perseverance to provide training and support to those tenants over many years of becoming co-op owners.

I have known Linda since 1990 when she and I both worked at Washington Inncity Self Help (WISH). I was the tenant purchase development manager and Linda was a tenant organizer. Together we worked on several tenant-purchase projects, where tenants would exercise their rights to purchase the apartment building where they lived. Two particular projects stand out:

One was Linda's own building in downtown Washington DC at 919 L Street N.W., where an unscrupulous landlord had allowed the building's heating system and elevator to totally break down. Many tenants moved out but Linda rallied a small group of remaining tenants to demand the building be sold to them, often publicly walking a picket line against the landlord. Indeed, after meetings and hearings with the city government in 1991 they successfully purchased the building and oversaw a complete renovation of the building into 27 co-op apartments by 1992.

A second tenant purchase was equally unique, as a group of public housing residents was able to purchase 90 townhouses near East Capitol Street S.E. as a limited equity co-op. Their saga extended over decades, as the DC Housing Authority originally built these homes in the 1970s to be resident-owned. That promise was not kept until Linda Leaks began working with the tenant association in 1990, and the association with Linda Leaks' support *for six years* protested, campaigned, testified and lobbied to regain their right to buy their homes. Once the Housing Authority agreed in 1996 to transfer the property under the federal 5(h) program, it was sold for \$1 to the residents, some renovation was completed, and the Southern Homes and Gardens Co-op took over operations in 1999. It was a triumph of nine years of Linda Leaks' persistence and determination in support of strong resident leaders, doing whatever it took to persuade public officials to do the right thing.

Linda Leaks helped educate me about the power of persistence, and about elevating the capabilities of ordinary residents to become leaders. In particular working with residents of color, she showed me and others that even residents who have been denied education, job opportunities and status due to their race do have the capacity to create and lead effective resident organizations. Their wisdom, drive, and humor can create and sustain successful resident cooperatives.

Linda earned my respect for her consistent work ethic and true belief in the power of cooperative ownership, so I heartily recommend Linda Leaks be inducted into the Cooperative Hall of Fame.

Please contact me at 202-550-8601 if you would like more information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Martha Davis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "M".

Martha Davis

Community Development Solutions consultant

Washington D.C.