



5-Year Highlights 2020-2025

Catalysts for Local Control-501(c)(4) and Catalysts Institute for Local Control (c)(3)

Introduction & Mission.

Catalysts for Local Control, a **501(c)(4) advocacy** organization, was formed in May 2021 in response to a wave of California housing bills perceived as undermining local control and planning authority, without meeting the stated goal of meeting the need for affordable housing. The Catalysts c/4 organization focuses on **legislative engagement, elections, political advocacy, litigation support, and direct action**. Donations are not tax-deductible.

Catalysts Institute for Local Control, the **501(c)(3) educational** organization was formed in August 2023. It focuses on informed action, networking, and collaboration around issues of housing policy, land use planning, and local control. Donations are tax-deductible.

Catalysts for Local Control - 501(c)(4): 2020 - 2025

Advocacy & Legislative Engagement: Policy Opposition & Legislative Letters

- In 2020, Catalysts for Local Control created a campaign called “Nix-the-Nine. The campaign relied on research from The Embarcadero Institute, which called out the fraudulence of the claim California faced a housing shortage of 3.5 million units. The campaign addressed nine egregious housing bills that accelerated developer/builder/investor power and authority at the expense of local governments. With slick names like streamlining, density bonuses, and ministerial review, Catalysts educated about the truth of the bills. Seven of the nine were defeated. A summary of the campaign is in historian Ray Lorber’s book *The History of Catalysts for Local Control: 2020-2023*, available on Amazon.
- In 2021, the gist of the bills came roaring back with new titles and authors. Most of them passed.
- Over the five years, Catalysts of Local Control submitted multiple opposition letters to state legislation intent on undermining local authority or imposing top-down mandates. These efforts included challenges to the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) process and specific controversial housing growth bills.
- Weekly Monday night Catalysts Calls, an activity of Catalysts Institute (c/3) served to educate participants. Once educated, Catalysts were encouraged to take action to defeat bills that undermined local control. Actions included submitting letters to Assembly and Senate Housing Committees via the Legislative Portal, testifying during committee hearings, and contacting local representative to take a stand on housing bills.

- In October, 2022, founder Susan Kirsch met with nine community activists at the Gloucester Writer's Center to share notes on national efforts to undermine local control and strategize strategies to offset the growing power of YIMBYs.

Political Candidate Engagement

- The (c)(4) arm supported and hosted candidates for **state Assembly and Senate** seats, local elections, and board positions for elections on groups like the Sierra Club.
- Events included time on Catalysts Calls, distribution of campaign information, and opportunity to use the Zoom chat function to distribute campaign information.

Ballot Measures, Litigation, & Public Policy Campaigns

- Catalysts for Local Control educated participants and took positions on ballot measures and regional initiatives, applying criteria that included truth, transparency, strengthening local control, and protecting current affordable housing stock and transportation systems. In one instance, Regional Measure 4, support for litigation around Bay Area Regional Measure 4, contributed to the measure's withdrawal.
- The group also actively **urged opposition** to statewide propositions, including Prop 5, through signage, letters, and public messaging.
- In 2022, Catalysts experimented with a 5-part workshop series called, "Save your city, sue the state." Portions of the workshop are on the Catalysts website under Resources Litigation.
- The (c)(4) entity aligned with litigation strategies, including support for the 2024-25 lawsuits (e.g., *Bruce Corcoran v. Marin County*), and hosted sessions to educate constituents about legal challenges related to local planning sovereignty.

Outcomes & Influence

Catalysts for Local Control's advocacy work has:

- Drawn more community leaders and current and former elected officials into relationships to strategize how to protect democracy via housing legislation.
- Increased awareness and resistance to statewide policies and mandates detrimental to local control. In June, 2022, founder Susan Kirsch's advocacy work was a front-page story, second section, in the New York Times.
- Advanced electoral engagement by introducing community-supported candidates to key political conversations.
- Contributed to legal victories and strategic withdrawals of regional measures by mobilizing constituents, allies, and legal support.

These efforts helped build political and legal capacity to balance state-level housing imperatives with grassroots community priorities. Details can be found on the [Catalysts](#) website.

Catalysts for Local Control-501(c)(3): 2023 - 2025

Catalysts Institute for Local Control, the **501(c)(3) educational** organization was created to **educate, engage, and empower** citizens, community leaders, and elected officials on **housing, land use policy, zoning, and local planning**. The emphasis is on **preserving local control** over state and regional mandates. Donations are tax-deductible. Catalysts Institute was granted IRS c/3 status August 24, 2023.

The Institute's mission focuses on sharpening local decision-makers' knowledge and skill to use their authority to protect their constituents from state overreach. The goal is achieved by providing reliable information, and creating a network for community stakeholders to actively participate in public policy debates that shape their neighborhoods.

From its inception, the Institute sought to provide a platform for **education and community involvement**, particularly by translating complex legislation into accessible formats and creating strategic tools for outreach and influence.

Activities & Outreach

Catalysts Calls

- The weekly Monday night **Catalysts Call** on Zoom from 5-6 pm became an institutional cornerstone, offering ongoing education, networking, legislative updates, and strategy discussions. In 2025, the Institute conducted **49 calls** with more than **1,400 attendees**, averaging ~35 participants per call.
- These calls provided a consistent platform for thought leaders, policy experts, and activist voices to challenge state housing policy, growth mandates, and local control strategies.

Educational Forums, Town Halls, Workshops

Hosted **town halls and workshop series** that addressed critical issues like RHNA (Regional Housing Needs Allocation), the California Environmental Quality Act, and local planning tools, educating hundreds of engaged constituents and activists.

- Initiatives during this period emphasized **capacity building**, establishing the Institute as a key resource for community leaders seeking alternatives to top-down planning mandates.
- A series of **town halls and workshops** broadened community reach, including panels on the interplay of housing with **safety, taxes, elections, and constitutional rights**. These hybrid sessions increased participation, visibility, and impact.

Legislative Education & Advocacy

- The Institute produced detailed analyses of complex state initiatives like **RHNA**

- In 2025, the Institute focused on the nine-county Bay Area regional plan called Plan Bay Area 2050+ and the draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR). The Catalysts website's "PBA Resources" tab includes excerpts from the DEIR, analysis, and sample letters.
- Through summaries, fact sheets, and event presentations, the Institute played a role in shaping public comment, media narratives, and municipal debates around these high-impact policies.

Networking, Media, & Strategic Partnerships

- Catalysts Institute cultivated networks and partnerships with like-minded organizations, including **California Alliance of Local Electeds (CALE)**, **California Cities for Local Control**, **Citizen Marin**, **Livable California**, and **United Neighbors** groups.
- For the past five years, Catalysts founder Susan Kirsch has been a monthly, 20-minute guest on **KSVY's Morning Show**, hosted by Marcia McComber, and talking about housing policy and legislation

Communications & Publications

- Books such as *A History of Catalysts for Local Control* by Ray Lorber and available on Amazon, helped document the movement and educate broader audiences beyond immediate participants.

Outcomes & Influence

Over the past few years, the Institute achieved notable advancements in:

- **Informing the public debate** on statewide housing policy and growth plans.
- **Mobilizing engaged citizen networks** through weekly calls, town halls, and workshops.
- **Expanding partnerships** with elected officials and civic groups to uphold local planning authority.
- **Increasing visibility** through media and public commentary.

These achievements underpin the Institute's central mission: equipping Californians with knowledge, networks, and tools to advocate for community-based solutions and protect local decision-making autonomy.