



Protecting Neighbors from Unsafe Construction

In neighborhoods throughout Philadelphia, homes are being affected by nearby demolition, renovation, and construction. Our city's homeowners and tenants have endured illegal practices, serious injuries, and costly repair bills with nowhere to turn. Thanks to the City's investment in **Community Legal Services' Rowhouse Protection Project**, Philadelphians now have a fierce advocate to protect their rights when construction goes wrong.

The Rowhouse Protection Project has assisted more than 70 clients. And we are just getting started.

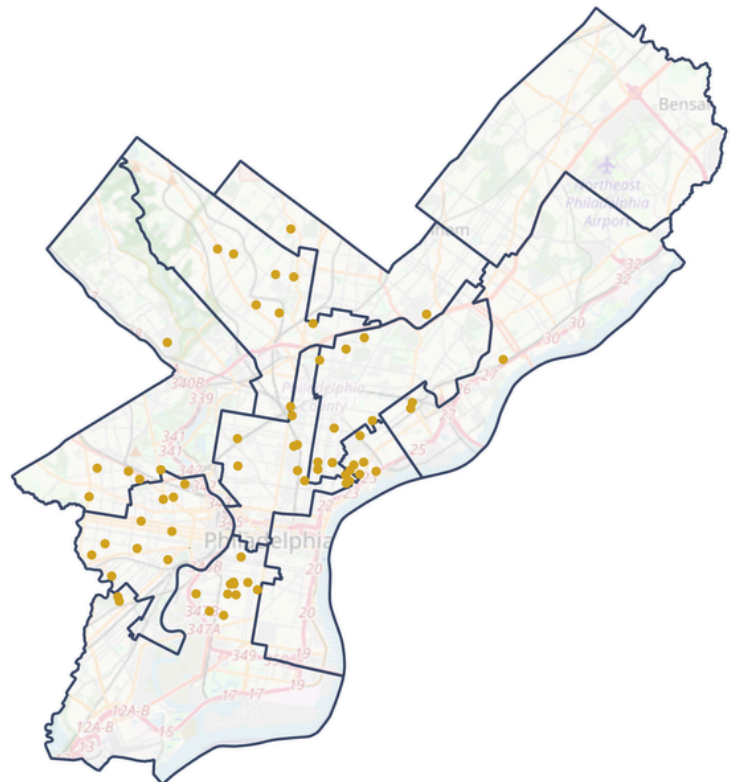
With CLS at their side, Philly homeowners and tenants can:

- Negotiate fair agreements with neighboring construction projects, including proactively developing a plan to monitor construction and prevent damage
- Navigate the City's complaint, zoning, and permitting processes, which can be confusing and inaccessible for many residents
- File suit to hold builders accountable... and win!

The Rowhouse Protection Project has represented clients in every part of the city, and our work is concentrated in rapidly changing parts of West Philadelphia, South Philadelphia, and North Philadelphia. As a result, CLS is helping to keep families in the communities they love as development occurs next door.

- Our clients' median annual income is \$21,510. Without free legal representation, they cannot afford to hire an attorney, nor pay for expensive repairs out of pocket.
- 57% of our clients in the Rowhouse Protection Project are seniors, many of whom are living on a fixed income.
- CLS advocates have protected a combined \$16.3 million in generational wealth for our clients (based on the assessed values of their homes).

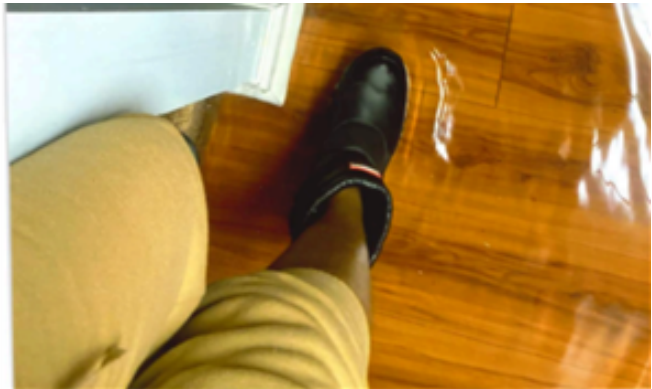
With support from City Council and Mayor Parker's Administration, the Rowhouse Protection Project is helping to level the playing field for longtime residents facing new development in their neighborhoods.



Map of CLS Clients Represented through the Rowhouse Protection Project

Client Stories

A Flooded Basement for Christmas



Imagine coming home from Christmas break to find four inches of water in your finished basement! Our client, a preschool teacher and single mom of two, was horrified when she discovered that her basement was flooded because contractors had improperly installed the water line next door. Her homeowner's insurance denied her claim, and the property owner who hired the contractors to convert the home to a rental refused to pay for damage. She filed suit on her own, but the court dismissed her case.

With nowhere else to turn, our client came to CLS for help. We amended her lawsuit and brought it to a jury trial. With access to the Rowhouse Protection funds, we hired a structural engineer and a mold remediation expert, and both testified at the trial to explain how the water traveled from the adjacent property into our client's basement. **Last summer, we concluded a four-day jury trial and obtained a \$35,000 verdict in favor of our client to pay for the repairs and mold remediation!**

An 85-Year-Old Without Heat

In 1974, our client inherited her rowhouse in Graduate Hospital, and she has lived there for more than 50 years. But in 2023, the owner of the adjacent rowhouse constructed a third-floor addition to his two-story rowhouse. The next year, our client noticed significant water damage in her living room on the first floor. A few months later, she called PGW to conduct a routine inspection of her furnace before turning it on for the winter season. The PGW workers detected elevated levels of carbon monoxide and shut off her gas.

Our client hired a chimney contractor who determined that her chimney had been intentionally sealed over with plywood and black tar. Upon unsealing the chimney, her contractor discovered that the chimney bricks had been damaged and that construction debris was thrown into the chimney. Additionally, a chimney extension was never constructed to vent our client's chimney above the newly constructed third-floor addition. **In May 2026, CLS obtained a \$4,600 judgment from the former owner and contractor to pay for the repairs.**

A Well-Deserved Happy Ending

Our client needed help navigating the process after a builder began a full renovation next door to his home in Fishtown. The builder needed access to the client's property because he was removing and replacing their roof. They were also modifying a shared downspout. Our client, his wife, and two children had experienced adjacent construction a few years earlier on the other side of their home, and the builders threatened our client when he raised concerns about their work. Since they did not feel safe through that process, they knew they wanted help this time.

CLS helped the client negotiate an access agreement to address his concerns and protect his home, while ensuring that the construction could be carried out quickly and safely. The roof work and drainage work were all done without any issue to our client's home, and, upon completion of the renovations, our client and his family now have new neighbors.



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Photos from the Rowhouse Protection Project



A builder carelessly demolished our client's portion of a twin chimney, leaving her portion of the chimney open to the elements and evicting her from her bedroom.



The owner of the warehouse next door to our client removed the existing downspout without installing any type of drainage, and the negligent construction caused extensive mold in our client's home.



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