

Organizing Tenants for TOPA

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Housing Counseling Services, Inc.

So, you and your neighbors just got TOPA - now what?

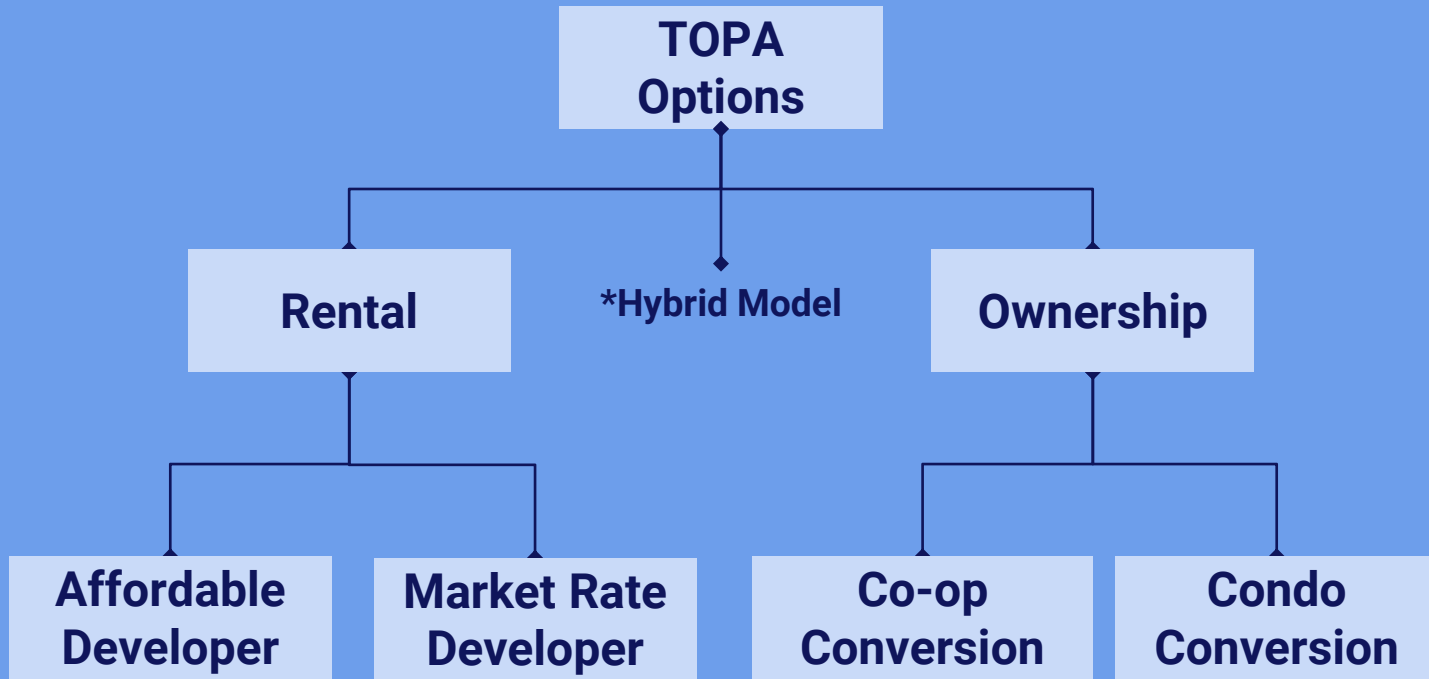
You saw a TOPA packet posted in the hallway of your building, and you got a packet mailed to you by certified mail. It says your building is for sale and you have the right to buy it. What are your options?



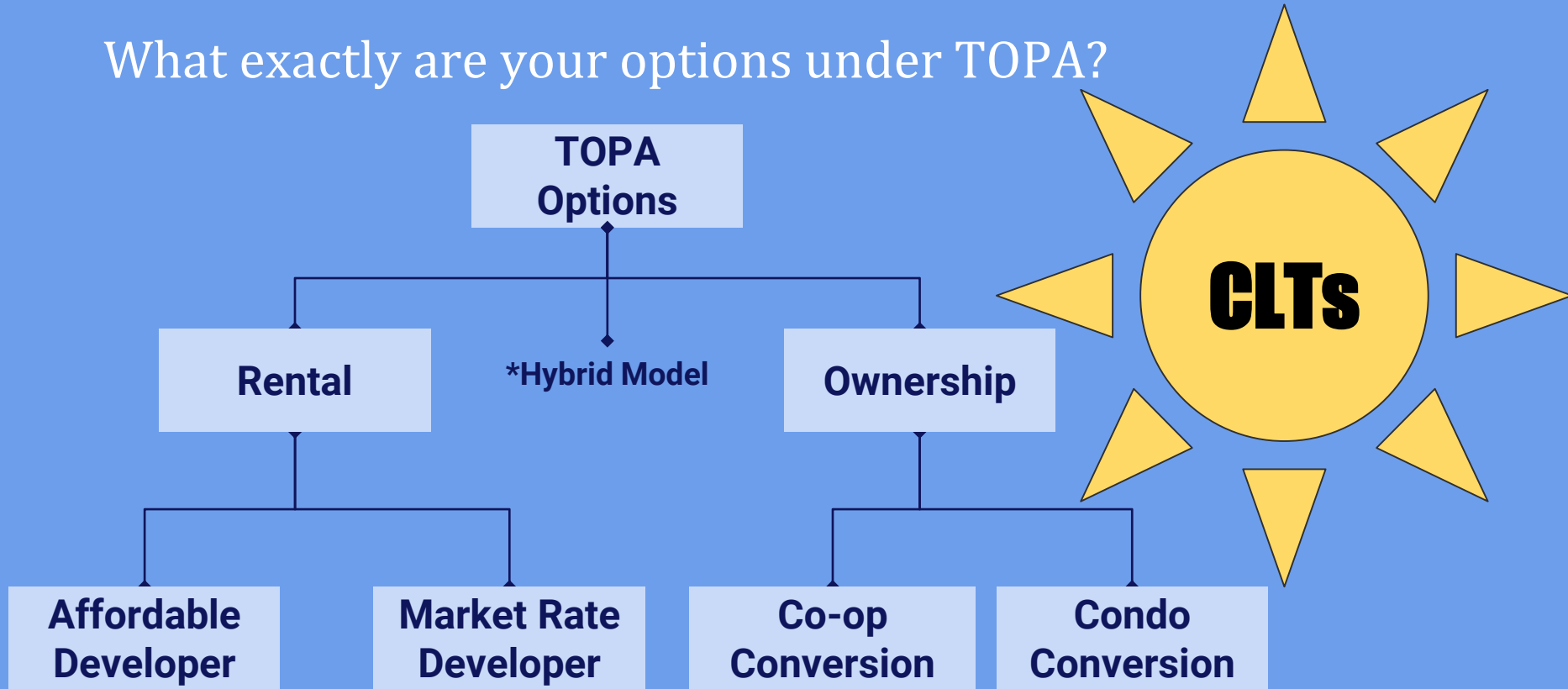
A few TOPA basics:

- TOPA: Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act
- It's a collective right (have to organize!)
- Tenants have to match contract price*

What exactly are your options under TOPA?



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What do tenants have to invest in TOPA?

Time



Energy

Talents & Leadership



No
personal
money



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What benefits do tenants get from TOPA?

- **Long-term affordability**

- Home-ownership (condo or co-op)
- Improvements/renovations
- A choice and voice in what happens to their home
- Better relationship with landlord
- Sense of community, organized group for the future



Other helpful tenant rights laws in DC

- Automatic lease renewal
- Rent Control
- Just Cause Eviction
- Tenant Right to Organize
- Condo Conversion Regulations



Why tenants don't organize

- Lack of motivating factors
- Lack of tenant capacity
- Intimidation/harassment
- Disbelief in TOPA
- Lack of technical assistance
- Buyouts



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You saw a TOPA packet posted in the hallway of your building, and you got a packet mailed to you by certified mail. Your timeline starts as soon as this happens!



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Steps to exercising TOPA rights

1. Organize a
Tenants
Association

45 days

2. Decide what to do
with TOPA rights, find
development partner,
negotiate a deal

135 days

3. Get
acquisition
financing

120-240 days



First 45 days - Organize a Tenants Association

1. Organize a Tenants Association

- First meeting with tenants: “You have TOPA rights”
- If they want to organize, tenants have 45 days to:
 - form a Tenants Association elect leadership, adopt bylaws
 - incorporate as a non-profit
 - collect signatures of 51% of tenants in the building
 - register their “intent to purchase” with the government & the owner
- Registering “intent to purchase” is non-binding



Next 135 days - Negotiation Period

2. Decide what to do with TOPA rights,
find development partner,
negotiate a deal

- Lots of tenant meetings
- Hire a TOPA attorney
- Decide if they will stay rental? Go co-op? Go condo?
- Meet with development partners/consultants
- Choose a development partner/consultant
- Negotiate a contract with development partner/consultant



Next 120-240 days - Acquisition Financing

3. Get financing acquisition

- Association & their development partner/consultant will seek financing for the acquisition
- Sources could be from private or public sources
- Tenants may need to lobby elected representatives/city officials

