



# We envision neighborhoods regenerated by small developers who care deeply about the places where they live and build.

## ABOUT THE INCREMENTAL DEVELOPMENT ALLIANCE

IncDev is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, founded 2015. We aim to inspire and enable thousands of small (1-3 story) development projects, championed and delivered by local people. We focus on infill development, helping people stay, return, and contribute to the place they love.

Our team (faculty, staff, and board) of 29 represents 14 states and provinces across nine cultural regions. We are builders, champions, and investors of small-scale development from the private, public, and nonprofit sectors. We are an intergenerational Alliance - evenly split between Millennials, GenX, and Boomers - bound together by a passion for place. Half our team are women who proudly espouse a different approach to development. We're growing a more racially diverse faculty with every workshop as we discover or coach alumni with the experience to teach and pay it forward.

## CONTACT

Incremental Development Alliance  
PO Box 8847, Minneapolis MN, 55408  
training@incrementaldevelopment.org  
[incrementaldevelopment.org](http://incrementaldevelopment.org)

## WHAT WE DO:

We offer **aspiring developers** training and mentorship to help them take the first steps toward their small-scale real estate development projects.

We coach **civic leaders** how to cultivate patient, healthy real estate development at a scale accessible to locals, starting with supportive regulation.

## HOW WE DO IT:

- We design and deliver **training** (in person and online) for groups at different stages of the development process.
- We offer **technical assistance** to governments looking to troubleshoot challenges in their local development ecosystem.
- We are an on-the-ground partner to foundations and nonprofits, embracing the messy work of **capacity building** in hard-to-reach places.
- We **speak** at conferences and events.
- We **implement** in our own communities, speaking from experience.





## Why work with IncDev?

**We care about building stronger places. We want you to thrive without relying on external sources of skills or investment.**

That means creating the physical pieces of a resilient neighborhood and cultivating the human and financial capital that assembles those pieces. Our clients come to us with “place” problems. Their place is either missing out on an opportunity or heading in an unhealthy direction. Their struggles often sound like this:

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

- Our local industry needs more housing for workers.
- Small-scale development and construction is a crucial entrepreneurship and workforce development activity that we’re missing.
- Our current development projects are not diversifying the tax base or providing an adequate return on infrastructure investment.

### **HOUSING**

- We’re building a monoculture and desperately need more housing diversity and choice.
- Our development ecosystem does not enable housing at different price points.
- Disparity in real estate ownership is fueling a vicious cycle of generational and racial wealth gaps.

### **PLANNING**

- Our rules have somehow made small buildings functionally illegal to construct and we don’t know what to do.
- Our neighborhoods are spiraling out of control (up or down) and we want development that is loyal to local needs.

### **THE INCDEV APPROACH**

We teach regular people to take small steps forward from any starting point. Practically, this means helping a local talent pool create opportunity from existing buildings or lots, financed by everyday loan products and local cash.

Beyond the individual, we coach cities to calibrate their policy so that small-scale infill is permitted by-right. This coaching is not anti-regulation, it’s about making rules scale-sensitive so that small projects are not unintentionally and unfairly impeded.

We take this approach out of necessity. No one is coming to save the places where we work; it’s incumbent on locals to find a way forward.

Our clients are the front line protecting their neighborhoods from the effects of an economic system that doesn’t care about them. They are quietly building a defence against decline or against “catastrophic money” in the words of Jane Jacobs. In the process, they are establishing powerful networks of people who do care about the future of the place they love.

*Our approach is to grow the capacity of locals to build real wealth, diversify housing options, and reinforce their tax base. We educate city staff and constituents on approachable, implementable real estate development scaled down to their own neighborhoods’ needs.*



# What is Incremental Development?

Today, city-building is dominated by big developers with institutional investors who build large projects like subdivisions and shopping centers. However, the neighborhoods we love most tend to be ones that were built gradually over generations.

*That is what we mean by incremental development: small projects by local people over a long period of time.*

We call these small projects **STEP Buildings™**. STEP Buildings are both a process and a product. They are a one-step-at-a-time approach to building cities that improve with age. They are also a set of time-tested building types that we all know and love.

## **SMALL-SCALE**

STEP Buildings are small enough for local people to develop and own. They create human-scaled urbanism where people know their neighbors and can get around without a car. STEP Buildings max out at three stories and 12 residential units. Avoiding the cost of an elevator makes these buildings more affordable to build and lease.

## **TIME-ENHANCED**

STEP Buildings are flexible and resilient enough to improve with age. They learn, evolving with the needs of their occupants and neighborhood. STEP Buildings become more valuable through better cash flow and contribution to the neighborhood over time, not just passive appreciation.

## **ENTREPRENEURIAL**

STEP Buildings earn an income, turning a building into a business. Profitability is what makes them so resilient over time - they can pay for their own maintenance and adaptation. Entrepreneurial people develop these buildings by finding creative ways to make space more valuable.

## **PURPOSEFUL**

STEP Buildings are an answer to "What does this neighborhood need?" They have a job to do and are brought to life by people who care about the building itself and the place it serves. Without purpose, these are simply profitable buildings. With purpose, they become STEPs to a better neighborhood and can give more than they take.

*At IncDev, we have catalogued 50 STEP Buildings including:*

- **House Hacks:** Entrepreneurial adaptations to an existing home that diversify housing options or generate an income.
- **Commercial Incubation:** Low-cost ways to grow and validate an early-stage business.
- **Missing Middle:** Multi-unit residential buildings that blend well into single-family areas.
- **Neighborhood Node:** Walkable neighborhood destinations like corner stores and workspaces. Mixed-use or pure commercial, but small enough to be welcomed in residential areas.

**Small-scale  
Time-enhanced  
Entrepreneurial  
Purposeful**

