THE FUTURE OF REAL ESTATE IS COOPERATIVE

AFFORDABILITY
Due to the treatment of housing as an investment rather than a necessity that should be available for everyone and scarcity in urban markets, rent and property costs have risen to astronomical levels, often taking up large portions of individual incomes (Albouy et al. 2016). As this problem persists, more and more individuals and families will be priced out of owning, or even renting, adequate homes.

STRONGER NEIGHBORHOODS
Due to over a century of discriminatory policies enforcing or encouraging racial covenants, redlining, white flight, and a vast array of other discriminatory practices, countless communities of color in the US are burdened by segregation, highly concentrated poverty, and deteriorating infrastructure. Rising housing costs are disproportionately affecting people who are already low-income and in lower-quality structures (Kampel 2021). Historically marginalized individuals continue to be displaced, damaging the fabric of communities that have always struggled to attain economic stability.

AUTONOMY BUILDING: SOCIAL CAPITAL
When individuals have to rent properties, they ultimately have very little meaningful control of their space. Renters must abide by the whims of the owner of their property (formal and informal), leading to frequent discomfort and lack of incentive to invest in one’s own living space. This creates a sense that one’s residency is always temporary, dampening one’s autonomy and their will to build community in their area.

COLLECTIVE FINANCING
Co-ops can be financed collectively, individually, or a hybrid of the two. Group purchasing can allow individuals to buy homes that would otherwise be financially unattainable, leading to collective ownership of a home. Collective financing can protect cooperative members from economic downturns or individual financial hardship. If a single cooperative member loses their job, for example, the rest of the co-op can make up for the lost income and prevent foreclosure. Co-ops can release people from the fear that they are one missed paycheck away from losing their housing.

DEMOCRATIC DECISION-MAKING
Housing cooperatives allow residents to have control over their own dwelling spaces. Decisions that would impact all members are decided on democratically (Northcountry Cooperative Foundation 2004). Members of the house would feel as if they are part of a greater community, giving them a vested interest in improving the quality of their living space.

COMMUNITY BUILDING
By living in a large group together, members of a house can bond over their shared interests and experiences. This will strengthen not just the house but the broader neighborhood as a whole, creating a more resilient community.

COMBATING INSTITUTIONAL DISCRIMINATION
Open membership is a strongly held principle in cooperatives across the globe, promoting inclusivity and more harmonious living. Additionally, cooperatives have empowered historically marginalized communities, to reach economic security and vibrant communities, and could be used to generate autonomy for those who have been the subject of systemic oppression.

Further reading: