

The CSU's Cooperative Student Housing Project

1. Permanent Affordability

The CSU's cooperative student housing project prioritizes affordability. Traditionally, students are the preferred clients of landlords due to their high turnover and unfamiliarity with tenant rights. This inexperience recurrently leads to unauthorized rental deposits, rental increases, and other monetary surcharges being imposed on unsuspecting students. Following an extensive market study analyzing the student housing market in Montreal, we've empirically identified that students pay significantly more than non-students for housing across the city. As a result, the cooperative student housing project aims to create housing options that are 20% below the student market median. However, more importantly, by establishing non-profit housing that's permanently removed from speculation (as opposed to a temporary real-estate investment to be sold later with higher returns); the cooperative model will safeguard affordability in the long term for years to come.

2. Empowering Students

First and foremost, post-secondary students are adults who can manage their own affairs. The cooperative student housing project recognizes this by empowering students to improve their own living conditions and act as their own landlord. Within the housing cooperative, the standard tenant-landlord relationship is replaced by cooperative student ownership! An independent legal entity – a solidarity cooperative governance model – means students manage the operations of the residence. This includes the planned interior and exterior common areas, custodial needs, and neighbourhood collaboration. By collectivizing our knowledge and resources, we can have a groundbreaking positive social impact where we live.

3. Building Partnerships and Community

Many of our existing living circumstances are isolated and atomizing. Cooperative student housing can reverse this common trend by amplifying the growth of community at home. Through the creation of intentional communities our living experience can be a transformative one where we can re-imagine the role students play in neighbourhoods across Montreal. For example, the housing cooperative can collective its purchasing power (of say 100+ people) to buy food in bulk and reduce the financial burden of meeting our essential needs. To take it a step

further, the co-op can act as a ‘food hub’ for the broader community by expanding the bulk purchases to those living in the surrounding area to combat unhealthy, overpriced options that typically define our urban food landscape. Besides socially collaborative commercial activity, cooperative student housing will spread the incredible initiatives and projects being spearheaded at Concordia to the general public. Popular education, skill sharing, urban agriculture, youth engagement, etc. Mobilizing community support is intrinsic to harvesting strong vibrant partnerships in neighbourhoods; we want the cooperative student housing project to act as a catalyst in starting a new conversation. What’s the goal? Local control!

4. Residence Halls or Cooperative Housing?

Residence halls promote a conventional living environment for students somewhere between living with your parents and being quasi-independent. For instance at Concordia, residence options are tied to a pricy mandatory meal program which doesn’t provide the flexibility and diversity required to meet the needs of proactive student lifestyles. Furthermore, following one year of occupancy students are forced to leave residences whether they like it or not. In comparison, a variety of choices exist with cooperative student housing. From one year renewable leases where you can sublet over the summer to a full kitchen in every suite, students will have the ability to make their own decisions about how they want to live. Another distinguishing aspect of cooperative student housing is that each occupant will be included in the process of deciding who one has to share a living space with; meaning living preferences like social interests, day-to-day schedules, and housekeeping priorities will be respected!

5. Deep Social Impact

It goes without saying that the CSU’s cooperative student housing project takes social innovation in Montreal to new heights! However cooperative student housing projects exist all across North America. Throughout the United States and Canada the positive impact of non-profit housing is improving the welfare of students and the communities their embedded in alike. From the University of California network, to Austin Texas and back to Toronto, the success of student cooperative housing as a model of the future exemplifies the benefits they provide to both students and the university, on and off campus. The CSU has long defended the rights of students as tenants with our Off Campus Housing and Job Bank (HOJO); this next step aims to tackle the systemic challenges of making affordable, quality, and dignified housing accessible to Concordians!