

What is Cooperative Housing?

La Reunion Cooperative – 2016

Well, what is *cooperation*?

Dictionaries lend some insight:

- Working with others toward the same end
- Assisting others
- A common effort

Working with others toward the same end

- <Picture of a meeting for which we have permission>

Assisting others

- <Picture for which I have a waiver>

A Common Effort



Cooperation is that, as an economy

- We all have some shared basic needs
 - *Food*
 - *Shelter*
 - *Wifi*
- Some of us have unique needs
 - *Physical*
 - *Financial*
 - *Emotional*
- ***And yet all too often these needs are not met.***

How do solvable problems not get solved?

- Governance
 - *Many people have little or no voice*
- Economic Participation
 - *A rented life is not one you have stake in*
- Division
 - *Organizing is difficult on top of other responsibilities*
 - *How do you even know others will join you?*

Cooperation is Collective Empowerment

Skip the “if you can’t beat ‘em” part and just join them!

- Democratic member control
- Member economic participation
- Voluntary and open membership

Cooperative Housing puts the “you” in “US”

- Members meet and vote
- Members pay dues and volunteer
 - *Collective ownership of profits*
 - *Lowered costs: don't pay someone else to sweep!*
 - *Encourages a sense of community*
- The community is inclusive and welcomes all.
- Sorry for the pun.

A little history

- Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers, 1844
 - *College cooperatives*
 - *ICC Ann Arbor, 1937*
 - *NASCO, 1968*
- Meanwhile, in Texas ...
 - *ICC Austin, 1930s*
 - *College Houses, 1960s*
 - *CHEA -- that's us!*

Rochdale Principles

- Voluntary and Open Membership
- Democratic Member Control
- Member Economic Participation
- Autonomy and Independence
- Education, Training, and Information
 - *Hey, that's what I'm doing here!*
- Cooperation Among Cooperatives
- Concern for Community

Okay but *how does it work?*

Case study: La Reunion Cooperative

- Founded in 2013 by volunteers
 - Most lived in coops previously
 - Part of larger organization, CHEA
- Purchased with help from NASCO Properties
 - Arm of NASCO which develops and helps coops
 - CHEA itself elects a member to the NP board
- Residents meet once a week
 - Decide policy
 - Approve expenses
 - Review membership when necessary
 - Eat dinner and talk together!

La Reunion is just one house ...

Community Housing Expansion of Austin (CHEA)

- Founded in 2002 by former college coop residents
- First house, Sasona, bought in south Austin
- Joined NP after meeting difficulties
- Each house selects two members to the CHEA board
 - A fifth community representative is elected by the general membership
 - CHEA also elects a representative to the NP board
- Board monitors and ensures the legal and financial stability of the houses and delegates much responsibility to the houses

And it DOES work!

- Rent is very competitive compared to surrounding market
- Both houses are independently financially solvent
- Houses are empowered to take care of themselves, *and they do.*
 - *No assembly of more than 1 person will ever be free of conflict*
 - *Cooperation is how we face problems*
- Coops exist around the country
- Every year hundreds meet in Ann Arbor, MI to discuss housing, social issues, and other topics of interest to communities.
- “No [person] is an island.” - John Donne

Stats are worth 1000 words

	Coop rent / room	Neighborhood rent / room	
La Reunion (Wooten)	\$360	\$427.50	84.2 %
ICC (West Campus)	\$565	\$904.35	62%
Sasona (Zilker)	\$660	\$1,238	53%
Sunflower (Bouldin Creek)	\$375	\$1,376	27%

Questions?

- CHEA website: <http://chea.coop>
- La Reunion: <http://lareunioncoop.org>
 - info@lareunioncoop.org
- Sasona: <http://sasona.org>
- NASCO: <http://nasco.coop>