

1. Discuss the challenges of providing affordable housing.

The “Through the Roof” reading by Ellen et al (2021) efficiently and insightfully captured so many of the challenges that are evident in the journey to create affordable housing. These barriers included:

- A. **Economic Affordability pendulums:** Since 1970 median rents have risen more significantly than median incomes consequently creating a housing market that might be considered “luxury”. The term luxury is used rather loosely throughout the readings but a great way to substantiate the financialization of housing is to juxtapose it with the understanding of commodity goods. Commodities are generally understood to be staple goods that hold affordability due to its widespread need-use-and availability, while luxuries are inversely understood as non-staple goods that are expensive due to their niche need and demand. *The luxuriating of housing poses a unique threat because in practical terms it’s a commodity but in everyday economics the market behaves like a luxury due to its inability to be created quickly, niche zoning regulations limiting its diversification, and traditionally low vacancy rate (creating competition).* Additionally, often when these limits exist developers opt to create more expensive housing so that the time and effort it takes to build the housing is profitable.
- B. **Government responses and limitations:** While the federal government has played an active role in the creation of housing via HUD/FHA and vouchers for housing assistance, local governments appear to not be as mobile or agile in their ability to address housing affordability. This seems to be recently changing with many cities creating benefit agreements and inclusionary zoning and TIFs to combat the issue. However, *government (especially local) is often cash poor (asset “rich”)*, making them very limited as to how they can provide housing outside of policy. FAR regulations and Density regulations and zoning additionally complicates the flexibility developers could use for increasing housing capacity.
- C. **Supply Side Challenges & Scarcity:** *Land is invariably limited due to scarcity in availability and ownership opportunities which consequently creates the barrier of access to creating more housing.* The consequence of this is the need for greater density. Additionally, the challenge of creating housing in a quicker way is a challenge due to limitations on labor, limitations on housing developers, and limitations on housing materials. All of these challenges intensify the already tight housing market by creating “supply” gaps and bottlenecks that aren’t always easy to overcome.

2. Can housing markets help foster more equitable and inclusionary outcomes?

In the readings “Through the Roof” (Ellen et al, 2021) and “Confronting the Real Barriers to Housing Affordability using research to assemble durable Coalitions & Expand Political Capacity” (Teresa et al) and the John Oliver YouTube video the responsibility of who’s

job it is to make markets more equitable and inclusionary gets shuffled around in blame when history and reality is considered. Ultimately, it seems ***it's a collective and collaborative effort*** needed to create equitable and inclusionary outcomes but specifically in terms of housing markets these things can be considered:

A. Governments at fault in backing redlining & discriminatory policies: Governments must take responsibility for the vile and consequential role in backing redlining (reviewed in the John Oliver video). *Ultimately, governments must fund reparative programs for these wrongs to communities that suffer today from the wealth gaps and ownership.* Due to this being a community wide issue certain taxes should be considered to address reparative and restorative justice to communities. Reallocation of taxes can also be considered. Once governments begin taking responsibility for their role in inequity, then transparency on actual solutions can evolve. *Just as discriminatory laws created inequity, inclusionary laws can create and support equity.* The key is that communities must fundamentally understand that wealth building and integration of oppressed communities must become a key part of their planning.

B. Coalitions and organizing can help bring awareness: The article by Teresa et al really delved into the role of coalitions and how they could bring awareness to social injustices. *If coalitions could be built between sympathetic developers and city planners, then opportunities for affordability and wealth building may naturally occur.*

Additionally, coalitions may really help to stir the community towards acknowledgment of past harms that still need rectifying. The historical harm of redlining is a perfect example in which a coalition could bring awareness to housing markets and planning officials as a top need of redressing. *Coalitions can place pressure on governments and private interests to do the right thing and ensure them that people are watching their behavior and responses.* These kinds of actions can help to spur more equitable and inclusive policy and development.

C. Policy change supporting denser and faster development: Cities can also play a role in supporting the equity via home ownership by supporting policy changes at the city level such as loosened FAR regulations and density requirements, purposely preserving affordable housing, supporting mixed use & inclusionary zoning, or creating loan support opportunities to home buyers. *A unique idea that was proposed in the "Through the Roof" reading was the concept that home ownership support via funds (similar to ubi or universal basic income) should be guaranteed to a larger pool of the populace so that there would never be a need for home costs to assume 30% of ones income.*