



# **Queer Communities**

Aisteach Co-Operative Housing Society

Strategic Plan

2024-2028

Date: 25 April 2024

## Context

Aisteach Co-Operative Housing Society Limited was registered as an Industrial and Provident Society in November 2021.

The LGBTQ+ Queer<sup>1</sup> community is an established city-centre community that contributes to Dublin as a diverse and creative city. Its existing community bonds, activist experience and history of social cohesion, among diverse groups of varied ages, ethnicities, social backgrounds and incomes, makes this community ideal for the development of a housing co-operative.

Aisteach Co-operative Housing Society Limited is registered as an Industrial and Provident Society Limited to provide housing and housing support, for LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer)+ people through mutual aid based on the co-operative principles.

We are a not-for-profit social enterprise, with a broad membership of LGBTQ+ community members who have an interest in and support the development of a Queer Housing Co-operative in Dublin city centre in order to support a sustainable LGBTQ+ community in the city.

LGBTQ+ people are especially susceptible to socioeconomic disadvantages, with higher levels of poverty, homelessness and insecure housing, often as a result of discrimination from a young age that impacts their lives and wellbeing.

LGBTQ+ people are more likely to live in urban centres, more likely to rent in the private sector, with home ownership rates either lower or of less value than their heterosexual or cisgender counterparts. LGBTQ+ youth homelessness is a particular issue that continues to impact throughout the lifecycle. A life experience of disadvantage and discrimination has meant that older LGBTQ+ people face particular challenges in relation to housing and care.

The LGBTQ+ community has a history of resilience that comes from their self-reliance, community engagement, connectedness and strong social networks.

Aisteach aims to develop a LGBTQ+ community housing co-operative in Dublin city.

Drawing on research and consultation, Aisteach proposes an intergenerational, safe, welcoming housing cooperative to also include spaces for those fleeing persecution. It will draw on the resilience and strengths of the LGBTQ+ community to deliver housing sustainability that can be applied to other communities of interest in the future, such as creative or essential workers.

## SIMILAR PROJECTS

Similar projects elsewhere include:

Abeona Housing  
Co-op in London

Roze Hallen in  
Amsterdam

Abiwin  
Co-operative in  
Ontario

Mas coop in  
France Sredzki 44  
intergenerational  
housing project in  
Berlin

Tonic in London

Older Women's  
Co-Housing in  
London

Sparbau in  
Germany

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<sup>1</sup> We define queer as denoting or relating to a sexual or gender identity that does not correspond to heteronormative ideas of sexuality and gender (as of 03/03/2024)

## Our Vision

Aisteach Co-Operative Housing Society wants to see a world where queer communities are formed, nurtured and sustained in an equitable, safe and supportive environment.

## Our Mission

The mission of Aisteach Co-Operative Housing Society is to provide homes in a community environment in Dublin for queer people in accordance with our values (see appendix 2).

## Our Aims

According to our rules, as stated in our registration under the Industrial & Provident Societies Acts (1893 – 2018) the objects of Aisteach are:

To carry on and advance, for the well-being and the benefit of the community at large, the provision of housing support, housing provision, and associated amenities for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people.

For the well-being and the benefit of the community at large, to provide for the relief of poverty and deprivation caused by poor housing or inadequate housing conditions or other social and economic circumstances affecting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people through mutual aid based on the co-operative principles (see appendix 1).

Aisteach Housing Co-operative Society Ltd. aims to develop an intergenerational LGBTQ+ housing co-op to mitigate against the impacts of speculation and gentrification that are pushing distinctive communities out of the city centre, threatening cohesion, sustainability and diversity. It aims to be accessible for all based on principles of universal design.<sup>2</sup>

### IMPORTANT CONCEPTS FOR US

Safety, security, stability

Ideas of 'community' are safeguarded

Nature, open spaces, respect of living things

Openness, awareness, accepting.

Universal design

Embracing diversity where everyone is cherished

Equity for people, especially those who are vulnerable

Sustainable future

Rights to travel

Fair distribution of resources

Blue sky above, rainbow within

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<sup>2</sup> Universal Design (UD) is the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability. An environment (or any building, product, or service in that environment) should be designed to meet the needs of all people who wish to use it. This is not a special requirement, for the benefit of only a minority of the population. It is a fundamental condition of good design. <https://universaldesign.ie/about-universal-design>

## Our Pillars

We have 3 core pillars, all of which work in tandem to support the overall mission of Aisteach. Objectives of each of the pillars are outlined below.

### Community Relations

- o To build and engage our membership, so that there is genuine community ownership and control of the co-op.
- o To promote and campaign for a queer housing co-operative
- o To engage our stakeholders
- o To develop productive partnerships with housing bodies, local authority,
- o To connect with other co-ops and build mutually supportive relationships with them
- o A targeted approach to membership recruitment to engage those who are the most hardest to reach and marginalised in our community.
- o To understand what the community needs and is asking for (workshops)
- o To support and engage our members and achieve membership involvement and support (practical and general support)
- o To influence policy to provide for housing co-operatives – so that policy recognises the distinct needs of the LGBTQIA+ community – recognises that the city needs queer community in order to thrive

### Funding & Finance

- o To gain funding for, and to complete, a feasibility study
- o To source housing finance for a housing development
- o Fundraising to cover our ongoing, operational costs
- o Financial management - manage our finance, be compliant, audit, etc.

### Organisational

- o To maintain a management committee and hold AGMS in accordance with our rules.
- o To uphold good governance
- o To build and maintain working groups made up of members
- o To understand what the community needs and is asking for (workshops)
- o Facilitate workshops and pull out the outcomes to support our research
- o To understand the co-operative housing landscape, models and regulatory frameworks
- o Define and address the issue of affordability e.g. % of income, differential rents, affordability - what does it look like in practice for Aisteach specifically
- o Eligibility criteria - what does it look like in practice for Aisteach specifically
- o Align with an Approved Housing Body

## CO-OPERATIVE PRINCIPLES - Appendix 1

*The co-operative principles are guidelines by which co-operatives put their values into practice.*

- **Voluntary and Open Membership**  
*Co-operatives are voluntary organisations, open to anyone able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.*
- **Democratic Member Control**  
*Co-operatives are democratic organisations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions.*
- **Member Economic Participation**  
*Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their co-operative.*
- **Autonomy and Independence**  
*Co-operatives are autonomous, self-help organisations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organisations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their co-operative autonomy.*
- **Education, Training and Information**  
*Co-operatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their co-operatives. They inform the general public – particularly young people and opinion leaders – about the nature and benefits of co-operation.*
- **Co-operation among Co-operatives**  
*Co-operatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the co-operative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.*
- **Concern for Community**  
*Co-operatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members.*

Click [here](#) to find out more from Co-operative Housing Ireland

## Values - Appendix 2

*Aisteach Co-Operative Housing Society Limited ("Aisteach") seeks to represent, in accordance with Aisteach's Rules, many diverse characteristics, beliefs, and affiliations. Aisteach seeks to offer all members an equitable, inclusive, welcoming, secure, responsive, and affirming environment that fosters mutual respect, empathy and trust.*

*Aisteach is a Co-Operative Housing Society committed to the Co-Operative principles of: Voluntary and Open Membership; Democratic Member Control; Member Economic Participation; Autonomy and Independence; Education, Training and Information; Co-Operation among Co-Operatives; Concern for Community.*

*We recognize, value, and affirm that our rich diversity contributes to the excellence of our housing community and enhances the quality of life for individuals and groups. We encourage one another to apply our unique talents in creative and collaborative work, to take pride in our various achievements and celebrate our differences.*

*We reject all acts of discrimination, including, but not limited to those based on sex, race, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, and religious or political beliefs. We commit ourselves to fostering an atmosphere of equity and inclusion.*

*We are committed to providing a welcoming environment where each person can benefit from the principles of openness and integrity.*

*We affirm freedom of expression and communication that is courteous, sensitive, respectful and never demeaning.*

*Each member of Aisteach is expected to commit to these principles and values*