

Sustainabuilders

<u>Team Member Name</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Major</u>
Jillian Crowder	2026	International Business
Jillian Dabrowski	2026	Marketing and Sustainability
Andres Pena	2026	Sustainability Management
Dermot Sheehan	2026	International Business and Sustainability
Alyssa Souza	2026	Sustainability Management

Advisor(s): Astrid Schmidt-King, Jimmy Rhee, Barry Benjamin and Sonny Dua

Topic Title: Cubicles to Communities: From Empty Offices into Thriving Neighborhoods

Audience: WeWork Office Space and Work Space Team and Amazon Board of Investors

Sustainable Development Goal

SDG #11: Sustainable Cities and Communities: Make Cities and human settlement inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

Executive Summary

The housing affordability crisis in many urban centers has reached a critical juncture, leaving potential new residents unable to secure housing. Rising housing costs hinder homeownership for younger generations, widening the wealth gap. Ethical urban planning must prioritize sustainable, inclusive policies, since affordable housing isn't just an economic issue but a moral one that impacts societal fairness and wellbeing. In San Francisco, for example, many struggle to find affordable housing, as a typical one-bedroom apartment requires over 30% of an entry-level salary—far beyond sustainable levels. This financial burden limits long-term urban retention and reduces socioeconomic diversity. At the same time, post-pandemic economic shifts have driven office vacancies to a record 29.3% in San Francisco as of January 2025, highlighting the urgent need to repurpose underutilized commercial spaces.

This disconnect between soaring housing costs and vacant office space presents an opportunity to rethink urban development. WeWork is positioned to respond to market and societal needs and create new revenue streams. We propose that Amazon and WeWork expand their partnership by converting vacant office spaces into cooperative residential housing. Amazon, as an investor, can offer employees affordable living arrangements near work, encouraging their return to physical offices, while WeWork leverages its expertise to create flexible co-living environments. This initiative diversifies WeWork's revenue, helps Amazon retain talent, and redefines urban space utilization to address the housing crisis. This model, which saw a 357% increase in converted housing units from 2021 to 2024, can cut construction costs by 25-35% per square foot, revitalize commercial properties, and create vibrant, community-oriented living spaces.

By reimagining office spaces as affordable housing, this partnership can address San Francisco's housing crisis: rising housing costs and record-high office vacancies. This transformation has potential to attract talent back to urban centers, provide affordable and accessible housing, and create a more resilient metropolitan future.