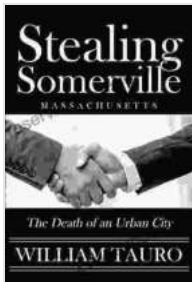


Stealing Somerville: The Death of an Urban City

Somerville, Massachusetts, a once-vibrant and diverse city just north of Boston, has become a glaring example of the rampant gentrification and displacement that is sweeping across urban centers nationwide. In the past two decades, the city has undergone a rapid transformation, fueled by an influx of affluent newcomers, soaring housing costs, and the displacement of long-time residents, particularly communities of color.



Stealing Somerville: The Death of an Urban City

by Alan B. Krueger

★★★★☆ 4 out of 5

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Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 568 pages
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The Roots of Gentrification

The roots of gentrification in Somerville can be traced back to the 1990s, when the city began to attract young professionals and students drawn by its proximity to Boston and its relatively affordable housing prices. As these newcomers moved in, they brought with them increased demand for housing and amenities, leading to rising rents and property values. This, in

turn, made it increasingly difficult for low-income residents and communities of color to afford to live in the city.

Corporate Greed and Government Complicity

The gentrification of Somerville has been exacerbated by the actions of corporate developers and government officials who have actively promoted luxury housing developments and other projects that cater to wealthy newcomers. These developers have often received generous tax breaks and other incentives from the city, while affordable housing initiatives have been neglected or underfunded.

Government officials have also played a role in gentrification by approving zoning changes that favor high-end development and by failing to enforce regulations designed to protect affordable housing. In some cases, city officials have even actively worked to displace low-income residents, such as by closing down homeless shelters or increasing police presence in low-income neighborhoods.

The Devastating Impact of Displacement

The gentrification of Somerville has had a devastating impact on the city's long-time residents. Many have been priced out of their homes and forced to relocate to distant suburbs, far from their jobs, schools, and communities. Others have been displaced by the closure of affordable housing units or by the harassment of landlords. The displacement of residents has led to a decline in the city's diversity and a loss of its vibrant cultural heritage.

Resistance and Resilience

In the face of gentrification and displacement, Somerville's residents have organized and fought back. Community groups have formed to advocate for affordable housing, protect tenants' rights, and promote social justice. Residents have also staged protests, occupied vacant buildings, and engaged in other forms of direct action to resist displacement.

These resistance efforts have had some successes. In 2014, the city council passed a rent control ordinance, which has helped to slow down the pace of rent increases. Community groups have also played a role in preserving affordable housing units and in providing support to displaced residents.

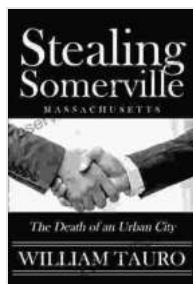
Solutions and Strategies

Addressing the problem of gentrification and displacement requires a comprehensive approach that includes a range of solutions and strategies. These include:

- **Investing in affordable housing:** Cities need to commit to building and preserving affordable housing units for low-income residents and communities of color.
- **Regulating the housing market:** Cities can use zoning regulations, rent control, and other measures to prevent the displacement of low-income residents.
- **Supporting community development:** Cities can support community development corporations and other non-profit organizations that work to create affordable housing and promote economic development in low-income neighborhoods.

- **Enforcing tenant protections:** Cities can strengthen tenant protections and establish renter assistance programs to help low-income residents stay in their homes.
- **Promoting social justice:** Cities can address the underlying causes of gentrification and displacement, such as poverty, inequality, and discrimination, by investing in education, job training, and other social programs.

The gentrification of Somerville is a cautionary tale about the dangers of unchecked urban development. When cities prioritize the interests of wealthy newcomers over the needs of long-time residents, the result is displacement, inequality, and the loss of community. However, the story of Somerville also shows that resistance is possible. By organizing, fighting back, and demanding change, communities can protect their homes, their neighborhoods, and their city's future.



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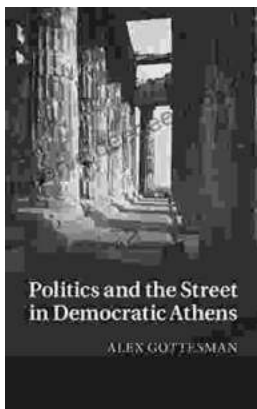
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