

How Cohousing Can Help

The results of a National Conversation at the National Cohousing Conference,
June 15-19, 2011, Washington, DC

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What does cohousing have to offer?

- **Social contributions: Resiliency**
 - Sense of belonging - “We are a frontal attack on American individualism”
 - Support system – caring and sharing
 - Leadership and citizenship development

 - **Environmental contributions: Using less**
 - Sharing and minimize resources
 - Support each other in converting to sustainable lifestyle
 - Sustainable food production

 - **We model helpful social and environmental behaviors and attitudes – We inspire!**
 - Sustainability and appropriate scale
 - Peaceful decision making and living
 - Learning how to compromise with grace
 - Dealing with difficult conversations
 - Participatory decision making
 - Cooperation and consensus
 - Living our values - mindfulness of choices
- Limitations
- **Homogenous** – mostly white, educated, middle class
 - **Not easy access** - not affordable to all – requires lots of time and energy
 - **Not well understood by the general public**

How to maximize our benefits

- **Better define who we are**
 - Better messaging – elevator conversation
 - Make and promote replicable models

- **Be more open and inclusive**
 - Overcome affordability barriers
 - Internal micro-lending – “like Craig’s List” – “Cohousing Credit Union”
 - Partner with governments and nonprofits
 - Other means – retrofits, renting, etc.
 - Overcome cultural barriers and hesitancy
 - More appealing to diverse cultures and less elitist
 - Adapt our model to meet needs
 - Listen to community needs
 - Encourage all types of other community-building – in work, faith groups, etc

What are we gonna do about it?

- **Increase our success rates**
 - Training and technical assistance: database of best practices, information forum, toolkit, leadership development (subsidized for those who need it)
 - Access to capital – endowment, national cohousing bank/credit union
 - Mentorship – buddy system
 - Create partnerships with other national associations

- **Show others what we have to offer and how we live**
 - Extend our community values and activities beyond our cohousing boundaries in order to spread our benefits: outreach committees, extend our caring ethic (Fresh Air, Foster kids), temporary cohousing experiences, university partnerships
 - Tell people about cohousing: cohousing in a box, share our stories via slideshows and articles, social media, etc., translate basic texts into other languages
 - Bring outsiders to our cohousing communities: open use of our Common Houses to others, Community Supported Agriculture at our communities
 - Show don't tell – let your life speak

- **Enhance regional groups**
 - To foster collaboration among existing and start-up cohousing communities
 - To do regional marketing, promotion, advocacy