

Cohousing neighborhoods

Some people consider these resident-created neighborhoods a return to the best of small-town America.

Others say they are like a traditional village or the close-knit neighborhoods of earlier generations.

Futurists suggest that cohousing is a new response to the 21st century's social, economic and environmental challenges.



Picturesque Pioneer Valley Cohousing, Amherst, MA

Cohousing offers an ideal balance of privacy and community, with neighbors choosing to participate in activities at the level they wish.

Want to learn more about cohousing?

Visit www.Cohousing.org



What is Cohousing?

Imagine a neighborhood where:

- Neighbors know each other well and can, if they choose, catch up on each other's lives often over home-cooked dinners in a comfortable common house.
- Residents live much more sustainably after building wisely and then sharing common facilities.
- Kids are free to run and play together along car-free paths and in a central area in sight of their homes.
- Neighbors own their individual homes and together make decisions about their community.

Imagine living in cohousing.



Berkeley (CA) Cohousing neighbors enjoy a casual gathering.

Today's new “old-fashioned neighborhood”

Cohousing communities are old-fashioned neighborhoods created with a little ingenuity. They bring together the value of private homes with the benefits of more sustainable living. That means green building, common facilities and good connections with neighbors. All in all, they stand as innovative answers to today's environmental and social problems.

Cohousing communities combine the autonomy of private dwellings — complete with full kitchens — with the advantages of shared resources and more sustainable living. The basic traits include shared facilities, a common house, self-governance and design input by the group of future residents that created the community.

Cohousing first emerged in Denmark more than 30 years ago. The first cohousing in the U.S. was completed in 1991. By 2008, there are more than 113 established cohousing neighborhoods in the U.S. and approximately 100 more in development.



A community play day at Pleasant Hill (CA) Cohousing.

Most of these intentional neighborhoods are intergenerational, offering opportunities to live among people in all stages of life, ranging from newborns to residents well into their 80s. In addition, several new communities are designed specifically for seniors.

What makes cohousing unique:

- Growing Community
- Increasing Sustainability
- Aging Successfully.

In a cohousing community, you know who lives six houses down because you eat common meals with them once or twice a week, decide how to allocate homeowners dues and gratefully accept a ride from them when your car's in the shop. You listen to what they have to say, even if you don't agree with them at first, and you sense that you, too, are being heard.

Cohousing residents are consciously committed to living as a community. The physical design encourages both social contact and individual space. Private homes contain all the features of conventional homes, but residents also have access to extensive common facilities such as open space, courtyards, a playground and a common house.

Cohousing communities are often designed as attached or single-family homes clustered around a courtyard or a pedestrian walkway. Most have 20 to 40 households. Regardless of the size of the community, there are many opportunities for casual



Children playing on the pedestrian path at Hearthstone Cohousing in Denver.

meetings between neighbors, as well as for deliberate gatherings such as celebrations, clubs and business meetings.

People living in cohousing share no other ideology other than they want to know their neighbors well and to live more sustainably. Yet cohousing offers an ideal balance of privacy and community, with members choosing to participate in activities at the level they wish.

Research at major academic institutions has found that people live longer and healthier lives when they are socially connected to others.

In addition to enriching the families who live in cohousing, cohousing helps to create a more sustainable society, one neighborhood at a time.

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