

[Having trouble viewing this email? Click here.](#)



April, 2019

Cohousing Now!

Engaging a Less Autonomous Live

The cohousing dream is one of togetherness, shared meals, casual conversation and deep discussion. We celebrate the health and happiness we gain by living in community. We talk less about the things we scale back – autonomy, independence, individualism.



I suspect that among long time cohousers, we mostly don't talk about it because we no longer notice it. Interdependence has become so natural to us that we no longer miss the independence we had before cohousing. For newer and prospective cohousers, I suspect there are a number of reasons we don't talk about autonomy, none of them particularly healthy.

Reason #1: We don't talk about the loss of autonomy because we haven't really thought about it. We're focused on our goal to live in blissful community and it doesn't occur to us that in gaining connection we will lose some individual choice. The problem with this is that in fact we do lose some individual choice when we move into community and if that catches us by surprise there can be a hefty emotional toll.

Reason #2: We don't talk about autonomy because we're trying to sell this place. Loss is such a downer. We wouldn't want to scare anyone off by talking about the hard stuff. But there is hard stuff. There is quite a lot of hard stuff, particularly in the transition into community. The thing that is most likely to make things less hard is to talk about the hard stuff. Most of us were taught to avoid uncomfortable topics, but the truth is the very connection we are seeking is born of tough conversations. Community is a place where all of life is welcome, where we carry our dirty laundry right into the common house and stand beside each other as we work our way through it.

Reason #3: We don't talk about losing autonomy because we suspect that if we don't say it, it won't be so. Surely if we just ignore this piece it will simply work itself out. Sadly this doesn't work any better than procrastinated homework assignments do for kids. If anything, the more we try to ignore it, the more it grows into a bigger and bigger irritation. Far better to bring it out the in open where community can work its magic.

So what does happen to autonomy in community? The answer is a bit different for each community and each community member. Communities with larger homes and fewer shared walls will retain more independence than those who live closer together and share more of their functions, but cohousing is about sharing, and when things are shared, it means no individual gets to decide what happens with them.

We figure out early in the design process that we have a variety of ideas about our common spaces – what kinds of spaces to share, what we want to use them for, how to prioritize one need over another. We discover we weren't entirely aware of all the assumptions we were

making until we bump into someone who was making the opposite assumption. We discover that the sense of ownership we feel toward the common space must be tempered with flexibility and awareness of others' needs.

More surprising, we learn that the need for awareness of others doesn't stop with the common spaces. Our private homes may be ours, but what we do with them can impact our neighbors. Unlike suburbia where we don't expect our neighbors to care what we think of their strange paint choices or unkempt landscape, cohousing is entirely about care. The pesticide I use in my back yard, the fragrance in my laundry soap, and the actions of my pet all impact others in real ways. Because we are in community together, we do take those needs into account, and we don't always like it. It is one of the many parts of our lives and our thinking that shift as we practice living together.

Whatever the flavor of our community, we quickly discover that we are only one piece of it. We do not have the individual choice we have enjoyed in other types of housing. As we entered cohousing we made the decision to give up some of our autonomy, often without fully realizing what that would mean.

Perhaps this too is a gain. Perhaps we are not made for individual, autonomous living. Perhaps the things we find ourselves doing for the good of the community turn out to be good for ourselves as well. Perhaps the independence we have been taught to celebrate is not all it is cracked up to be. Maybe, just maybe, the more we let go, the better life becomes.

Events



"...Name badges have been ordered, speakers are putting final touches on presentations, communities are spiffing up their common houses, keynote speaker has booked her flights, menus have been chosen, rooms have been assigned, volunteers have been prepped...excitement is filling the air... watch out Portland...here we come!"

N ational Cohousing Conference
May 30-June 2

Main Conference Registrations still available

Registrations to attend 'just' a pre-conference intensive and/or tour are now possible

We are likely to sell out, so please REGISTER SOON!



May 7 Chuck Durrett
Cohousing Design
5pm PT, 6pm MT, 7pm CT, 8pm ET
<https://zoom.us/j/202941610>

Full Webchat Schedule

Recent WebChats

Raines Cohen
Open House Day

Joe Cole
Addressing Racism

We Can Work It Out
New Member Orientation

Michael LaFond
Cluster Apartments

Liz Magill



68 communities participated in this year's **National Cohousing Open House Day**. If you have photos or stories from your event, please share them with me (karincohous@gmail.com)

Mark your calendars now, **Sunday April 26th 2020** for National Cohousing Open House Day!

Thank you to Raines Cohen for helping organize this nationwide event!

Blog



We Welcome Your Stories

Some of our favorite blogs are stories by people just like you. Tell us about your favorite community experience, your biggest learning, the beautiful thing your neighbor did. We'd love to share it. Submit to: karencohous@gmail.com



Sharing Risk

by Karen Gimnig

Cohousing begins with the premise that we want to share things. We think first of big, tangible things, like lawn mowers and guest rooms. Then there are smaller things, the proverbial cup of sugar, a ride to the airport. We anticipate and cherish this sharing as part of our identity as a cohousing community. We are less likely to anticipate the intangible sharing that



The BIG PROJECT

by Helen Spector

I live in Trillium Hollow Cohousing Neighborhood, and just recently completed serving as project manager for a major construction defect remediation. Preparing for my "Managing the BIG PROJECT" presentation at the National CoHo conference, I talked with several other communities who have faced

comes with living together, the sharing of values represented in policies, agreements and rules. Policies about outdoor cats and free range kids and pesticide use to name a few.

One of the most challenging places for sharing and cooperation is around financial risk. Forming communities get a taste of this early on as they begin to invest in feasibility studies for land that may or may not work for them.

[Read More](#)

construction issues to gather lessons learned and cautionary tales.

I found that each situation has unique elements stemming from the age of the community, the complexity or pervasiveness of the problem, and financial resources available. I also realized that for each disruptive situation that has emerged in their physical plant, the community faces both a technical challenge and the stress on the interpersonal dynamics of how they come together to work through it.

[Read More](#)

In the News



Why I'm Raising My Kids in an East Bay Cohousing Community

by Kate Madden Yee

(published in the in the Bold Italic;
illustration by Shen Malcom)

“**T**he boys are peeing in the yard again,” I say to my neighbor one spring morning. It’s 2006, just a few years into our community-living experiment in the East Bay, and the yard is one we share. She’s got four kids, and her youngest is in between my two: the dynamic-trio ages of four, five and six. Apparently, they think it’s funny to find special spots around the property at which to let loose. Not the worst problem, but probably one worth addressing.

“Do we care?” she asks.
It’s a great question.

“Well, in terms of the ongoing young-children-socialization project, we should probably talk to them about it, don’t you think?” I asked.



Cohousing and the Return to Communal Living

by Jennifer Grayson

(episode in The Uncivilize Podcast;
photo by Adam Johnson)

I know many of you, like me, dream of decamping the modern existence to live in the solace of the woods or on a bucolic homestead—just as many of our Uncivilize guests have done. But many of you also may not yet be able to fully commit to that dream (like me) or perhaps don’t even want to commit to that dream; that what, in fact, you are searching for is a more connected human existence in the 21st-century city or town in which you already live.

To you, I introduce cohousing, an intentional community-on-the-rise best described as a modern and sustainable take on the village (or commune) of yesteryear.

And to give you the rundown, I introduce Karin Hoskin, executive director of The Cohousing Association

We come up with a party line, gather the boys and lay down the law. No peeing in the yard. I'm not sure if our little chat is effective, but at least my neighbor and I present a united parental front.

The boys are now 17, 18 and 19, and they've grown up in this unusual environment called cohousing. We're a group of nine households—singles, couples and families—in Oakland's Temescal Commons cohousing development, which came together in 1997 with the idea that we would build a community and therefore share our lives in meaningful ways. That means tangible resources, like cars, tools and laundry machines, as well as work, like property maintenance. But it also means our spiritual paths, health challenges, careers and extended families and, of course, the rearing of our children.

[Read More](#)

of the United States, who lives with her husband, two teenage kids, mother-in-law, two cats and two dogs in Wild Sage Cohousing in Boulder, Colo. Wild Sage is a community of 91 people living in 34 homes on an acre-and-a-half of land surrounded by nature and open space; but as Karin explains here, the possibilities for cohousing are as diverse as their settings and the folks who choose to live there.

(There's a mixed-income bike-sharing condo community in Boston's Jamaica Plain neighborhood and a rural cabin community eight miles west of Fairbanks, Alaska!)

[Read More & And Listen](#)

Classified Ads

Forming Communities and Communities Seeking Members



Fair Oaks EcoHousing
Fair Oaks, CA



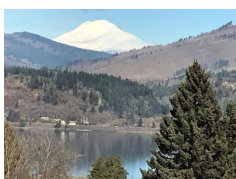
Ralston Creek Cohousing
Arvada, CO



Washington Commons
West Sacramento, CA



Prairie Hill-Iowa City Cohousing
Iowa City, IA



Adams Creek Cohousing
Hood River, OR



Oakleigh Meadow Cohousing
Eugene, OR



Haystack Heights
Spokane, WA

Homes for Sale



Home available at
intergenerational Emerson
Commons by
Charlottesville, VA



Light filled cozy townhome,
3bdrm, 2bath, loft Ashland
Cohousing, OR



2 Bed/ 1 Bath Pleasant Hill
Cohousing, CA



Building Now in Rocky
Corner Cohousing
Bethany, CT



Unique View Home
Milagro Cohousing
Tuscon, AZ



Homes in Nubanusit
Neighborhood & Farm
Peterborough, NH



Two Homes for Sale at Wolf
Creek Lodge Senior
Cohousing, Grass Valley,
CA

Cohousing Professionals

[Caddis Architecture](#)

[CoHousing Solutions |](#)
[Sustainable Neighborhood](#)
[Consultants](#)

[Fitch Architecture & Community](#)
[Design | Home - Community -](#)
[Planet](#)

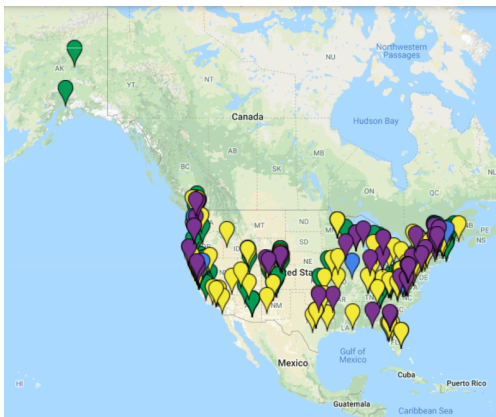
[Linda Herman Consulting](#)

[Mary Kraus, Architect](#)

[McCamant &](#)
[Durrett Architects:](#)
[The Cohousing Co](#)

[schemata workshop |](#)
[architecture & planning](#)

Directory - Find your community now!



[Click Here for the Cohousing Directory](#)

New listings:

**Oak Park Intergenerational CoHousing
in Oak Park, Illinois**

**Bozeman Cohousing
in Bozeman, Montana**

Thanks for reading

[Cohousing Now!](#) provides news and events on Cohousing... Now! provided by The Cohousing Association of the United States. Please forward to your friends, communities, and other lists to spread the word about cohousing!

The Cohousing Association is funded by donations from people like you. Thanks so much for your support.

[Donate to Cohousing](#)



karincohous@gmail.com
www.cohousing.org

Connect with us

