

Cohousing Now! Is Cohousing Green Enough?



Is Cohousing "Green Enough"?

The Paris climate summit is now over. And I am wondering - has it (or other climate news) inspired any new or existing cohousers to stretch a little further in the green direction? We know about many new communities who are talking "passive house", "net zero" and "net zero ready". **Village Hill Cohousing** in Northampton, Mass. is designed to be net zero from the onset. Our firm, with the lead of Mary Kraus, has been walking a fine line to deliver this goal on budget, and it often comes down to small, attached, simple units. Luckily for us, cohousers embrace a lifestyle that is happy in exactly this - a comfortable small home within a lovely community.

Most of the older east coast communities that we have worked with or visited chose to build beyond the energy codes of the times. As it turns out, those codes were pretty low bars, and what was excellent in 1995 is not sustainable in 2015. So what is a green cohouser to do to reduce their carbon footprint within their existing cohousing unit? Fortunately, the well-built-for-1995 cohousing stock has proved to be very suitable for retrofit. Mary's 2010 net zero renovation of her co-home has demonstrated this....[[read more](#)]

As for my community **Pioneer Valley Cohousing**, we are growing more and more of our own food every year and I help in that effort by starting the seedlings in my house, fueling the grow lights with PV panels. We invested \$20,000 a few years back on better insulation in our common house and I figured it had about an 8-year payback. We just invested another \$15,000 in improving the insulation in our workshop and office buildings. Car sharing has been discussed; in the meantime, informal borrowing has made it viable for some households to reduce their car ownership. Our bike room has 5 "zip bikes". And one of our residents lobbied the local bus company to add a stop at our common doorstep, making bus transportation more available.

Our buildings at Pioneer Valley Cohousing were designed to anticipate future solar installations, with sufficient uninterrupted south roof area to power the entire community. More than 50% of our households have taken advantage of this to install photovoltaics or solar hot water. We have recently been exploring a community-wide strategy to cover the remaining available roof areas, which requires lobbying the State to force the utility company to allow us to do this.



And yet, I know this is not enough....I think back to the climate march, where our community brought a cohousing banner, and other cohousers coalesced around us. As communities, we can work together to be agents of change, not only on the personal level, but on the global level where it matters most.

Cohousers are leaders! Let's lead this green revolution step by step!

Laura Fitch, Kraus Fitch Architects, Inc.

[Editor's Note: Come talk with Laura at the [Aging Conference](#) which is being co-sponsored by Kraus Fitch Architects]

Conferences & Events



Conference | May 20-21, 2016 | Salt Lake City
Produced by Coho/US and SageHill Cohousing

"Aging Gracefully" at Rocky Hill Cohousing

Join David Entin at the conference to be part of conversations with current cohousers in intergenerational living sharing their experiences

National Cohousing Open House Day Saturday April 30, 2016
Has your community registered yet? This is a unique opportunity to promote your community along with others around the country; a great way to strengthen the bonds within and between communities while attracting people to your waiting lists. [read more...](#)

In This Issue

- [Conferences & Events](#)
- [Cohousing Blogs](#)
- [Living in Community](#)
- [Cohousing Map & Metrics](#)
- [Classified Ads](#)
- [Cohousing Professionals](#)
- [In the News](#)
- [Resources](#)

Classified Ads

[The Perfect Gift - Holiday Reading List for You and Yours](#)



Cohousing Blogs

Deep Aging: I'm Not In Denial...I'm Just Not Growing Old! *Reposted from [MidAtlantic Cohousing](#)*

Nancy Francis, Sage Cohousing International

Cohousers interested in tackling the issues around Deep Aging (TM) and all the attendant co-care issues are beginning a national conversation to address these challenges. For more information contact: [Ann Zabaldo](#)



Old age, another final frontier: and just like deep space, it is dark and unknown... In the last few decades I have watched my grandparents, aunts, mother in law, a few peers, and dozens of hospice patients age and die. I've always had friends who are much older, and in our talks over the years they share what getting older feels like, their various physical challenges, and how they are thinking about the end of life. Some cope with humor, some with different flavors of denial, some with an interesting assortment of approach and avoidance. I had been working in the well-being field, and when I applied well-being

concepts to my interest in aging, I landed in cohousing... A cohousing community could be a perfect forum for support and exploration during aging... [read more](#)

Housing Price, Size Don't Have Much Influence on Happiness **Jenny Godwin of CoHousing Solutions**

No surprise, but always nice to see data backing up what those living in cohousing communities are already intimately aware of.



Researchers asked, what makes for happy homeowners? Not size or price, actually. It's about the community. *"It turns out that what really matters is the extent to which our houses facilitate positive social connections,"* says Elizabeth Dunn, director of the Happy Lab at The

Univ of British Columbia ... Also important is access to nature, green space near the home and spaces for bumping into neighbors.

Reminds me of a Coho/US post earlier this year discussing "crossroads" as a key to lively communities...this clip references the essentials of cohousing architectural practice, neighborhoods built on a human scale and reminiscent of the landscape surrounding them... [read more](#)

Aging Gratefully: The Power of Community

Jenny Godwin of CoHousing Solutions

[Aging Gratefully: The Power of Community](#) (click for a preview) is a new documentary by Alan O'Hashi, a filmmaker and resident of Silver Sage in Boulder, CO. Alan's film includes



interviews on aging in community with six of his cohousing neighbors. Visit his website to learn more about Alan's own Silver Sage story and his inspiration for examining the topics he does in this film. ... There will be an opportunity for viewing at the opening night (May 19) of the [Aging Better Conference in Salt Lake City, UT](#). Alan

is an advisory committee member and has graciously offered to provide a viewing of the full documentary during the Conference. It's sure to be a packed two days of insightful conversations about healthy, vibrant aging in community!



Homes for Sale

Stunning

Contemporary Home in Silver Sage, Boulder

Two Lovely Cottages in Fantastic Vermont setting

Wonderful light-filled detached home in Arcadia: \$319,900

Colorado Mountain Ranch & Farm -- 3 & 4 BD at Heartwood

3 BR home at Mosaic Commons, \$320,000

For Sale in New Hampshire's Greenest Community.

Seeking Members

Join an Over-55 Cohousing Community in the Land of Enchantment - Placitas New Mexico

Jubilee Cohousing in Floyd, Virginia

Artisan oriented community, forming in stunning Vermont location

Rapidly Growing - Community-Centered Neighborhoods in Charlotte

Build your Home & Life at Katywil, CO-farming, CO-homesteading, CO-housing

Join a Green, Intergenerational Cohousing Community near Sacramento!

Riverside Living in Eugene, Oregon!

Cohousing Professionals

Caddis Architecture

CoHousing Solutions | Sustainable Neighborhood Consultants

Kraus Fitch Architects | Home - Community - Planet

Linda Herman Consulting

McCamant & Durrett Architects: The Cohousing Co

Living in Community

Fun and Work on a Christmas Tree Farm

Ed Sonnenberg, Hundredfold Farm (outside of Gettysburg PA)

Nestled in the picturesque foothills of South Mountain just west of the historic borough of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania is the **cohousing community of Hundredfold Farm**.



Situated at nearly 1200 feet up a winding gravel road on 75 acres, the community members, or "folders" as we call ourselves, enjoy scenic vistas and a rural lifestyle on this idyllic property. What one cannot help noticing when visiting the community are the acres of pine and evergreen trees necklacing the hills

and fields. Since its inception, the community has operated Seven Springs Tree Farm LLC, a seasonal cut-your-own Christmas tree farm that was in existence when the community purchased the property.....The tree farm also operates a gift shop and café during the tree season... If you love the freedom of working outdoors then this is the place for you. The smell of pine and freshly mowed fields is intoxicating.. [Read more](#)

Coho/US Notes

A Visit to Takoma Village in the Nation's Capital

Alice Alexander, Coho/US Executive Director

Just two blocks from a metro station, Takoma Village members enjoy a convenient way to lower their carbon footprint, not to mention being



conveniently close to Washington DC sights and commerce. The central piazza and green, and spacious common house present abundance on a compact urban site. Impressive! Lots going on, too. In my short visit, there was a common meal, a large children's party, and a string quartet practice. I joined a tour that the community hosts

periodically; over 50 folks came. I was particularly pleased to meet with **Ann Zabaldo**, who has contributed so much to the cohousing movement. Ann arranged for a meeting of MidAtlantic Cohousing reps, to support the upcoming Aging Conference. Read more here: [Addressing Issues of Deep Aging in Community](#).

Communities Directory Campaign - the Fellowship for Intentional Community has launched a Kickstarter campaign to raise \$6000-the funds needed to assemble a new print version of their flagship publication.

An Investment in Creating Community: Giving to Coho/US

"I hear from communities all over the country that Coho/US is their single best source for new members finding them. Our community supports CohoUS with an annual donation out of our operating fund, and I would urge any of you feeling generous and grateful that you live in cohousing, to consider an individual contribution ." Katie McCamant, Nevada City Cohousing

Please consider a year end tax-deductible gift - be a leader, we need support from individuals as well as communities!

Many Thanks to These Communities who have Given in 2015

It's not too late to join the list and show your support of Coho/US!

Cohousing Directory Metrics

Established Communities = 158

Completed = 133

Building* = 25

Own Site = 21

Forming = 97

* Many building communities have residents but continue to add members and build homes.

In the News

Meet the new Golden Girls (and guys): How boomers are coming up with creative living arrangements

The Globe and Mail

What the trailblazers of this [cohousing] movement have in common is this:



They saw what happened to their parents and do not want it to happen to them. Ferociously independent, boomers are saying "no thanks" to expensive retirement and nursing homes where itineraries are set and staff call the shots. "There are a lot of boomers who do not go happy into this night," says Janet Torge. "You don't want us in your institutions, really. We are not going to be docile."

An Evolving Movement

Communities Magazine

[Editor's Note: Coho/US welcomes Sky Blue, new Executive Director of the Fellowship for Intentional Community]



My name is Sky Blue. I'm 35 years old and have lived collectively for a total of 18 years. It was a surprise to find myself moving into this new role, but in retrospect it makes perfect sense.

Unbeknownst to me, I've been training for this job my entire adult life.

Community is in my blood.....

The FIC's mission is to support and promote the development of intentional communities and the evolution of cooperative culture. As I transition into the role of Executive Director, I have two questions for you: What can the FIC do for you? What can you do for the FIC? We all want to change the world. It's going to take a community effort.... [read more](#)

Resources

C

Aging Better Together Conference Flyer

Do you like receiving this eNews? Please consider supporting Coho/US, serving as a clearinghouse and connector to grow and nurture cohousing across the country.

DONATE NOW
Secure donations through
Network for Good



What is Cohousing?

The Cohousing Life Discussion Board

Top 10 Benefits of Early Participation in Cohousing

NCB Financial Services

Tag Cloud

Thanks for reading

Cohousing Now! provides news and events on Cohousing... Now! From **Coho/US**, the Cohousing Association of the United States, Cohousing Now! is emailed monthly. Please forward to your friends, communities, and other lists to spread the word about cohousing!

Join Our Mailing List

Copyright 2015 The Cohousing Association of the United States All rights reserved.
Privacy policy - www.cohousing.org/privacy