Like Living in a Zoo
Sky Blue, The Fellowship for Intentional Community

Communities are like exotic animals. They may be extraordinary, but the fascination comes more from the novelty, the unfamiliarity, and the association with an untamed land. Communities are used to having lots of guests, and also often give tours to the curious public. It’s easy for members to sometimes feel like they’re an attraction at a zoo, or being observed in their natural habitat.

Communities tend to attract idealists, who are also like exotic animals, with beliefs like colorful plumes or twisted horns that make you think, how is that possible?! I’ve rarely met a person living in community who didn’t have at least a little bit of an idealistic streak. Meaning, as much as they live in community for themselves, they’re also doing it for reasons beyond themselves. As much as they might get tired of living in a zoo, a part of them wants people watching, exclaiming, like the people at the zoo, that's amazing!

There’s a quintessential tension in all but the most reclusive communities about how much they want to be in the public eye. There are always those who want the world to see what their community is doing, to be an inspiration for change, and don’t care how many tourists pass through. And there are those who are no less proud of their community, but who want to change the world more quietly, simply by living a more peaceful and harmonious life. This is not so much a conflict of values as it is one of desires, strategies, and priorities. There is no right answer, but few would disagree that there are times when the community should open its doors.

I was very excited to hear that the Coho/US was hosting a National Cohousing Open House Day. Open houses are great opportunities for communities to recruit members and educate the public, but coordinated open houses across the country become a national event with the potential to exponentially increase attention. We want cohousing to become mainstream. We want people to be able to say cohousing without thinking about whether others will know what they’re talking about. We want the ideas, the models, the principles, the culture of cohousing to infiltrate and fundamentally alter the conventional wisdom of residential development.

The National Open House Day is an opportunity to inject cohousing into the public consciousness in a major way. There are over 75 communities across the country banding together to tell the world what is possible when people live together in a closer, more cooperative way. These are your partners and allies, your brothers and sisters in building community in a world often hostile to anything that challenges individualism as the core value.... Building community can seem like an impossible feat sometimes. The world needs to see the people attempting the impossible, because seeing people attempt the impossible is how people realize that more is possible than they ever imagined.  

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Confereces & Events

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

Early Bird Rate Ends March 31st!
Conference Schedule Here  Full Program Here
Questions & Answers Here

Senior Cohousing 101 with Charles Durrett
[Add this to your conference registration, or participate separately]
There is a quiet grassroots movement, among Boomers, to reject the current options for housing older people - managed-care facilities, retirement homes, nursing homes, and so on. This group, who began turning 60 in 2006, does not want to retire or grow older in the same kind of
aging institutions in which they placed their own parents. So it should come as no surprise that Boomers are embracing cohousing as a tool for maintaining their independence, building community, living light on the planet and caring about each other. In this inspiring pre-game show, learn why senior cohousing is such a big deal today and how to get them started.

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National Cohousing Open House Day. Saturday April 30, 2016

Over 75 cohousing communities across the country are welcoming the public for tours. Join us! Communities learn more here. We'd love to have you sign up! Visitors see the list of Participating Communities. Visit close by or travel outside your area. Press and Promotions here. Follow the conversation on Facebook.

Getting It Built Workshop April 9-10, 2016
Freemont, Calif
Conducted by Kathryn McCamant and Charles Durrett
Avoid reinventing the wheel! Join sponsor Mission Peak Cohousing

Cohousing Blogs

Aging Gracefully in MultiGenerational Cohousing
David Entin, Rocky Hill Cohousing
Join David Entin at the Aging Better Together Conference
Have you noticed that folks in your cohousing community are getting older? You moved in five, or ten, or fifteen years ago and people who were about sixty are now in their seventies. Your community may have begun to wonder how you will handle aging in community. As folks get frailer, can they remain in your community? Can your community help maintain your senior citizens in their cohousing homes as they age? Are your oldest members wondering how they can still contribute and how they will be supported in community? Has your community formed an "aging in community" group or committee?..... We encourage every cohousing community to send representatives to the national

Cohousing Professionals

Caddis Architecture
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conference in May... I hope we will have the opportunity to meet you in Salt Lake City and share our experiences of this new, vibrant, and challenging phase of life...... read more

**The Elephant in the Room**
Ann Zabaldo, Board of Directors, Mid Atlantic Cohousing
[This is a repost from Ann Zabaldo’s MidAtlanticCohousing blog; join Ann and Janice Blanchard at the Aging Better Together conference.]
Do you know that **90% of the care given to elders is given by family members?** but ... almost 25% of the population retiring now at age 65 are “elder orphans”? They are either widowed, divorced, or single-never-married. They have no children and no siblings. **the current cost of nursing home care can easily exceed $100,000 per year? yet, fewer than 30% of those retiring have even $50,000 in savings or income beyond Social Security? What's happening with the other 60%+?**

**70% of us will need 1-3 years of health care assistance? and ... we're all living longer and longer lives? .... read more**

**Kindness and Civility Within Community**
Philip Dowds, Cornerstone Village Cohousing (Cambridge MA)
We often discuss the mechanics of creating and maintaining cohousing; we don't discuss as often issues of kindness or civility within communities.
Cornerstone Cohousing has been up and running about 15 years now, and our 32 households (approximately 50 adults, various kids) know each other pretty well. We tend to know who has a sense of humor, and who is easily angered; which kids seem to be having a problem with a parent; who won't eat meat, and who can't eat cheese; who is a good cook; who's living on a tight budget, and who has some financial flexibility; who can be trusted to follow through; who is available to lift heavy objects - and so on. Moreover, the normal courtesies and kindnesses of coho life are well established: We offer help to those who incapacitated in some way, or temporarily inconvenienced. If a household needs a ride to the airport, an onion, or some emergency babysitting, a single e-mail usually solves the problem in five or ten minutes. Read more ...

**Building Community**
Fitting Historic Houses into Bristol Village Cohousing
Jim Mendell, Bristol Village Cohousing (Vermont)
Vermont is a state of small towns, and among them, the village of Bristol is unique. It is the commercial hub of five rural townships, featuring an old-fashioned Main Street lined with shops and restaurants. A turn-of-the-century Town Hall rises in the center of the village, one part municipal office, one part cultural center. Across the street is the town green, with a new wooden playground, a band shell for summer concerts, and benches for taking it all in.... In this central part of town, just across from the village green, are three historic structures, the future site of Bristol Village Cohousing. In a town filled with postcard-perfect older homes, these buildings are an important part of the town's self-image. So when all three were placed on the market, there was an opportunity to preserve a piece of the town's history, while creating an infill community to enliven the town today. . . . Read more
Finding or Starting a Community - Communities Magazine
The Spring 2016 issues of Communities has some terrific articles. We’re reposting a couple of excellent ones. Consider subscribing!

Kindling New Community: Village Hearth Cohousing
Pat McAulay, Village Hearth (Durham NC)
Our vision has followed a long path originating 15 or more years ago with long weekends at the beach....when our gang started to retire, we faced the reality of actually living together under one roof permanently, as well as the standard reply, "I'm going to stay in my home until I can't." That forced us to seek out other solutions. Having the close-knit community with a balance of privacy in cohousing is where we landed. read more...

Finding a Healthy, Happy Cohousing Community that Fits Your Values
Cynthia Dettman, The Commons on the Alameda (Santa Fe NM)
How does one go about locating a cohousing community that is a good personal fit? Here are my suggestions on how to go about finding a healthy, vibrant, and happy community. read more...

Cohousing Directory Metrics
Established Communities = 162
---Completed = 136
---Building or Expanding* = 26
Forming** = 123
* Many building communities have residents but continue to add members and build homes.
**Twenty four forming groups have acquired land they plan to develop

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