URBAN COHOUSING CASE STUDIES

Photo: Germantown Commons
INTRODUCTION

CURRENT CUTTING-EDGE URBAN COHOUSING CASE STUDIES

Early cohousing communities commonly retreated from cities to pastoral environments. By doing so, they removed themselves from the conveniences, amenities, and cultural resources found in towns and cities and had to look to themselves to provide those aspects of life. As a part of broader cultural shifts, there is strong interest in low-impact urban living, resulting in benefits to cohousers and to the municipalities welcoming these projects.

Urban cohousing communities are lighter on infrastructure, help to conserve land and open space, have lower vehicle miles traveled per person, and often lower carbon emissions than remote communities. Most urban cohousing communities locate themselves in highly walkable neighborhoods that are transit rich, allowing them to take advantage of diverse resources in close proximity to the cohousing community, which makes them less insular and more integrated, accomplishing a very livable form of elegant density.

WHAT COMMUNITY MEMBERS ARE SAYING:

“There have been a lot of articles about how families’ sitting down to dinner makes a difference in kids’ lives. Well, I think it makes a difference in adults’ lives, too. There’s no easier way to deepen our connections.”  
- Kathy Tymoczko, Resident of Daybreak in Portland, OR  

“To walk out of your door and down the hall and run into people who care about you and the community is very satisfying.”  
- Joan King, 63, a Resident of Eastern Village Cohousing in Silver Spring, MD  

“Here, you walk in and know every one of the people and you know them well. You greet them. They’re your friends. You do stuff with them. It’s the opposite of the isolation you sometimes get in the urban areas.”  
- Steve Fisher, 63, a retired transportation planner who leads weekly hikes at PDX Commons  

“It turns out when you eat together, you start planning more activities together. When you eat together, you share more things. You start to watch each other’s kids. You lend each other power tools. You borrow each other’s cars.”  
- Grace Kim, Developer and Resident of Capitol Hill Urban Cohousing in Seattle, WA
Common House Elements

- Dining Room
- Kitchen
- Kids Play Room
- Guest Rooms
- Laundry
- Multi-Purpose Room
- Garage / Workshop
- Meeting Space
- Office
- Fireplace
- Wrap-Around Porch

Unique Features

- Community focuses on environmental sustainability and includes features such as a rainwater catchment system, composting, recycling, and green building strategies that create energy-efficient and solar-ready homes
- Located near the Greenway for easy access to biking and walking

Project Overview
9/10 Acre Site
2-3 Stories
25 Residential Units
1, 2, & 3 Bedrooms
3 Affordable Units
659 - 1,336 SF Each
$5M Development Costs

GERMANTOWN COMMONS COHOUSING
Nashville, TN | 2013 | Caddis PC / Parkside Builders
Common House Elements
- 5,000 SF
- Commercial Kitchen
- Dining Area
- 2 Guest Rooms
- Bike Storage
- Library & Lounge
- Exercise & Yoga Space

Unique Features
- 55+ Community
- Residents are the owners and run the community themselves
- Aging-in-place design allows people to stay in their homes longer than if they were isolated
- The site is one of the most walkable, transit-accessible locations in Portland
DAYBREAK COHOUSING
Portland, OR | October 2009 | Schemata Workshop / Daybreak Cohousing

Common House Elements
- 7,200 SF
- Commercial Kitchen
- Dining Area
- 2 Guest Rooms
- 1 Guest Bathroom
- Living & Family Rooms
- Kid’s Play Room

Unique Features
- The community was designed with external walkways that connect all the buildings to further encourage the neighborly flow of traffic that interior hallways would inhibit
- Elevator located at the Common House services each level

Project Overview
2/3 Acre Site
2, 3, & 4 Stories
30 Residential Units
1, 2, & 3 Bedrooms
700 - 1,100 SF Each
$5.5M Development Costs
QUAYSIDE VILLAGE COHOUSING
North Vancouver, BC | Summer 1998 | The Courtyard Group / Artian Construction

Project Overview
1/10 Acre Site
17,600 SF Area
5 Stories
19 Residential Units
1 Commercial Space
Studio, 1, 2, & 3 Bedrooms
450 - 1,400 SF Each
$5.6M Development Costs

Common House Elements
• 2,500 SF
• Community Room
• Laundry Room
• Guest Bed & Bath
• Storage
• Trash & Recycling

Unique Features
• North America’s first pilot project for multi-family grey water system that saves and reuses 30% of the water from sinks, laundry and shower to use for toilets
• “Dump and Dumpster” program results in a 90% recycling rate, and only two 20 gallon cans of trash per week

Children’s Playroom
Craft Room
Meditation Room
Roof Deck with Garden
Community Gardens
Common House Elements

- 9,000 SF
- Kitchen
- Dining Area
- 2 Guest Suites
- 2 Visitor Bathrooms
- Living Room
- Media Room
- Project Room

Unique Features

- Wide hallways serve as gathering spaces, libraries, and art displays
- Underground Garage for 25 Cars with Bike Storage
- Located adjacent to Central Park in the heart of Durham, North Carolina

Project Overview

1/2 Acre Site
65,000 SF Area
5 Stories
24 Residential Units
1, 2 & 3 Bedrooms
850 - 1,700 SF Each
$9.3M Development Costs
EASTERN VILLAGE COHOUSING
Silver Spring, MD | January 2005 | EDG Architects / Ecohousing and Poretsky Builders

Project Overview
1 Acre Site
93,000 SF Area
4 Stories
56 Residential Units
1, 2, & 3 Bedrooms
650 - 2,000 SF Each
$12M Development Costs

Unique Features
- LEED Silver Certified
- The EVC building is an adaptive reuse of an abandoned office building originally constructed in the 1950s
- EVC incorporates groundsource heating and cooling, low-emitting finishes, rapidly-renewable materials, and a vegetable roof
- The courtyard used to be a parking lot, but is now a green space with benches and play area

Common House Elements
- 14,000 SF Total
- Kitchen
- Dining Area
- Living Room
- Exercise Room
- Meditation Room
- Workshop
- Rooftop Gardens
- Kid’s Play Areas
Common House Elements
- Amenities on Level 2
- Kitchen
- Dining Area
- Patio
- Community Room
- Laundry Room
- Guest Bed & Bath
- Storage
- Trash & Recycling
- Roof Deck with Garden

Unique Features
- Working, year-round Rooftop Farm provides produce for residents and a nearby restaurant called “Lark”
- Rooftop farm designed by Seattle Urban Farm Company, as well as interns from local community colleges
- Ownership structure set up as long-term rental model starting at market rates and moving to rent control within a few years

Project Overview
1/10 Acre Site
17,600 SF Area
5 Stories
9 Residential Units
1 Commercial Space
2 & 3 Bedrooms
850 - 1,300 SF Each
$5.6M Development Costs
Common House Elements

- 6,881 SF
- Dining Room
- Kitchen
- Guest Rooms
- Office
- Meditation & Exercise Room
- Craft Room
- Library/Theatre

Unique Features

- Architectural design facilitates aging in place and personal well-being
- Passive solar access to all units
- Every community member is on one or two teams managing specific aspects of the community
- Community is structured as an HOA
- All community decisions made by consensus

Project Overview

34,936 SF Area
16 Residential Units
6 Affordable Units
860 - 2,891 SF Each
$3.9M Development Costs