Living in My Thesis
Cohousing in Davis California

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INTRODUCTION

The term Cohousing was developed by two American architects, Kathryn McCamant and Charles Durrett who studied intentional communities in Denmark. Several of these "living communities," as translated from the Danish word "bofoellesskaber," have been sustaining themselves for over twenty years. In fact, in Denmark they have become housing models that the government is subsidizing and promoting for people from all walks of life. It is these "living communities," or cohousing communities, that inspired McCamant and Durrett to write their book, *Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves*. Published in 1988, this book has already had an impact on the way many Americans are choosing to plan their living situations.

In a general sense, cohousing is an attempt to utilize the social, economical, and practical benefits of cooperative living while at the same time allowing for individual needs and privacy. In cohousing, families* reside in their own private apartments or houses. These units make up a cohousing neighborhood of anywhere from 6-80 dwellings. Unlike traditional urban or suburban neighborhoods where anonymity is the rule, cohousing not only allows for, but strongly encourages, social interaction, interdependence, and cooperation among all community inhabitants.

Cohousing first became an alternative housing model beginning in the early 1970's. By the end of the 1980's Denmark was home to over 120 cohousing communities (McCamant & Durrett 1988: 10). Emerging from a growing awareness that traditional housing types were not meeting the needs of their occupants, the cohousing concept spawned a new generation of thinking. Communities were being designed and built by their future inhabitants. One of the main components of cohousing is that

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* The use of the word family is in no way limited to the traditional nuclear family. Over the past several decades, demographics of American families have undergone considerable change. Single parents are increasing in number; unmarried couples are living together; and unrelated people are choosing to live together for economic and social reasons. For the purposes of this paper, I will use the word family in a broad sense, to mean any housekeeping unit.
individuals are active participants in the design process. Other key features include a common house with shared kitchen facilities, evening meals in a dining hall, shared laundry facilities, children's play rooms, and workshops.

Centrally located, the common house is generally owned by all members of the community. Its facilities are accessible to all residents. It serves as a formal and informal meeting area, houses the cooking and eating facility, is home for many of the commonly owned items and pieces of equipment, and provides an extension of the private homes. The common house also provides a forum in which social interactions can easily occur. Mailboxes are frequently located here so residents have many opportunities to come in contact with friends and neighbors during the course of a typical day.

The concept of cohousing began in Denmark in 1964 when architect Jan Gudmand-Hoyer organized a meeting among his friends to discuss housing alternatives. (McCaman & Durrett 1988: 133) He and his friends were interested in developing a housing scenario that provided a more supportive living environment. Within that first year, this group had mapped out the template for their planned community and was ready to begin the process of developing a site. Unfortunately, due to setbacks, including public opposition, their initial plans did not get off the ground. In 1968, Gudmand-Hoyer and others who had become interested in cohousing joined forces to realize their dream. By 1973, the first two cohousing communities were completed: Saetedammen community in Hillerod housed 27 families and Skrapplanet, located in Jonstrup Denmark was home to 33 families.

By word of mouth, through literature available on the topic, and occasionally even spontaneously, cohousing communities began to form throughout Denmark. Like the theory of the hundredth monkey, the cohousing idea became popular as if by magic. During the 1970’s cohousing communities sprouted up across the Danish countryside. "Cohousing was an idea whose time had come" (Ibid: 138)...at least in Europe.

During the 1960s, Americans had taken a different tack. While the Danes were forming collectives in towns and cities, American attempts to rethink life-style improvements and community-building began with the "rural back-to-the-land commune." (Fromm 1991: 19) It was not until 1988 that the cohousing movement made
it to this side of the Atlantic, after McCamant and Durrett studied the Danish phenomena and printed their book. Within months of publication, the cohousing idea had taken root in the United States.

McCamant and Durrett's book outlines the inorganic aspects of cohousing as they came to know it in Denmark. It primarily deals with the physical and structural designs of Danish cohousing and delineates the typical components of cohousing communities. If we are to successfully plan and design sustainable human communities, we must take into account both the structural and human aspects of housing. They are inextricably linked. As Winston Churchill said, "We shape our buildings, thereafter, they shape us." Understanding the inorganic is an important first step. But it is not the only step. Just like you can't tell a book by its cover, you cannot understand cohousing simply by analyzing floor plans or studying the four components of this housing model.

This paper will concentrate on the organic aspects of cohousing - the human interactions that occur in such living arrangements, the process whereby decisions emerge and are carried out, and the developmental stages of two, very different, cohousing communities.

Muir Commons and N Street Cohousing are both located in Davis, California. The former is often cited as being the first cohousing community in the United States. Over a three-year period, its residents designed and planned everything from floor plans to the location of play areas and gardens, from meal rotations to the decision-making process. With consulting advice from McCamant and Durrett, Muir Commons exemplifies the prototype cohousing community.

Unlike Muir Commons, N Street Cohousing did not start from scratch. Located in an existing neighborhood, its physical growth has been less planned, as residents have gradually added houses and people as circumstances allowed. Residents of N Street Cohousing had adopted the term cohousing to define their lifestyle long before Muir Commons was completed. Because N Street Cohousing does not follow the ground-up model suggested in McCamant and Durrett's book, N Street has not shared the visibility or attention of its counterpart, Muir Commons. In fact, the media have all but ignored the cohousing approach that has taken place at N Street Cohousing.
It is no wonder that cohousing took off so fast in Davis. The University of California is the primary focus of the town. This institution serves over 23,000 students and employs a significant number of the town's 50,000 residents. There is little industry in Davis. Most people either are affiliated with the University or make their livelihood in Sacramento, the state capital located 11 miles to the east. It is a comfortable commute by car, bus, or even bicycle.

The second most educated population in the United States, Davis is considered to be a progressive city. Ballot initiatives are popular and in 1990 the city council voted to be the first Pro-Choice City in the country. Since the early seventies, energy conservation measures have been priorities. There are more bicycles in Davis than there are people and over 40 miles of bike lanes guide cyclists to work, school, shopping, and play. City shading ordinances dictate that trees adorn the streets, avenues, and parking lots, not so much for aesthetics, but to cool the ground from the 100 degree temperatures that engulf the central valley throughout the summer days. In addition, Davis was one of the first cities to have a curbside recycling program. For over a decade, trucks have picked up both garbage and separated recyclables from every house in Davis on a weekly basis.

Innovative housing alternatives are already established in Davis. Perhaps the most widely known example is Village Homes. Designed by Judy and Mike Corbett in the mid 1970's, this development consists of 40 apartments and 220 single family homes, more than half of which utilize solar energy. Planned with people, not automobiles in mind, Village Homes applies pedestrian-friendly, European-style designs in a 70 acre subdivision. The houses are situated on lots such that common space is emphasized and a sense of community is enhanced. The common areas are maintained by residents in the eight houses surrounding any given green space. Work parties as well as strolls and bike rides through the development encourage neighbors to get to know one another. This sense of familiarity is a key component of community and one which the designers of Village Homes had in mind throughout the planning process. (Corbett, 1981)

Housing cooperatives, limited equity co-ops, and shared living arrangements are not uncommon in this university town. A nonprofit, affordable housing construction association is also active in meeting housing needs for those unable to keep up with
skyrocketing market prices. But housing is not the only area in which Davis has taken the lead. Davis boasts a restaurant cooperative, an artists cooperative, as well as a food co-op, all of which successfully compete with their mainstream counterparts.

Alternative consumer and housing options have thrived among Davis' progressive population. A significant number of residents adhere to the adage, "Think Globally, Act Locally." Many people are not content with how things have "always been done" and are actively pursuing ways to enhance their lives and the lives of others sharing the planet. A local newspaper columnist cynically refers to Davis as the town of "all things right and relevant." He misses the significance of the fact that the status quo must be challenged and improved from time to time. The time is ripe for creating more livable communities. Davis has been on the cutting edge of innovations for decades. It should then be no surprise that American cohousing got its start here.

As the first two cohousing communities in the United States, Muir Commons and N Street Cohousing seemed ideal to study. Although growing out of a similar need for establishing a sense of community, the approaches taken by the two communities differ. How they are structured varies greatly. At the same time, they both embrace characteristics representative of cohousing, specifically, those contributing to a sense of community. For these reasons, research that would compare and contrast Muir Commons and N Street Cohousing was an obvious outgrowth of my interest in the cohousing phenomenon.

McCamant and Durrett identified four characteristics that embody cohousing. They are as follows:

**Participatory Process:** Residents organize and participate in the planning and design process for the housing development, and are responsible as a group for all final decisions.

**Intentional Neighborhood Design:** The physical design encourages a strong sense of community.

**Extensive Common Facilities:** An integral part of the community, common areas are designed for daily use, to supplement private living areas.

**Complete Resident Management:** Residents manage the development, making decisions of common concern at community meetings. (McCamant & Durrett 1988: 36)
Each of these characteristics requires a high degree of cooperation among residents as well as a willingness to continually work at building community. The process is ongoing. The two case studies will show how the Davis cohousing communities have successfully adapted McCamant and Durrett's principles. The studies will also illuminate some of the challenges confronting residents and provide examples of solutions attempted, both successful and not.

When McCamant and Durrett coined the word cohousing, all of their research on cohousing came from Denmark where this type of housing design originated. However, the social circumstances which spawned the cohousing communities are not unique to Europe. In fact, most housing in the United States is altogether alienating. The automobile has changed the face of America. "Because we are a society of mobile individuals with only weak community ties, we design our new neighborhoods with more concern for mobility than for community life..." (Corbett 1981: 18) The front porch with its accompanying swing and rocking chairs has been replaced by the driveway and garage. People no longer sit on their front porches watching their neighbors come and go; people enter their homes after walking only a few meters from their car, unnoticed by even their closest neighbors. It is no wonder that most Americans don't know their neighbors. The idea of community and neighborhood is difficult to re-create where the houses are not designed to be user-friendly.

Many Americans grew up in old neighborhoods where a sense of community was evident. Often, in the bigger cities, ethnic pockets allowed for cultural and social exchanges on a daily basis. Other neighborhoods were "melting pots" where first and second generation children of immigrants schooled and played together, while their parents assimilated by frequenting the Greek deli, the Irish pub, and the barber shop owned and operated by the Italian family who lived a few blocks over. These days, smaller family-owned businesses have given way to larger chain stores. That old neighborhood sense of community is difficult to maintain by bigger, less personal enterprises. It takes personal interaction, and the commitment embodied in what Aldo Leopold refers to as a sense of stewardship, before community can be achieved. Residents of old neighborhoods had this, and more and more people are realizing that suburbia and modern housing designs don't allow this. "One significant factor missing in today's society is the sense of "community" and neighborly help that once characterized
small towns. The type of dwellings our present land use systems create... do not promote supportive neighborhoods: for people of all stages of life." (Caldara 1989: 4)

The word community is widely used throughout this paper. It is at the very core of cohousing itself. It is a sense of community that attracts people to this alternative housing arrangement; it is the impetus behind the cohousing movement. And yet, it is this seemingly simple word, community, that is nearly impossible to define. It is not necessarily a number of individuals having similar values, nor is it limited to a group of people sharing similar boundaries and institutions.** "When [people] talk of community, we find that no one is quite sure what it is, though everyone agrees we have lost it and need to get it back." (Leinberger & Tucker 1992: 86) Proponents of cohousing agree and believe they have discovered one way to get it back.

Over the past century, scores of intentional cooperative communities have been attempted in order to make up for societal deficiencies. Dissolution of the extended family, loss of an interdependence on neighbors, and a lack of concern for the "other" all contribute to the growing alienation epitomizing modern society. There are plenty of examples of communes, cooperatives, and shared living situations (most of which have not been able to sustain themselves) which were responses to this alienation. The main drawback of traditional planned cooperative living situations is that most models do not adequately allow for individual needs to be met. This affront to American individualism has contributed to their lack of sustainability.

None of the features of cohousing are necessarily new. In fact, the "first successful contemporary model of housing combined with communal open space was designed by Clarence Stein and Henry Wright in Radburn, New Jersey, in the 1920s." (Cooper Marcus and Sarkissian 1986: 107) Cohousing has borrowed from centuries of past experiments, gleaning the good and discarding the bad. In essence, cohousing is a synthesis of many ideas about cooperative living that have been circulating for years. The end result consists of a living situation that utilizes some aspects of communal living while at the same time attends to the needs of the individual.

** I will refrain from defining community here, but alert the reader to a larger discussion on the topic later in the paper.
Cohousing residents would argue that they have achieved a balance between the individual and communal domain. With each family housed in a private residence, privacy needs of an individual or family can be adequately met. Private residences are not common space. They are typically privately owned and maintained. Common areas are outside of the private residences. The common house typically houses most of rooms held in common and functions as a central activity place. It may also serve as an extension of the private home, providing a facility for evening meals, children's activities, meetings, etc.

Cohousing residents participate in community activities at varying levels. Frequently there are minimal requirements that individuals must meet; however, there is also flexibility with regard to the degree of participation on the part of the individual. Residents generally may choose which group or cooperative activities in which to partake. It is this individual autonomy, coupled with the existence of a private domain, that distinguishes cohousing from less successful models of the past.

Sir Thomas More's famous book entitled *Utopia* was published in 1516. He described an imaginary society which he called Utopia where shared meals, child care, and common facilities were all depicted. In her book, *The American Garden City and the New Towns Movement*, Carol A. Christensen suggests that in the centuries following More's work, the word Utopia has been unfairly misinterpreted. She goes on to write:

Translated from the Greek, "utopia" meant "no place" - but it also meant "good place." (Sir Thomas deliberately punned with the prefix.) It is this former association of "no place" that has endured, defining utopia as foolish, childish, and unattainable. Yet utopia's real contribution is as "good place," for utopia is concerned with improvement, not with perfection. In its long history as a literary form, the utopian tradition has been secular, concerned with creating the good life on earth and in the here-and-now. Utopia is very much related to the present reality against which the utopist is writing. Each utopia is an implicit criticism of the civilization that serves as its background, as Lewis Mumford has said. Each is an attempt to uncover potentialities that existing institutions have either ignored or buried under an ancient crust of custom and habit. (Christensen 1986: 3-4)

Succeeding generations of utopists have attempted to redefine societal values and institutions. "True utopianism is not escapist. It is constructive. Taken as a whole,

*** Initial cohousing communities were comprised exclusively of residents who owned their homes. Later examples include nonprofit-owned rentals, government subsidized housing projects, and rental homes.
the literature of utopianism enriches the sense of human possibility" (Ibid). Large-scale visions such as B.F. Skinner's Walden Two or Earnest Calenbach's Ecotopia are examples of attempts to create whole new societies. In both examples, all needs of the residents were expected to be fulfilled within the context of the particular utopian vision. We generally refer to holistic living situations such as these as communes. They are attractive because they offer the individual an entirely new lifestyle, beyond the boundaries of contemporary society.

Other utopias recreate only certain aspects of society. These serve to improve upon particular flaws such as housing, education, health, etc., while coexisting in the greater society. Housing and food cooperatives are examples of modern utopian visions. Cooperatives are founded by people who believe that pooling resources and needs makes sound economic sense. Some food cooperatives started out as small-scale buying clubs where people bought healthy food in bulk quantities. Often these products weren't available at local stores. As the demand for such products increased, clubs were able to evolve into full-scale food co-ops. These co-ops, in turn, continue to serve the growing needs of the communities in which they emerged. By participating in these alternative models, individuals are able to experience glimpses of an idealistic society.

Throughout the ages, utopists have been ridiculed for their idealism and for their tendency to criticize the greater society. Christensen provides a reasonable argument in defense of utopists:

Contrary to popular belief, the utopist does not view social problems in personal or moral terms. Social improvement is sought through changing the social structure from without, not through changing the individual from within. The utopian tradition is an environmental one: it holds the manipulation of institutions to be possible and worthwhile and believes the good person to be a reflection of a healthy environment. The utopian tradition rests firmly on the rationalistic assumption that reason alone is sufficient to change society from what it is to what it should be. (Christensen 1986: 4)

Cohousing is a perfect example of restructuring an institution through environmental manipulation. By redefining housing, rather than the individual, cohousing provides an avenue for neighborhood and community to thrive. In essence, it is a rational solution to the growing alienation that has become the norm in typical
suburbs throughout the developed world. It is utopic in nature, but is so appealing and holistic that it has the potential to transcend the utopic's grip and proliferate as a sustainable housing model in the greater society.

Other than McCamant and Durrett's book on cohousing, only one other book specifically studying cohousing has been published. Dorit Fromm studied contemporary collaborative communities throughout the world. Her research was printed in 1991 in her book, Collaborative Communities, in which cohousing is only one of many collaborative living arrangement discussed.

The word cohousing, itself, was only introduced to the United States within the last five years. Therefore, there has been very little written about it to date. What have been published are primarily feature stories in newspapers, magazines, and journals. I have referenced some of these articles in the paper in order to further substantiate some of my findings; however, by no means can these articles be considered in-depth studies of cohousing. They have primarily served the purpose of exposing the general public to this housing phenomenon, which, in turn, has reduced the burden on cohousing pioneers by legitimizing their lifestyle as a new housing alternative.

When I began my thesis research, the first, and to my knowledge only book in English on cohousing was the McCamant and Durrett book, Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves. It deals exclusively with models in Europe, where cohousing has been evolving for over twenty years. It was this book that spurred the imaginations of the founders of N Street Cohousing, Muir Commons, as well as nearly one hundred other Cohousing communities currently being planned throughout the United States.

I will use this book as the theoretical basis of what cohousing is and what it can offer society. Although begun as a solution to more community-oriented housing, cohousing's impact is far-reaching. I believe that cohousing provides solutions to many of society's problems. It attempts to construct a home environment that encourages diversity and human potential. Cohousing may well provide the foundation for social change on a large scale. As Margaret Mead, renowned American anthropologist, so
aptly stated, "Never underestimate the power of small groups to change the world; indeed, nothing else really has."

This thesis will compare N Street Cohousing, the community in which I live, with Muir Commons, a prototype cohousing community. It will attempt to encapsulate what cohousing is and how it works. My research will analyze these two cohousing examples, both in Davis, California, for the purpose of contributing to the dearth of literature on cohousing in order to popularize its advantages and advance social change towards such innovative housing models. The comparison will explore their evolutions, physical layouts, ownership structures, demographics, and participation requirements. By studying two very different models, I will show that cohousing is not a rigid model, but one that can be molded to fit the needs of people in search of community.
PROCEDURES AND METHODOLOGY

The research methodology used included a literature review of cohousing and community-building, surveys, interviews, and participant observation. Since the term cohousing was coined as recently as 1988, current literature on the subject consists primarily of McCamant and Durrett's book, newsletters, and newspaper and journal articles. Books on community and alternative living arrangements as well as unpublished papers of friends and acquaintances provided additional background information.

I had originally intended to conduct a survey only of Muir Commons residents. As I did not have ongoing access to this group, a questionnaire, coupled with several interviews, would provide enough information to adequately analyze their process and inner-workings. Most of the information for studying N Street Cohousing would be gathered through participant observation. Upon further analysis, I decided to survey both communities so that there would be an objective foundation upon which to structure an analysis. A questionnaire would allow equal access to both communities and provide an opportunity to compare and contrast information objectively, in an anonymous manner.

Two questionnaires were developed - one for N Street and one for Muir Commons. The majority of questions were identical on both surveys, but some questions had to be modified given the different audiences. Muir Commons was surveyed in February 1991. Questionnaires were handed out to 50 Muir Commons members at a regular monthly meeting. This number included members, as well as those still on the waiting list. I requested a three minute time slot on the agenda to introduce myself, pass out the surveys, and answer any questions. The surveys took 15-30 minutes to complete and respondents were given two weeks in which to mail them back to me. Thirty-eight questionnaires were returned in self-addressed, stamped envelopes that I had provided. A 76% response rate was achieved.
Although construction at Muir Commons had not been completed at the time of the survey, and no one was yet residing there, I felt that this group of people was a legitimate community. They had been working and dreaming together for two years, meeting 1-4 times each month for hours at a time. Members had come and gone but there remained a steady base that had formed a cohousing community. Although they weren't necessarily "living together" yet, they were living cohousing at their meetings, work parties, and social gatherings. There was never any question in my mind that they were a cohousing community, and therefore worthy of study.

N Street was surveyed in October, 1991. The format of the N Street questionnaire was streamlined for faster tabulation, but otherwise most questions were identical to those asked of Muir Commons. At the time the questionnaire was distributed, 30 adults resided at N Street Cohousing. I chose not to complete a questionnaire myself. Therefore, with 22 out of the 29 possible returned, N Street also had a 76% response rate.

In order to fill in the gaps that the questionnaire would leave unanswered, formal and informal interviews were conducted with residents of both communities. Adapting techniques learned as an undergraduate student of sociology, the participant observation method of research was employed, primarily when researching N Street Cohousing. As a community member, I had access to any and all community functions and activities and had the opportunity to interact with community members on a daily basis.
RESULTS & DISCUSSION

MUIR COMMONS

Evolution

In 1988, the McCamant and Durrett book on cohousing was published. In December of 1988, Linda Cloud, one of the founders of N Street Cohousing, organized the first cohousing slide show presentation in Davis. She became interested in modeling N Street as a cohousing community. Follow-up meetings to the slide show were well attended by a few dozen people interested in starting cohousing in Davis. After several meetings, it became obvious that most of those in attendance were not interested in working with the existing N Street structures, but instead wanted to build from scratch. This group worked together for the next two and a half years to design and construct Muir Commons, the first cohousing community in the United States to be built from the ground up.

This initial group of cohousing advocates got an early boost when Virginia Thigpen, a local designer, offered to provide a site for this project in Aspen, a planned development under way in West Davis. Her firm, Ridge Builders Group, Inc., a partner in West Davis Associates, was in the process of developing the Aspen community. Interestingly, Thigpen had become interested in cohousing independently, when some Danish friends introduced her to the concept. She and her colleagues agreed to work with the group because they were interested in having the cohousing units provide the city-mandated affordable housing component of the Aspen development. The group of cohousers decided to work with the developer because they saw it as an opportunity for more affordable units, as well as a means to speed up the design and construction process.

It is not uncommon for cohousing groups to work without assistance from developers. There is no guaranteed prescription on how to do cohousing correctly. Pluses and minuses can be found on any path taken. Davis' slow growth policy and
affordable housing constraints drew the developers and cohousers together. From nearly the inception of Muir Commons, these two groups were wedded and although the outcome has been a success, the marriage was not without conflict.

The developers were forced to deal with the group's consensus-based, decision-making process. Used to making their own decisions, this was an unusual role for the developers to play. Muir Commons members wanted to participate fully in the decision-making process and design their own site. This process took almost 3 years, with members working with the developers and spending hundreds of hours in meetings, determining everything from floor plans to bylaws and membership agreements. Sometimes this time consuming process frustrated the developers and sometimes the group had to make hasty decisions so as not to hold up the project. There was give and take on both sides.

The group's composition changed over the two year period, but 12 households remained from inception to fruition. Reasons for leaving ranged from financial constraints to having interpersonal differences with others in the group. One couple left because they felt that the process was too bureaucratic and rigid. Whatever the complaints, enough people were satisfied with the process and eager to work to see the project through to completion. An active waiting list was tapped into when positions became available.

Early on, only a commitment to attend meetings was required to maintain membership status. Later, financial contributions of $30 per household per month were necessary to hire Kathryn McCamant and Charles Durrett to provide guidance on group process and design. Their firm, the CoHousing Company, provides consulting services to cohousing groups. The monthly fees covered these types of expenses which assisted the group in getting better organized and moving forward as a team. Three months before the closing of escrow, the first investment was required. This $1,000 was a refundable deposit to reserve a place. One month before moving in, everyone had to increase their deposit to total 3% of the sales cost of their house.

Commitments, other than financial, took the form of meetings and work parties. Meetings consisted of semimonthly general meetings as well as committee meetings and
work projects. During the early phases, it was not uncommon for individuals to spend several evenings a week in meetings. Currently, someone from each household is required to attend at least one of the two general meetings a month and actively participate on one committee. General meetings last 2 hours each and committee meetings can range from one to several hours a week or every-other week, depending on the committee. Committees include: Children's, Communications, Coordinating, Garden, Landscape, Meals, Community Spirit, Architectural Review (ARC), Finance, Design/Building, and Common House.

In order to gain active voting membership during the design and construction period, a household had to do the following, as outlined in the Muir Commons Membership Agreement:

A) Sign the group's statement of intent.

B) Pay membership dues and any other fees agreed to by the group, as specified in the procedures governing membership and dues fees.

C) Attend 3 meetings per month, of which at least one must be a general meeting. The other two meeting requirements may be met by attending a general meeting, working groups or performing working group tasks.

D) Accept and assent to decisions already reached by the group.

Letter D is crucial to the health and well being of the group. However welcome new blood is, there comes a point where the group cannot afford to revisit past decisions because a newcomer disagrees. "New members add different perspectives and bring new skills to the group, but they can also be disruptive. They question decisions already made, make new requests, and can slow down meetings by asking questions on basic issues." (Fromm 1981: 170) It is incumbent upon cohousers to orient new members and bring them up to speed about past decisions, protocol and the group culture. This is not to say that the group should be close-minded about new ideas. They should welcome newcomers and new ideas; but at the same time, the group must continue to move forward, not backwards.

The Muir Commons group has had a tendency to be task-oriented. This has served them well in accomplishing objectives on time; however it has had some consequences. In two different open-ended survey questions dealing with how to
improve upon their system, the most frequently suggested response by Muir Commons residents was to emphasize community-building simultaneously with pragmatic aspects. Over 37% of the write-in responses supported this idea. No other single response received such resounding support. The Community Spirit committee was born out of the desire by some to integrate more personal/relationship-building components of community into the general meetings which deal exclusively with the business aspects of cohousing. This integration has been difficult, at best, and the group is still struggling with appropriate venues for addressing interpersonal communication skill-building.

The residents of Muir Commons contributed thousands of person-hours to carefully designing and planning every possible component of their cohousing community, including conflict resolution techniques. Without having the benefit of actually residing in a cohousing community during the two year period, they trusted the process and believed in the concept. This faith and determination is commendable given that at the beginning there were no guarantees, and no one knew for sure if all the long hours and hard work would be worth it. Six months have elapsed since move in day, but it is clear that most feel satisfied with the results. The sweat and tears of the past are already paying off.

Physical Layout

Muir Commons consists of 26 units on a 2.91 acre site. The dwellings are attached row houses arranged in a linear configuration where two rows of houses face each other across a common space of walk-ways and patios. Two to four homes comprise each set of clustered houses. The 3,668 square foot common house is placed between ten units situated to the west and 16 on the eastern end.

Located in the center of the site, the common house is an integral part of the community. Within its walls are a kitchen and dining room designed to feed 30-50 people, five times a week; a lounge; a meeting/meditation room; a guest bedroom; bathrooms; laundry facilities; a children's room; a teen room and a craft room. The common house accommodates needs that either cannot be met in the individual residences, or that are more enjoyable or efficient when shared with others. Meals, for example, are time-consuming to prepare night after night for one's own family. When
food preparation is rotated, individual burdens are decreased and opportunities for social interaction are increased. Dining is perhaps the most visible and immediately gratifying feature of the common house.

Several sets of French doors open from the dining area onto the large patio which is the main entrance to the common house. Paths lead here from all the homes as well as the main parking lot which is located near the street. Automobiles are restricted to the periphery of the site. Only foot and bike paths access individual homes; however, back entrances to some of the homes are situated 40 feet from residential streets bordering the development.
One resident elaborated on several important features of Muir Commons and cohousing in general:

The common house, although integral, is not necessarily the key ingredient to Cohousing. To me, the layout of the entire site: creating diverse, interesting spaces, a sense of richness through landscaping, a sense of enclosure/security without feeling impenetrable, keeping the cars to the perimeter, making the entire space conducive to interaction, are all just as important as the fact that we have a central place to be together. The issues around those other factors: personal boundaries, socialability/privacy, whether it feels safe or easy to wander out into shared space areas; are really crucial to us as Americans because most of us, myself included, are used to coming home and having that feel like closing the gates of the fort. A sense of security (relative) and domain, but also one of isolation.

This quote quite nicely sums up the gist of cohousing and also alludes to reasons why it is so appealing.

Muir Common's houses are small and include ten 808 square foot, 2 bedroom/1 bath designs; thirteen 1,124 square foot, 3 bedroom/1 bath designs; and three 1,381 square foot, 3 bedroom/2 bath models. Sixteen of the 26 units are two story. Typical of the architecture in the area, all were built at ground level with no steps leading to the houses. All units, including the common house, are wheel chair accessible. Living rooms look out onto small private yards while kitchens face the common areas. This type of design is indicative of the cohousing model. Kitchens lend themselves quite well to being the transitional space between the private and the social. They are often the most well-used room in any house and are not usually considered private areas. Intimate moments more often occur in other rooms of the house. For the sake of privacy, it then seems logical that an extension of the community should enter private domains via the kitchen, and vice versa. Large windows and glass front doors contribute to this flow.

Muir Commons was designed to achieve an optimal level of social interaction and at the same time maintain a sense of individual privacy. It is difficult to transcend desires for more individual space. Most Americans dream of owning their own home, which includes yard space. Most cohousing sites sacrifice some individual space for common or shared space. The trade-off is normally more than satisfactory. Many hands make light work and what can be seen in this community is concentrated efforts on several impressive undertakings. Muir Commons boasts a 6-7,000 square foot orchard with 45 fruit trees including 20 varieties of peaches and nectarines, 4 pear, 4 cherry, 4 apricot,
and 4 plum. In addition, there’s an assorted variety of grape vines. A large vegetable
garden and children’s play area is also shared in common. Individual space becomes less
of an issue when there are other places in which to work, garden, hang out, and play.

Ownership Structure

The 26 single family dwellings in Muir Commons follow the condominium model
of ownership, in which separate units are owned by individuals, but common areas are
owned jointly. As part of the price of the individual units, each household owns 1/26 of
the common house. The entire development is estimated to have cost 3 million dollars.
House prices are as follows:

- 2 bedroom, 1 bath - 808 square feet - $96,000
- 3 bedroom, 1 bath - 1,124 square feet - $110,000
- 3 bedroom, 2 bath - 1,381 Square feet - $152,000

As mentioned above, the developers courted the cohousing group because they
wanted to have the Muir Commons site fulfill the first tier of their affordable
requirements for the Aspen development. This allowed them to build larger, more
expensive homes in the rest of Aspen. Affordable housing guidelines are necessary,
especially in a city like Davis, where rent and home prices have sky-rocketed in the last
decade. The developer had intended 23 homes to be affordable. To qualify for the
affordable units, members had to have incomes that were no more than 130% higher
than the Yolo County median income. But adherence to the affordable quotas placed
on Muir Commons created some complications for the group. Many of those who had
participated in the two year design process qualified for affordable units initially, but by
the time construction was completed and it was time to sign the loan papers, many
households found themselves in the uncomfortable position of having current incomes
that no longer met the affordable requirements. In the end, the developer decided not to
break up the group and designated several other sites in the Aspen development as
affordable. Sixteen, instead of the original 23, ended up meeting the affordable
guidelines.
All homes were intended to be, and currently are, owner occupied. However, the future holds alternative possibilities. There are no constraints about selling or renting homes, although the group is working on developing a waiting list of people interested in buying in when units are available. It will probably be a few years before this group has to tackle the resale issue head on.

N STREET COHOUSING

Evolution

716 N Street has been a cooperative house since 1979 - where residents share meals, work together in the garden, practice good communication skills, and coexist in a healthy, nurturing environment. For nearly 15 years, this house has been called by its numbered street address. Like others in the neighborhood, this 1955 tract home reflects typical California development: flat roofed, one story, stucco design; floor plans identical to others in the neighborhood; and driveways leading right to the front doors as if to discourage interaction with neighbors. The lots are between 55-60 feet wide and are 120 feet deep. The backyards are enclosed with wooden fences 6 feet in height that block any view of neighbors.

716 differs structurally from other houses on the block in that an extension and second story were added during the 1960's. The two-room addition makes this house significantly bigger than the adjacent homes. This 5-bedroom, 3-bath home has normally accommodated 5 residents at a time. In 1984, Kevin Wolf, one of the occupants of the cooperative, purchased the house. He and his housemates began creating a permaculture garden in the backyard. At the same time, they dreamed of taking over the neighbor's land and making the two yards into a permacultural community which would integrate plants, animals, and humans in an ecologically sound manner.

In 1986, Kevin and his friend and colleague, Linda Cloud purchased the adjacent house. The fences between the two houses were torn down - the first of many fence tearing down parties to come. In this subdivision there are no alleys; therefore, by removing the fences, 40 by 60 foot backyards can be connected, one to the next, to
allow for expansive gardens, walkways, play areas, etc. In the fall of 1987, Kevin and Linda married and moved into the house Linda bought, 724 N Street. Through their efforts, friends purchased adjacent homes. The next fence to come down was between 724 and the house directly behind, 743 Lessley Place. Lessley Place is the cul-de-sac directly east of N Street, which bounds the other side of the community.

Once two fences were down connecting three houses, it was easy for visitors and friends to latch onto the dream of more open space and more shared resources, both personal and physical. What was beginning to become obvious was that by connecting houses, families, and yards, people's lives were becoming less isolated and more fulfilled.

The next house to be added was 1825 Lehigh. Although located one block from the other three, it was secured by Kevin and Linda in the hopes that it could be traded for one closer, or sold in order to purchase an adjacent one should one come up for sale. As of this writing, 1825 has neither been sold nor traded and its current occupants do not participate in the community. Former occupants of 1825 have opted for cohousing: one couple moved to N Street, and one woman and her daughters relocated to Muir Commons.

Meanwhile, others in Davis were coming in contact with the cohousing idea. The McCamant and Durrett slide show presentation which Linda had organized was the catalyst for people to talk about new ways of conceptualizing housing. What she and Kevin had been thinking of for years was very similar to this new housing model. The McCamant and Durrett term, cohousing, gave what they were dreaming of a name.

While most of the people who had attended the slide show went on to design and build Muir Commons, Linda was set on living in cohousing and wanted to continue to develop the existing community in which she and Kevin were living. This was not an easy task. Many of the people currently residing in houses whose backyards were fenceless, were not necessarily interested in the cohousing model. Some had been living on N Street for years and did not want to participate in a community beyond their own house. Others, simply, were not keen on the idea of cohousing. Monthly meetings were held to try to map out plans for the future and to resolve differences of opinions among
the residents of N Street and Lessley Place whose lives had become interconnected by choice or by circumstance.

What ultimately happened was that this group decided to be a cohousing community. The agreed upon name was N Street Cohousing. After many months of agonizing meetings, it was decided that 716 would become the common house as of September 1, 1991. By this date current residents who were not interested in cohousing would have well over one year to find other living accommodations. This was also the long anticipated date for construction to begin on remodeling a suitable kitchen, living room and dining area for the common house.

In the spring of 1989, 732 N Street became part of the community. It was purchased by Kevin, Linda, and other investors by leveraging home equity in their other property. Later that year, 708 N Street was up for sale and Kevin and Linda organized a group of their friends to purchase this house - none of whom could afford to buy their own home on their own, all of whom were interested in investing their savings in home ownership. Thus began the 708 Partnership.

Comprised initially of nine individuals, the 708 Partnership represents a unique ownership scheme. With a very limited background in home ownership, this group of people met for months, struggling with financing options, and breaking ground on an uncharted course. The minimum investor put in $500 and initial investments ranged up to $7,000. With limited resources, this group pooled their money so that this fifth house could be added to the community. This group of people designed an ownership arrangement unlike any that exist. They hope their hard work in designing a Partnership Agreement can benefit other groups and that their document will be a useful model for others considering similar ownership ideas.

The fence tearing down party between 708 and 716 occurred on February 24, 1990. This was a turning point in the community. The purchase of 708 represented the power that can be achieved through cooperation. Most of the owners of 708 had never dreamed of owning a home due to limited finances. By pooling their resources and working together, they achieved an important goal. The 708 acquisition also was the
first house in the community in which community members could invest. As will be addressed later, ownership contributes to a sense of commitment and fairness.

Dozens of people stopped by to help with the work at the fence tearing down party. People are commonly enamored with the idea of cohousing and that day there were people interested in becoming part of the community. Unfortunately, no rooms were available. This was the impetus for these new people to agree to live together in yet another house under a rental agreement with an absentee landlord who agreed to the fence being removed. 700 N Street joined on in this fashion in the spring of 1990. It should be noted that one of the things that has allowed N Street to expand so easily is the inordinate number of houses in the area that are owned by absentee landlords. Were the surrounding homes owner occupied, the community would probably not have grown so fast.

A double fence tearing down party was planned for the 700 N Street fence and the fence between 732 and 740. The latter had been purchased by friends and neighbors of Kevin and Linda. This made for six houses in a row on N Street, while there was still just one house on Lessley Place. Spatially, this made for a very linear outdoor design, but there was little to do but wait until new houses became available.

Within months, two houses on Lessley Place were added. 727 Lessley, located directly behind 708, is another long term rental whereby people interested in living in the community were able to talk the absentee landlord into a long term lease. Part of the terms was that the fence could be removed, provided the boards were saved for potential future reconstruction. 719 Lessley Place joined when the occupants of this rental property looked over their back fence and liked what they saw. They were particularly interested in expanding their garden by taking down the fence between their house and 700.

The final house to become part of N Street Cohousing was 732B. Consisting of 860 square feet on two levels, this is a garage conversion extraordinaire! With one bedroom, a bath, a living room, and a kitchenette, this is the most attractive unit on the block. Not satisfied with 10 houses, the community is currently considering ways to
acquire the houses on Lessley Place that are not part of N Street Cohousing but which are in back of community houses on N Street.

For anyone raised in an urban or suburban area, the idea of tearing down barriers and increasing open space is inviting, yet frightening. As Robert Frost wrote, "good fences make good neighbors." What N Street Cohousing has been able to prove is that good neighbors are not a product of good fences, but rather, a result of a desire for community. By working towards a common goal, community and neighborhood can be designed and achieved.

The founding of N Street Cohousing is not unlike some of the utopia dreams from the past. Two cofounders are responsible for its inception. What is refreshingly unique about N Street, is that its foundation now resides with a majority of the residents. To varying degrees, all residents are responsible for the direction the community is taking. The degree to which one participates is entirely up to the individual. There are few requirements to living in N Street Cohousing. As is true of most things, what you get out of it depends on what you put into it. Active participation by a significant number of residents has allowed the cofounders to let go of the control that was initially needed to get the project started. In fact, they have welcomed a decrease in responsibility, and it has been healthy for the group to take an active role in making things happen.

**Physical Layout**

The homes in N Street Cohousing are set up in a linear arrangement. This is not by design, but rather by circumstance. Six of the houses in the community are situated along N Street. Only 3 are on Lessley Place. Back yard fences have been removed so that views and access are considerably improved from what the developers had designed nearly forty years ago. If the arrangement were more symmetrical, with 6 houses on each side, it would not appear so elongated. Perhaps future acquisitions will ameliorate the perceived narrow configuration. Each time a house has been added to the community, the layout of the N Street Cohousing has changed.

At the time of this writing there are ten contiguous households comprising N Street Cohousing: seven in a row on N Street, and three on Lessley Place. The tenth
was added in January of 1992. Its design is unique because it is a two story addition on an already existing structure. In essence, it is a one bedroom apartment, but it is referred to as a "room addition" since existing zoning laws do not allow for multifamily units on this block. The other 9 houses follow one of two original models: 3 bedroom / 1 bath, or 3 bedroom / 2 bath floor plans. Many have converted the garage into a fourth bedroom.

Unlike Muir Commons, N Street's boundaries have expanded over time. Most residents would like to see the community accommodate up to 12 households. Some disagreement exists as to the optimal number of units desired. Because N Street's common house has finite dimensions (major construction and remodeling notwithstanding), many feel that it is almost at capacity already. McCamant and Durrett suggest that between 6 and 80 units are acceptable for a good cohousing community. With 32 adults and 10 children housed in the 10 units, the population of N Street Cohousing is essentially larger than would be assumed given the number of dwellings. As has been the case throughout N Street's evolution, timing and circumstances, rather than good planning, will determine whether or not the community expands.

A natural border exists on the north end of the site where Lessley Place and N Street are bisected by Lehigh Drive. On N Street, there is only one more house to acquire to the north. To the south, many homes exist on both Lessley and N Street, but the community has informally agreed that houses to the south are not priority acquisitions. The goal is to concentrate on incorporating Lessley houses that are in-between those that are already part of the community. Buying or renting these units would allow for a wider, more uniform site. Until these homes are acquired, the layout will remain less than perfect. But long range goals and dreams are healthy, and N Street residents are satisfied with the current configuration for the time being. When and if contiguous houses become available, the group will take action.

Before N Street had a common house, residents had been eating meals together for several years. Starting out as weekly potlucks, things got more formalized in May 1990 when the first buffet-style meal was team cooked for all who signed up to attend. During the summer months, between 1-4 meals per week were held outside at picnic tables. As winter approached, the garage at 716 was cleared out to make room for a make-shift mess hall. The unfinished walls and bare rafters, however unsightly, were
overlooked amid delicious meals with 20-30 people cozily seated in the 14 by 20 foot room. Everyone knew this was a temporary arrangement; the permanent community dining room would be located in the common house and completed by the following winter.

N Street's common house is located in the center of the community at 716 N Street. Given the random nature of home acquisitions in the community, it is fortuitous that the only house able to function as the common house was centrally located. As the largest house in the community, this house seemed ideal for accommodating common activities. Renovations took place in the autumn of 1991 in order to construct a facility where all residents could eat and meet together regularly. Common facilities housed in the common house include a large kitchen, dining room and living room. The five bedrooms are rented out to defray the costs. As a result, the common house is open to the community from 10 AM to 10 PM Sunday through Thursday, and until 11 PM on Friday and Saturday nights. The residents have the place to themselves all other times and share the facility, as can any community member, during open hours.

Certain restrictions apply to the residents of 716 because it is the common house. 716 is the only house in the community that is managed by the community. People choose to live in 716 knowing full well that their access to the kitchen and other common rooms may be limited at certain times. They also understand that there are frequently dozens of people using the common house. One of the benefits about living in 716 is that the rent is cheaper than most any other house in the community. Resident bedrooms are off-limits to community members; only the kitchen, living room and dining room are considered "common house areas" and are utilized by nonresidents. A copy of the 716 House Contract is in the Appendix. It delineates responsibilities of the residents of 716 as well as the community, with respect to the common house.

Renovating 716 as the common house cost $11,000. Investments by N Street homeowners covered $8,000 of this; $1,000 was invested by one couple who rents; approximately $1,000 was covered by the community fund (a fund which accumulates money through periodic garage sales, a meal surcharge, and community fees); and the remaining $1,000 was a loan by a community member to be paid back over the course of one year through the community fund.
Some of the community funds were spent on furniture and furnishings for the common house. N Street residents chose to purchase three 5 foot tables and one 6 foot table for the dining room. When Chuck Durrett visited the community, he commented on how the tables could "accommodate one or two families." This was an interesting observation since no one on N Street had thought about it this way. The tables weren't meant to hold "families" per se; they were meant to be more conducive to "intimate conversations." In fact, "families" don't always sit together. Most children sit at a special short table which was designed especially for their use. Both the children and parents are pleased with the arrangement.

Given the financial limitations of N Street residents, they produced a facility that meets their needs and they did it within a tight budget and without the aid of professionals. They brainstormed, argued, laughed, and dreamed together. It was especially important that everyone have a sense of "ownership" in the common house. Since few could afford to put money into the house, this "ownership" was achieved through physical and mental labor spent constructing and designing the facility. The pride and satisfaction that resulted from creating the common house is evident. Not only did the community learn to work hard to achieve results, they learned to trust each other. An example of this comes from an interview with one N Street resident who said,

"It often took a mass of 3-5 people, sitting around a kitchen table or eating a community meal together, to casually brainstorm another possibility. I have time and again been reminded that more heads are better than one. I have faith that entrusting decisions to 30 people will have a better, more sustainable result, than making decisions on my own or with just one or two people."

He went on to say,

We are not a wealthy community. We have been forced by our circumstances to plan out our community without outside assistance. I think we have done a damn good job under the circumstances. In fact, I'm not sure we could have done any better with the help of professional architects or planners. In the process, we have become planners ourselves and have become stronger as a community.

Even half a year after the common house's inauguration, it is still a source of inspiration and joy.
Other common facilities are not located in the common house. The community laundry room is located in 708's utility room; a wood working shop is available to residents in the garage of 643; and a tool room is housed in 724's garage. Clothes lines, a children's play structure and sand box, picnic tables, vegetable and herb gardens, and egg-laying chickens all are shared in common by the community. Front yards are maintained by individual households and are not considered community space.

Like Muir Commons, N Street kitchens face the back, common space. So, too, do the living rooms. Although the houses were poorly designed in most respects, this aspect is very complementary to cohousing and a welcome feature of these otherwise hideous examples of 1950's architecture. The houses are connected by primitive walkways which meander between garden beds and around wood piles and clothes lines. The large picture windows facing the backyards offer two-way access. A resident can see what is happening in the community outside the house, and community members can be drawn to activities or individuals sitting at the kitchen table or in the living room. Conversely, privacy can be attained within each house in the front where the bedrooms are situated.

The original backyards of N Street were not designed with cohousing in mind. Neither were the houses. N Street residents have continually had to work within an already existing outline to mold their surroundings to meet their needs. Several large trees grace the site. Shade is not always a good thing for gardeners, so residents have also had to mold their aspirations to fit the site limitations. This is perhaps the major underlying difference between Muir Commons and N Street Cohousing. Building anew or working with the old play fundamental roles in defining not only the physical, but also the human and social components of community.

Ownership Structure

The homes in N Street Cohousing do not share a common ownership plan. Some are owner occupied, some rented by landlords residing in the community, still others are owned by absentee landlords. Because the community was constructed in a piece-meal fashion, there is no overriding plan as to how things are organized. The community has made do with what was available, based on the simultaneous coming together of needs,
opportunities, and finances. The combination of these three factors was essential in every acquisition, and each home has its own story as to how it came to be part of the community.

N STREET UNITS BY # OF OCCUPANTS AND OWNERSHIP TYPE

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<tr>
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N Street's ownership structure (or lack of structure) has created some problems for the group. Renters and owners frequently hold different perspectives regarding responsibility levels (financial and otherwise) and time commitment (both duration of stay and time spent working for the good of the whole). Although there is no consensus as to what the issues are, 60% of N Street residents who participated in the survey felt that unresolved issues do exist between owners and renters of houses in the community. This percentage includes responses of both owners and renters.

Several noteworthy comments were elicited from the question, "In your opinion, what are the issues?" Issues range from power and control, to concern that financial responsibility should be shared among everyone. Two people stressed that it's important that members own part of the community. They believe that a "feeling of ownership" will contribute to a sense of equitability. One person stated, "We operate on a model that those who make down payments own, and those who pay off the loan
(renters) don't, which I feel is wrong." This type of thought is contrary to how the system of property ownership has worked for centuries and continues to work at N Street. It is precisely the type of thinking that helps us reevaluate and improve our world. It is necessary to question so that we may achieve a sense of fairness and equity at home and in the greater society.

Inequities between owners and renters exist on N Street, because a new system hasn't yet evolved. At the same time, opportunities do exist for renters to become owners. The 708 Partnership is one such example. Two years ago, Kevin and Linda solicited the help of their friends to buy this house and property. Of the original 9 owners, 5 were individuals from N Street Cohousing. These renters had seized the opportunity to become owners which was no small feat, especially when the California housing market is out of reach of even middle income citizens. Granted, they don't own a home in the conventional sense, but they invested their money wisely and reap some of the benefits of home ownership. These include a sense of permanence, belonging, and commitment.

Dedication and commitment to this cohousing community is present among homeowners and renters alike. Some would argue that without a financial stake in the community, the commitment of renters is, by definition, less. One homeowner commented that there is a "lack of interest in the community on the part of the renters." This exemplifies the traditional homeowner perception of renters. However, this was the only response of its kind, and such talk would likely stir up heated debate among other homeowners. Many renters plan to live in N Street Cohousing a long time. Eighteen percent will probably stay several years, and 41% don't have plans to leave. Compare this to 26% of Muir Commons residents, all homeowners, who don't have plans to leave. With renters comprising 78% of N Street Cohousing residents, clearly, lack of commitment to this lifestyle does not seem to be a function of whether or not one rents or owns.

To supplement mortgage payments, or to meet the monthly rental costs, all 10 of the N Street units are shared homes, in which unrelated individuals participate as one household. Groceries, utilities, phones, living areas, etc., are shared by all residents of any particular house. Economic factors play a large role in why singles or families would
choose to share their home with unrelated persons. However, of those surveyed, 62% would still choose to share living space even if they could afford not to. This number is in stark contrast to Muir Commons where only 1 out of 4 would continue to live with unrelated housemates were there no economic benefits for doing so.

Having housemates has become part of the N Street culture. Although socializing opportunities occur with neighbors in the larger community, most N Street cohousers enjoy the special, family-type relationships shared with housemates. It is on a different level of intimacy than is readily accessible among those in other houses. Many have expressed the idea that housemates become a sort of nuclear family, and others in the community play the role of extended family. Since very few N Street residents live near their blood relatives, housemates and cohousing neighbors serve as surrogate family in a day and age so lacking in traditional family cohesion.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Age

Taking a closer look at the individuals in the two communities sheds some light onto the type of people choosing cohousing. As a university town with an undergraduate population of 20,000 students, Davis has a young population. Ages of adults in N Street Cohousing range from 19-44, with the average age being 31. Muir Commons has a slightly older group, ranging in age from 26-60. The average age at Muir Commons is 35. Children comprise 31% of the population at N Street. The youngest is 10 months and the eldest child is 7 years old. Muir Commons has a larger distribution of children. 36% of the Muir Commons population is children; 17 kids are under the age of 10, and 6 are adolescents. Children reside in 65% of Muir Commons homes, while 40% of N Street homes have children.

Education

In terms of education, both communities reflect the town's high educational level. Over 80% of all respondents have a college degree or better. 37% and 65% from N Street and Muir Commons, respectively, have gone on to do graduate work. Given the
rather young composition of the two groups, many respondents are still pursuing educational goals. 55% of N Streeters and 32% of those residing in Muir Commons consider themselves students. This accounts for why the employment and income levels of both communities are surprisingly low. 14% of N Street residents are not employed, compared to 8% at Muir Commons. These figures are more a function of being in school or being a homemaker, than they are a reflection of the Davis economy.

**Income**

Income is probably one of the more striking differences between N Street and Muir Commons. While 24% of N Street Cohousers earned more than $20,000 in 1990, 57% of Muir Commons respondents did. The median income range of Muir Commons residents was $10,000 more than their N Street counterparts. Most N Street residents could not live in Muir Commons, for the simple reason that they would not be able to qualify for a home loan. Many of the homes in Muir Commons are considered "affordable" but it still takes a significant amount of money to be able to buy a home through traditional means. N Street provides a model in which low and middle income people share the same lifestyle. Interest, not income, determines whether one is able to reside in N Street Cohousing. That is not to say that interest is lacking at Muir Commons. Certainly this is not the case; however, income was a limiting factor in deciding who remained part of the group.

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<td>$50,000-$59,000</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Answer to the question,**

"In 1990, how much money did you gross before taxes?"

by percentage of those responding in each category.
Lifestyle Characteristics / Common Culture

In order to fully understand who these cohousing residents are, it is important to take a look at their values and lifestyles. As depicted in the above sections, cohousers tend to be people who are willing to work to construct a way of living that supports their values and ideals. In order to determine if there are common values in each community, one of the survey questions asked, "What would you say are the prominent values or lifestyle patterns shared by those in [your cohousing community]?") Although one person in Muir Commons wrote, "None - we have no common values," most of the others had no difficulty listing commonalities.

The most frequently mentioned response from both communities had to do with respecting and caring for the earth and her people. A sense of environmentalism is widespread among Davis cohousers. Over 71% of both populations mentioned this in their write-in answers. Nearly a third of all respondents claimed that the group was liberal politically. Other responses that were mentioned frequently included openness of emotions/feelings; cooperation/working with groups/conflict resolution; respect for diversity/inclusive/open minded; valuing community; and belief in a "better way" of living than the typical American. Tired of the way it's always been, and perhaps a bit idealistic, these folks have learned to reap personal satisfaction out of their concern for other people and the earth. Each of the phrases used to describe shared values engenders a feeling that these people are committed to a world beyond their own front doors.

One Muir Commons respondent took issue with the homogeneity of the group. They wrote at length on the topic.

In the ideal cohousing community portrayed by Chuck and Katie [McCamant and Durrett] everyone seems to tolerate diversity of opinion and to respect other points of view. Our group, it seems, has self-selected (meaning that some have dropped out while some have joined) for people who tend to agree on most issues, for the "politically correct" point of view peculiar to Northern California (and various other places). The fact that I happen to agree with that world view does not make this tendency any less disturbing. It is almost offensive, not unlike a country club which excludes Jews, Blacks, and Women. We (de facto) exclude conservatives, non-recyclers, Cadillac owners, and free market economists.
The old saying, "birds of a feather, flock together," has some significance here; yet it is unclear to what degree these commonalities are dangerous. In fact, "U.S. research demonstrates that nodding acquaintanceships between neighbors will lead to friendships and home visits only if a level of homogeneity of values, interests, and background is also present." (Cooper Marcus and Sarkissian 1986: 119) Nevertheless, it may be important for the community to take notice of exclusionary tendencies so that they may be prevented before they become problematic.

In 1991, N Street Cohousing developed a Mission Statement that clearly spelled out the group's intentions. Hours were spent designing it to everyone's satisfaction. The final result was a statement that reflects the energy and aspirations of the group. It also is an example that the group is in agreement about some values that it shares. Here is the Mission Statement as it appears at the beginning of the N Street Cohousing General Information packet:

N Street Cohousing is a nurturing environment that offers a practical adaptation to challenges of modern living. We live affordably, make use of shared resources, cultivate personal relationships, and strive for diversity. While there is an individual level of responsibility to the community, the community acknowledges personal choices and needs.

Interestingly, nearly all Danish cohousing communities are not centered around any particular value system. In fact, the only one that McCamant and Durrett found that did share a common philosophical system actually had problems filling vacancies. But the degree to which this community espoused a belief system is very different than the common values held by Muir Commons or N Street residents. These commonalities are simply similarities, not meant to restrict or segregate. It is not required that one be an avid recycler or a member of the Green party in order to live in Davis cohousing. The point was only made to portray a picture of who cohousers are; not who they are not.

It is not surprising that these fledgling communities built foundations upon similar lifestyle patterns and values. There are so many opportunities for disagreement throughout the developmental stages of cohousing that it is probably a good thing that these two communities found some common ground in other, more stabilizing areas. There's an old adage that reads, "in all things essential, unity. In everything else, diversity." Breaking ground and blazing trails is arduous and scary work because it lays
the foundation for years to come. All the hours and arguments that went into developing the decision-making procedures at Muir Commons and N Street testify to the fact that it is hard work. (See next section on the Decision-Making Process.) But it is less difficult when this work is accomplished by people who have similar goals and objectives. These are the essentials. With construction completed, the hardest part is more than likely over. It is less risky from here on out to open the door to greater diversity.

Both Muir Commons and N Street Cohousing have nondiscrimination statements that reflect an openness to diversity. Muir Commons' statement appears as the opening paragraph of their Membership Agreement and reads as follows:

Muir Commons (MC) welcomes and encourages diversity of membership in race, religion, sex, and age; with the understanding that the purpose of MC is to foster strong community involvement of the residents.

It is difficult to know the degree to which a community can "encourage" diversity. Davis is home to a wide range of cultures and religions, but most people would agree that the town is very "white." It is therefore not unusual that Muir Commons is almost exclusively comprised of Caucasians. N Street has struggled with this dilemma. How does a community strive for diversity when the society from which it comes is not diverse? There is no easy answer.

One way that N Street Cohousing residents have worked to promote diversity in their community is to put their diversity statement on all flyers advertising vacancy notices of rooms in the community. It was determined that this was not enough - that if the community were really serious about diversity, then more than just lip service would be needed to open the doors. Flyers from the past conjured up images of N Street having a "hippy" atmosphere, where everyone was a vegetarian and everything was communal. The group felt that this image would not attract many people of color. Room notices were then designed to appeal to a broader community. In addition, aside from posting these flyers on the usual town bulletin boards such as at the Davis Food Co-op and local vegetarian restaurant, notices were posted on campus boards outside the various ethnic and cultural groups. Clearly these gestures are only a start.
Frequently when people think of diversity, they concentrate on the ethnic/cultural aspects. Both N Street and Muir Commons have struggled to do the right thing regarding diversity but it is almost impossible to make colors appear from a plain white canvas. Colors must first be available on the palate, before they can become part of the painting. Although N Street continues to strive to include more people of color, they do not limit other possibilities. N Street's diversity statement reads: "We are a community striving for diversity in age, gender, sexual preference, disabilities, ethnic/cultural background, and economic status."

The room addition at 732B was designed to appeal to an elderly single person or an elderly couple. The thought was that someone older may not be interested in sharing a house with others, but may be interested in being a part of the community. A lack of age diversity at N Street has long been a frustration and this unit was designed in the hopes of attracting some diversity. The project was a success; the community got more diversity - but not in age. A lesbian couple moved in. Ultimately, N Street wants some older representatives, but meanwhile, residents are satisfied achieving diversity in other areas.

N Street cohousers realize that there is time to work at developing the dream. Not everything has to happen immediately. It is okay for things to evolve over time. In striving for diversity, it is important that any community recognize the common bonds, values and behaviors that tie the group together. Recognizing the appropriate interplay between unity and diversity is essential in developing a cohesive and thriving community.

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Meetings

If there is anything cohousing requires, it's meetings. Meetings are the formal channels of communication; these are the places decisions get made. Meetings can also provide a forum for a sense of community to develop and grow. Long before Muir Commons residents became neighbors, their primary form of socializing together was
through meetings and work parties. After 1-2 years of meetings, 91% felt a sense of community had already developed. (See section on community.)

Prior to moving in, meetings were the axis around which everything at Muir Commons revolved. Members were required to attend at least 3 meetings a month, many of which were long and difficult. To meet construction deadlines, committees often met several times a month. Many spent hours each week attending meetings to plan and design their community. With most of the work completed, such long hours are no longer necessary. But regular meetings are still essential to keep the axle greased and communication channels open.

N Street has developed two different monthly meetings at which attendance is strongly encouraged but not required. Vision quest meetings have historically been 2-3 hours, once a month. Here, long range issues are decided, such as how do we finance the common house construction, and who can vote. Community meetings usually last 1 hour and it is here that short term, operational issues such as chicken-care rotation and obstruction of pathways by children's toys get discussed. Committees do a lot of the work that would be cumbersome to tackle in these large meetings. Normally, committees do not make decisions, but instead bring proposals back for the larger group to decide. However, there have been occasions when committees have been given authority to act on their own. One case in point was the Common House Management Team that was largely responsible for the remodeling of 716's kitchen, living area, and dining room. After agreeing to some general design principles, this committee was able to make construction decisions without having to consult with the group on each point. This certainly streamlined the process and allowed forward movement on what would have otherwise been a much more drawn out and tedious process. Muir Commons, too, gave its Design Committee authority, on occasion, to act on behalf of the group.

This brings up the issue of equality and democracy. Cohousing residents are staunch supporters of the democratic process where everyone has a say in decision-making. The consensus model guarantees this. But it is not undemocratic to entrust someone to make decisions on your behalf. In fact, when you trust the people and the process, it is much easier to let go and rest assured that, even in your absence, the group will arrive at a good decision.
This point is thoughtfully elaborated by Gordon Davidson, founder of the Sirius Community in Massachusetts and former member of Findhorn in Scotland. In an interview about his experience with intentional communities, Davidson offered some insight on this topic:

The greatest learning for us has been recognizing that the future development of a balanced system of governance requires the integration of the principle of democracy and egalitarianism, together with the principle of hierarchy and apportioned responsibility of authority. These two principles are inextricably woven together. When you watch how people really function in groups and in political arrangements, you realize that if you don't integrate these principles, you get into very serious difficulties.

We have worked for a long time in what gets called "the alternative movement," where there is an extreme emphasis on democracy and egalitarianism. Oftentimes that doesn't allow real leadership and authority to be exercised. What we've learned is that even though we are all "divinely equal," we are at different stages of manifesting and expressing our divinity."

... Different people are at different levels of energy, consistency, and ability to take responsibility. It seems to me that out of the effort to allow everyone full empowerment, we sometimes disempower the people who have more capacity. (Davidson 1991: 23).

Renovating 716 into N Street's common house was a beautiful example of meshing democracy and hierarchy. One person volunteered to take on the responsibility of seeing that everything got done. He had no personal agenda and the community implicitly entrusted him to do whatever was necessary to complete the job. He organized meetings and consulted those who had expressed an interest in certain tasks before making decisions. His level of energy and ability to take responsibility was the perfect combination for this undertaking. No one resented his "take-charge" approach; in fact, most agreed that the planning and actual construction process was empowering for all who chose to take part.

Leadership is an important ingredient in any organization; so, too, is management. In an article entitled "Skills for Living Together," ecologist Duane H. Fickeisen points out the distinction between the two and affirms that both are necessary components of accomplishing objectives. He writes:

Leadership is involved in the process of creating new approaches and innovative ideas, envisioning a purpose, and enrolling others as co-creators. Management is the reactive process of maintaining the status quo, organizing resources to
accomplish a goal, and solving problems that threaten to interrupt progress. Both are needed for effective community action. (Fickeisen 1991: 57)

There are times leaders are needed to provide new direction and there are times when managers' skills are required to keep things on course. In both cohousing communities, there are leaders and managers. People take on different roles depending on their capabilities, interests, and timing. At certain points in the evolution of both communities, there were greater opportunities for one or the other.

Differing individual capacities must also be acknowledged. One Muir Commons resident hates meetings. He's a hands-on, Mr. Fix-it type. His strengths are seen on work days and doing other physical tasks. Unfortunately, during the lengthy planning process in which attendance at meetings was required, his strengths went unappreciated and he became alienated from the group. Of course, it would have been impractical for the group to single him out and exempt him from the meeting requirements. But as we build community, we should be thinking about empowering ourselves and others, and experimenting with ways to achieve this goal with flexibility towards meeting the needs of individuals.

N Street has an opposite problem - they struggle with the tendency of being too permissive. Very few rules govern this community. It took almost a year for the group to agree to a monthly community fee of $5 per adult. No one was willing to agree to anything that would inhibit participation or be exclusionary. The community fee was finally agreed to because of the exemption clause whereby individuals can choose to exempt themselves if they are unable, for any reason, to make the payments. By and large, N Streeters recognize each other's strengths and weaknesses and acknowledge that everyone has their niche in the community. Those on the Common House Management Team are good organizers and the type who enjoy details and meetings. The Outdoor Committee includes the green thumbs and the more creative. Others find expression on the Food Committee, Tools Committee, Outreach and Orientation Committee, and the Children's Committee. These committees provide the forum for good ideas which lead to successful decision-making.
Voting / Consensus

Both N Street and Muir Commons make decisions through a consensus process. In the former, all adult residents are considered voting members; in the latter, voting is done on a per household basis. Voting, per se, is not the operative word in consensus. As Americans, we are conditioned to cast votes and accept the majority position. In voting, there are always winners and losers. Consensus, on the other hand, is decision-making whereby everyone can live with the decision - no one feels like a loser.

In her book, Collaborative Communities, Dorit Fromm outlines the 6 main steps in a consensus process:

1. **Issue:** A problem is stated.
2. **Discussion:** What needs to be decided is discussed, as well as concerns.
3. **Amendments:** As members bring up ideas and solutions, others add to them or alter suggestions. As one member explained, "It's not consensus if you don't have the benefit of the other person's wisdom."
4. **Test for consensus:** The facilitator draws the discussion to an end by stating a proposal that summarizes the group's direction or preference. The group agrees or disagrees, and more discussion follows.
5. **Proposal:** If agreed, a formal proposal is stated, and there is a call for any concerns about it.
6. **Formal consensus:** The concerns are discussed until consensus is reached. (Fromm 1991: 169)

Components of a good meeting include a good agenda, a good facilitator, and timeliness. Agendas can be prepared in advance of the meeting by a committee or can be done at the start of the meeting. Regardless of whether 5 minutes or two hours goes into planning the agenda, it is essential that there be one. Usually it is written up on newsprint and hung for all to see. Attendees agree at the beginning how much time to devote to each item of business. Someone may be requested to be the timekeeper to keep the group on schedule. The facilitator's role is to keep people focused and to see that all points are addressed and all voices heard. Anyone can act as facilitator, but
newcomers should observe several meetings before attempting to facilitate, since groups take on their own culture, and meetings reflect this.

When someone does not agree with the proposal, they can block the consensus. Fromm explains: "Blocking is a refusal by a member to go along with a proposal and can give the individual the power to block the group. There are several levels of blocking; for example, a member can agree to step aside from the decision making or to have his or her objections recorded." (Ibid)

Both communities have provisions to resort to a vote if they get stuck and consensus cannot be reached. As written in the N Street Cohousing General Information packet, if someone blocks on N Street, "a 3 month minimum effort of at least biweekly meetings occurs. The person(s) who blocks consensus must attend the biweekly meetings. Meetings should be scheduled around blockers. The biweekly meetings must focus on the issue needing consensus. If consensus cannot be reached, a 2/3 majority vote of those present at the monthly vision quest meeting will decide the issue at hand." (More on consensus can be found on page 11 of the N Street Cohousing General Information packet included in the Appendix).

Muir Commons developed a tidy diagram of their consensus process that is displayed at formal meetings. It clearly outlines the stages of consensus. (See diagram.) Other collaborative communities employ techniques to make meetings run more efficiently. The Winslow, Washington cohousing group uses a system of colored cards that participants hold up to express the degree of agreement with the proposal. Other groups use hand signals which help keep the meeting on track, express agreement or disagreement, or allow the facilitator to know if they have a point of information that should be addressed immediately or comments that can be taken in turn.
FORMAL CONSENSUS PROCESS
Developed by Muir Commons

One of the most comprehensive explanations of the consensus process was written by a group of physicians in the Valley Diagnostic, Medical, and Surgical Clinic, Inc. of Harlingen, Texas during a community-building exercise. Their definition is worthy of reprinting in total.

Consensus is a group decision - which some members may not feel is the best decision but which they can all live with, support, and commit themselves to not undermine - arrived at without voting, through a process whereby the issues are fully aired, all members feel that they have been adequately heard, in which
everyone has equal power and responsibility, and different degrees of influence by virtue of individual stubbornness or charisma are avoided, so that all are satisfied with the process. The process requires the members to be emotionally present and engaged; frank in a loving, mutually respectful manner; sensitive to each other; to be selfless, dispassionate, and capable of emptying themselves; and possessing a paradoxical awareness of both people and time, including knowing when the solution is satisfactory, and that it is time to stop and not reopen the discussion until such time that the group determines a need for revision." (Peck 1991: 27)

The Muir Commons consensus diagram and the physicians' description are complementary. The former provides an organized framework for consensus; the latter very descriptively explains the fundamental principles behind consensus.

Working through differences pulls people apart and brings them together. Sometimes this happens in a linear sequence, but it is more likely to take a less logical form. At times, a decision-making process will divide the group temporarily, bringing some people closer together and driving others further apart. This is the assumed scenario in a typical voting process. But consensus rebels against the winner/loser side effect of majority rule decision-making. Cohousing aims to strengthen the individual and the community simultaneously. One's success should not be at the other's expense. The consensus process and the cohousing model work towards unifying the whole.

Clearly, consensus is the modus operandi among cohousers, both in the United States and abroad. It is becoming an accepted form of decision-making. Certainly it takes more time and energy to accomplish things through consensus, but decisions tend to be better than those arrived at through traditional voting methods. With consensus, no one is working to undermine the group. Issues or concerns are confronted during the discussion process, before a decision is made. At Muir Commons, only one decision has ever had to be decided by voting: choosing the name, Muir Commons. Tomato Flats was the big contender. N Street has never had to resort to a vote, although several issues have been blocked initially but later decided after the biweekly meetings helped reach mutual understandings and agreement.

**Perceptions of How Decisions Get Made**

Perhaps as important as how decisions get made is the *perception* of how they do. The survey asked the question, "Do you feel comfortable with how decisions get
made?" 89% of Muir Commons, and 86% of N Street residents responded in the affirmative. The top reasons among both groups were the consensus process and the fact that one's voice could be heard.

While the majority were comfortable with the process, the follow-up question which asked, "What factors contribute to your feelings of comfort or discomfort with the decision-making process?" elicited many concerns. The primary reply mentioned by N Streeters was the problem of some people being obstructionist and stifling the process - the fear that one obstinate person would block the will of the many. Another observation was that the consensus process is slow and decisions can't be made quickly. Only one person at Muir Commons stated that the process was too time-consuming.

Six respondents at Muir Commons expressed the following concerns: "No way to deal with minority opinions/needs; dissension is frowned upon; sometimes majority consensus steamrolls unresolved concerns." This was the single most frequently given response to this question. Another response, mentioned 6 times, was that it is "Dangerous when a small group takes too much power in decision-making; Power is too centralized." Two people responded that "not everyone speaks up." Additional comments about perceptions of the decision-making process are worth noting. One Muir Commons resident wrote:

There is not a hierarchy or inner circle pushing what they want. Group input is encouraged and decisions are made to support the needs of group rather than individuals. I am impressed at how often this is true. If the situation ever arises where someone feels like they are being railroaded it is usually due to not taking the group into consideration. If anything we are too sensitive to people with concerns.

At the same time, another from this same community felt otherwise. They stated that "Power is often abused but not horribly. Too few make decisions; more care but are not interested in helping..."

N Street residents were not united in their perceptions of the process either, but generally they were satisfied. One N Streeter commented:

I feel we have done very well, through time, finding situationally workable and usually quite happy resolutions to the forms of individual/collective conflicts that have arisen. I feel confident we will continue to do so - or have a strong potential to do so.
Some people will presumably never be happy. It is difficult to please everyone under one organizational umbrella. The most that can be hoped is that the majority will be satisfied. Those who aren't can either leave or stay and try to amend the system. The consensus process of decision-making allows for even lone voices to be heard and acknowledged.

In an effort to make everyone feel comfortable with the process, N Street institutionalized a "Feelings Sharing" section at every meeting. 10-15 minutes of every agenda is devoted to people taking turns expressing what they're feeling at the moment. In the past, this has allowed the group to reflect on how the meeting is going and how individuals are feeling about certain issues. Sometimes people share how they are doing in their lives outside the meeting; sometimes they share joys or frustrations regarding community issues. "Feelings Sharing" came about when several people felt uncomfortable with the fast pace of the meetings. They felt that expressions of personalities and feelings should have a forum. This agenda item, although instituted for rather esoteric reasons, has come to play a significant role in reminding the group of each other's humanness, as well as in providing a kind of checks and balance system for how things are going. The Community Spirit committee at Muir Commons is attempting to do a similar thing.

Growing Pains

Creation and implementation of policy is time-consuming, yet a vital exercise in maintaining a sustainable community. Cohousers are continually breaking new ground - in structuring the community, in long term and day to day decisions, and in personal interactions. Nobody has all the answers, yet it is frequently frustrating when things fall between the cracks and solutions or directions aren't readily apparent. Whether a decision should be made by an individual, a household, a committee, or the entire community is not always obvious. Jurisdictions are not always spelled out, nor are they necessarily cut and dry. Does constructing a new path fall under the jurisdiction of the household adjacent to the path or the Outdoor Committee? Growing pains occur when community members are confronted with ambiguity or contradictions.
Similar to an adolescent struggling to be an adult, many cohousers dream of the day when they don't have to agonize over every decision or analyze every alternative. They dream of the time when the community is self-regulating and runs smoothly, without frequent meetings. In the early stages of cohousing, meetings are essential components of the process. Regular gatherings, where decisions are made and progress is monitored, cannot be neglected. Muir Commons accomplished its goal through diligent meetings which spanned nearly a three-year period from the first get-together and slide show presentation on cohousing to the completion of the homes. Meetings will continue to be an integral part of Muir Commons cohousing as they adapt to living together and continue to nurture their community.

N Street cohousers have been meeting twice monthly since January of 1990. There has not been the same urgency to meet, as Muir Commons experienced, due to the simple fact that N Street residents did not have to design cohousing from scratch. On N Street, residents were already living and working in a cooperative community while they were designing cohousing. Muir Commons existed only on paper for nearly two years. The Muir Commons cohousers were much more anxious to build their community, since they were not able to fully experience cohousing until they moved in and were living it.

Responsibilities

Communication

Attending meetings, of course, is not the only responsibility of cooperative living. Meetings constitute formal channels of communication. They are the nexus between what is and what could be. Vital to the maintenance and momentum of the community, meetings are only one means of problem-solving, networking, socializing, and accomplishing goals.

Less tangible, but equally important, are the informal communication modes. Due to the physical design of cohousing communities, human interaction is purposefully enhanced. Cohousers come in contact with each other often as they carry out their day to day activities. In the laundry room, watching the children play, or over a community
meal, conversations develop. These can provide a very functional role of conveying information and form the basis of informal communication. Talking to others about issues or concerns helps people work through things one-on-one or in small groups. It also allows big problems to be brought to the attention of the larger community if need be.

Other forms of communication commonly utilized in cohousing communities are the community bulletin board and mail boxes. Announcements of upcoming activities and events, grievances, sign-up sheets, etc., can be posted for all to see. Mail boxes can be used for personal correspondence, as well as for distribution of meeting minutes or agendas.

Each community develops its own system of communication. Whether through conscious choice or by default, formal and informal communication systems are crucial to maintaining strong working relationships among community members. Smooth interpersonal relationships won't always be possible among cohousers; differences of lifestyle and opinion can cause disharmony. But having access to tools with which to work through differences is an essential ingredient of successful community-building and good communication is the responsibility of every cohousing participant.

Having to be accountable to a large group is more responsibility than many Americans would consider on a day to day basis. Living with other people takes time and energy, as well as occasional hard work. People who choose to live in intentional communities weren't any better at interpersonal skills than their mainstream counterparts. Good communication skills and working in groups are learned behaviors - behaviors that most people do not learn in school, but have to struggle to learn as adults. These skills are within reach of nearly everyone. In other words, if they know what they are doing, virtually any group of people can form themselves into a genuine community.

Energy/Time

Muir Commons members have spent much more time developing their community, than have their N Street counterparts. While 18% of N Streets admitted to spending at least 8 hours per month designing their community, 71% of Muir Commons residents fell
into this category. The survey was administered when there was still much work to do designing and constructing Muir Commons. Building a community from scratch is more labor-intensive. In addition, Muir Commons has had to be much more thorough in their approach to infrastructure and decision-making. With much more capital at stake, it was necessary that their membership agreement, bylaws, and other legal documents be formal and precise. N Street has not even established such documents because they have not needed them. The demands facing the two communities differ in degree and kind.

It was interesting to see the various opinions held by cohousers on the topic of equity and fairness with regards to working on cohousing. A question to both groups asked, "Is every adult member expected to contribute about the same time and energy as everyone else?" 30% at Muir Commons circled Yes. Even at N Street, where nothing was mandatory at the time of the survey, 24% said Yes. Follow-up questions revealed that some people feel that there are those who don't carry their weight. When asked, "Do you feel that the work in designing and planning [your cohousing community] has been shared equitably among members?" the difference in responses by the two communities was astounding. 89% of those at Muir Commons felt that it had been shared equitably, while only 23% felt it had at N Street. This difference may be attributable to Muir Commons' requirements which tend to level the playing field. One person wrote: "Everyone is expected to contribute a minimum and beyond that it is discretionary dictated by time, interest and need to have input." Another person wrote that although participation wasn't equitable, it was fair, with perhaps one or two exceptions. They added, "I get the feeling that a few aren't felt to be 'pulling their weight'."

The above percentages would seem to imply that there is resentment about those who don't do their share. The third survey question tried to establish if this were a possibility. The question read, "Do you feel that each person contributes what they can and over time it will probably balance itself out?" Surprisingly, 76% of N Street respondents thought it would balance itself out. Muir Commons had nearly half that amount with only 41% responding affirmatively. One Muir Commons person had circled "No" to each of the three questions on participation and afterwards wrote "and that's okay." Resentment isn't necessarily an outgrowth of others not "pulling their weight." Apparently most people are reasonably comfortable with how the work is
getting accomplished. This is summarized by one cohouser who commented: "equitable? No, not exactly - but I do feel that many people have contributed in very different ways according to their very different interests/needs and time/energy available to them at various times - in all this difference and variability I do feel (though it's a logical paradox or unscientific notion) that there is a very real, very human "equitability".

It seems that everything in cohousing takes a lot of time and energy. Some things do; however, there are tradeoffs. For all the meetings attended, there are tangible results; for all the sweat contributed to workdays, there are beautiful gardens, paths, and play areas; for all the hours spent cooking a monthly community meal, there are a dozen more to attend that don't require a lick of work - all tradeoffs that cohousers wouldn't think of trading. Yes, building a cohousing community takes work, but the payoffs are significant. Once most of the kinks dealing with construction, design, and decision-making are worked out, a savings in time and energy can be realized.

Trading off cooking meals is one of the most welcome time-savers. All the hours spent preparing supper each night add up. How nice it is to come home from work or play and not have to spend time leafing through cookbooks, rummaging through the fridge for leftovers, racing to the store, and cooking a meal. In both cohousing communities, members cook just once a month, but can eat between 3-7 times a week. Teams of two pair up and prepare a meal for everyone who signs up to attend. The quality of these meals is much better than most people would cook for themselves, and the cost is very reasonable, ranging from $1.00 to $2.50 per adult. It is a challenge cooking for 20-40 people, but spending 3-5 hours once a month is a far superior option than the traditional alternative which would have most adults spending that much time cooking for their household in just one week's time. In Muir Commons, cooking once a month is mandatory; at N Street, the rule is, "if you eat, you cook." For those who eat infrequently, the ratio is to cook one meal for every 10 attended.

Financial

Monetary contributions and obligations are quite different between Muir Commons and N Street. As stated earlier, the only financial requirement at N Street is a
$5 monthly fee. The community uses this money to pay for shared equipment, the community's share of the common house utilities, repairs, and other items deemed necessary. In addition, the price of community meals includes a 25¢ tax which contributes to the fund.

Muir Commons residents have more substantial financial obligations to meet. Each household contributes $130 each month to the homeowners fund. This money is used to maintain property and facilities shared in common. Even with these obligations, 76% of those surveyed in Muir Commons responded that they thought there should be a community fund, in addition to the homeowners fund. A follow-up question asked, "If everyone were expected to contribute equally, how much money would you be willing to contribute to a community fund each month?" 47% of those responding to the question said between $6-15 dollars; 28% would contribute $16-25 dollars. Nearly half of all respondents would like to see this money used to buy a workshop and tools. Other suggestions that were mentioned by almost one third of the group were: supplies for the common house; sports, exercise and recreation equipment; and a hot tub/sauna. Muir Commons residents realize that by pooling their resources, they can have access to many opportunities not available in their previous living arrangements.

**Participation**

Aside from the mandatory responsibilities, there is an unwritten responsibility which some people have difficulty fulfilling. Sometimes it's because busy schedules keep them away; sometimes it's spending time with a lover who doesn't live in the community; and sometimes it's because some people never understand the significance of this responsibility. It is simply the act of participating in the community, especially in community meals. It only requires that you be around. People are missed when they fulfill only the formal requirements, but do not take the time to participate in community activities or hang out with other cohousers. It doesn't take long before their recurring absence is noted. At N Street, a lack of participation has often been the precursor to the individual choosing to move out of the community.

Participation is not easy to measure, nor is it easy to monitor. Mandatory participation at meetings or work days may be required, but it is difficult to institute
mandatory requirements for activities which simply increase social interaction such as
eating meals, frequently using walkways, and hanging out in the common house. These,
and other activities conducive to interaction, although intended as benefits of
cohousing, become barometers of dissatisfaction or discomfort when and if some
members avoid informal gatherings and are only present at mandatory events. Absences
are subtly noticed and if they recur for no apparent reason, neighbors start to wonder if
something is wrong.

Informal, spontaneous participation provides the link that connects neighbors to
neighbors, friends to friends. It's what makes cohousing fun and enjoyable; it's the icing
on the cake. It's what solidifies a sense of community. As one resident at N Street said,
"alienation is solved by participating." A similar perspective was shared by a resident of
Muir Commons: "The more you participate the more you feel the community."

SENSE OF COMMUNITY

What is Community?

Just what is this "sense of community" and how can it be achieved? These are
not easy questions to answer. The idea of community is not thought to be very tangible.
Many think it is ephemeral, slipping from view after lasting only briefly. But to others,
such as noted psychiatrist and author, M. Scott Peck, community is a phenomenon that
is profoundly lawful, that is, it follows a predictable pattern. But he admits that there
"remains something about it that is inherently mysterious, miraculous, unfathomable.
(Peck 1987: 60)

Founder of the Foundation for Community Encouragement, an organization
created to support community-building, Peck has replicated the community experience
hundreds of times throughout the nation, among all types of people. He has broken
community down into components and studied its history and complexities. M. Scott
Peck's book, The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace, discusses his findings
at length and provides valuable insights into the topic of community. This section
would be incomplete were it not for his work.
Peck states that "Community can be one of those words - like God, or love, or death, or consciousness - that's too large to submit to any single, brief definition. At the Foundation we consider community to be a group of people that have made a commitment to learn how to communicate with each other at an even more deep and authentic level." (Peck 1991: 26) Inhabitants of N Street Cohousing and Muir Commons have made this commitment.

Achieving and maintaining a sense of community is one of cohousing's primary goals. 73% in Muir Commons and 68% in N Street Cohousing chose having a "closer relationship with neighbors and a sense of community" as their top reason for choosing to live in cohousing. Over 90% from both groups listed a sense of community as one of their top 3 reasons for living in cohousing. A similar response was received from the question, "What do you anticipate/enjoy the most about cohousing?" The most frequently written replies involved experiencing a sense of neighborhood and community, eating together, working together, and being together.

And they got what they wanted! 100% of all respondents on N Street answered Yes to the survey question, "Do you feel a sense of community among N Street Cohousers." At Muir Commons, this rate was 94%. It should be noted that Muir Commons respondents completed the survey before they were actually living in cohousing. The primary reason that responses from Muir Commons were not 100% had to do with the difficulty of assimilating newcomers. 62% felt that newcomers hadn't yet broken in, but that this would change with time.

"Sociologists generally use the term "community" in a combined social and spatial sense, referring to an aggregate of people who occupy a common and bounded territory within which they establish and participate in common institutions." (Warren 1962: 104) But just because people feel they are a community, doesn't necessarily mean they are. The word community is all too often used to define any group of individuals, such as a church congregation or a group of neighbors. The essential ingredient in achieving community is a commitment by the group to meaningful communication. It seems evident that both cohousing groups are examples of real communities.
Necessity of Community

It is now commonplace to talk of creating community. Corporations are striving for it in the workplace and developers are trying to build it. Even prominent architects acknowledge that Americans are longing for community. (Duany and Plater-Zyberk 1992: 19) Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk suggest that instead of moving forward towards community, we have only to look back half a century to city and town plans that were designed before the automobile reigned supreme. These architects believe that the design and placement of such things as houses and roads has a direct correlation to the existence or absence of a sense of community. This is an important discovery, but the solution is not so simple.

Only in post-industrial societies do we see a corrosion of the extended family. For millennia, most of civilization depended upon family and community for survival. The more "civilized" people have become, the less dependent they are on others for meeting physical needs. One needn't be a hunter to eat meat every night or feed a family. Grocery stores provide everything necessary to keep a body fed. A job covers food and shelter expenses. But mere survival needs are not sufficient to satisfy the human spirit. People are complex beings, in need of social interaction and emotional support. Philosopher and writer Wendell Berry offers some insight into the repercussions of living in the modern age. He writes:

Insofar as we reside in the industrial economy, our obsolescence, both as individuals and as humankind, is fast growing upon us. But we cannot regret or, indeed, even know that this is true without knowing and naming those never-to-be-official institutions that alone have the power to reestablish us in our true estate and identity: marriage, family, household, friendship, neighborhood, and community. (Berry 1987: 121)

He does not espouse a return to the past, but an acknowledgment of certain institutions that are worth retaining. Cohousing's supportive environment offers opportunities for individuals to reconnect with all but the first institution mentioned.

Americans hunger for a sense of community but have difficulty putting their fingers on what this is. The conservatives would have us looking backwards in an attempt to reinvigorate the "traditional nuclear family." Liberals see the solution in improving infrastructure, thinking that if all physical needs are met, then the spiritual and
emotional needs will fall into place. Neither of these is sufficient to get to the root of community.

Cohousing is not an attempt to recreate the past; that would be futile. It is an attempt to recapture some of the basic components, which have successfully nurtured community throughout history, and add to them some new concepts, such as sharing meals. An appropriate physical setting, together with individuals who are committed to working at communication, combine to form the basis of community. As Duany and Plater-Zyberk espouse, the physical constructs of our homes and environment promote community. But it is the people who really make it happen.

Sharing

One of the nicest things about cohousing are the spontaneous social gatherings. Proximity and shared use allow for frequent interaction to take place. Dorit Fromm, researcher of collaborative communities, quotes urban planner Jan Gehl's simple explanation of how interactions occur: "...something happens because something happens because something happens." (Fromm 1991: 153) While one person is feeding the chickens, someone walks by and stops to chat. Still another sees these two talking and decides to join them. This phenomenon can occur outside in the garden, in the parking lot, in the common house, and along walkways. Opportunities are countless. To be sure, spontaneous interactions occur because the physical and social environment are conducive to them happening. They are all but impossible occurrences in the typical suburban development where concrete guides people right to the front door, and neighbors have been conditioned to mind their own business.

Cohousing residents enjoy each other's company. Many on N Street consider their cohousing neighbors to be their closest friends. This is such a widely held view that one respondent to the survey who was not experiencing this actually acknowledged her disappointment about cohousing: "it doesn't meet all of my needs - I need a life outside of the community too." No one had anticipated that cohousing neighbors would so successfully satisfy the needs that family and close friends fulfilled in the past. With traditional extended families nearly nonexistent, and some nuclear families spread out in cities, it is timely that cohousing has created an opportunity to
develop surrogates for them. In fact, several respondents in both communities mentioned how much they enjoyed the "extended family feeling."

This extended family feeling extends to singles and couples alike. One example is that many adults in cohousing communities participate in parenting activities. On N Street, there is a baby-sitting co-op whereby parents exchange tokens with each other for caring for each other's children. One token is good for a half hour time period. This represents a form of barter or trade and is an example of an under-ground economy of sorts. In addition, many childless adults have expressed an interest in being allowed to nurture children from time to time. It is like a return to having aunts and uncles. This fulfills many functions:

1) Allows the parent(s) some time to engage in activities without their kid(s).
2) Allows the adult an opportunity to practice what it's like to be a parent.
3) Allows the adult an opportunity for reflection and provides a reminder of what kids can teach adults. If all adults had to wait to learn these until they had kids of their own, many would never get the opportunity.
4) Allows the child to be exposed to adults other than their parent(s). This is healthy for all children, but can be especially rewarding for children from single parent families to interact with an adult of the opposite sex of the parent. Role models are important for children.
5) Allows kids to see a continuum of ages participating in their care. The kids and adults have the opportunity to develop friendships across age lines. This helps reduce age-ism, by allowing both young and old to interact and learn from each other.
6) Allows for caring in the home or very nearby. Children can stay in their familiar surroundings and be with familiar faces and friends when their parent(s) are away.

Many singles have mentioned how wonderful it is to be allowed to "mother" or nurture children from time to time. When children are exposed to adults and can get to know them over an extended period of time, both with and without their parent's supervision, it allows for a different kind of interaction. Caring for kids in the community is seldom very stressful. It makes a big difference to the kids that they know the adults who are supervising them. The adults are their friends. They see them at community dinners, working in the gardens, hanging clothes on the line, feeding the chickens, etc. They are part of the children's environment.
With dozens of neighbors to choose from, both young and old, there is a good selection of people with whom to engage in conversations or activities. Going to movies, undertaking crafts projects, and cooking, all are fun social opportunities. There is usually something going on around the community at all times, and if there isn't, it usually only takes one person to set something into motion. The common house can be used to hold slide shows, birthday parties, informational talks, spontaneous children's plays, tie-dying classes, dances, recitals, and the like. Occasions to get together with others are limitless. At the same time, cohousing residents always have the choice to stay home and enjoy their privacy; social activities are optional.

There is another kind of sharing which cohousing fosters: the sharing of resources. Modern homes encourage their occupants to be inefficient with resources and possessions. To be self-sufficient, every household must acquire their own appliances such as washers and dryers, lawn mowers, tools, an automobile, etc. Individual ownership of appliances, tools, and modes of transportation is not only wasteful, but needlessly costly. Think about all the lawn mowers across the nation that are pulled out of the garage only a few times a month. Think again of the possibilities of sharing one mower among several households. That one mower would satisfy the needs of several families who, as a result, would experience savings of money and storage space.

Access, not ownership, of items such as these, is a necessity in order to get along in our society. Cohousing is one option that encourages co-ownership arrangements that are both cost effective and energy efficient. At the same time, the extent to which an occupant chooses to participate in ownership sharing is entirely left up to the individual. Opportunities exist for those who wish to participate, but are not required for those choosing to operate independently. Complicated ownership schemes complement the old-fashioned notion of borrowing a cup of sugar. This type of neighborliness receives renewed vigor in cohousing communities where neighbors are in close proximity and being an imposition takes a back seat to being a friend.

**Group Cohesion**

It would be misleading to portray cohousing as a utopia, devoid of any conflicts
or problems. Humans constitute cohousing, and bring with them the realm of human emotions and complexities. Arguments and conflicts do arise. Peck writes that community is "a place where conflict can be resolved without physical or emotional bloodshed and with wisdom as well as grace. A community is a group that can fight gracefully." (Peck 1987: 71) It is not essential that everyone like everyone else, but there must be a mutual respect among the residents. Cohousing is a place to work through differences. In community, the goal becomes conflict resolution, rather than conflict avoidance.

Working through conflict gives individuals confidence in the process and in each other. It is the essential ingredient that teaches members to trust. Once established, trust is maintained by doing and sharing things together. Cooking and eating community meals, playing with the kids, and double digging the garden all are activities that allow individuals to form binding connections with others. Individuals, in turn, feel connected to the group and develop a sense of belonging, to each other and to the community.

People are the fiber of the community. But it is the trust that they share that is the glue that binds them together. Alan Bates, long time resident of The Farm, the well known commune in Tennessee, describes trust another way. He states that "The glue that holds any group together is the ability to put aside your own personal ego at times, and to recognize that you have to look out for other people." (Bates 1991: 37) He continues: "...Basically, it's about being able to relate to one another in a close way, understand each other's aspirations, and assume each other's goodwill." (Ibid). Without this trust - trust that others won't sabotage a decision; trust that others will do what they believe is in the best interest of the community - there cannot be honest and open communication. And without this level of communication, there cannot be community.

Trust, then, is integral to establishing community. At the same time, people need a little help at maintaining community and group cohesion. This help comes from an environment that is conducive to community-building. A cohousing environment is "user-friendly" and capable of providing individuals with all the equipment necessary for affirming trust, and hence, community. With the hardware as the physical design, and software as the process, it is up to the community as users to see that it gets used and cared for properly.
CONCLUSION

Feelings and Suggestions

The process of building cohousing communities can be long and arduous. Regardless of the time and energy required, most cohousing residents were not surprised or turned off by the hard work. One question the survey asked was how the respondent's feelings had changed since they first became involved. Responses ran the gamut from being concerned about "confrontational types" to feeling "more firmly resolved that this is the way to live." Both communities had a high rate of feelings changing for the better. Between 58%-61% of all respondents mentioned positive examples of how their feelings had changed.

Cohousing is not without its anxieties. Entering into a living situation with dozens of other people can be a scary prospect. Most Americans don't have experience with this type of lifestyle. It is only natural that cohousers were a little apprehensive. What is interesting is the different kinds of fears represented by each group. Muir Commons residents were mostly afraid of interpersonal problems. They feared poor conflict resolution and ineffectively handling problem members. They were also concerned about a lack of privacy and members contributing less than they received. N Street, on the other hand, was primarily concerned with financial aspects. This was the only reply mentioned more than twice.

Another question asked, "What, if anything, would you try to do differently next time in planning a cohousing community?" While only one suggestion mentioned by N Streeters appeared more than once, a few ideas were mentioned frequently by Muir Commons participants. 39% of Muir Commons respondents felt that they would pay more attention to community-building. They would emphasize and "program" community-building earlier on in the process. 15% felt that if they were to do it over, they would eliminate the "constraints of affordable housing." Pursuing more "ethnic diversity" and "relying on residents more than an architect/developer" each were suggested by 9% of respondents. At N Street Cohousing, the only idea mentioned more
than once dealt with working more on group process. Two people suggested that the group would have been better off spending more time on common goals and the decision-making process before beginning the design process. (A complete list of all responses to all questions on both surveys appears in the appendix.)

A third open-ended survey question asked, "If you could give one suggestion to new cohousing groups, what would it be?" Again, N Street respondents were not united in their responses. The following 4 suggestions were the only ones mentioned twice:

* Be patient
* Orient new members thoroughly so all agree and know the program
* Organize
* Concentrate on designing bylaws, a charter, goals, and/or the vision first before dealing with the physical design.

None of these suggestions reflects much frustration. N Street Cohousing residents seem very satisfied with the process they developed.

Muir Commons respondents were a bit more united on several suggestions. Fourteen respondents, or 38% of those in the Muir Commons survey stated that new cohousing groups should emphasize community-building simultaneously with pragmatic aspects. Because of all the work involved in starting a community from scratch, Muir Commons became a task-oriented group. One of the original members mentioned in an interview that "we don't have time to get to know one another. There are so many new people." She went on to say that she missed breaking up into small groups like they did during the early design meetings. Clearly, even before the construction was completed and people could move in, Muir Commons participants were hungry for community and eager to reap its benefits. They did not want to wait until they were living in close proximity before becoming neighborly.

Other Muir Commons responses mentioned more than once are as follows:

* Pay for outside expertise as needed
* Be patient / don't give up or be discouraged
* Give yourself lots of time and a time line
* Enjoy the process - it's a long one
* Realize cohousing is not for everybody - one has to want it and commit to it
* Be honest with yourself and others - communicate
* Building community takes work
* Require substantial participation

There is no right answer or perfect solution to making the process better. The cohousing process is one of evolution, and each group has its own culture and set of experiences. What is true for one group may not be workable in another. It would be prudent for new groups to learn from those that have gone before. It is always easier to work from an already established model. But each new community will have to experiment with what works for them, discarding what isn't viable, and adding ideas that are.

**Two Successful Paradigms**

For many Americans trying to live more fulfilling and productive lives, cohousing offers many opportunities. Shared facilities, trusted neighbors and convenience all provide cohousing residents with more than is typically available in standard American housing. Residents design both the physical and human structures within their community, develop and participate in the planning process, and manage the day to day decision-making. This process is one of empowerment. It is one to be emulated.

This paper has attempted to show that Muir Commons and N Street Cohousing are two successful examples of cohousing paradigms. Although very different in their evolutions and design, both communities portray viable and more satisfying alternatives to the typical suburban model.

Muir Commons is a cohousing prototype. Designed by interested individuals, developers, and architects, this development was built from scratch. In spite of taking over 2 and 1/2 years from its inception to the actual move in day, Muir Commons was on the cohousing fast track. It is not unusual for cohousing and other intentional communities to take even longer to build. Muir Commons is a subdivision within a suburban development, but unlike the neighboring lots, it was designed by and for the people who live there. Many of the units qualify as "affordable housing." This is a
significant feature, but unrealistically implies that the units are affordable. Certainly, compared to average housing prices in Davis, these homes are less expensive. But Muir Commons is based on the condominium ownership model, so the net effect is that only those individuals who can afford to buy a home have access. There are good reasons why Muir Commons residents chose the path they did. I believe it was a good choice; however it is the one feature that makes this model less than perfect. Allowing for some units to be rentals would have been more difficult to design and manage, but the end result would have allowed for more potential diversity.

N Street Cohousing is rare in cohousing because it is an "infill" model. It was designed using an existing suburban site, which luckily included rental houses owned by absentee landlords. Infill can be less predictable than building from scratch because not everything can be planned or anticipated. If N Street residents were more affluent, they would have considered buying the whole city block. This is not the case, so they have made do with available resources. Since nearly all of the units are occupied by several adults, mortgage and rental costs are shared and thus lowered. It is a system that allows N Street Cohousing to provide affordable housing; it is also the most unappealing feature noted by visitors. Most Americans would be interested in sharing some common facilities, but would find it difficult to share their individual residence. This is one of the beauties of cohousing. It combines the benefits of communal living without sacrificing the desire for personal property and individual needs of privacy. N Street residents have adjusted to sharing their homes, and, in fact, many would have it no other way. They have molded the cohousing model to meet their needs and take pride in the fact that they have done it with very little capital.

Dorit Fromm explains that unlike the European models where the government takes a role in funding and supporting such developments, American examples operate with essentially no help from the government. She continues,

"...the lack of government support has required communities to rely on their members' resources. Dwellings have tended to be expensive, beyond the reach of those below median incomes. Many of the people best served by this housing type - the elderly, single parents, the handicapped, and young couples with children - are shut out of this option." (Fromm 1991: 95)
The N Street Cohousing model acknowledges these shortcomings and actively attempts to counter the obstacles that too often prevent people from being able to live in community: lack of money. One resident voiced the opinions of many when he said: "I like our approach. I think that starting out with "existing units" and having tenants and owners together has some great strengths to it - beyond being financially less demanding and less exclusive." Theirs is not a perfect example, but it allows middle and low income people (especially students and single parents) to live in a supportive and cooperative community. At the same time, it provides a framework from which others can build.

**Why Choose Cohousing?**

There are many reasons why people are interested in living in cohousing. These reasons range from the very simple need for shelter, to more altruistic desires. The following typology provides an explanation for what motivates people to choose to live in a cohousing community. Each of the four different categories represents a reason for selecting cohousing. Cohousers experience all four at some point, and may identify with certain ones more strongly than others. Whatever the case, the typology seeks to explain both the attractions and the rewards of cohousing.

**TYPOLOGY OF WHY PEOPLE CHOOSE TO LIVE IN COHOUSING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>INDIVIDUAL</th>
<th>SOCIAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INSTRUMENTAL</td>
<td>home/shelter</td>
<td>live/interact with people with similar interests/lifestyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXPRESSION</td>
<td>saving resources</td>
<td>sense of belonging/community being kind to the planet</td>
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</tbody>
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**Individual/Instrumental:** One of the most basic human requirements is that of shelter. People need to be protected from adverse environmental conditions and have a sense of
security. Most Americans live in houses or apartments to meet this need. Cohousing is just one housing option that provides home and shelter.

**Social/Instrumental:** Humans are social animals by nature, and as such, have a tendency to want to interact and socialize with similar types. More than most housing developments, cohousing was designed to be conducive to social intercourse. The physical and social constructs actively encourage interaction to take place.

**Individual/Expressive:** There is something fulfilling about doing good deeds. Cohousing provides opportunities for sharing resources and living more sustainably. Many people place a high priority on obligation to society and can feel good about how they are contributing to society through cohousing.

**Social/Expressive:** This final reason is appropriately left for last. It is perhaps the last one of the four to be realized. Most people are in need of feeling a part of what they do. This sense of community or belonging exists in Cohousing and is available to those who care to participate in it.

**Cohousing - A Panacea?**

It would seem that cohousing is not for everyone. Cohousers can relate to typical responses made by friends and family during visits. While visitors enjoy their stay, many have reservations about how they would adapt to such a lifestyle. They fear their privacy would be sacrificed. Still others are so entrenched in more traditional housing schemes that they are uncomfortable with cohousing's message. Cohousing is built on the premise that something is missing from American homes and neighborhoods. Although interested in the idea of community, most Americans do not yet have access to viable alternatives. Since cohousing is not yet available in mainstream America, it is difficult for many people to fully comprehend. In many cases, it is easier to deny that there is a better way, than it is to realize that a better way exists but is not a practical option at the present time.

At the same time, it may be too hasty to conclude that cohousing is not for everyone. Cohousing is still in the formative stages in this country. The cohousing
pioneers living in Muir Commons and N Street Cohousing do share a certain value system. But this is more a function of being in Davis, than an example of how a cohousing community ought to be comprised. Not everyone visiting Davis feels comfortable with the lifestyle patterns and values that most Davisites take for granted. Cohousing would be highly attractive if examples existed all over the country, and included people from all walks of life. Only then will cohousing be appealing to a variety of Americans. As McCamant & Durrett's book demonstrates about our European counterparts, it is not important that cohousing communities be homogeneous. In fact, differences and diversity are prized. Unity of thought may be useful in the developmental stages, but once formulated, the foundation exists to support more diverse populations.

**Cohousing - A Model for Our Future**

The Davis examples are only two models of the nearly 100 that are currently evolving throughout the United States. From Winslow, Washington to Amherst, Massachusetts, individuals are organizing to share common space, resources, and community. A sense of community is perhaps the most significant outgrowth of cohousing. It is yearned for and revered. At the same time, it may provide the key to better things to come. Building community may very well be a precursor to achieving global peace.

Cohousers learn coping skills, interpersonal skills, organizational skills, and conflict resolution skills. They learn to laugh and love, cry and trust among neighbors and friends. Through this, they achieve community. These are invaluable lessons that many people never have the opportunity to learn. These skills can be utilized at local school board meetings, civic groups, and political forums. These are the lessons that can be expanded to an even wider arena. Our local, national and world leaders would probably make wiser decisions if they employed such skills and had the experience of true community. Reverberations of community could be realized indefinitely. Peck's ideas support this logic:

There are very real conflicts in the world, and the worst of them do not seem to go away. But there is a fantasy abroad. Simply stated, it goes like this: "If we can resolve our conflicts, then someday we shall be able to live together in
community." Could it be that we have it totally backward? And that the real dream should be: "If we can live together in community, then someday we shall be able to resolve our conflicts."? (Peck 1987: 71-72)

Peck's words reflect my long-held philosophy that building community at home is transferable to the larger world community. Certainly, cohousing should not be viewed as a panacea. It is simply a housing and living arrangement offering solutions to inadequacies and problems confronting average Americans. It is not a commune, not some religious order, and it is not just for radical liberal types. It is very likely that this type of housing will cross ethnic, economic, and social barriers and seep into mainstream America. Awareness has already begun to happen. There is a growing discontent among Americans about the decrease in standards of living, having to work more hours to make ends meet, and other quality of life issues. Necessity is often the impetus behind change. I believe that Muir Commons and N Street communities are unique only in that they were the first to pioneer cohousing. Philosophical changes in attitudes of people will continue to occur and, in turn, spur on cohousing developments throughout the country.

Cohousing empowers residents with essential skills required to live together harmoniously. If it can be done in a small way, it is possible at even greater levels. Cohousing is a grassroots movement that is spanning oceans and spreading across countrysides. It is a very promising model today and for the future. My words and work are offered so that other aspiring communities don't have to re-invent the wheel each time. It is my hope that this paper will help replicate cohousing and promote community-building for years to come.
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APPENDIX
Dear Fellow Cohouser:

I am a resident of N Street Cohousing and am currently working on a master's degree from the School for International Training in Brattleboro, Vermont. I am writing my master's thesis on Cohousing. I'll be comparing Muir Commons Cohousing with N Street Cohousing. What I feel is needed is a practical reference for future Cohousers as well as an analysis of what is really involved in creating a Cohousing community.

It is for this reason that I am asking you to fill out this questionnaire. Your responses are optional but I would love to have every future resident's response so that I can be as thorough as possible in my study. Because I am administering a similar questionnaire to the residents of N Street Cohousing, there may be questions that won't precisely reflect the Muir Commons situation. I also realize some of the questions may be personal; I will keep individual responses confidential while doing everything I can to be professional in my analysis and conclusions. It is my hope that this thesis will be a valuable contribution to the dearth of literature available on the topic of Cohousing. Once I'm finished, I will make a copy of my thesis available for anyone to read.

Please answer the questions to the best of your ability. If you have questions or concerns, don't hesitate to call me at 756-4493, or you can write comments in the margins or on separate sheets. Feel free to write more than the space allowed; my lines are only a suggested guide and are not meant to inhibit your thoughts and ideas. Please mail completed questionnaires to my home at 708 N Street by February 3rd. Thank you so much for taking the time to provide your perspective.

Donna Spreitzer

* * * * * * * * * *

1. How many months have you been involved with Muir Commons? Check one: 0-6 months ___ 6-12 ___ 13-18 ___ 19-24 ___ over 24 months ___

2. Please rank in order of importance your top 3 reasons for choosing to live in Muir Commons. (With 1 being your first priority, 2 your second, etc.)
   ___ Affordability
   ___ Closer relationship with neighbors / sense of community
   ___ Home ownership
   ___ Innovative lifestyle
   ___ Location
   ___ Shared Meals
   ___ Other

3. How long do you plan to live in Muir Commons? Check the one that is closest to what you think will happen:
   Less than 2 years ___ over 2 years ___
   Not sure but probably several years ___ I don't have plans to leave ___
4. What factors may cause you to leave Muir Commons? (Check all that apply): Rent/mortgage/cost increases ___ Job relocation ___ Not enough privacy ___ Interpersonal differences ___ Cost/benefit ratio out of balance ___ None of the above ___ Other ____________________________

5. On average, how many hours per month do you spend designing Muir Commons? (i.e., attending meetings, working on committees, designing the landscape, etc.) Check the one closest to reality:
None ___ 1 or 2 hours ___ 3-4 hours ___ 5-7 hours ___ 8-10 hours ___ 11-15 hours ___ 16-20 hours ___ over 20 hours per month ___

6. Is every adult member of the community expected to contribute about the same time and energy as everyone else? Yes ___ No ___

7. Do you feel that the work in designing and planning Muir Commons has been shared equitably among members of this group? Yes ___ No ___

8. Do you feel that each person contributes what they can and over time it will probably balance itself out? Yes ___ No ___ Not sure ___

9. What do you feel are the most important things to have or do in a common house? Check up to five (5):
Meetings ___ Meals ___ Childcare ___ Laundry ___ Guest room(s) ___ Library ___ TV/VCR ___ Teen room ___ Music room ___ Art/Crafts ___ Recreation/Exercise ___ Meditation ___ Other ____________________________

10. Please list the advantages and drawbacks of a common house as you see them?
Advantages: ____________________________________________
    ____________________________________________
    ____________________________________________

Drawbacks: ____________________________________________
    ____________________________________________
    ____________________________________________

11. How many times per week do you anticipate eating in the common house?
Check one: Never ___ 1-2 times ___ 3-4 times ___ 5 or more times ___

12. What types of things would you like to see the Cohousing group buy or do that might require using some type of community fund? ____________________________

13. Should there be a community fund (excluding the homeowners fund)?
   Yes ___ No ___ (if No, skip the next question)

2
14. If Yes, how should the fund accumulate money? Check only one:
   ___ All adults pay a fixed amount on a regular basis.
   ___ When particular needs arise, all adults share the up-front cost evenly (i.e.,
   ___ when a hot tub is installed, all adults contribute money).
   ___ When particular needs arise, all households share the up-front cost evenly.
   ___ When particular needs arise, the anticipated users split the up-front cost.
   ___ Contributions should be based on ability to pay.
   ___ Establish user fees; people contribute as they use or do something.
   ___ Other ________________________________

15. If everyone were expected to contribute equally, how much money would
   you be willing to contribute to a community fund each month? Check one:
   $0  __ $1-5  ___ $6-15  ___ $16-25  ___ $26-35  ___ $36-45  ___ over $46  ___

16. What do you anticipate/enjoy the most about Cohousing? ________________________________

17. What things, issues, etc. scare you the most about Cohousing? ________________________________

18. How have your feelings about Cohousing changed since you first became
   involved? ________________________________

19. What would you say are the prominent values or lifestyle patterns shared by
   those in Muir Commons Cohousing? ________________________________

20. Do you feel comfortable with how decisions are made?  Yes ___  No ___

21. What factors contribute to your feelings of comfort or discomfort with the
   decision-making process? ________________________________

22. Do you feel a sense of community among the Muir Commons Cohousers?
   Yes ___  No ___
   Comments?: ________________________________
23. What, if anything, would you try to do differently next time in planning a Cohousing community? 

24. If you could give one suggestion to new Cohousing groups, what would it be?

* DEMOGRAPHICS *

Please check or fill in where appropriate:

25. Are you Single? ___ Married? ___ Living with Significant Other or Mate? ___

26. Do you have children living with you? No ___ Yes, Full time ___ Yes, Part time ___

27. How many people will live in your home in Muir Commons?
   Full time # ___ Part time # ___

28. Of these, what number will not be part of your core family (i.e., how many will be housemates)? ___ (If zero, skip the next one)

29. If you could afford to live without housemates, would you? Yes ___ No ___

30. How old are you? ___

31. What was the last year of schooling that you completed? Please check one.
   Some high school ___ High school or equivalent ___ Some college ___
   College degree ___ Master's degree ___ Ph.D. ___ Some graduate work ___
   Other ___ (if Other, please specify:) ________________________________

32. Are you a student? Yes ___ No ___
   If Yes, Part time ___ Full time ___

33. Are you employed? Yes ___ No ___
   If Yes, Part time ___ Full time ___

34. In 1990, how much money did you, yourself, gross before taxes? Please include any student loans or government aid (i.e., public assistance, scholarships, unemployment compensation, etc.).
   $1-$4,999 ___ $5,000-$9,999 ___ $10,000-$19,999 ___ $20,000-$29,999 ___
   $30,000-$39,999 ___ $40,000-$49,999 ___ Over $50,000 ___
35. What do you estimate to be your combined family income for 1990?
$1-$4,999 ___ $5,000-$9,999 ___ $10,000-$19,999 ___ $20,000-$29,999 ___
$30,000-$39,999 ___ $40,000-$49,999 ___ $50,000-$59,9999 ___
$60,000-$69,999 ___ $70,000-$79,9999 ___ $80,000-$89,9999 ___ $90,000+ ___

36. On average each month, how many hours do you spend volunteering or working for no pay aside from your household duties. Do not include the time you spend planning your Cohousing community. Check one space per line.

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</table>

* Please feel free to use the remainder and/or back of this page to elaborate on anything above; to provide me with other information that you feel is important for my work; and/or to give me feedback on this questionnaire.

THANK YOU !!!
APPENDIX B

MUIR COMMONS QUESTIONNAIRE KEY

* C = Column used for tabulation; responses are coded by numbers 1-99; write-ins are in *italics*; & number of responses by category are *bolded*.

C: 1 Respondent Number: 1-38

1. C:2
   How many months have you been involved with Muir Commons? Check 1:
   
   0-6 months  4
   6-12        7
   13-18       5
   19-24       12
   over 24 months  10

2. C:3 = 1st  C:4 = 2nd  C:5 = 3rd
   Please rank in order of importance your top 3 reasons for choosing to live in Muir Commons. (With 1 being your first priority, 2 your second, etc.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>Closer relationship with neighbors/sense of community</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovative lifestyle</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shared Meals</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordability</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
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<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. C:6
   How long do you plan to live in Muir Commons? Check the one that is closest to what you think will happen:
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 2 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure but probably several years</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>over 2 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t have plans to leave</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. C:7 to C:9A
   What factors may cause you to leave Muir Commons? (Check all that apply):
   
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>23</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
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<td>Job relocation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rent/mortgage/cost increases</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Interpersonal differences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not enough privacy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost/benefit ratio out of balance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
None of the above 1
Lifestyle change 8
Move to a Yoga based community 2
Quality of life changes in Davis 2
Group loses community ideals 1
Financial ruin 1
Move up to something better 1
Don't know 1

5. C:10
On average, how many hours per month do you spend designing Muir Commons? (i.e., attending meetings, working on committees, designing the landscape, etc.)
Check the one closest to reality:
None 1
1 or 2 hours 1
3-4 hours 5
5-7 hours 4
8-10 hours 3
11-15 hours 12
16-20 hours 7
over 20 hours per month 5

6. C:11
Is every adult member of the community expected to contribute about the same time and energy as everyone else?
Yes 11
No 24

7. C:12
Do you feel that the work in designing and planning Muir Commons has been shared equitably among members of this group?
Yes 4
No 31

8. C:13
Do you feel that each person contributes what they can and over time it will probably balance itself out?
Yes 15
No 12
Not sure 10

9. C:14 to C:18
What do you feel are the most important things to have or do in a common house? Check up to five (5):
Meetings 34
Drawbacks:
C: 23 to C: 25A
Community Type
Imposed by Personal
Place for outdoor community to share
Place for kids to get together
Medal
Extension of home
Variety of uses / activities close to home
Environment, facilities, opportunities for association
Efficient & economical use of time and space
Draws community together community center or focal point

Advantages:

10. Please list the advantages of drawbacks of a common house as you see them?
11. **C:26**

How many times per week do you anticipate eating in the common house?

- Never: 0
- 1-2 times: 1
- 3-4 times: 2.5
- 5 or more times: 11

12. **C:27 to C:32**

What types of things would you like to see the Cohousing group buy or do that might require using some type of community fund?

3 people had no response to this question

- Workshop / tools: 18
- Garden equipment / landscaping supplies: 9
- Supplies for common house: 11
- Truck / van / vehicle: 4
- Sports / exercise equipment / recreation equipment: 10
- Hot tub / sauna: 11
- Playground equipment / kids' play structure: 3
- Tables and benches: 1
- Public art: 1
- Crafts equipment: 1
- Office equipment: 2
- Vacation home: 2
- Storage building or sheds: 2
- Covered carports: 3
- Newsletter production: 1
- Fun events: 3
- Car shop: 1
- Bike sheds: 1
- Site improvements: 2
- Common house cleaning / maintenance: 3
- Pool: 1
- Another unit or existing unit: 1
- Alternative energy source: 1
- Piano: 1
- Peace and justice activism: 1

13. **C:33**

Should there be a community fund (excluding the homeowners fund)?

4 people had no response here, 2 of which had no response to #12.

- Yes: 29
- No (if No, skip the next question): 4
- Maybe: 1
14. C:34
If yes, how should the fund accumulate money? Check only one:
N/A = 3 (3 people didn't have to respond based on #13) 4 people chose not to respond, and 1 person had an inappropriate response (i.e. they checked 3 options).

- All adults pay a fixed amount on a regular basis. 3
- When particular needs arise, all adults share the up-front cost evenly (i.e., when a hot tub is installed, all adults contribute money). 6
- When particular needs arise, all households share the up-front cost evenly. 5
- When particular needs arise, the anticipated users split the up-front cost. 5
- Contributions should be based on ability to pay. 0
- Establish user fees; people contribute as they use or do something. 3
- Other 3
- Depends on things / combination 4
- All Households pay fixed amount 1

C:35
If everyone were expected to contribute equally, how much money would you be willing to contribute to a community fund each month? Check one:
6 people didn't respond; 2 people said, it depends.

- $0 0
- $1-5 3
- $6-15 15
- $16-25 9
- $26-35 1
- $36-45 0
- over $46 2

16. C:36 to C:40
What do you anticipate/enjoy the most about Cohousing?

- Close relationships with neighbors / extended family feeling 20
- Working together / sharing skills & experiences 15
- Informal interactions/ spontaneous socializing & activities 11
- Eating meals / sharing dinners 10
- Sense of community 10
- Children around 7
- Easy place to raise children / safe for kids 4
- Positive group dynamics 3
- Design buildings and community 2
- My cozy, charming new house / home ownership 2
- Interesting people 2
- Parenting support 1
17. C:41 to C:45
What things, issues, etc. scare you the most about Cohousing?

- Poor conflict resolution
- Members contributing less than they receive
- Lack of solitude / privacy
- Ineffectively handling problem members
- Balance of strict rules to be fair but not so strict that we're insensitive to individual needs
- Tendency to form factions or cliques
- Breakdown of group process / decision making process
- Won't be a savings in time and energy, but an increase
- I'm not scared or worried
- Excessive use of common facilities at others' expense
- Financial aspects
- Too much noise
- Personal risks and growth in building community
- People not working towards community
- Nonacceptance of other's lifestyles
- Manipulation that might destroy trust
- People's weirdness
- Responsibility to the group (like being in a marriage)
- Some members' discomfort with negative emotions (anger or sadness)
- Parking far from houses
- That I won't get in (I'm on the waiting list)
- Gentrification / too yuppyish
- "Granola fascist" mentality (Politically correct)
- Pettiness
- Having to be on "best" behavior all the time
- Putting my heart into it and having others not care or respect "spiritual" element of cohousing
- Houses / development too small - cramped together
- Buying a house
- Burn-out before sense of balance is achieved
- Getting used to different living space

18. C:46 to C:47
How have your feelings about Cohousing changed since you first became involved?
+ 25 (17 options) or 58% ; - 13 (11 options) or 30% ; = 5 or 12%

- Improved 6+
- None / not much / same 5=
- Switch from focus on house to focus on community 4+
- Realization of complexity of it all 3-
Focus changed from what would be given up to what will be gained

Don't expect everyone to like me

More skeptical

Concerned about being neighbors with confrontational types

Money issue and affordability question have lowered my feelings toward people attracted to cohousing

Trust others more

Worry less about potential problems

Honoring group process for better or for worse

Feel part of a true community

Evolved into a more cohesive group

I think in more specifics now

Grown to like people who first felt could never put up with

Concerned about investment - will I lose money?

Embrace the idea / great for my family

Confident project will be a success

Some will always need to serve themselves

More challenging and rewarding

Worry about workability

Don't know if there will be governing by the laws or power cliques

Frustrated that it takes so long for nonaffordable spot to open

Less active than at first

Less scared / less intimidated

Process of developing physical cohousing is, in itself, community building

More optimistic it'll work

More at ease with living with 25 other households

19. C:48 to C:52

What would you say are the prominent values or lifestyle patterns shared by those in Muir Commons Cohousing?

Respect and concern for the earth and people / green living / environmentalism / ecologically concerned

Liberal politically / progressive / left / socially & politically aware

Cooperation / work with groups / conflict resolution

Valuing community

Belief in a "better way" of living than typical American

Shared resources / conservation

Spiritual

Interpersonal and global peace / nonviolence

Respect for diversity inclusive / open minded

Working for something you believe in

Extended family / neighborly

Wholesome foods

None - we have no common values
20. C:53
Do you feel comfortable with how decisions are made?
2 no answers; 1 inappropriate answer
Yes 31
No 4

21. C:54 to C:55
What factors contribute to your feelings of comfort or discomfort with the decision-making process?

Pluses
Voice can be heard
Consensus
How well decisions and discussions work
Work through process and problems
All have experience in meetings
It's fair
Friendliness
No hierarchy or inner circle

Minuses
No way to deal with minority opinions/needs; dissention is frowned upon;
sometimes majority consensus steam rolls unresolved concerns
Dangerous when small group takes too much power in decision-making; Power is too centralized
Not everyone speaks up
Too time consuming
Too much referred to committees and not all important information arrives at general meetings
Uncomfortable when things are hidden from group
Strong vocal minority overriding basically silent majority
Facilitator gets too emotionally involved
Needs to be a conflict resolution process
Need more practice honoring each others' thoughts and words
Have to rush through things too much / decision-mill
Don't like factionalism
Vague rules
People don't acknowledge when views are influenced by the person rather than the objective reasons
Haven't worked out all the kinks

22. C:56 Do you feel a sense of community among the Muir Commons Cohousers?
5 no responses; 1 inappropriate response

Yes 30
No 2

Comments?: C:57 to C:58

It's building; newcomers have difficulty breaking in 20
Already have a community 4
It feels like a family / extended family 3
Not yet solid for me; we're addressing the problem 2

23. C:59 to C:61
What, if anything, would you try to do differently next time in planning a Cohousing
community?
5 people did not respond.

Work more at community building
Emphasize / "program" community-building earlier
(feelings sharing, communication) 9
Socialize individually with Cohousers to build more community 1
Put more energy into activities that enhance social cohesion
such as social activities independent of planning process 1

Change designers / change design process
Hire architect/contractor interested in cohousing to design common house 3
Rely on residents more than architect/developer 1
Spend more time on own needs and visions 1
More group freedom 1
Be involved with design process (I wasn't) 1
Don't do it under a developer 1
Get professional help in writing nonambiguous, concise bylaws 1
Have small core group to design, then bring in rest of group 1

Work more on group process
Process for letting people go if they are unhealthy 2
Develop conflict resolution process earlier 1
Spend more time on common goals and decision-making process
before we begin design 1
Find a way to weed out the "freeloaders" and still have diversity 1
Stress importance of long term commitment 1
Have time for reflection 1

Eliminate affordable requirements
Not have constraints of "affordable guidelines" 5

Change location
Find a place with more land 2
Not here: Aspen subdivision has too many rules 1

Change design
Solar design 1
Use existing structures (taking too long) 1
Incorporate more alternative/innovative design

Other suggestions
Pursue more ethnic diversity
Participation requirements would be more stringent
Have a clear budget before starting design process
Be patient
More pro-active recruitment - not less mass-media to get word out to future Cohousers
Consider hiring a business manager who would live there
Keep good, accurate records
Nothing different

24. C:62 to C:64
If you could give one suggestion to new Cohousing groups, what would it be?
Emphasize community building simultaneously with pragmatic aspects
Pay for outside expertise as needed
Be patient / don't give up or be discouraged
Give yourself lots of time and a time line
Enjoy the process - it's a long one
Realize cohousing is not for everybody - one has to want it and commit to it
Be honest with yourself and others / communicate
Building community takes work
Require substantial participation
Don't limit size of group
Have a process to remove disruptive members
Assume nothing about own limits to change
Find ways to revitalize the vision
Buy land
Choose own architect
Trust your instincts
Go for consensus
Speak up for yourself
See the vision / live the vision
Democracy is critical / each member is important
Avoid strong leaders, hierarchy, dogmatism
Don't overlook human aspect; learn to respect, trust, listen, and let people be themselves
Don't prejudge others or the whole picture
Be open to others' ideas
It's difficult if individuals don't make real sacrifices for the good of the group
Be friends, not partners = goal
Don't "over meet"
Know your fellow travelers and their quirks from the beginning 1
Work continually to include and welcome new members 1
Work on common goals and decision-making process while looking for land 1
Find developer or public agency to help with up front costs 1
Let things settle when conflicts arise, then try to come back at issue from a new perspective 1

* DEMOGRAPHICS *

25. C:65
    Are you Single? 13
    Married? 23
    Living with Significant Other or Mate? 2

26. C:66
    Do you have children living with you?
    No 19
    Yes, Full time 18
    Yes, Part time 1

27. C:67
    How many people will live in your home in Muir Commons?
    #: Full time #
    1 = 7
    2 = 12
    3 = 10
    4 = 8
    5 = 1

    C:68
    #: Part time #
    0 = 35
    1 = 3

28. C:69
    Of these, what number will not be part of your core family (i.e., how many will be housemates)?
    #: (If zero, skip the next one)
    1 = 2
    88 = 2
    99 = 1

29. C:70

11
If you could afford to live without housemates, would you?
Yes  3
No   1
N/A  34

30. C:71
How old are you?
18=1 * dependent
26=1
27=2
28=1
29=1
30=3
31=2
32=4
34=2
35=2
36=3
37=2
38=4
39=2
40=1
41=2
42=1
43=1
44=1
51=1
60=1

31. C:72
What was the last year of schooling that you completed? Please check one.
Some high school  0
High school or equivalent  2
Some college  2
College degree  6
Master's degree  18
Ph.D.  2
Some graduate work  5
Other  0
Teaching credential  3

32. C:73
Are you a student?
No   26
Yes, Part time  11
Yes, Full time 1

33. C:74
Are you employed?
   No 3
   Yes, Part time 15
   Yes, Full time 10
   Yes 10

34. C:75
In 1990, how much money did you, yourself, gross before taxes? Please include any student loans or government aid (i.e., public assistance, scholarships, unemployment compensation, etc.).
   $1-$4,999 5
   $5,000-$9,999 2
   $10,000-$19,999 9
   $20,000-$29,999 7
   $30,000-$39,999 11
   $40,000-$49,999 1
   Over $50,000 2

35. C:76
What do you estimate to be your combined family income for 1990?
   $1-$4,999 0
   $5,000-$9,999 1
   $10,000-$19,999 2
   $20,000-$29,999 8
   $30,000-$39,999 14
   $40,000-$49,999 6
   $50,000-$59,999 2
   $60,000-$69,999 3
   $70,000-$79,999 0
   $80,000-$89,999 0
   $90,000+ 0
   No answer 2

36. C:77-80
On average each month, how many hours do you spend volunteering or working for no pay aside from your household duties. Do not include the time you spend planning your Cohousing community. Check one space per line.

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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Political Activism</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>Church Work</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
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</table>
Dear N Street Cohouser:

As many of you already know, I am working on a master's degree from the School for International Training in Brattleboro Vermont. I am writing my thesis on cohousing. I'll be comparing N Street Cohousing with Muir Commons, the cohousing community in West Davis. What I feel is needed is a practical reference for future cohousers as well as an analysis of what is really involved in creating a cohousing community.

It is for this reason that I am asking you to fill out this questionnaire. Your responses are optional but I would love to have everyone's response so that I can be as thorough as possible in my study. Because I administered a similar questionnaire to the Muir Commons cohousing group, there may be questions that won't precisely reflect the N Street situation. I also realize some of the questions may be personal; I will keep individual responses confidential while doing everything I can to be professional in my analysis and conclusions.

Please answer the questions to the best of your ability. If you have questions or concerns, don't hesitate to come ask me personally or give me a call at 756-4493. You can also write comments in the margins or on separate sheets. Feel free to write more than the space allowed; my lines are only a suggested guide and are not meant to inhibit your thoughts and ideas. Please return completed questionnaires to my back door by Sunday, October 27th. Thanks so much for taking the time to provide your perspective!

Donna Spreitzer

P.S. Please disregard the C-codes in the left margins. They will allow me to tabulate the responses with greater ease.

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

1. How many months have you been involved with this community? (Circle the number on the left corresponding to your response.)

1 0-6 months
2 6-12 months
3 13-18 months
4 19-24 months
5 over 24 months

2. Please rank in order of importance your top 3 reasons for choosing to live in N Street Cohousing. (With 1 being your first priority, 2 your second, etc.)

Affordability
Closer relationship with neighbors / sense of community
Home ownership
Innovative lifestyle
Location
Shared Meals
Other

1
3. How long do you plan to live in N Street Cohousing? (Circle the number on the left that corresponds to the response you think is most accurate)

1. less than one year
2. between one and two years
3. over 2 years
4. Not sure but probably several years
5. I don't have plans to leave

4. What factors may cause you to leave N Street Cohousing? (Circle all applicable)

1. Rent / mortgage / cost increases
2. Job relocation
3. Not enough privacy
4. Interpersonal differences
5. Cost / benefit ratio out of balance
6. None of the above
7. Other ________________

5. On average, how many hours per month do you spend designing N Street Cohousing? (i.e., attending meetings, working on committees, designing the landscape, etc.) (Circle the one closest to reality)

1. None
2. 1-2 hours
3. 3-4 hours
4. 5-7 hours

5. 8-10 hours
6. 11-15 hours
7. 16-20 hours
8. over 20 hours per month

6. Is every adult member of N Street Cohousing expected to contribute about the same time and energy as everyone else? (Circle one)

1. Yes
2. No

7. Do you feel that the work in designing and planning N Street Cohousing has been shared equitably among members of this group?

1. Yes
2. No

8. Do you feel that each person contributes what they can and over time it will probably balance itself out?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not sure
9. What do you feel are the most important things to have or do in the common house within the next two years? (Circle up to five)

| 1 | Meetings | 7 | TV/VCR  |
| 2 | Meals    | 8 | Recreation/Exercise |
| 3 | Childcare| 9 | Music room |
| 4 | Laundry  | 10 | Art/Crafts |
| 5 | Guest room(s) | 11 | Meditation |
| 6 | Library  | 12 | Other |

10. Please list the advantages and drawbacks of a common house as you see them?

Advantages: __________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

Drawbacks: _________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

11. How many times per week do you typically partake in community meals? (Circle one)

| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

12. What, to you, would be the ideal long term ownership situation of the common house? (Please circle the number corresponding to your top choice.)

| 1 | Divide ownership among all 9 households through equal investments. |
| 2 | Divide ownership among all houses that are owner occupied, through some means of investment. |
| 3 | Divide ownership among all the adults living in the community who own houses (or parts of houses), by means of investments. |
| 4 | Divide ownership among all adults in the community, both owners and renters, by means of investments. |
| 5 | Divide ownership among only those who can afford to make an investment. |
| 6 | Continue as is, with community holding lease on house and managing rental arrangement. |
| 7 | Other: ___________________________________________________________
13. Do you feel that there are unresolved issues between owners and renters of houses in the community? (Circle the number corresponding to your answer)

1  Yes
2  No (if no, skip the next question)

14. In your opinion, what are the issues? _______________________________________________________

15. How important to you is it that ownership of property in the community (the common house, for example) is shared among some or all in the community rather than held by a few individuals? On a scale from one to five, with 1 being extremely important and 5 being unimportant, please circle your response.

1  2  3  4  5

16. What types of things would you like to see the N Street Cohousing buy or do that might require using the community fund? (Your answer may include what is already occurring) _______________________________________________________

17. How should the fund accumulate money? (Circle only one.)

1  All adults pay a fixed amount on a regular basis (Currently this is $5/mo).
2  When particular needs arise, all adults share the up-front cost evenly (i.e., when a hot tub is installed, all adults contribute money).
3  When particular needs arise, all households share the up-front cost evenly.
4  When particular needs arise, the anticipated users split the up-front cost.
5  Contributions should be based on ability to pay.
6  Establish user fees; people contribute as they use or do something.
7  Other _______________________________________________________

18. If everyone were expected to contribute equally, how much money would you be willing to contribute to a community fund each month? (Circle one)

1  $0
2  $1-5
3  $6-15
4  $16-25
5  $26-35
6  $36-45
7  over $46
19. What do you anticipate / enjoy the most about Cohousing?


20. What things, issues, etc. scare you the most about Cohousing?


21. How, if any, have your feelings about Cohousing changed since you first became involved in this community?


22. Do you feel comfortable with how decisions are made? (Circle one)

   1  Yes
   2  No

23. What factors contribute to your feelings of comfort or discomfort with the decision-making process?


24. In general, do you feel that your opinion is considered when decisions are made?

   1  Yes
   2  No

25. What improvements, if any, would you like to see happen in the decision-making process?


26. Do you feel a sense of community among the N Street Cohousers?

   1  Yes
   2  No

27. What would you say are the prominent values or lifestyle patterns shared by those in N Street Cohousing?


Comments?
28. What, if anything, would you try to do differently next time in planning a cohousing community?

29. If you could give one suggestion to new Cohousing groups, what would it be?

* DEMOGRAPHICS *

Please circle or fill in where appropriate:

30. What is your marital status?

1  Single
2  Married
3  Living with Significant Other or Mate

31. Do you have children living with you?

1  No
2  Yes, Full time
3  Yes, Part time

32. How many people live in your house?

# Full Time _____  # Part Time _____

33. Of these, what number are not related to you (i.e., don't include lovers, significant others, children of partners, etc.) (Circle the number)

1  2  3  4  5  6

34. If you could afford to live without unrelated housemates, would you?

1  Yes  2  No _____

35. Are you a student?

1  Yes (part time)  2  Yes (full time)  3  No

36. Are you employed?

1  Yes (part time)  2  Yes (full time)  3  No
37. How old are you? ___

38. What was the last year of schooling that you completed? (Please circle one)

1  Some high school
2  High school or equivalent
3  Some college
4  College degree
5  Master's degree
6  Ph.D.
7  Some graduate work
8  Teaching credential
9  Other ________________________

39. In 1990, how much money did you, yourself, gross before taxes? Please include any student loans or government aid (i.e., public assistance, scholarships, unemployment compensation, etc.) (Circle the number corresponding to the gross amount)

1  $1-$4,999
2  $5,000-$9,999
3  $10,000-$19,999
4  $20,000-$29,999
5  $30,000-$39,999
6  $40,000-$49,999
7  Over $50,000

40. What do you estimate to be your combined family income for 1990?

1  $1-$4,999
2  $5,000-$9,999
3  $10,000-$19,999
4  $20,000-$29,999
5  $30,000-$39,999
6  $40,000-$49,999
7  $50,000-$59,999
8  $60,000-$69,999
9  $70,000-$79,999
10  $80,000-$89,999
11  $90,000+

41. On average each month, how many hours do you spend volunteering or working for no pay aside from your household duties. Do not include the time you spend planning your Cohousing community. Check one space per line.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Service Work</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1-2</th>
<th>3-5</th>
<th>6-8</th>
<th>7-10</th>
<th>over 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activism / organizational work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Please feel free to use the back of this page to elaborate on anything above; to provide me with other information that you feel is important for my work; and/or to give me feedback on this questionnaire.

THANK YOU !!!!
APPENDIX D

N STREET QUESTIONNAIRE KEY

Where C = Column used for coding; responses are coded by numbers 1-99; write-in responses are in *italics*; and number of responses by category are bolded to the right.

C:1 Respondent Number: 1-22 (in order questionnaire was returned)

C:2 1. How many months have you been involved with this community?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-6 months</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6-12 months</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-18 months</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-24 months</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over 24 months</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C:3-5 2. Please rank in order of importance your top 3 reasons for choosing to live in N Street Cohousing. (1 being your first priority)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Closer relationship with neighbors / sense of community</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovative lifestyle</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Meals</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Home ownership</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordability</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurturing environment for children</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual Empowerment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of shared facilities that are better than I could own myself</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expanding the garden / more open space</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was here before - evolved from first co-op house</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C:6 3. How long do you plan to live in N Street Cohousing?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>1st</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than one year</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between one and two years</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 2 years</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure but probably several years</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't have plans to leave</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C:7-10 4. What factors may cause you to leave N Street Cohousing?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>1st</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job relocation</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent / mortgage / cost increases</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interpersonal differences 3
Not enough privacy 2
Cost / benefit ratio out of balance 1
None of the above 2
Move to a more rural environment 1
Academic relocation 1
If made to feel like an unwanted community member 1
Move to a place on the coast 1
Move to a more rural cohousing community 1

C:11 5. On average, how many hours per month do you spend designing N Street Cohousing?

1 None 3
2 1-2 hours 6
3 3-4 hours 4
4 5-7 hours 5
5 8-10 hours 3
6 11-15 hours 0
7 16-20 hours 1
8 over 20 hours per month 0

C:12 6. Is every adult member of N Street Cohousing expected to contribute about the same time and energy as everyone else? (Circle one)

1 inappropriate answer
Yes 5
No 16

C:13 7. Do you feel that the work in designing and planning N Street Cohousing has been shared equitably among members of this group?

Yes 5
No 17

C:14 8. Do you feel that each person contributes what they can and over time it will probably balance itself out?

1 no answer
Yes 16
No 2
Not sure 3
9. What do you feel are the most important things to have or do in the common house within the next two years? (Circle up to five)

- Meetings: 22
- Meals: 20
- Library: 10
- TV/VCR: 9
- Guest room(s): 6
- Laundry: 4
- Art/Crafts: 3
- Meditation: 3
- Childcare: 2
- Recreation/Exercise: 2
- Music room: 1
- Casual social gatherings: 3
- Children's play room: 1
- Computer room: 1
- Celebrations: 1

C:21-24 10. Please list the advantages and drawbacks of a common house as you see them?

Advantages:

- *Draws community together/Community center or focal point* 8
- *Provides intentional gathering/relationship-building environment; facilitates non-threatening socialization* 8
- Extension of home / More space and flexibility 5
- Communal atmosphere / Engenders community 5
- Commonly owned location for meals and meetings 3
- Meals / Communal eating space 4
- Cooking space for 40 people - Easier to prepare meals 5
- Designated place for meetings 3
- Variety of uses / Activities close to home 4
- Place for everyone in community to feel at home and welcome 1
- Good vibes from collective effort that's gone into it/Working together 3
- Group ownership of house and community 1
- *CH being an evolutionary state so there's a willingness to plan, fundraise, negotiate as needed to further development* 1

C:25-28 Drawbacks:

- Devising and implementing maintenance/cleaning schedule 9
- Additional obligations (financial and time) 4
- Occasional difficult dynamics between tenants of common house & other community members 4
Maintaining common house inhabitants who accept CH and its constraints
Management is difficult to organize 1
Competition for types of uses/scheduling conflicts 2
No clear policy on how community gains access to more space 1
10-10 hours - inaccessible at times 1
Not having space for the kids to play 1
No clear sense of how landscaping will be developed and maintained 1
Too small if community grows 1
Need space for washing machine 1
Not designed from beginning as a common house 1
Under use of space by community members 1
None 1

C:29 11. How many times per week do you typically partake in community meals?

1 4
2 10
3 8
4 0
5 0

C:30 12. What, to you, would be the ideal long term ownership situation of the common house?

Divide ownership among all adults in the community, both owners and renters, by means of investments. 5
Divide ownership among all the adults living in the community who own houses (or parts of houses), by means of investments. 3
Divide ownership among only those who can afford to make an investment. 3
Continue as is, with community holding lease on house and managing rental arrangement. 2
Divide ownership among all 9 households through equal investments. 2
Divide ownership among all houses that are owner occupied, through some means of investment. 0
Community as a corporate entity should own common house 2
When 10 houses are owned, each owner contributes 1/10 towards purchase of common house. 1
Solicit owners and have it be voluntary - only those who can afford it 1
Land trust, nonprofit or limited equity co-op 1
13. Do you feel that there are unresolved issues between owners and renters of houses in the community?

1 no answer; 1 inappropriate response
Yes 12
No (if no, skip the next question) 8

14. In your opinion, what are the issues?

- Non-investor "power" vs owner power 1
- Difference in rights 1
- We operate on a model that those who make down payments own, and those who pay off loan (renters) don't which I feel is wrong 1
- Lack of interest in the community on the part of the renters 1
- Monetary investment in CH as indication of long term commitment 1
- Sense of belonging 1
- Policy decision-making or long term issues 1
- Everyone in community needs to share equally the financial burden of community ie. common house 2
- Equitability - the "feeling" of ownership - it's important that members own part of the community 1
- How much control of time and space should residents of CH have vs other community members? 1
- How about when community needs rooms now occupied by tenants? 1
- I think ____ has issues about us as landlords 1
- Who controls what 1
- No sense of it being all right if one is here temporarily 1

15. How important to you is it that ownership of property in the community (the common house, for example) is shared among some or all in the community rather than held by a few individuals? On a scale from one to five, with 1 being extremely important and 5 being unimportant.

1 no response
1 6
2 5
3 5
4 2
5 3

16. What types of things would you like to see N Street Cohousing buy or do that might require using the community fund?

- Workshop / tools 7
- Garden equipment / landscaping supplies 5
- Kitchen supplies 5
Furnishings for CH
Hot tub
Playground equipment / kids' play structure / ground cover here
Retrofitting for energy efficiency
Supplies for common house
Fun events
Truck / van / vehicle
Outdoor lighting on pathways
Owning common house
Office equipment
Bike storage
Books for library
Sauna
Cable TV in CH
Musical instruments
Green house
Garage conversion
Outings
Redo landscape - better organize the open space
Child care and home teaching

C:40 17. How should the fund accumulate money? (Circle only one.)

All adults pay a fixed amount on a regular basis
(Currently this is $5/mo).
Contributions should be based on ability to pay.
When particular needs arise, all adults share the up-front cost
evenly (i.e., when a hot tub is installed, all adults contribute money).
When particular needs arise, the anticipated users split the up-front cost.
Establish user fees; people contribute as they use or do something.
When particular needs arise, all households share the up-front cost
evenly.
Combination of the above plus fundraising

C:41 18. If everyone were expected to contribute equally, how much money
would you be willing to contribute to a community fund each month?

$0  0
$1-5  11
$6-15  8
$16-25  3
$26-35  0
$36-45  0
over $46  0
19. What do you anticipate / enjoy the most about Cohousing?

- Sense of community / neighborhood
- Eating meals / sharing dinners
- Working together / sharing skills & experiences & ideas
- Informal interactions / spontaneous socializing & activities
- Interesting / fun people
- Sharing resources
- Support / love
- Close relationships with neighbors / extended family feeling
- Easy place to raise children / safe for kids
- Community garden
- Friendship
- Savings of time (meals)
- Nurturing environment
- Community outings
- Status of being an up and coming affordable, environmentally sensitive, ethnically diverse neat group of people with kids
- Having plenty of privacy when needed
- Access to nice hobby/tool facilities
- Diversity / open-mindedness
- Shared experience of life
- Learning more about communication
- Lack of isolation
- Common babysitting
- Going visiting without having to go out on the street
- Common goal
- Cooperation
- The "whole" of what we've done / been so far
- Future possibilities
- Working our situations through consensus manner
- Basic acceptance of other people's lifestyles

20. What things, issues, etc. scare you the most about Cohousing?

- Financial aspects
- Individuals might feel pressured to contribute more than they could afford (time and energy)
- Ugly relationship problems in a small community / break-ups
- People taking sides - factions - ugliness
- Leaving
- Consensus problems / people blocking
- Excessive financial dependence on too few individuals
- Ownership problems
People will be discouraged/scared by ownership issues and just say they give up on figuring it out
Buying a house
Sociological dynamics
People not getting along
People not letting go of old patterns / uncomfortableness with sharing
Mine/our conflicts within community and within each of us / self interest
There seems to be anxiety about relations with residents of CH which gets overblown through indirect communication
Apathy
Houses / development too small - cramped together
Too much noise
Problems with tenants
Collective consciousness conflicts
That it will fall apart
Loss of ability to do anything you want to do

C:52-53 21. How, if any, have your feelings about Cohousing changed since you first became involved in this community?

None / not much / same
Very impressed by successful functioning of community
Feeling are strong and getting stronger
Trust others more
More firmly resolved that it is the way to live
We've come a long way and have a long way to go
Originally I didn't think we would have followed the model as closely as we have
More relaxed
My hopes have largely been confirmed
Convinced that living together in a community is viable and workable
Still believe in it
Love it more than I could ever have imagined
Spend more time "working" on community than I have thought I would have been willing to do
What's difficult and what's wonderful about the creation and participation in "community" have greatly expanded in my years here
Fears of no privacy or the unknown have disappeared
More positive; more can be accomplished
Didn't have any expectations
Realization of complexity of it all
Less constraints than I thought but more hierarchy than I would like
It will not be easy and simple and it will take a long time to finish
It takes a lot more time and emotional effort
Realize how much more work is involved  
Not so idealistic  
Doesn't meet all of my needs - need a life outside community too

C:54 22. Do you feel comfortable with how decisions are made? (Circle one)

One no response
Yes  18
No  3

C:55-56 23. What factors contribute to your feelings of comfort or discomfort with the decision-making process?

Pluses
Consensus  9
Voice can be heard  3
Work through process and problems  2
I trust others judgment  2
A lot of thought goes into major decisions  1
People are encouraged to say what they feel and others try to listen  1
That I can disagree and hopefully not be judged  1
Good documentation of meetings  1
Level of attention and participation among people  1
Good people in process  1

Minuses
Consensus blocked by one obstinate person  2
The process takes too long - decisions can not be made quickly  1
Needs more organization  1
Uncomfortable with ability of a few to stymie will of the many  1
Isn't enough distribution of ownership - process is stifled  1
Limited flexibility on the part of some people  1
Slow / bureaucratic  1

C:57 24. In general, do you feel that your opinion is considered when decisions are made?

1 no answer
1 Yes  21
2 No  0

C:58-60 25. What improvements, if any, would you like to see happen in the decision-making process?

None  4
Decisions should be made by those who have a like investment and
commitment in the community
Homeowners should have more "equal" say in decisions - need to take a larger share in shaping community
Personal skills might be improved, but not much to improve on policy level
Deal with issues when they become issues instead of taking time to decide something that isn't dividing
Move faster somehow?
Group is much more flexible than some individuals are - we limit our participation because others are unable to put "limits" on themselves
New people need to understand past process and get training in it
More people should participate
Committee members decide; post decisions; if no objection in one week, act
Deal more with feelings and other not so "functional" aspects
Place more attention on interpersonal relations
More folks taking individual responsibility for things getting done
Perhaps issues brought up on "ballots" and everyone voting on them

C:61 26. Do you feel a sense of community among the N Street Cohousers?

1 inappropriate response; 1 no answer

Yes 20
No 0

C:62-63 Comments?

I couldn't imagining living anywhere else 2
It feels like a family / extended family 1
N street is an interesting experiment 1
Wonder how long it would last without a few key people keeping it going 1
It waxes and wanes - we're on an upswing 1
I know my neighbors well and do a lot of stuff with them 1
I love all the kids, esp., since they're not mine 1
Could be more spiritual 1
More intimacy on a community wide level 1
I think there be a bountiful of such here 1
Not all cohousers 1
Not as much as I would like to 1

C:64-68 27. What would you say are the prominent values or lifestyle patterns shared by those in N Street Cohousing?

Openness of emotions / feelings 18
Respect and concern for the earth and people / green living /
environmentalism / ecologically concerned 17
Liberal politically / progressive / left / socially & politically aware 7
Respect for diversity inclusive / open minded 6
Supportive / caring 3
Shared resources / conservation 3
Healthiness 3
Happiness / enjoyment of life 3
Children 3
Value good communication 2
Cooperation / work with groups / conflict resolution 2
Reflection of consumerism and mainstream ways 2
Well educated 2
Belief in a "better way" of living than typical American 1
Wanting to make the world a better place 1
Valuing community 1
Single motherhood 1
People are important as individuals and as a group 1
Hardworking and responsible 1
Not uptight / mellow individuals 1
Personal growth 1
Friends 1
Don't like the hegemony of the existing nuclear family, materialistic, mindless society we live in 1
Nonexploitation 1
Concerned about social and economic justice 1
True concern for harmony 1
Lack of fear of difficulty 1
Interest in / tolerance of complexities and decision-making 1
We all give of ourselves 1
Watch TV less than the norm and eat beef less than the norm 1
Not upwardly mobile 1
Making the most of the here and now 1
Family values 1
An organic approach to living 1
Communing with all of mother nature 1

C:69-70 28. What, if anything, would you try to do differently next time in planning a cohousing community?

Work more on group process
Spend more time on common goals and decision-making process before we begin design 2
Make sure all had same values of children and lack of value of cats 1
Change design
- Big substantial houses where noise doesn’t come through walls
- Build common house ourselves
- Build from the ground up - spent a lot of effort tearing things down

Change designers / change design process
- Agree as committed group on long range vision, then the process of making it happen would happen incrementally versus incrementally piecing it all together
- Document all parts of planning decisions so that history can be passed down in an organized fashion
- Would have signed agreements with people buying other houses
- That my actions and inaction will be respected and not have to be justified by others
- More structure

Other suggestions
- Glad we could enjoy benefits of cohousing while community evolves instead of years of planning beforehand
- Understand house financing more completely
- More money up front to remove anxiety about it
- Understand it will take longer to accomplish and plan accordingly
- Get more involved
- Have the houses in community owned by community
- Use of existing units with tenants and owners has some great strengths
- Don't know

C:71 29. If you could give one suggestion to new Cohousing groups, what would it be?
- Be patient
- Orient new members thoroughly so all agree / know the program
- Organize
- Concentrate on designing bylaws or charter/goals/vision first before dealing with physical design
- Enjoy the process - it's a long one
- Keep a sense of humor - don't get so bogged down with decision-making that you forget to nurture each other and have fun
- Know how to buy houses and understand uniqueness of many people living together
- Start with clear goals before action is taken, to reduce rehashing goals
- Talk about children - it seems that children are the major source of conflict in the community
- Hug each other a lot - esp., after working through tough stuff
Have faith = don't give up 1
Stay committed to community 1
Write all agreements down 1
Prepare for long planning time 1
Love one another 1

C:72 30. What is your marital status?

Single 9
Married 9
Living with Significant Other or Mate 4

C:73 31. Do you have children living with you?

One house had both full and part time kids living there 12
No 9
Yes, Full time 2
Yes, Part time 2

C:74-75 32. How many people live in your house?

# Full Time
1 0
2 2
3 5
4 6
5 6
6 3

# Part Time
0 14
1 7
2 0
3 1
4 0

C:76 33. Of these, what number are not related to you (ie., don't include lovers, significant others, children of partners, etc.) (Circle the number)

1 8
2 4
3 5
4 2
5 2
6 2
34. If you could afford to live without unrelated housemates, would you?

One inappropriate response:
- No: 13
- Yes: 8

35. Are you a student?

- No: 10
- Yes (full time): 7
- Yes (part time): 5

36. Are you employed?

- No: 3
- Yes (full time): 8
- Yes (part time): 11

37. How old are you?

- 21: 1
- 22: 2
- 23: 1
- 25: 1
- 26: 2
- 27: 1
- 28: 2
- 29: 1
- 31: 2
- 32: 2
- 34: 2
- 35: 1
- 38: 2
- 40: 1
- 41: 1
- 44: 1

38. What was the last year of schooling that you completed?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some high school</td>
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<td>High school or equivalent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College degree</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's degree</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Option</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Some graduate work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Teaching credential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C:82 39. In 1990, how much money did you, yourself, gross before taxes?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Count</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>$1-$4,999</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td>$10,000-$19,999</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>$20,000-$29,999</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>$30,000-$39,999</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>$40,000-$49,999</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Over $50,000</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

C:83 40. What do you estimate to be your combined family income for 1990?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>$1-$4,999</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>$10,000-$19,999</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>$20,000-$29,999</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>$60,000-$69,999</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>$70,000-$79,999</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>$80,000-$89,999</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>$90,000+</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C:84-87 41. On average each month, how many hours do you spend volunteering or working for no pay aside from your household duties.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
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<td>3-5</td>
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<td>6-8</td>
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<td>7-10</td>
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<td>over 10</td>
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C:84 Community Service Work | 11 4 2 2 0 0 |
C:85 Activism / organizational work | 6 5 1 0 0 0 |
C:86 Church work | 13 1 0 0 0 0 |
C:87 Other | 5 0 0 1 2 3 |
Muir Commons Membership Agreement
proposed 5/20/90

OBJECTIVES AND PURPOSES

1.1 PURPOSE. The purpose of Muir Commons is to create a neighborhood which fosters strong community involvement of the residents. This involvement is encouraged by the design of a Common house, the landscaping, and the siting of the individual homes on the 2.83 acre site of the Aspen development in Davis, California.

1.2 The membership guidelines assume that involvement in the Group is a reflection of commitment and that those committed to living in the Muir Commons Cohousing Group shall make the decisions which affect their community.

MEMBERSHIP

2.1 VOTING MEMBERS

2.2 Voting members have full and equal rights in the Group.

2.3 The number of voting members will equal the number of houses.

2.4 To achieve voting membership a household must:

2.4.1 Sign the group’s statement of intent.

2.4.2 Pay membership dues and any other fees agreed to by the group.

2.4.3 Accept and assent to decisions already made by the group.

3.1 TO MAINTAIN VOTING MEMBERSHIP a household must attend three meetings a month. One must be a general meeting. The other two meeting requirements may be satisfied by attending a general meeting, a working group meeting, or performing tasks (e.g. daycare, minute taker).

3.2 If a voting member is unable to attend any of the required three monthly meetings, said member must notify the Membership Secretary in advance.

3.3 The Secretary has the authority to determine the legitimacy of an absence.

3.4 The member may appeal the Secretary’s decision to the Coordinating Committee.

3.5 At the end of the month in which a member does not attend three meetings, the Membership Secretary will contact said member to inform him/her of a potential change in membership status.

3.6 Absences without notice to the Membership Secretary or unacceptable absences, must be made up by the end of the following month.

3.7 If a member fails to make up missed meetings and pay dues as specified above, the member will be dropped to the bottom of the waiting list and lose voting membership status.

4.1 WAITING LIST MEMBERSHIP. A household may become a waiting list member by paying and maintaining membership dues. Waiting list members may attend general and working group meetings and will receive mailings.

4.2 A Waiting List member may become a voting member when the following conditions are met:

4.2.1 A voting member resigns or is removed from the membership list.

4.2.2 The Waiting List member is on top of the waiting list.

4.2.3 The following criteria will be used to determine waiting list order:

1) The number of Months the household attended at least 3 meetings consecutively.

2) The date of the first meeting attended.
3) The date of first dues payment.
4.2.4 The new Voting Member will pay the M&D fees and any other appropriate fees as defined by the treasurer.

4.2.5 HOUSE SELECTION
   A. Voting Member house selection
      When a house becomes available it will be made known to the general membership immediately by phone tree and in the next newsletter. A meeting date will be set for all current members that are interested in the available house (or in other houses that may become available) by the WLC within two weeks of the original notification. At this meeting the participants will work out among themselves whatever house exchanges are necessary. If an impasse results and need is not obvious, first house choice goes to the most senior member. This can be determined using the criteria in 4.2.3
   B. House selection for waiting list members
      Whatever house is available from the above process is to be offered to the member at the top of the waiting list. The household has a maximum of 2 weeks to decide to become a Voting member and accept the available house; knowing that this will allow participation in process A. If the household decides not to become a V.M. then the 2nd household gets the choice etc. Where there is a tie for eligibility for Voting membership the relevant parties must meet and decide which household becomes a V.M. If an impasse results, a method of random selection will be used and supervised by the Waiting List Coordinator.

DECISION MAKING

5.1 OBJECTIVE Muir Commons objective in decision making is to build a consensus among all voting members. When consensus is not possible a quorum is acceptable. A quorum is when a proposal is passed by 2/3 of the current membership (17 of the 26 Households).

5.2 VOTING If the group cannot come to a consensus among all members after two general meetings a member may call for a vote if:
   5.2.1 A motion to have a vote is seconded.
   5.2.2 Ratified by a simple majority of those present.
   5.2.3 A quorum exists at that meeting.
   5.2.4 ADVANCE NOTICE. When possible a draft of proposed changes shall be published in the newsletter or distributed to all voting members before it will be discussed at a General Meeting.
   5.2.5 PROXY. If a voting member cannot attend a meeting, he/she may extend a proxy vote by contacting two voting members or by sending a written statement explaining his/her position. If a proxy has been extended, the member shall be considered present for purposes of reaching a quorum.
   5.5 VOTING METHOD. A verbal vote will be taken by a reading of the current voting membership list. Decisions will be recorded by the Membership Secretary.
   5.6 In special circumstances, the vote will be anonymous and tallied by two voting members.

ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE AND CURRENTLY EXISTING COMMITTEES

6.1 Purpose. The Purpose of a committee is to deal with specific issues in a working group. Each committee will bring back to the general meeting or meeting with a quorum a draft proposal for discussion, refinement, and consensus.
6.2 Currently Existing Committees
   6.2.1 COORDINATING COMMITTEE

page 2 of 3
a. The Coordinating Committee includes one representative from each working committee and two representatives from the voting membership at large.
b. A three-month commitment to this committee is necessary to ensure efficiency. The commitment begins mid-month, with a system of staggered participation to ensure continuity. A member may serve consecutive terms, or terms may be rotated.
c. This committee meets prior to each General meeting.
d. Some of the tasks the Coordinating Committee performs are:
   (1) Prioritize issues and tasks.
   (2) Set the agenda for General Meetings, accommodating any input from committees, task-persons, working groups, and voting members.
   (3) Designate facilitators and minutes-takers for General Meetings.

6.3 OTHER COMMITTEES & TASKS
6.3.1 Design Committee
   6.3.2 (1) Landscape
   6.3.2 (2) Playground
   6.3.3 (3) Common House
6.3.2 Finance and Legal
6.3.3 Communications and Records. This committee will perform the following tasks:
   6.3.3.1 Compile, edit, and distribute a semi-monthly newsletter and other mailings to members.
   6.3.3.2 File minutes and reports.
   6.3.3.3 Maintain a mailing list and telephone tree.
   6.3.3.4 Compile newcomer orientation packets.
   6.3.3.5 Condense minutes for the newsletter when necessary.

6.4 TASKS: will be considered equal to attendance at a meeting that same month.
6.4.1 Childcare
6.4.2 Minutes-takers. The minutes-taker’s duties include the following:
   (1) Take minutes at the meetings
   (2) Type these minutes taken and give them to the Communications and Records Committee for filing and inclusion in the newsletter.

OFFICERS

SECTION 7.1 DESIGNATION

SECTION 7.2 MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY. The secretary shall attend to the following:
   (a) Maintain voting membership records
   (b) Compile attendance from the minutes
   (c) Keep track of the waiting list
   (d) Arrange newcomer orientations and give out newcomer packets

SECTION 7.3 TREASURER The Treasurer shall be the chief financial officer of the Group and shall attend to the following:
   (a) Collect membership dues and fees agreed to by the Group.
   (b) Send notices to members for overdue dues and fees.
   (c) Pay the Muir Commons Cohousing Group bills.
## N STREET COHOUSING GENERAL INFORMATION

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MISSION STATEMENT

N Street Cohousing is a nurturing environment that offers a practical adaptation to challenges of modern living. We live affordably, make use of shared resources, cultivate personal relationships, and strive for diversity. While there is an individual level of responsibility to the community, the community acknowledges personal choices and needs.

GOALS

1. Develop a common house and other facilities that meet the priorities and needs of the evolving community.

2. Develop an attractive, safe, integrated and ecologically-sound, friendly village atmosphere that meets the needs of children and adults.

3. Develop and maintain group processes, including celebrations, rituals, and decision and policy making that encourage participation, social interaction, emotional support and diversity.

4. Strive for diversity in age, gender, sexual preference, disabilities, ethnic/cultural background, economic status, and occupation.

5. Pursue policies, attitudes, and practices to conserve and share resources and lessen the community’s negative impact on the environment.

6. Help make members feel at home in the community through established institutions.

7. Maintain affordability within the community.

8. Participate in activities and decision making that affect our neighborhood and local environment.


10. Encourage cooperative child care and after school activities for community members.

11. Encourage people to get more involved in the community, not just participate in structured activities (play and hang out).
COMMON HOUSE

Living room, dining room and kitchen are open to the entire community. At least three meals per week will be prepared by the community. In addition, other uses of the common house include, but are not limited to: food buying club, committee meetings, TV/VCR use, vision quest & community meetings, board games, rainy day activities for kids after school, and other social activities.

Private hours for the common house are 10:00 pm -10:00 am, Sunday through Thursday and 11:00 pm -10:00 am, Friday and Saturday. Hours of community use can be extended if agreed to by common house occupants. If, at any time, the occupants feel that the noise level is overly intrusive, they are encouraged to bring this to the attention of those creating the intrusion.

Community members using the space must clean up immediately after use; things should be left better than found. General clean-up duties are rotated among community houses.

Except for emergencies, the bathrooms are not community space. Guests are encouraged to use facilities at the home of their host.

There is a map in the kitchen of where items are located. Only the bottom shelf in the pantry cupboard is for community use.

One third of the PG&E bill will be paid by the community.

Community members do not have access to the household phone. However, there is a second phone line that could be used by the community at a future time.

Common house occupants are responsible for basic upkeep of the grounds. They also have first priority for garden space. If no occupant is interested in gardening, the garden space would be open to any community member via the outdoor committee.

Parking in the driveway is for the household only, except for unloading.

Smoking is not allowed in the house.

Cats are allowed in the bedrooms but not in any of the common spaces.

Community members should try to use the back door on the common house, if at all possible while leaving the front door for the household to use.

At the time of lease renewal, the community has the right to change the 716 house contract to reflect the needs of the community. This may include the community's desire to rent bedroom space for other purposes.

Occupants must make a decision to renew for the following year by July 1 and will be asked to sign a new lease at this time. If an occupant decides not to renew, or is evicted, the interviewing committee is responsible for looking for a replacement.

The new roommate interviewing committee is comprised of at least one household
member and at least one community member with a maximum of four community members.

The community is leasing the common house from Kevin and Linda. Kevin and Linda will advance $50-75/month for a maintenance/repair fund.

Issues needing resolution can be brought up to the Common House Management team. Linda is the contact person on that team to deal with crisis problems that can't wait until a meeting.

COMMUNITY MEALS

Community meals occur usually 2-3 times per week. The meal is cooked by a team of usually 2 people with a possible third person doing cleanup and last minute meal preparation. The sign up sheet for meals is supposed to be posted a minimum of 3 days before the meal on the bulletin board in the community room. The sign up sheet should list the menu and also indicate if the meal is spicy or that there can be a non-dairy option. (If eaters want to have that option, s/he should indicate so on the sign up sheet.) The community room is located in the garage of 716 N St.

There is always a vegetarian main dish and there usually is an optional meat dish. Cooks are encouraged to use organic and seasonal foods. Meals range from the simple - make-your-own potato bar to the complex - 7 course Thai dinners.

Meals are served at 6:00 or 6:30 pm. The night varies depending on the best night for the cooks. It's encouraged that at least two meals/week are during week nights (Mon-Fri).

It is acceptable to cancel a meal if one of the cooks is sick. However, it would appreciated if the cooks would try to trade with someone else or find a replacement before canceling.

A sign up calendar for the next month is circulated at meals and team cooks pick their dates. At the end of the month, the next month's calendar is circulated in the "mailboxes" located in the dining room of the common house.

Community members generally eating two or more meals per week are expected to cook once a month. More infrequent eaters can cook once every 7-8 times eating. For those who prefer not to cook, 2 cleanups are equal to one cooking turn. Those who desire to clean up are responsible for seeking out cooks who've signed up. If a person wants to make up for a month in which they didn't cook, s/he should feel free to sign up twice in the following month.

Each community member (which includes non contiguous households who cook and eat fairly regularly) is asked to try to limit guest invitations to 2 adults + children.

Cost is divided equally and paid for at the meal - to pay back the cooks. Small children cost $.75. Cost of the meal ranges between $1.50-$2.75 but is generally around $2.00. An additional $.25 surcharge is added to help pay for the cost of the community room.
If someone signs up who doesn't come to dinner, s/he is responsible for the cost if there was a net loss on the dinner to the cooks or community. Often last minute people sign up and that could cover if a signed-up person doesn't come. Cooks usually allow for several over so it's okay to check with the cooks to see if there's enough. However, if you know you're coming please sign up. It is important that you pay the night of the meal. It's your responsibility to make arrangements with the cooks if you can't. Please try to bring small bills. Also, please cross your name out on the sign up sheet after you've paid.

When people have guests, especially those interested in the community, they should be introduced at the meal.

There is a kids' table and we generally encourage children to sit and eat with the other children.

OPERATIONAL LOGISTICS FOR THE COOKS:

- Generally, don't park in the common house driveway except when unloading.

- There is a map of the kitchen/living area which will help you locate items you need.

- Before your meal, put away all the dishes/silverware & glasses from the drainboard.

- Fill several water pitchers with purified water from the big white jugs. Sometimes there is one in the kitchen. If not, you can get one in 724' porch. No need to charge for water.

- Fill the 3 basins with dishwater - 1 soapy, 1 rinse, 1 clorox rinse (3 Tbsp).

- Put labeled & dated food in refrigerator and list them on the refrigerator. It is important for those leaving spoilable items that they come back and remove them if they are not used.

- You can be reimbursed for any purchased cleaning supplies from community fund.

- After each meal: 1) wipe tabletops, empty garbage, sweep dining area and spot mop if necessary, sweep & mop the kitchen, put away dishes.

- The cooks should give the leftover money to the treasurer.
ITEMS AVAILABLE TO SHARE OR OWNED BY THE COMMUNITY

Bulk Food buying club: We can buy bulk and cases of food and toiletries at discounted prices from Mountain People's Warehouse (one of the natural foods wholesale distributors for the Davis Food Co-op) which delivers every 4 weeks. We have a monthly order meeting date which is on the calendar. The food is delivered to the 724 garage the following Tuesday. The meeting allows an opportunity to split quantities with other households. There's no minimum order per household but our overall order has to be $500. Generally, each participating household has a food order book. Monthly specials lists are delivered to 724 & 732 N St. Each participating house takes responsibility for calling in the monthly order and supervising the delivery on a rotating basis.

Tools: The tools are being purchased by the community over a four year period. Tools are located in 724 N St garage. The key is located behind the 724 fence next to the garage. There is a sign out sheet to be used for borrowing all tools and a $.25 charge per use (not per tool) will partially pay for repairs & replacements necessary. If a tool gets broken while a person is using it, it is her/his responsibility to get fixed within a few days (it's okay to ask someone else if you don't have time).

All community tools are sprayed with orange paint and numbered. If a person signs out a tool, s/he is agreeing to replace that tool if it is not returned to its proper location and signed back in. The tools committee should check on tools monthly.

Tools in the backyards should be color coded or labeled with your name. Things can be borrowed but should be put back to the household's area when not in use and wheelbarrows should not be left full. Screws, nails, etc are available for community use but the other items in the garage are privately owned and one needs to discuss their use with the 724 household.

If the community disbands or Kevin & Linda leave, they have the right to buy back their tools at the same 1/2 price cost that the community purchased them at ($469). The treasurer will be paying Kevin & Linda $10/month on an annual or semi-annual basis. Any new tool purchases need to be approved at a community meeting.

Workshop: There is a woodworking shop in the garage of 643 Lessley. There is a table saw, radial arm saw and other woodworking tools available for use in the shop. The shop is managed by Stuart and instructions for its use are posted in the workshop and in the community notebook.

Washing machine & dryer: The community washing machine is currently located in 708 N St garage. Cost is $.50/load. 708 N also has a dryer available for community use in their garage but people are encouraged to hang their clothes on the line. Rules of the dryer are located above dryer. Cost of dryer is $.25/10 mins of use.

Water purifier: Located @ 724 N, cost is $.25/gallon until paid off. Money paid to Linda until it's paid for.

VCR & rewinder: Is located in the living room of the common house. If people would like to borrow it the cost is $2.00 per use. Put money in pocket of VCR case. Also the rewind button is broken so take the separate rewinder.
**Hot tub:** We have access to community member Bob Harless's hot tub on Colgate. This is available to community members only. Bob or Laurie need to be called to see if it's an okay time for them. Be open to hearing it isn't. Cost is $2.00 per adult. Members need to read the other rules on separate sheet found in the N St Cohousing notebook.

**Chickens & eggs:** We have about 15 chickens in the chicken coop. All households are welcome to go in the chicken coop any time and collect eggs for their household. If there are no eggs, one can check with the household who is responsible for care of the chickens that month. (Household is listed on the monthly community calendar) They collect the eggs daily.

**Paint Shed:** In the driveway of 732 N St, there is a paint shed with leftover paint and painting supplies. Individuals are allowed to use anything in there which is not labeled with a household’s name to be saved for their house. Paint materials should be cleaned after use and not left in jars of paint thinner.

**Wet/Dry Vacuum:** Donated by former community member. It is located in 724 garage space. Should be checked out like any other tool. There are some attachments located on the floor to the right of the water heater.
RESPONSIBILITIES

Chicken yard & composting: All food stuff goes into chicken yard except coffee grinds. Crush egg shells going into chicken yard or put in compost. Each household will take responsibility for the chickens for one month on a rotating basis. The house responsible is written on the monthly calendar. It is helpful if the "outgoing" house reminds the "incoming" household of this responsibility. This includes checking the water & food, and collecting eggs daily. Also, household will buy a 25 lb bag of Layena crumbles or scratch grains during their month and when low, buy oyster shells to sprinkle weekly on their food. During the month, you should rake/scrape chicken feces out of the coop and chicken yard.

Fees: The community is collecting a voluntary $5/month fee which goes into the community fund for paying for community projects. Fees should be given to the treasurer.

Workdays: There is a regularly scheduled Sunday morning garden work period. Other workdays occur sporadically and are usually called by the outdoor or common house management teams.

Common House Cleanup: Each household is responsible for cleaning the community room once during the month that they are responsible for it. The household responsible is written on the monthly calendar. Clean up includes vacuuming the rug, sweeping & mopping the dining room, emptying trash can, wipe off cobwebs, dusting, general pickup and tidying, and cleaning out the refrigerator of old food and wiping clean.

Community meetings: The household in charge of common house cleaning is also responsible for hosting the monthly community meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to make short term operational decisions. It is scheduled to occur during the first week of the month at 7:00 pm. Each household is requested to have at least one representative at this meeting. The responsibilities of the "host" household are putting up paper on the community bulletin board to collect agenda items, facilitating the meeting, taking & distributing minutes. Vision quest meetings are scheduled during the third week of the month from 7:00 to 9:30 pm. People volunteer to take a turn at notetaking, facilitating and being on agenda making committee. The agendas are supposed to be posted/circulated prior to the meeting.

Notetaking: Everyone who attends vision quest meetings should take a turn at taking notes. People who take notes or make calendars need to distribute notes and calendars into the "mailboxes" in the community room. They also need to put a copy in the community notebook which is on the shelf next to the dishes.

Clothesline Etiquette: Take your clothes down when they are dry. Common house will have a lost & found box and a separate "give away" box.
MISCELLANEOUS

Diversity: "We are a community striving for diversity in age, gender, sexual preference, disabilities, ethnic/cultural background, and economic status." We ask that households include language like this in ads looking for housemates and exclude all language that may alienate people. Also, it is suggested that households place ads in places other than Blue Mango or Co-op i.e. the Community Clinic, UCD financial aid office, or campus programs with higher diversity components. (see contact person for outreach & orientation committee for list)

Finances: There is a community checking account in which all community funds are deposited (except for the water purifier which isn't paid for yet) and accounted for by the treasurer. Expenses $25 and under can be approved by the treasurer and the coordinator. Expenses over $25 will be subject to community approval at a community meeting. Whenever possible all expenses will be approved by the community.

Pets: Because of the difficulties in sharing backyards and dogs needing to be confined, dogs are not allowed in the community on a permanent basis. Each situation can be appealed to the whole community.

Recycling: The community collects aluminum cans to raise funds. Give cans to Steve at 740 N St.

Children: A separate policy paper regarding philosophy, discipline has been developed. See community notebook for details.

Backyard items: Generally, unless specifically designated backyard items usually belong to that household. If you would like to use/share something in someone else's backyard, you should ask for permission or leave a note asking for permission.

Owners/renters rights: All those present (owners & renters) pledged to work for consensus first on community decisions. Owners have "veto power" over changes on their properties. Community owners of houses have put an easement on the back half of their backyards. Also community owners have put $2,000 toward the common house remodeling. An additional $2,000 has been committed toward the common house at a future date. Noncommunity owners have no agreements to invest in common house or easements.
LIST OF ESTABLISHED COMMITTEES

Committees: Each committee will establish a contact person so that agenda folks and community coordinator can contact one person. All committees should meet as often as necessary. The contact person should know what's going on in the committee and calls meetings.

(Contact persons underlined)

Food: Scott, Linda, David
Tools: Linda, Jan
John's Yard: Kevin,
Outreach/orientation: Craig, Donna, Amy, Laurie R.
Children: Amy, Linda, Laurie R, Jan, Dawn, Laurie M
Treasurers: David, Donna

Outdoor Management Team: Jerome, Stuart, Diane, Janice, Lynette, Jean
Common House Management Team: Scott, Donna, Steve, Brian, Linda, Diane

DECISION MAKING PROCESS AGREEMENTS

The agendas for vision quest & community meetings will be set and posted on the bulletin board, and distributed at least one week prior to meeting. If anyone has old business to discuss, they need to talk to the agenda setting committee to get it on the agenda. Within one week after notes of meeting are out, if a person has a problem with what was discussed, s/he needs to see an agenda committee person to ask questions or make sure it's on the next meeting's agenda to clear up misunderstandings. Any decision by our community can be appealed.

Work for consensus first! Everyone participates equally in the consensus process - there is no distinction between short and long term residents. If someone blocks consensus, a 3-month minimum effort of at least biweekly meetings occurs. The person(s) who blocks consensus must attend the biweekly meetings. Meetings should be scheduled around blockers of consensus. The biweekly meetings must focus on the issue needing consensus. If consensus cannot be reached, a 2/3 majority vote of those present.

Categories of community decisions: Short term operational (defined as easily changed & fairly inexpensive). Made at monthly community meetings. Follow decision making process outlined above. House which is responsible for that month's meeting will list agenda on common house bulletin board. At least one person from each house is encouraged to attend although all are welcome. There is a one week delay on proceeding with all decisions to allow for appeals. Decisions will be posted on the bulletin board immediately following the meeting by the host house. All community members are responsible for checking the board.(2/11/90) Household hosting community meeting should remind people the day before to encourage attendance. Permanent Operational (defined as investments in time, money & physical structures). In conformance with the long term community plan developed by all, these decisions will be made by the above decision making process. Tenant/owner issues are excluded.
Property owners may veto any decision affecting her/his/their property. **Long term community plan** (ideals and bylaws of the community)

**Consensus process guidelines:**

1. Participation to be preceded by raising hands and facilitator then calling in order of hands. However, if a person feels they need to respond immediately to a speaker rather than wait to speak after a series of speakers who have raised hands, s/he can ask to do so, if the question raised a point of information or clarification.

2. Interruption of someone's speaking turn is to be limited to the facilitator with such questions as "Are you staying on the subject?, repeating/echoing a previous speaker?"

3. General agreement on the importance of self imposed attention to stay on subject and keep one's expressions of support of another's statements as brief as possible and this latter only when one feels it is necessary that the group hears an expression of agreement.

4. Importance of working around proposals. Proposals are not made in the sense of championing a personally held idea but to come to and refine proposals that best expresses the general thought/feeling/will of the group or the most effective and kindly compromise. We want to work to express our collective consensus.

5. General agreement that in consensus building we can take some recourse to Roberts Rules of order for friendly amendments.

6. The facilitator needs to be responsible for guiding the process if there ends up being a new or counter proposal, s/he should clarify the best relationship of the proposals and find out the will of the group.

7. Importance of developing a "culture of facilitation", i.e. developing each of our abilities as facilitators, supporting/aiding the facilitator, raising questions when appropriate, including facilitation in meeting evaluation, etc.

8. General agreement that for now we will rotate among ourselves for regular vision quest meetings. We will consider outside facilitation when or if a controversy arises that would appear to make such a person more useful, or if we have a good "outside" facilitator come along and volunteer. At that time, we will consider the issue of paying him or her.
APPENDIX G

716 HOUSE CONTRACT

Community related responsibilities are strongly recommended:
  a. Sending a household representative to the monthly community meetings.
  b. Participating in vision quest meetings.
  c. Participating on a community committee.

Required Responsibilities
  a. If you eat, you’re responsible for cooking a community meal once a month (or once every 10 meals).
  b. Chicken care, rotated monthly among households.
  c. Contributing to the community fund at the mandatory rate. This will be tacked onto the rent.

Household Operations:
  a. Living room and kitchen are open to the entire community. At least three meals per week will be prepared by the community in this facility. In addition, other uses of the common house include, but are not limited to: food buying club, committee meetings, TV/VCR use, vision quest meetings, community meetings, board games, rainy day activities for kids after school, and other social activities.
  b. The common house is open to the community 9:00 AM - 10:00 PM, Sunday through Thursday and 9:00 AM - 11:00 PM, Friday, Saturday, and the day before holidays. Hours of community use can be extended if agreed to by common house occupants. If, at any time, the occupants feel that the noise level is overly intrusive, they are encouraged to bring this to the attention of those creating the intrusion. Common House residents should be aware that other community members may enter the house before 9 AM if they have individual in/out business. These hours do not apply to the garage conversion.
  c. Just like any other community member, household occupants, in using the kitchen and living room area, must clean up immediately after use; things should be left better than found. General clean-up duties will be rotated among community houses.
  d. Except for emergencies, the bathrooms are not community space. Guests are encouraged to use facilities at the home of their host. In emergencies, the upstairs bathroom can be used.
  e. Household will have personal storage in the kitchen, but will have access to all community kitchenware.
  f. Twenty-five percent of the PG&E bill will be paid by the community.
  g. Community members will not have access to occupants' phone; however, there is a second phone line that is reserved for the community's future use.
  h. Common house occupants are responsible for basic upkeep of the grounds. They also have first priority for garden space. If no occupant is interested in gardening, the garden space would be open to the community via the outdoor committee.
  i. Parking in driveway is for household only, except for unloading.
  j. Smoking is not allowed on the property.
  k. Dogs are not allowed; cats are negotiable, but must remain in bedroom.

Moving in and out:
  a. New roommate interviewing committee is comprised of all interested common house residents and one of three designated community representatives. Each time a room is vacant, there will be a preliminary meeting for any and all community members to attend to go over questions that the committee should ask of prospective residents.
  b. If someone chooses to move out prior to expiration of the lease, they are responsible for meeting the monthly rent for the duration of the lease unless it has been sublet. The interviewing committee must approve of the replacement. The replacement must agree to the 716 House Contract.
c. In compliance with City regulations, no more than 5 unrelated adults will be permitted to live in the common house.

d. Tenants must give 45 days notice to housemates, that a sublet needs to be found, (with the 45th day being the last day of the month). Outgoing person must post flyers in at least the following locations: the Davis Food Co-op, Blue Mango, UCD Housing Office, Ethnic Studies Departments, Community Clinic, International House, UCD Women's Center, and public library. The outgoing tenant must place an ad in the Davis Enterprise until the room is rented. The interviewing committee will help write the ads and flyers. Flyers must include the N Street Cohousing diversity goals as per N Street general information packet.

e. All occupants must sign the Davis Model Lease for one year from September 1 to August 31.

f. At the time of lease renewal, the community has the right to change the 716 House Contract to reflect the needs of the community. This may include the community's desire to rent bedroom space for other purposes.

g. Occupants must make a decision to renew for the following year by July 1 and will be asked to sign a new lease at this time.

h. If an occupant decides not to renew, or is evicted, the interviewing committee is responsible for looking for a replacement.

i. Eviction: The following conditions supersede the Davis Model Lease. Reasons for eviction are as follows:
   1. Tenant is delinquent on rent. Rent is due on the first of the month and late on the fifth. If tenant is delinquent on rent twice, this is grounds for eviction.
   2. Tenant is not abiding by the 716 House Contract.
   3. Tenant is not paying their share of the utility/phone bills on time.
   4. Upon unanimous decision of N Street voting membership.

j. Upon acceptance, a $100 security deposit is required. First month's rent is due on the first day of the first month of occupancy. Last month's rent is due within sixty days.

k. Rent may increase at the time of lease renewal. Every effort will be made to keep the rents affordable.

By signing below, I agree to abide by this housing contract.

Tenant Signature  N Street Cohousing Interview Committee Chair  Date
FURTHER READING


Dunning, Bob. "Do you really want to eat dinner with all those folks?" The Davis Enterprise. 4 October 1990: A-2.


Smith, Ellen. "Residents Move in to "Muir Commons"." CoHousing. Volume 4, Number 2 (Fall 1991): 1-5.


________. "Once again, group living experiments are sprouting." The Sacramento Bee. 29 September 1991: E-1 and E-4.
Thompson, Robert H. "Looking Backward in the Utopian Tradition: Can Cohousing Succeed, 1991(?)" TMs [photocopy].