Cohousing: Creating affordable communities to meet Canadians’ changing needs

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Prepared for CMHC Affordable Housing Webinar, March 25, 2015
Cohousing is a neighbourhood design developed by and for resident owners. It combines the autonomy of private dwellings with the benefits of shared community amenities.
Two architects introduced cohousing to North America in 1988 with this book.

~ 130 cohousing communities in North America today.

7 completed communities in BC, and 4 in the rest of Canada.
Future cohousing residents participate in planning, designing, and developing their community, so that it directly meets their needs and builds a sense of community.
Cohousing is resident managed before and after move-in.
What kinds of People Live in Cohousing?

- Various backgrounds, incomes, family types, and beliefs
- Want to have their own voice & control their housing
- Believe social connection will enhance life
- Financial ability to purchase a home
- Value privacy & community
- Want small, “green” homes & ample shared common space
Skilled Professionals ground cohousing projects

Ronaye Matthew, of Burnaby based Cohousing Development Consulting (CDC), and Peter Treuheit, of Mobius Architecture.

www.cohousingconsulting.ca

Photo courtesy of CDC
Cohousing Structure & Process

Diagram courtesy of CDC
31 units on 2 acres in Sooke core. Under construction.
How is this affordable housing?
STRATA/CONDO TITLED
Lower than average monthly fees
How more affordability and efficiency can be built into Cohousing:

- Energy efficient design reduces utility costs.
- Compact homes reduce land taken up by housing.
- Sharing reduces costs and encourages sustainability.
Savings through neighbourly mutual support in cohousing.
How to reframe aging ... and affordability
... using cohousing principles

Welcome to Canadian Senior Cohousing
Posted on May 23, 2011 by Margaret Critchlow

Imagine an innovative elder culture that approaches looming issues in sustainability and health care in an entirely new way. Our aim is to provide the mutual support to flourish, living in an optimal range of human functioning for the rest of our lives. Canadian Senior Cohousing combines the well-established international model of senior cohousing with new ideas for active aging here in Canada.
CSC is grateful to CMHC for providing $70,000 in grants and loans to support Harbourside’s development.
Canadian Senior Cohousing society encourages developing innovations in affordable cohousing that already exist as prototypes:

1. Creating below-market units by removing land value

2. Shares in a mutual housing company and “rent”

3. Affordable rental in partnership with housing authority

4. Adaptation of Community Land trust model
1. Creating below-market units by removing land value

Where land values are high, inclusion of below market units w/out land value can reduce prices 20%.
How to create happy communities through co-housing

From The Guardian, Nov 21, 2014

A tiny but growing movement is seeking to build and develop new urban neighbourhoods based on sustainable living and mutually supportive communities. Could this end the isolation associated with the modern era?

Lilac Grove Cohousing, Leeds, UK
(Lilac = Low Impact Living Affordable Community )

2. Shares in a mutual housing company and “rent”
3. Affordable rental in partnership with housing authority – e.g., Petaluma Ave Homes, California

http://www.sahahomes.org/properties/petaluma-avenue-homes
4. Adaptation of Community Land trust model -- e.g., Simon Fraser University

http://www.verdantliving.com/affordability.html
CSC is exploring other innovations that may increase cohousing stock

1. incubate a new multigenerational cohousing in Victoria w/ CSPC and their Community Investment Co-op.

1. Encourage training to increase project management capacity and group readiness – e.g., books, mentorship, courses.

3. Engage with stakeholders – e.g., municipal, provincial, developer, real estate, seniors and community organizations.

4. Dialogue and test options for seniors co-housing with different sectors to expand the range of prototypes (tenures and settings).

5. Analyze zoning and development policies that are needed to enable new seniors housing models.
Innovations applying cohousing principles that change the “software”

increasing resident management and social connection in affordable housing, esp for seniors

retrofitting to create accessible, “green” cohousing in existing housing stock

Team building “on the ropes.”
Building more cohousing, and increasing its affordability will benefit Canadians of all ages.