

Is it Cohousing?

What is Cohousing? If its not Cohousing what is it?

As concepts involving Community Developments expand there are some communities that are “Cohousing Like” or “Cohousing Inspired” but is it Cohousing?



This is a 2-part Group Participation exercise – sort of like a game show with audience participation.

Part 1

Various examples of fictitious “example communities” will be displayed – then we will ask “is it cohousing?”

Individuals will quickly “vote” by physically moving and standing next to one of three locations for “Yes” – “Sort of” – “No”

No time for discussion – just express your opinion. This should be a fun rapid-fire opportunity to express different opinions. There will be no “correct” answers.

During this session, we will record on flip charts the “vote” for each example for “Yes”, “Sort of”, or “No”.

Part 2

This is a facilitated discussion. Based on feedback generated during Part 1 we will ask the reasons people voted the way they did. We seek to understand what are the “key characteristics” and requirements for something to be considered cohousing – or the reason something is not cohousing - and if something is not cohousing what “label” would you name it?

Are there “Must Have” – “Should Have / Nice to have” – “Not Required” – “Can not be” characteristics?

What is Cohousing?

Is it Cohousing?

What this is NOT:

Consensus Building
Polite waiting for others speaking
Debate

What this IS:

Mandatory Group Participation
Fast expression of your opinion
OK to talk – OK to talk over others – lets not Yell to much.
Data Collection

Requirements:

You must agree to follow the instructions of the “Game Host”
Have Fun
Be honest – go with your initial gut feeling – don’t let others influence you.
Participate

Goals:

Have Fun
Learn about other’s opinions
Challenge your current views
Report Feedback to others

Case #1 – Group Formation and Development

Bob and Sue learned about cohousing from a friend who lives in an established cohousing community, they have read all the books, and attended the national conference.

They advertised in their hometown, conducted “what is cohousing” presentations, held countless pot luck dinners and assembled a group of 30 households to form a new community.

As a group they hired professional cohousing consultants to hold “get it built” sessions and the consultants helped them locate and purchase land, get needed municipality approvals, hired an architect who drew up plans in accordance to guidance from the group, hired a developer, got financing, and built the community the group designed.

The group meets regularly and together. They used consensus decision making and determined how their community would be self managed.

Case #2 – neighborhood retro-fit

Bob and Sue live in a neighborhood where all the homes have front street driveways and garages, and fenced-in back yards that back up to each other.

Everyone (20 homes) agreed to convert their area of the neighborhood into cohousing.

Everyone tore down their back yard fences to create a giant shared green space.

Everyone chipped in and they purchased one of the houses that was for sale, and converted it into a common house where they gathered for events and meals.

At one end of the street, they built a big tool barn and filled it with tools and equipment that everyone shared. They created community gardens.

Case #3 – repurposed camp

Bob and Sue assembled a group of 25 households to form a new community.

As a group they located and purchased an old summer camp which had 20 cabins, a main building with a mess hall, and a horse barn.

They fixed up the old cabins and buildings and moved in.

The group meet regularly and together. They used consensus decision making and determined how their community would be self managed.

Case #4 – Developer Led

Bob and Sue are developers with experience building neighborhoods. They learn about cohousing and think it's a great idea.

They have land, financing, connections with architects and good relations with the local municipalities.

They advertise about cohousing, and find 35 households who are interested. The future homeowners cooperate and design the neighborhood they want.

Bob and Sue build the cohousing community on the land they control, secure all needed approvals, and make arrangements for financing. They then sold the individual homes to the residents.

While construction progressed, the group meet regularly for pot luck dinners. They used consensus decision making and determined how their community would be self managed.

Case #5 – Field of Dreams (build it and they will come)

Bob and Sue are developers with experience building neighborhoods. They learn about cohousing and think it's a great idea.

Bob and Sue do their research, worked with architects to develop plans that maximize neighbor interaction, and build a 20 unit community with a common house and other shared facilities.

Bob and Sue work with experienced cohousing consultants and develop a “How to Self Manage your community” guide book.

- They advertise to sell homes and held orientation meetings about cohousing.
- Once a few units were sold, the new homeowners took over the orientation meetings as new neighbors joined.
- The homeowners used the “How to Self Manage your community” guide book to organize and the community self managed.
- The homeowners used consensus decision making to resolve issues and “tweaked” the guide book as the group determined appropriate.

Case #6 – Prepper Compound

Bob and Sue are Preppers who are worried about the government taking away their rights. **They want to move out to the country and be “off the grid”.** They tell all their friends at the gun club about their plans and get 30 families interested in their plan.

The families form a group that regularly meets together. They work together and find some remote land which they purchase. They collaborate and design a compound that includes a common house with gun ports and underground escape tunnels.

They hire a developer to build the community they designed.

The group meets regularly. They used consensus decision making and determined how their community would be self managed. **They agreed that if they ever came under attack by hostile forces, that they would resort to a “chain of command” management style while engaged in a fire fight.**

They all moved in but because they all hunted and ate too much red meat they had health problems.

Case #7 – Urban Apartment Tower

Bob and Sue develop high rise apartment condo towers in big cities.

They decide to turn one floor of a apartment condo building into a segregated community. This floor has 30 units and includes a large shared unit that serves as a common house.

They advertise, conduct “what is cohousing” presentations, hold countless pot luck dinners and assemble a group of 30 households who each purchase a condo on the same floor and form a new community.

Each member purchased their unit and moved in.

The group meets regularly. **They use 2/3 vote majority rule decision making and determined how their community would be self managed.**

Case #8 – Mobile Home Park

Bob and Sue live in a mobile home park.

They tell all their neighbors about cohousing and they all agree to turn their mobile home park into cohousing. They talk to the owner of the park who agrees to allow them to do this.

The park residents continue to make rent payments to the park owner, but they take over shared community space (club house, swimming pool, BBQs with picnic tables) and self-manage community activity.

The group meets regularly. They used consensus decision making and determined how their community would be self managed.

Everything went well except for George who did not like NASCAR so he felt like an outsider.

Case #9 – Tents Around a Camp Fire

Bob and Sue are big outdoor people and have many friends who hike and camp.

They want to live a debt free life and live off the land in a tent. They tell all their friends about cohousing and invite them to join them.

20 families form a group, they sell all their belongings. They form a Co-Op, everyone pays an equal amount and they buy land with each member owning a equal share.

They decide to group each family tent around a shared community camp fire pit. They have a large community tent where they share meals. They have community gardens. They have a shared community car and go into town for supplies once a week.

Everything went well except for George who missed cable TV and left after one week.

Case #10 – Full Service

Bob and Sue learn about cohousing and want to live in a community. They are wealthy and can afford to pay others to do all the work.

They tell others at the country club about cohousing and form a group of 30 households who share the vision of developing a cohousing community. They meet and use consensus decision making and determined how their community would be self managed. They all agree to hire everything out and follow the guidance of consultants.

They hire a cohousing professional project manager and ask the consultant to design and build a cohousing community based on other successful communities. The consultant uses the architectural plans from another successful community and oversees everything and the neighborhood is built.

Everyone moves in. The community hires a management company to handle everything that needs to be done. They hire chiefs and kitchen help to do all the work to prepare group meals. The residents meet regularly for social activity and everyone is happy.



Is it Cohousing? Part 2

This is a facilitated discussion.

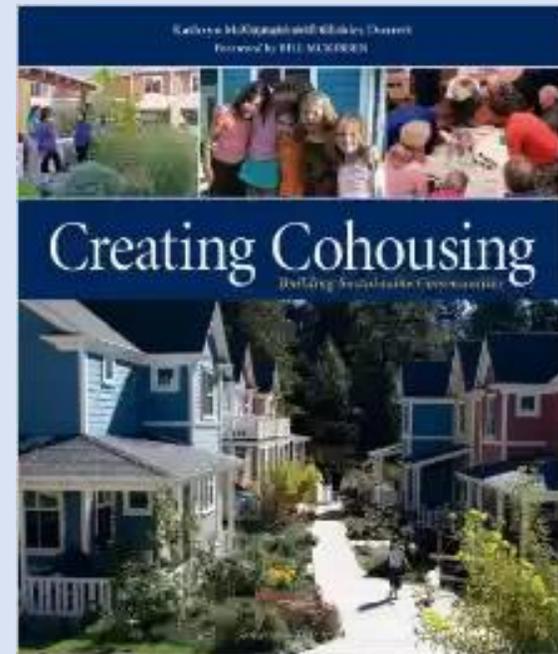
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What is Cohousing?

From Creating Cohousing by Kathryn McCamant and Charles Durant – page 25; Common Characteristics:

- Participatory Process
- Designs that Facilitate Community
- Extensive Common Facilities
- Complete Resident Management
- Non-Hierarchical Structures (responsibility for decisions is shared by the community adults)
- Separate Income Sources



From Cohousing.org – What is Cohousing Common Characteristics:

- Relationships
- Balancing Privacy and Community
- Participation
- Shared Values

