



# The Accidental Cohouser

Read about Retrofit  
Cohousing

By Alan O'Hashi

<https://bit.ly/2QO8n56>

# A word from our sponsor ...

- ⊗ **Cohousing Association of the US** doesn't save whales, or stomp out cancer. We make the world a better place by building communities that:
  - ⊗ Are great places for kids to grow up healthy and strong;
  - ⊗ Are hedges against loneliness which is as deadly as smoking 15 cigarettes a day;
  - ⊗ Are safe places for all to age among caring and supportive neighbors



# WebChat Agenda

- ⊗ What is the cohousing secret sauce?
- ⊗ What are the types of cohousing?
- ⊗ Who is the typical cohouser?
- ⊗ What minimum steps does it take to create a cohousing community?
- ⊗ Discussion



# Cohousing Secret Sauce

## ⊗ Relationships

- ⊗ Neighbors commit to being part of a community for mutual benefit.
- ⊗ Cohousing cultivates a culture of sharing and caring.
- ⊗ Design features and neighborhood size (typically 20-40 homes) promote frequent interaction and close relationships.

## ⊗ Balancing Privacy and Community

- ⊗ Cohousing neighborhoods are designed for privacy as well as community.
- ⊗ Residents balance privacy and community by choosing their own level of engagement.

## ⊗ Participation

- ⊗ Decision making is participatory and often based on consensus.
- ⊗ Self-management empowers residents, builds community, and saves money.

## ⊗ Shared Values

- ⊗ Cohousing communities support residents in actualizing shared values.
- ⊗ Cohousing communities typically adopt green approaches to living.

- ⊗ [https://cohousing.org/what\\_is\\_cohousing](https://cohousing.org/what_is_cohousing)

# Cohousing Micro Brews

- ⊗ **Cohousing Stout – Silver Sage Village, Boulder, CO**
  - ⊗ “Burning Souls” partner with Architect / Real Estate professionals
  - ⊗ Time consuming 5 to 7 years or more
  - ⊗ Capital (\$\$\$) intensive sharing cost of the entire development
  
- ⊗ **Cohousing Lite – Bloomington Cohousing, Bloomington. IN**
  - ⊗ Architect / Real estate developer driven
  - ⊗ “Burning Souls” may or may not be recruiting community members
  - ⊗ Development is less time consuming
  - ⊗ Less capital intensive, responsible for home financing
  
- ⊗ **Cohousing UltraLite – Genesee Gardens, Lansing, MI**
  - ⊗ Neighbors transform a existing neighborhood rather than building from the ground up and all at once;
  - ⊗ More cost effective than developing a brand-new community and can allow for more rental housing
  - ⊗ May or may not be driven by “burning souls”
  - ⊗ Architect / real estate professions likely involved in supportive roles

# Who is the typical cohouser?

## 🎬 Coho Stout, Lite:

- Liberal
- High perceived social class
- High income
- High education level
- 70% of the time a woman
- Caucasian

## • Coho UltraLite:

- Liberal
- Middle perceived social class
- Moderate income
- High education level
- More singles and single parents
- Tend to locate in diverse lower cost areas

Diversifying Cohousing: The Retrofit Model  
By Angela Sanguinetti, Cohousing Research Network  
<https://bit.ly/2U5Vktc>

# Three Cohousing Steps

## ⊗ 1. Feasibility study

- ⊗ Discuss and agree upon community values and perhaps, a higher purpose, which would fill the need to walk their community values talk while participating in service projects;
- ⊗ Whether you're three or thirty people, come up with a name and "elevator speech" identifying the community. Referring to yourselves as a "bunch of housemates" doesn't tell about your community story;
- ⊗ Community cohesiveness could be built around a higher purpose of community service that binds a community together;
- ⊗ Once you kick the can down the road a few blocks, check your state laws about homeowner association regulations. You will find they set up HOAs that do not mirror cohousing very well – lots of centralized power and control, lots of voting. Save this until later, because conforming cohousing declarations with state laws is a chore.

# Three Cohousing Steps

## ⊗ 2. Develop budgets

- ⊗ There likely will be common expenses that relate to community activities, coordinating transportation, common meals, intra-community communication and a fee structure to pay for all or part;
- ⊗ Community values and mission are implemented through the budget by teams – overall steering team equivalent to a board of directors, social events, managing building and grounds, process and governance, finances and legal matters;
- ⊗ The entire community approves by consensus the budget or any action for that matter, and the steering team ratifies the action also by consensus.



# Three Cohousing Steps

## ⊗ 3. Design and Construction

- ⊗ If you're sharing a big house, there will be design issues about designating common spaces and storage; same with adjacent houses
- ⊗ Some design and construction in retrofits may be necessary if you're in an existing condo community or apartment building is adapted:
  - ⊗ renovating an existing dwelling unit into a common space with a guest room and common kitchen which was the case at Boulder Creek cohousing in Colorado;
- ⊗ Identify resident needs, how the “site” functions – if it is in an existing physical development like a condo association, apartment complex, or households dispersed within a given boundary;
- ⊗ Determine what are considered “common spaces” which may not be literally common, but function in common:
  - ⊗ These may be in private homes, restaurants, civic spaces, churches, libraries for shared meals and meetings

# Cohousing UltraLite Examples

## ⊗ **Beacon Hill Village – Boston MA**

- ⊗ A member-driven organization for Boston residents 50 and over, provides programs and services so members can lead vibrant, active and healthy lives, while living in their own homes and neighborhoods.

## ⊗ **Boulder Creek Community – Boulder CO**

- ⊗ Our founder, Greg, purchased 17 inside the 363-unit Gold Run condominium complex situated on a 12 acre creekside property. Members of our co-housing community may rent one of Greg's condos, rent or buy any available Gold Run condo

## ⊗ **Big Bang Theory – CBS TV**

- ⊗ In the apartment building where Sheldon, Amy, Leonard and Penny live, the elevator has been out of order, forcing characters to use the stairs. Stairway conversations between characters occur in almost every episode.

# Now what?

- ⊗ You're all fired up and ready to go!
- ⊗ Keep your cohousing juices flowing!
- ⊗ Write your community story outline:
  - ⊗ Feasibility, Budgets, Design
  - ⊗ Expand out your outline
- ⊗ Attend the Coho Conference May 29 – June 2
- ⊗ Still stuck?
  - ⊗ I'm willing to coach you and your group:



**Alan O'Hashi**

Environmental and Cultural  
Organization Systems (ECOS)  
kaerupix@yahoo.com