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COHOUSING: Its Characteristics, Evolution, and Emerging Typologies.

A dissertation submitted to the

Graduate School

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ABSTRACT

Currently, the amount of planned cohousing communities in America outnumbers existing and completed communities. There is, therefore, a need for further studies so that a new typology for cohousing community planning may emerge which reveals various degrees of communal developing and living. Together with the specific design methods chosen by residents, it may be concluded that the success or failure of any given cohousing culture is linked to its ability to think about its relationship to other cultures, both within and outside the cohousing model. In this thesis, I will focus on an analysis of four urban and community planning methods developed by Emily Talen and expand upon these in order to understand the contemporary designs of cohousing communities. Furthermore, a thorough analysis of four cohousing communities will be conducted in order to clarify existing cohousing variations based upon the urban intensity and order of each communities' situation.

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1. INTRODUCTION
1.1 CREATING COMMUNITY IN AMERICA
A. WHY LOOK TO ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO COMMUNITY LIVING

According to the last decennial census, which was taken in 2000, more than a third of American households were situated in the residential enclaves we call suburbs.[1]
More recently, the social consequences of suburbanization that were originally meant to preserve our social traditions are now suspected of rupturing our social fabric. The housing patterns that prevail in suburbia echo that of a self-sufficient unit which has been designed to house the nuclear family consisting of a breadwinning father, a home making mother, and two to four children. However, a large segment of the population no longer fits these traditional views of a "family".

Additionally, the surges in housing costs and the increasingly mobile society have combined to break down traditional community ties and place higher demands on individual households separated from a diverse urban landscape. Within our cities we often find residents' life chances differentiated by neighborhood. The most affluent areas are carefully controlled and cared for and may include the gentrified districts, the gated enclaves, or the upscale suburbs. Furthermore, social, economic, and physical barriers have been created in order to keep poorer or atypical members of the community from feeling welcomed in these areas.

While such dramatic demographic and economic changes are taking place in our society, a reflective shift within societies' physical structure is also occurring. This move can, in part, be credited to the way in which we now interpret the ever changing understanding of the definition of family. The term nuclear family may now include those people who choose to remain single, to live with a partner without having children, same gendered partners, or those who have chosen

[1] US Census Bureau, 1999.

to divorce and remarry; often creating a family tree consisting of a constellation of stepfamilies. Accordingly, these newly created family types, coupled with vast numbers of the aging baby boomer generation, seem to be exploring alternative approaches to living which better suit their needs than such methods of "traditional" housing could provide.

Such societal and personal changes raise the question of what housing means to those people seeking a contemporary solution; and what individuals need from their living environment. From the proposal of such ideas, appropriate modifications can be made. One may find that we are currently situated in a position of simultaneously embracing diversity, yet as a whole resisting difference and change. It is of great importance to recognize the step towards a diversified lifestyle, which should be acknowledged in such institutions as museums, schools, and news outlets which celebrate diversity. Despite this, popular culture continues to advertise homogeneity through common products, which reflect status symbols. Areas of our cities become "spaces of cultural consumption in which goods mark status".[2] Many existing American communities have underestimated the significance of various degrees of diversity and have therefore developed few strategies to accommodate for difference and change in the physical reflection of a diverse lifestyle.

When the needs of householders are not met, yet their values and responsibilities remain unchanged, it is not surprising that some individuals are stepping out to seek a housing model which better supports them. This has ultimately created a demand for looking at housing from new and broader perspectives as many people observe that the old ways are no longer meeting the needs of a changing society. Furthermore, a number of those people seeking new housing solutions have additional concerns regarding family and community structure. They have

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[2] Talen, Emily. *New Urbanism and American Planning: The Conflict of Cultures.* New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2005. Pg. 12.

consequently been challenged to make not only superficial changes, but a transformation in their manner of everyday living.

The emergence of community arrangements which integrate the physical as well as the social, ethical, and cultural values of the inhabitants are making great impacts on surrounding neighbors by challenging the conventional ways we may think about community. Intentionally designed collaborative communities, such as cohousing, are one such living arrangement which is gaining significance in light of theories that validate action and architecture as the instruments for generating social order and community diversity. These living arrangements, whose tradition dates from the Utopian communities of the nineteenth century, have a goal of creating community through a variety of strategies which often include the creation of new physical arrangements.

B. COHOUSING APPROACH

Cohousing is an emerging housing option which addresses social connectivity through design and resident interaction. The movement originated in Scandinavia, and was developed by the Danish architect Jan Gudmand-Hoyer. The architect began planning an alternative living style with friends in order to create this sense of community, which could no longer be found in either suburban or urban Danish settings. The design that was ultimately produced outside of Copenhagen, Denmark became the first *bofaelleskaber*, which literally means *livingtogetherness* or "living communities", and consisted of 27 participating dual income families seeking better daycare alternatives and a safer neighborhood.[3] By the late 1970s this model of living had been quickly replicated throughout Scandinavia and the Netherlands and proved to be a great success.

[3] McCamant, K.M., & Durrett, C.R. (1994). *Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves* (2nd Ed.). Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press. Pg. 135.

In the late 1980s, after a 13 month study of 46 cohousing communities in Denmark, the Netherlands, and Sweden, California architects Kathryn McCamant and Charles Durrett introduced the housing model to Americans and coined the word cohousing. The American collective form of cohousing couples private individual dwellings, which are frequently situated around a common area, with a common house for group gatherings. The cohousing approach implies three substantial differences from other types of collaborative communities: the rejection of set ideologies, the absence of social hierarchy, and the lack of a shared economic system. Therefore, cohousing offers a new approach to housing rather than a new way of life and residents "espouse no ideology other than the desire for a more practical and social home environment."[4] All models of cohousing, both early experiments and current trends, utilize design as a means to reduce a sense of isolation often found in single-family dwellings while still affording its members privacy in their own homes.

1.2 DEFINING THE COHOUSING TERMINOLOGY

As new concepts, such as cohousing, gain popularity and emerge in Western society it seems appropriate to discuss the terminology which will be utilized when discussing cohousing and the supporting topics which this thesis covers. It seems relevant to first define American *urbanism* as the "vision and the quest to achieve the best possible human settlement in America."[5] Furthermore, when discussing cohousing communities, the model of *community* for this thesis can be understood through Fromm's description, which defines it as "an aggregate of people who occupy a common and bounded territory within which they establish and participate

[4] McCamant, K.M., & Durrett, C.R. (1994). Pg. 17.
[5] Talen, Emily. Pg. 2.

in common institutions, ideas, interests, or backgrounds."[6] This definition has been elected over others due the author's acknowledgement of the physical and social connections.

Some *cohousers*, a term used interchangeably with cohousing residents, may describe their communities as "intentional neighborhoods." However, it should be noted that when discussing communities, the term *intentional community* is an inclusive term for ecovillages, cohousing, residential land trusts, communes, student co-ops, urban housing cooperatives, alternative communities, and other projects where people strive together with a common vision. Unlike cohousing, many of these communities are often built upon a shared religious, political, environmental or social ideology rather than simply the desire to have a strong sense of community with their neighbors.

Based mainly on the Scandinavian experience, a number of models may also be distinguished under the concept of "collective house forms," which is defined as "housing with more communal spaces or collectively organized facilities than in conventional housing." [7] For purposes of this thesis, the terms *conventional* and *traditional* refer to familiar residences in today's American culture. For example, some examples of traditional residential settings may be recognized as freestanding single-family houses, townhouses, or apartments. It is primarily the absence of planned community through design and social interaction, which separates collective living such as cohousing from such traditional forms.

The term collective housing covers somewhat different housing types in Europe than in the United States. A brief introduction to the different collective housing models seems relevant, as they will be further discussed through a historical overview of cohousing. The first is the

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[6] Fromm, Dorit. Collaborative Communities: Cohousing, Central Living, and Other New Forms of Housing. New York, New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1991. Pg. 290.
[7] Vestbro, D.U. "From Collective Housing to Cohousing – A Summary of Research." The Journal of Architecture and Planning Research, 17(2, Summer 2000), Pg. 164.

Swedish model, *kollektivhus* referring to a multi-family housing unit with private apartments and communal spaces such as a central kitchen and dining hall designed to reduce the burden of housework. The second model of collective housing is the Danish *bofaelleskab*, which differs only minimally from the Swedish housing type. Bofaelleskab is typically low-rise housing that grew out of the movement to create a stronger sense of community rather than being labor related.[8] Nevertheless, the two models are similar.

Other terms, which this thesis will frequently discuss, are those related to the shared places and activities of cohousing including *common facilities*, *common house*, and *common meals*. Facilities designed, managed and shared by a cohousing community (supplemental to private residences) are almost always seen in cohousing communities. Except on very tight urban sites, cohousing communities often have playground equipment, lawns and gardens as well as a common house. Since the buildings are frequently clustered, larger sites may also retain several or many acres of undeveloped shared open space. [9]

The common house is a shared facility owned and managed by the community. It will typically include a common kitchen, dining area, sitting area, children's playroom and laundry, and also may contain a workshop, library, exercise room, crafts room and/or one or two guest rooms. Common meals almost always take place within or near the common house and are usually shared two or three times each week, with participation being on a voluntary basis. Commonly, a team of two to four persons prepares meals for diners who sign up in advance, and each adult resident helps cook and/or clean up once every five or six weeks.[10]

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[8] Vestbro, D.U. Pg. 165.
[9] The Cohousing Association of the United States. “U.S. Cohousing Communities.” http://www.cohousing.org/glossary.aspx (accessed January 28, 2008).
[10] The Cohousing Association of the United States. “U.S. Cohousing Communities.” http://www.cohousing.org/glossary.aspx

1.3 RATIONALE
A. THE INCREASING POPULARITY OF THE COHOUSING PHENOMENON

American cohousing seems to be providing some real answers for the increasing number of people who stop to look at where and how their residential situations can ultimately have an impact on both the environment and their surrounding communities. Today there is a fast paced emergence of the cohousing movement in North America, with more than 220 communities in different stages of development or completion.[11] Much of this popularity without doubt, can be traced back to McCamant and Durrett's efforts towards the dissemination of cohousing in America, which entailed active campaigning to spread the concept at various conferences, as well as the publication of the their text, *Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves*.

Additionally, the nonprofit national association, The Cohousing Association of the United States (Coho/US), works to publicize and promote this housing model in North America by providing those interested with a community directory, resource center, online market place and the specialized journal, *CoHousing*. They state their mission as "working to promote the cohousing movement, support individuals and groups creating communities, provide assistance to completed groups for improving their systems for living together in community, and to create networking opportunities for those involved or interested in cohousing."[12] The association, which was started in 1997 as a fee-based member organization, has matured into a donor-supported organization who; rather than focusing on individual member benefits, now seek to

[11] The Cohousing Association of the United States. "U.S. Cohousing Communities." http://directory.cohousing.org/us_list/all_us.php (accessed January 25, 2008).
[12] The Cohousing Association of the United States. "U.S. Cohousing Communities." http://www.cohousing.org/aboutus.aspx (accessed January 25, 2008).

promote and advance cohousing more broadly by raising awareness of cohousing through the information they supply to potential cohousers.

The Cohousing Association of the United States also fosters mutual support among existing communities and professionals, who develop, design and build cohousing neighborhoods. With the cohousing movement gaining so much popularity, and over 50 communities in California and comparable numbers in Colorado, Massachusetts, and Washington, many developers and architects see a rather enticing opportunity which allows for a considerably large market of cooperative based clientele. These companies also utilize the Coho/US's website to market their services and present a straightforward and prompt solution to a task that some cohousers may otherwise find daunting or unnecessary.

The organization and ambition of many cohousers is equally reflected through a number of the resources related to cohousing, which have also contributed to an increased interest in the housing model. Currently, the amount of planned communities in America outnumbers existing and completed communities. This presents a need for further investigation of the planning and development processes of such rapidly growing housing schemes in order to better understand how 'successful' these communities currently are with regard to the initial objectives of American cohousing. Furthermore, such research will allow for differentiation among the ever-growing number of planned and existing communities so that new cohousing typologies may be identified.

1.4 RESEARCH AIMS

As the popularity of the cohousing phenomenon increases so are the production of communities, and ultimately the reduction of a traditionally required participatory development

process. Cohousing orthodoxy raises the question of whether this loss might ultimately result in a lesser sense of community. A number of sources show that it is the residents' involvement in the participatory stage of development that lays the foundation for the strength of the community. However, some first hand discussions reveal different feelings about the development methods of cohousing. This suggests there are multidimensional desires which cohousers and potential cohousers possess regarding housing preferences.

This thesis therefore, places cohousing within various contexts and assesses it from such perspectives. Given that cohousing is founded upon the notion that the built environment and the natural environment are part of the equation in forming supportive communities, the thesis studies how architecture may ultimately foster a better sense of community. Theories related to human behavior and spatial configuration, also known as Environmental Design Theory, inform us that there are linkages between our built environments and human activities. It is suggested that cohousing communities provide a strong sense of community at a domestic scale, as well as cultivating a better sense of belonging. However, community means different things to different people. Often this may be a description of the physical environment, but for others community is referring to the sociological and psychological feelings evoked in ones surroundings.

Therefore, a model of cohousing community classification may better assist those seeking cohousing communities and provide cohousers with both information and a design that is more conducive to their lifestyle. There is a need for further studies so that a new typology for cohousing community planning may be identified, ultimately revealing a range of degrees of communal developing and living. Author Emily Talen states "what has gradually evolved in the American experience are different approaches to creating good urbanism in America."[13] Some have focused on small-scale, incremental urban development while others have looked outside

[13] Talen, Emily. Pg. 2.

the existing city, focusing on how to build the optimal, new human habitat. Knowing this, a formal analysis of four urban and community planning methods has been made of various cohousing community models so as to better understand the contemporary designs of cohousing communities.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
2.1 INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES

Intentional communities have for many centuries provided a place where idealists may come together with shared intentions of creating a better world. Often, the physical representations of these ideals are revealed through their settlements. Although there are thousands of intentional or collaborative communities in existence today, and many others in the formative stages, most people are unaware of them, or the roots from which they sprang.

In her text *Seven American Utopias*, Dolores Hayden reveals the interplay between ideology and architecture, as well as the social and physical designs of American utopian communities. At the heart of the book are studies of seven communitarian groups, stretching over nearly two centuries and the full breadth of the American continent. Included are the Shakers of Hancock, Massachusetts; the Mormons of Nauvoo, Illinois; the Fourierists of Phalanx, New Jersey; the Perfectionists of Oneida, New York; the Inspirationists of Amana, Iowa; the Union Colonists of Greeley, Colorado; and the Cooperative Colonists of Llano del Rio, California. Hayden examines each of these groups, through historical and global accounts as well as socialist community comparisons, to see how they coped with three dilemmas that all socialist organizations face. These include conflicts between authoritarian and participatory processes, between communal and private territory, and concerning unique or replicable community plans.[14]

Furthermore, Hayden poses the question of whether communal designing has any relevance to the larger society and concludes with the lesson that "social and economic reorganization must be the basis of any environmental reorganization."[15] This conclusion is

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[14] Hayden, Dolores. *Seven American Utopias. The Architecture of Communitarian Socialism, 1790-1975*. Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1976.
[15] Hayden, Dolores. Pg. 349.

supported by six basic principles; planning should include collective processes by being tentative rather than final; individual expression should be contemporary within a collective framework; it does not work to enforce public property at the expense of privacy; communal households are preferable to family houses because the latter tend to oppress women; special attention must be given to spaces which link communal and private territory; and uniqueness may be simple.

Most of the intentional communities or communal groups prior to the 1960s followed this paradigm. During this period social ties were the driving force for communal living rather than an architecturally designed community. Many of Hayden's cases recognize a religious or spiritual tie as the communities' social commonality. In particular, she discusses such settlements as the *kibbutz*, a Hebrew word for "communal settlement". These Israeli communities, which attracted Jews and Gentiles from all around the world, are a still thriving type of productive commune. For centuries, these communities have provided a sense of structure and security, within larger community groups, as well as equality, fellowship and harmony among individuals. Often, kibbutz societies are dedicated to mutual aid and social justice. This has been achieved through a socioeconomic system based on the principle of joint ownership of property, equality, and cooperation of production, consumption and education. However, unlike the religiously organized American intentional communities Hayden discusses, such as the Shakers, the kibbutzim have continued to prosper since the early 1900s with almost 300 communities existing today.

Dolores Hayden further discusses questions which these century old socialist groups (such as the Israeli kibbutzim, Tanzanian *ujamaa* villages, Chinese communes, and Soviet housing authorities) still have when reflecting their ongoing search for an appropriate communitarian consensus. What is revealed by her study is an understanding of how these

communities have continued to prosper over centuries. Because the lessons associated with these groups are often social and political, rather than technical and stylistic, debates continue to be spread over a century. Hayden disputes that when communities are more in tune with, or place importance on, the architectural or stylistic representations of their values, important historical ideas are overlooked. She states that "often, contemporary intentional communities frequently ignore historic communal debates at the peril of repeating their predecessor's mistakes, building in the same tentative ways, reliving the same dilemmas"[16].

All cases of intentional communities certainly involve the material element as a means of creating fellowship. Despite this, so many intentional communities' primary paradigm is focused on social rather than physical bases. Therefore, it seems relevant to look into the historical contexts of intentional communities which have validated the physical design of a community as the instrument to uncover social desires. When discussing intentional communities, many may argue that the most important legacy of planned communities were the garden cities and their ability to physically epitomize or "frame a discourse about nature."[17] This kind of intentionally planned community, which emerged in the 1910s, revolved around the need to improve living conditions for the working class and poor through a design containing carefully balanced areas of residences, industry, and agriculture. The communities core beliefs felt that sprawl away from the already out of scale downtowns was occurring, and thus caused a separation from nature coupled with poor and costly housing conditions.

Ebenezer Howard shared a passion for the Victorian 'cult of domesticity' in which the home was central to family welfare and personal character development. Furthermore, he thought the lower middle classes should also aspire to such an ideal. These values played a

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[16] Hayden, Dolores. Pg. 350.
[17] Talen, Emily. *New Urbanism and American Planning: The Conflict of Cultures*. New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2005.

major role in the movement Howard founded. Born of the creative mind of this deeply spiritual and social activist, the garden city concept advocated development in harmony with nature at reasonable densities, with decent housing options available for all. Jill Grant, author of *Planning the Good Community*, further examines the relevance of the garden city concept in 20th century America, and the influence it has had in shaping our contemporary society.

Howard's garden city concept had at its center, a park with civic facilities in the middle, surrounded by residential districts linked to work sites by broad boulevards and transportation systems.[18] The first garden city, Letchworth Garden City located in the UK, revealed the challenges of articulating Howard's vision of the good community as costs escalated in practice. This contested his hopes of keeping rents low. Over time, the garden city concept was translated into a variety of forms and contexts. The first garden city in the United States was the Russell Sage Foundation's philanthropic quest to build a model garden suburb working classes at the Forest Hills Gardens, located in Queens, New York. This design included housing units clustered in small groups rather than blocks and while gridded, were kept quiet and slightly curvilinear – in direct contrast to Manhattan.[19] While some have interpreted this layout as confusing or too informal, with its curving streets and cul-de-sacs, the garden city concept clearly affected the future of planned developments in the United States.

Within only a few years, the garden city theory came to the forefront in inspiring the new town planning movement. With its popularity, its key principles were consequently being diluted in practice. The dominant values involving a design which supported equity, amenity, health, efficiency, a sense of community, and strong connections to family and nature were being transformed into what we now refer to as suburbs. The concept was simplified over time and

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[18] Grant, Jill. *Planning the Good Community: New Urbanism in Theory and Practice.* New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2006. Pg. 38.
[19] Talen, Emily. Pg. 180.

ultimately meant wide lots, winding streets, and parks. Ultimately, the suburbanized concept suffered the same problems of monotony and alienation felt towards the industrialized city. The corrosion of Howards plan can be seen in figure 2.1 which illustrates the garden city concept losing some of its original features, or adapting to market realities with each iteration.

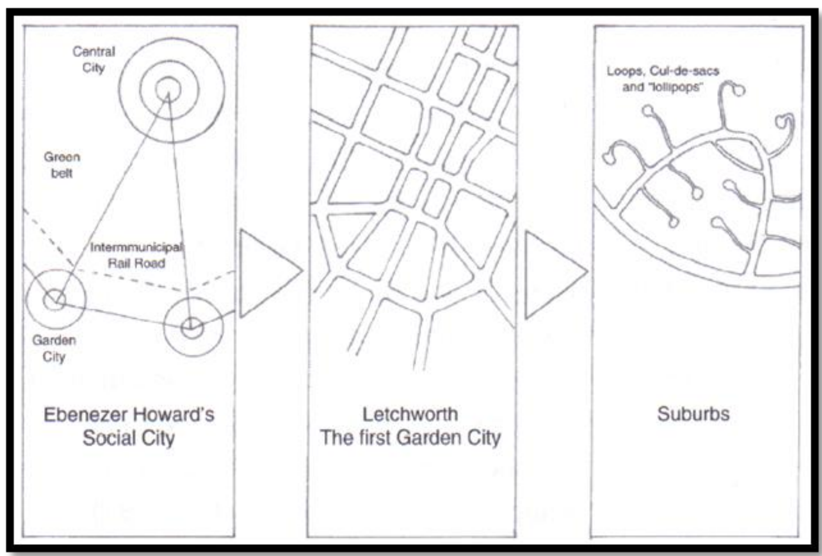

Figure 2.1 The Garden City Reduced[20]

Over time, socioeconomic changes, such as the movement of women into the workforce, increased longevity, and higher divorce rates have redefined the traditional structure of the family on which Ebenezer Howard based his theories. Furthermore, the initial values of the garden city concept, which placed value on preserving our shared natural resources, eventually diminished. Each household's individual 'garden' areas were growing, leading to larger communities spreading further away from the cities. Ironically, suburban sprawl is now seen as a model which excessively encroaches on the natural environment by increasing the need for vehicular transportation, generating extensive land and surface coverage, and exacerbating the consumption of resources.

[20] Grant, Jill. Pg. 39.

A different approach to creating community through design and social interaction was the grassroots movement seen in the communes of the sixties. They are often recognized as a rebellion against the unbending social and family order of the previous decades. The communes were a sort of living situation in which more than four people, who were not relatives, lived and ate together, often on a shared income and usually in a large one-household unit.[21] Because communes were often accommodated in large, single family dwellings or large apartments the model has generally not been associated with special design implications.

Much like Howard's ideas, the counterculture movement awakened these cooperative needs citizens had buried deep within them. These feelings were associated with ecological and humanistic ambitions, which were hoped to provide members with an intense community experience. Although communes are most frequently associated with the hippie movement, there is a long history of these developments in America right up into the present. Since the term 'commune' currently conjures images of hippie housing of the 1960s, the term 'intentional community' is now more often used where 'commune' would have been forty years ago. The quest for these cooperative arrangements is certainly continuing in contemporary explorations of alternative community and residential settings. Among these are the intentional communities known as cohousing which address social connectivity and environmental sustainability through design.

2.2 HISTORY OF EUROPEAN INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES

A. THE EVOLUTION OF INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES IN EUROPE

While the communes of the 1960s and 1970's were flourishing in American society, similar living situations were being explored in the Scandinavian countries of Europe. The now widely used North American term 'cohousing' usually refers to the Danish *bofaelleskab*. This

[21] Vestbro, D.U. Pg. 165.

particular model of collective living has been highly influenced by a number of other collective European housing types which have been well documented in a number of texts. Much of this can be recognized in Dick Urban Vestbro's overview of research titled "From Collective Housing to Cohousing- A Summary of Research."[22] The research which Vestbro presents in his paper is primarily empirically based, and includes topics ranging from historical overviews to descriptive and experiential accounts of existing collective communities, design aspects, and evaluations of their efficacy for providing support.

Within each of these classifications with regards to "collective living", the paper cites numerous authors who looked at the concept of collective living communities. It should be noted that the term collective living covers slightly different housing types in Europe than in the United States, and is therefore defined more precisely in the paper through five different European models. The paper mentions the work of Hans Erling Langkilde and Gottfried Pirhofer, who provide a historical framework for collective living, Dolores Hayden's socio-political and theoretical contribution, Calldenby and Wallden's analysis of design aspects, coupled with Dorit Fromm's architectural analysis, to name a few.

Probably the most comprehensive evaluation of individual collective housing units to emerge from this paper is the one made by Vestbro with colleagues Woodward and Grossman. In this assessment, an analysis of about 50 collective housing units, and over 30 cohousing communities constructed in Scandinavia were evaluated. Two cohousing or self-work model projects were compared to each other, as well as to two other projects. The study was based on group interviewing and questionnaires to over 300 households from four different units. The analysis included studies of conflicts over meals, the question of recruiting residents, the role of resident activities, and questions of social integration. One conclusion of this study found the

[22] Vestbro, D.U. Pg. 166.

felt desire for community as important a motive for moving into an intentional community as were the practical reasons. Another outcome revealed a disagreement about the combination of cohousing with housing for the elderly.[23] However, this has been strongly challenged in American cohousing literature, particularly by the cohousing creators Charles Durrett and Kate McCamant.

While the history of European collective housing is well documented and an ample range of subjects have been covered in the bibliography surveyed by Vestbro, there is no mention of developing trends of European or American cohousing communities. The text, however, provided a useful link to Dorit Fromm's book *Collaborative Communities: Cohousing, Central Living, and Other New Forms of Housing*.[24] As an alternative to collective or intentional housing, Fromm uses the term "collaborative communities", which in turn includes subgroups such as cohousing, central living, and housing with shared facilities. The text provides a good basis for considering the progression and evolution of cohousing. It begins with the first collaborative development Saettedammen, a Danish community situated in Hilleröd, Denmark, and assesses other communities which have come about overtime. The research continues up to contemporary American cohousing communities and additionally includes four imagined scenarios.

An overview of these various housing arrangements and an awareness of their differences provides for a better understanding of American cohousing and the potential recognition of emerging typologies. There is no agreement among Denmark, Holland, and Sweden on an English term for their separate and distinct collective developments. The Swedish term

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[23] Vestbro, D.U. Pg. 169.
[24] Fromm, Dorit. *Collaborative Communities: Cohousing, Central Living, and Other New Forms of Housing.* New York, New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1991.

kollektivhus has been loosely translated as *collective housing* which includes three models which Vestbro believes should be included in this Swedish model. These developments are typically in high-rise buildings and often contain more than 50 units. The units are organized around a central kitchen and shared facilities located on one or two floors connected by indoor communication to individual apartments.

The first subgroup of this Swedish housing type is the classical collective housing unit which was based on service through employed staff. These communities were aimed at reducing housework in order to enable women to combine professional work with family responsibilities. The second model is the self-work model and is based on communal labor. Rather than paying for meal services and common efforts, as the service based residents may have done, residents managed these responsibilities as a group. Lastly, the third subgroup is collective housing combined with services aimed at the elderly population, where communal facilities were used by both categories of residents.[25] In Sweden, all three collective housing types are referred to by the use of the word *kollektivhus* and residents do not constitute a special category.

As seen in figures 2.2 and 2.3 the architectural arrangements of the *kollektivhus* are often organized vertically with one or two common facilities generally situated at the ground floor and/or a centrally positioned common area. These common areas may include a staff room, dining room, kitchen, day care and playroom, teen room, laundry, storage, and sewing room. The common areas may be used differently according to the style of living established within the housing model. More usage and resident interaction is probable in the self-work or communal model.

[25] Vestbro, D.U. Pg. 165.

Figure 2.2[26]

Figure 2.3[27] The Main Common Facilities are centrally located on the 5th floor.

Developed with little knowledge of other European counterparts, the Dutch *central wonen*, referred to in English as “central living space”, have a wide range of households and housing types. While similar to the Swedish model in the sense that the communities are positioned within an urban landscape, the clusters are often arranged horizontally in contrast to the verticality of the *kollektivhus*. The most frequently seen architectural organization of the Dutch housing units is a division of households into clusters of four or five, with small versions of a common kitchen and dining facilities attached to each cluster. Figures 2.4 and 2.5 illustrate the arrangement of clusters in relation to one another and to the shared common spaces. In this example, each cluster of four homes shares a common living room, dining room, kitchen, laundry, storage and cluster garden. While this allows the clusters a more intimate shared space, it reduces the advantages of cooperating on a larger scale for meals, as the common facilities for the entire development are generally smaller and do not include dining areas. This may ultimately result in a greater individual effort to organize such functions as meals and other forms of community involvement.

[26] Fromm, Dorit. Pg 68.
[27] Fromm, Dorit. Pg 69.

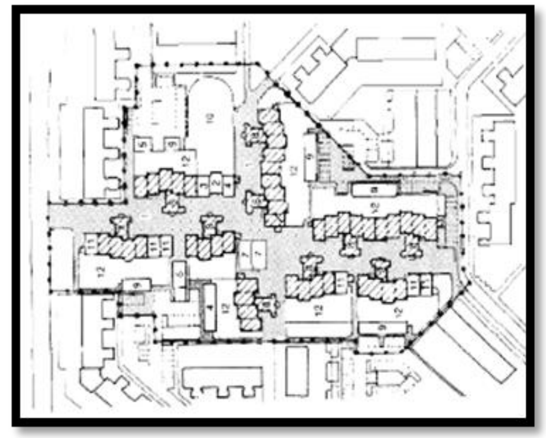

Figure 2.4[28] Dutch *central wonen* including 10 urban clusters, each with a common kitchen-dining area.

Zoning view of individual cluster.

There is a strong sense of individuality already at work within the clusters with about 93% of the dwellings being rentals. Often the communities are owned by large, independent, non-profit organizations funded by the government.[29] Almost half of the tenants who inhabit these central living spaces are single. Fromm suggests this composition results in a much higher turnover per year in comparison to the Swedish and Danish models. Nevertheless, the communities have proved to be rather successful with relatively high levels of interaction. Dorit Fromm reports one *central wonen* resident understanding the turnovers as an instrument assisting in their exploration of new social situations. These instances allow residents to "become more alive, to develop themselves with changing people around them who play the role of different mirrors, all playing back different facets of themselves to each other. It's natural and good that things are not always smooth and that there are turnovers in the group."[30]

Both the Swedish and Dutch models of European collective housing grew primarily in towns and cities where thousands of these urban collectives formed. Ultimately, these traditional *kollektivhus* and *central wonen* provided the inspiration for a group of Danish citizens lead by

[28] Fromm, Dorit. Pg. 47.
[29] Fromm, Dorit. Pg. 49.
[30] Fromm, Dorit. Pg 57.

architect Jan Gudmand-Hoyer to create an updated version of the model. In 1964 Gudmand-Hoyer began planning an alternative living arrangement which could provide a better sense of community not found in either the single-family suburban house or the multistory apartment building. What ultimately emerged is the Danish *bofaelleskab*, known to Americans as cohousing. This model is now entering its fourth decade of development and has matured into various forms of design and degrees of sociality since the original Danish designs.

The earliest Danish *bofaelleskaber* can be understood as a reaction against the tall apartment towers that were being constructed. This ultimately resulted in a desire for some tenants' participation in the design of their future housing. The Danes were also seeing a drastic shift in values as Western societies experienced the youth movement in Europe and the United States. The increase in student enrollment at many major universities including those in Berkeley, Paris, and Copenhagen called for innovative housing methods. Consequently, many people began questioning the success of their own communities whether or not they were directly involved with the counterculture movement. This shift in attitude, supported by a belief that a more cooperative living environment would help build a more humane world, fueled attempts to create new ways to live together. It was at this time when the housing options such as communes were gaining popularity among young people. Larger collectives, possibly influenced by the Swedish and Dutch models, were also sprouting across America and Europe and were often based on radical political and social ideals. However, for most couples with children, communes and collectives were not a realistic long term option. [31]

The motivation behind the *bofaelleskab* was to create a strong social network for the nuclear family which could be enhanced through design. Additional motivation was seen in the residents' desire for participating in the design of their future community. This participatory

[31] McCamant, K.M., & Durrett, C.R. Pg 137.

design process is one characteristic which distinguishes the collaborative housing type from other European arrangements. The initial cohousing form was strongly influenced by traditional Danish low-density housing arrangements. This concept developed into a design relating more closely to human scale, which included outdoor spaces emphasizing contact among residents. However, as more residents became involved, an evolution from housing loosely placed around a shared area evolved into housing closely ordered around streets, squares, and plazas. This movement is especially evident in the newer communities, which have chosen to cluster their buildings closer and closer together, often connecting ground-level dwellings and common facilities under one roof. This trend should be noted as an evolution of various residents' social desires and the architectural arrangements they have chosen to better support such needs.

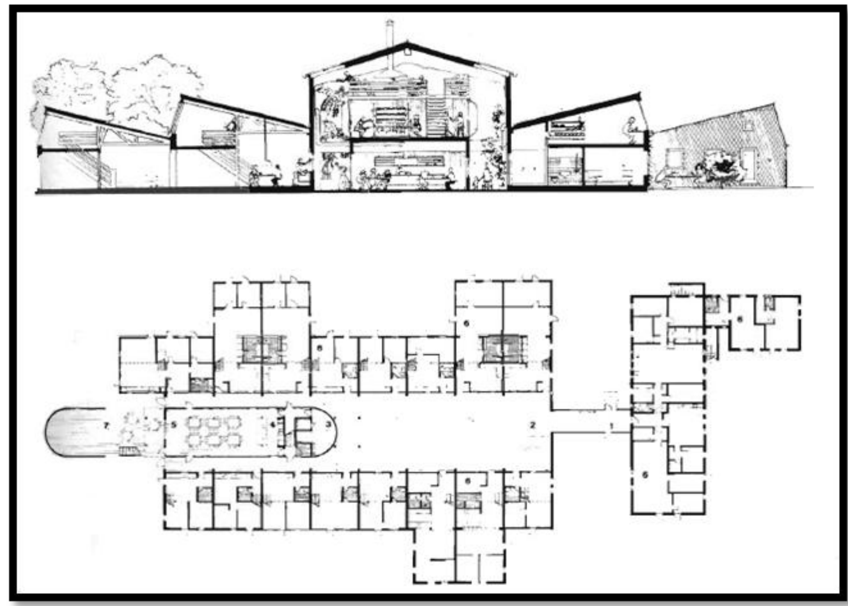

Figure 2.5[32] Cohousing arranged under one roof.

The increasing willingness of both Danish and other European collective housing residents' to live close together ultimately proved for a growing confidence in the cohousing concept. The current Danish cohousing communities would not be designed as they are had they

[32] Fromm, Dorit. Pg. 27.

not progressed through the more conservative developments which preceded them. This progression for the European collective living styles has ultimately proved to be a great success and has received extensive study. Much of this has predominantly focused on the Swedish and Danish communities, where a variety of alternative housing experiments have benefited from governmental support. Interestingly, it appears that European cooperative housing and cohousing projects are not identified as a movement, as they frequently are in American literature. Perhaps this is a result of the high levels of mainstream official support such European communities have experienced. In contrast, America has not seen cohousing gain significant mainstream or government acceptance. It has only been developed by a strong community network implemented by several American pioneers seeking innovative and supportive models for living.

B. TRANSLATING COLLECTIVE LIVING TO THE UNITED STATES

In the mid 1980s, architects and partners, Kate McCamant and Charles Durrett began researching alternative living styles to those currently available in America. Personal motives, including starting a family, led them in search of the kind of setting, which would allow them to best combine their professional careers with child rearing. After the completion of an international inquiry, the couple remembered the *bofoellesskaber* they had visited while studying architecture in Denmark and returned in 1984 for 13 more months. During this trip the couple conducted field work and studies of 46 collective living arrangements in Denmark, the Netherlands, and Sweden. The couple returned, immensely inspired, but realized a reassessment of American needs and cultural considerations were essential in order to design a community which most supportively dealt with American values and beliefs.

During this time, the American household was noticeably decreasing in size and the number of single-person and single-parent households were increasing; a trend which continues today. The majority of women were working part or full time outside of the home yet were still expected to prepare family meals, grocery shop, wash, dry and fold laundry, entertain and own all the household implements required for these tasks. In addition, McCamant and Durrett noticed the absence of social ties in many American neighborhoods. They have credited this to the transient behaviors of our culture where people live hundreds or thousands of miles away from their original families and have moved several times.[33] These trends ultimately provided the motivation to create a renewed interest in community where one could find a socially supportive network of people within close proximity which eased the burdens and expenses of everyday household tasks.

Another consideration which McCamant and Durrett found to be particularly important to Americans was a design which fostered a harmonious and affordable living situation which would not harm the environment. Increasingly, they began to see that the old ways were no longer working. It no longer made sense to them to continue a path of environmental destruction, an alienation from natural surroundings as some suburban communities were demonstrating. Furthermore, they found other people considering the ways in which buildings could evolve and be adapted overtime to meet the needs of various sorts of users, often with different ages, family configurations, or cultural backgrounds. Ultimately, these ideas assisted in establishing a more holistic approach to housing with an emphasis on combining residences with gardening, shopping, places to work, and daycare positioned within adaptable, energy efficient and environmentally compatible spaces.

[33] McCamant, K.M., & Durrett, C.R. (1994). Pg. 201.

After several years of research and preliminary dissemination of their findings, in 1988 Charles and Kate coined the word cohousing and published their first book in hopes of circulating their European research to other Americans interested in the community model. Since then, the concept of cohousing in America has seemed to take off. After more than a decade McCamant & Durrett's *Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves*[34] remains the most significant work on the subject, and the fundamental reference and source book of the cohousing movement in America.

2.3 HISTORY OF AMERICAN COHOUSING
A. WHAT IS COHOUSING?

The 1988 edition of the book translates the *bofoellesskaber* idea for an American audience, introducing the concept of cohousing through a narrative of the understanding the authors gathered from their Scandinavian travels. The updated (1994) edition includes descriptions of six of the first cohousing projects in North America. These communities were ultimately created through McCamant and Durrett's active campaigning. They gave informative presentations and workshops across the country, to spread the concept of living collectively without sacrificing individual privacy.

The book's text is rather simplified, to introduce the cohousing concept to the general public. This is achieved through the reduction of cohousing, to four main common characteristics:

[34] McCamant, K.M., & Durrett, C.R. (1988). *Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves*. Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press.
McCamant, K.M., & Durrett, C.R. (1994). *Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves* (2nd Ed.). Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press.

- Participatory Process – Residents organize and participate in the planning and design process and achieve conclusive decisions as a group;

- Intentional Neighborhood Design – The physical design must encourage a strong sense of community;

- Extensive Common Facilities – The common house and other collectively used facilities must supplement residents' private dwellings;

- Complete Resident Management – The residents of the community are responsible for all management and maintenance of the community.

Additionally, the authors have included two supplementary characteristics in the revised version which include

- A Non-Hierarchal Structure – shared responsibility for the decision making process, and

- Separate Income Sources – residents have individual income sources which should not be tied to the community finances.

The text highlights that it is the consistent combination and diverse applications of the characteristics which have ultimately come to define cohousing.

These characteristics are what make cohousing unique when compared to other American or European intentional communities. They allow the residents to take an active role in determining what kind of place they will reside, much like many others did before the age of mass-produced housing. With these new approaches comes recognition of some additionally shared characteristics which authors Chris and Kelly Scotthanson believe cohousing developments should possess. Their additions include an optimum community size. They believe communities seem to work best when they contain between 12 and 36 units. Also, a purposeful separation of the car and unit location encourages people to interact with one another. Another tradition started in Denmark which is almost always seen in American communities is shared evening meals. And lastly, the authors emphasize the importance of varied levels of

responsibility in the development process, a characteristic which is more closely examined through this thesis.[35]

McCamant and Durrett utilize these characteristics as a framework for describing several case studies, both in the United States and Denmark. Their text provides an overview of the development and design processes these groups employed as they sought out to create their cohousing community. The processes vary among different groups, but many of the underlying determinants are brought to light in the text. It should be noted that authors Chris and Kelly Scotthanson have additionally developed a handbook or application manual titled *The Cohousing Handbook: Building a Place for Community*[36] in which they also survey the development process of forming cohousing communities. The handbook probes this issue more deeply than McCamant and Durrett's text by analyzing the human, financial, legal, environmental, and design challenges groups may confront.

Both texts address specific issues regarding the layout and character of the site plan, the massing of buildings, the location, uses and spatial configuration of the common house, circulation within the community, the design of transitional spaces, and lastly the architecture of the private dwellings. These texts provide ideas which support the understanding that "cohousing is reinventing community in the sense that it replaces social values and architectural concepts that were once very common and adds new approaches that are proving rather popular in the mainstream market."[37] While more specific characteristics are sprouting through the popularity of the model, the term 'cohousing' now seems rather general as different

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[35] Wann, David. *Reinventing Community: Stories from the Walkways of Cohousing*. Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing, 2005. Pg. 1.

[36] Scotthanson, Chris and Kelly Scotthanson. *The Cohousing Handbook: Building a Place for Community.* Canada: New Society Publishers, 2005.

characteristics, housing arrangements, and development methods have created a web of possible approaches.

2.4 COHOUSING LITERATURE IN CONTEXT
A. COHOUSING IN A SOCIOLOGICAL CONTEXT

In order to obtain a better sense of the variations in cohousing, the sociological, psychological, and architectural factors should be examined. The variations make new classifications of cohousing communities necessary. Much like its European cousins, the more recent American cohousing, has undergone several social examinations. Cohousing provides a useful case study for many sociologists because the housing model uses design and formal organizational structures to encourage social interaction in neighborhoods. Additionally, informal social factors and personal characteristics of those living in cohousing communities predispose them to social interaction. Cohousing provides a unique opportunity to study these variables in one setting and to determine the relative importance of each and how social and personal factors may help to enhance the outcomes of the design of housing.

Studies of such cases, should ask what makes a community design successful in terms of the societies' or residents' needs. What we do know is that successful and unsuccessful neighborhoods have included the same housing types; and many different housing types that make up our cities have been associated with strong communities or alienating communities. If such various combinations have been home to strong cohesive communities at one time or failed at another, then what is the cause for cohousers' nostalgic need for something more? Perhaps it has nothing at all to do with the physical design of a community.

While good housing design, whatever one feels such design to be, may help to symbolize values in place, it has been hypothesized by some that it will provide neither a sense of

community nor guarantee involvement in community activities by residents. The definition of a good housing plan which portrays the identity of a community seems rather ambiguous as identities are "performed or defined by behavior, action and self-determination, resulting in designs which are instable and dynamic."[38] Additionally, both *success* and *failure* are relative terms and the conditions that underlie them are often difficult to see. Some causes of failure in one cohousing community may, in another place and time be the identical causes of success. It is for this and a number of other reasons that many cohousers are arguing that the participation in community design is crucial to community building and have identified this as a defining characteristic of cohousing. It is the use of the design process to organize residents of a particular place in social networks which provide the catalyst for community building. It is the research component and participation in the activity of design that may yield a sense of belonging, and may come to represent architecturally the values of future inhabitants.

Many would argue that cohousing is an ideal place to make such studies primarily because social ties are absent in most neighborhoods today. Cohousing also allows people to establish a sense of community relatively quickly, compared to the years or generations it might have otherwise taken. Although cohousing strives for a mix of ages and backgrounds, and there are residents from infants to eighty years old, the majority of residents are often Caucasians in their thirties and forties. Their backgrounds in social work, education, and similar white collar occupations, leads one to believe that they continue to perpetuate an American pattern of residential and social segregation.[39]

It can be suggested that people may achieve the greatest personal worth and productivity when their personal orientation is congruent with the social system and personality types of their

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[38] Harris, Dianne. "Social History: Identity, Performance, Politics, and Architectural Histories." Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians 64 (4, December 2005): 421-423.
[39] Fromm, Dorit. Pg. 22.

neighbors. Robert Putnam's text *Bowling Alone* has further addressed this likelihood. He examines the changing character of the American society in terms of the concept of "social capital". Notions of physical capital and human capital, such as tools and training which enhance individual productivity, are analogous to Putnam's core idea of social capital. This says that similar social networks have positive values. He offers the example of a college education (human capital) increasing both individual and collective productivity just as social contacts can affect the productivity of individuals and groups.

It is clear that the bonding and bridging of social networks are of great importance; however in an increasingly transient society this task seems rather difficult. Putnam's statistics support this idea; one in five Americans moves once a year, while two in five expect to move in five years. Putnam claims that this has created a U.S. population that is increasingly isolated and less empathetic toward its fellow citizens, that is often angrier and less willing to unite in local place or even as a nation. He concludes his analysis with a set of potential solutions, such as educational programs, work-based initiatives and funded community-service programs, offering a ray of hope in what he perceives to be a dire situation. [40]

Cohousers are diverse in terms of interests, ages, religion and household types. However, in terms of affluence, social class, race, education and attitudes, cohousers are a fairly homogeneous group. This may be credited to the underlying linkages prior to forming or joining a group. As Putnam stated, our society is becoming increasingly mobile. Perhaps many of the cohousers initially left their childhood homes and parents for secondary education where they established a subsitute family in order to fill the voids of nurturing loved ones. This provides the first commonality in cohousers, similar educational backgrounds. Next, another move was made

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[40] Putnam, Robert D. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2000. Pg. 205.

to a city where the cost of living in a close knit community be out of reach for many people, so the search for an affordable living situation which could provide a strong sense of community began. While the individual units of cohousing are generally reduced in size to allow for the common facilities, the shared spaces enable residents to use many more amenities than most households could afford on their own. There are not many variations in unit prices. These factors most likely create an analogous income range for cohousers.

These similarities seem unavoidable and naturally occurring, leading one to believe that psychological and social similarities in cohousing residents may also unintentionally exist. Available literature about cohousing or consonant intentional communities and communitarian movements suggest that the problem may not be the loss of the old associative patterns of community. It may be the failure of the present system to produce new contexts of association that can provide functional and psychological significance. The result has been an increasing sense of isolation and separation thus leading many to seek communities like cohousing. Conversely, Putnam identifies personal growth and self-fulfillment as motives for joining such groups. In order to better understand these viewpoints it is necessary to look into some of the literature.

B. COHOUSING IN A PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTEXT

While much has been studied about the sociological aspects of housing, some in particular regards to cohousing, the house and community should be further examined psychologically. One work which offers an empirical basis for the theory that the "house and its contents mirror our inner psychological self" is Clare Cooper Marcus' *House as a Mirror of Self:*

Exploring the Deeper Meaning of Home.[41] She examines various dimensions of person-place experiences through a life-cycle framework of the home-self relationship, and the need for the home to nurture what Marcus calls the "soul-Self." The book is organized into ten chapters documenting this relationship between self and home as a lifelong process beginning in special places of childhood; growing-up; always or never leaving home; self-image and setting; disruptions in bonding with home; and home as the transcendent self. Additionally, the text assesses this relationship through a wide number and scale of settings, both interior and exterior, in which people experience particular feelings with regard to their home.

Of particular interest are the creative methodologies Marcus utilizes for exploring people-place relationships. The text is the culmination of over 20 years of interviews with people of various backgrounds in terms of age, income level, owner/ renter status, type and size of dwellings, and urban/ rural context to discover why they felt the way they did about their houses and homes. In order to elicit unconscious feelings in as natural and non-threatening a way as possible, Marcus interviewed all participants in their homes and used a process of picture making and role playing to establish a dialogue between the person being interviewed and his or her home. She found that all informants generally expressed strong relationships with their homes, both positive and negative.

Marcus' research using environmental design theories, also known as environmental psychology or environment-behavior research, provides a framework for illuminating and discussing the linkages – or lack of linkages – between the social and psychological patterns of cohousing residents with their communities. The foundation of environmental psychology is the

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[41] Marcus, C. C. *House as a Mirror of Self: Exploring the Deeper Meaning of Home.* Berkeley, California: Conari Press, Publishers Group West, 1995.

suggestion that behavior and thoughts occur *somewhere*, and particular settings are associated with particular activities and thoughts. There is an inextricable reciprocal connection between humans and their environments.[42]

Amos Rapoport, a well known cultural anthropologist and architectural educator, writes on this matter. His earliest influential text was *House, Form, and Culture.* This book focuses on the way in which various people and cultures organize and use dwelling space. The text integrates a number of disciplines including, architecture, cultural geography, history, city planning, anthropology, ethnography, cross cultural studies and behavioral sciences. Most importantly, Rapoport recognizes that "the different forms taken by dwellings are a complex phenomenon for which no single explanation will suffice."[43] Therefore, he provides a cross-analysis of dwellings and their reasons for creation since earliest building.

Both Marcus and Dak Kopek, author of *Environmental Psychology for Design*, express that emotional attachment to place and perceived safety and security are often represented in either extreme positives or negatives. The need for communal living may be an attempt to obtain a sense of belonging and happiness. This sense of belonging required by cohousing residents may be related to the overall physical design of the communities. A number of authors have examined this presumption and have developed evaluations to better understand the personality characteristics of cohousing residents and the physical factors which may correlate with them.

C. COHOUSING IN AN ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

Clare Cooper Marcus has also examined cohousing communities which resulted in her paper "Site Planning, Building Design and a Sense of Community: An Analysis of Six

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[42] Kopek, DAK. Environmental Psychology for Design. New York: Fairchild Publications, Inc., 2006.
[43] R Rapoport, Amos. *House Form and Culture.* New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969. Pg. 1.

Cohousing Schemes in Denmark, Sweden, and the Netherlands." Marcus does not apply the previously mentioned methodologies to these communities, but provides an analysis of six European cohousing communities to consider to what extent the site plan and the building mass, form, and materials of the community design contribute to a sense of community. The study came to the conclusion that six physical design features help generate a sense of community.

Clare Cooper Marcus ranks these in order of importance and states that incorporating a shared outdoor space bounded in whole by rest of the community as chiefly important. She also found a covered shared space was important in climate zones where it was too cold to be outdoors for a considerable portion of the year. Furthermore, a site design which required residents to walk from peripheral parking to the front door of their dwellings past other units will engender more casual meetings and a stronger sense of community than a site design which incorporates parking within each unit. She found that the balance between privacy and community was essential. For example, site designs where residents had a choice between using private outdoor space and semi-public outdoor space had a greater potential for a strong sense of community than ones where there was no choice. She acknowledged that it is also probable that a site plan consciously designed to minimize or eliminate intrusion by outsiders into shared outdoor space will support a stronger sense of community than one which creates a busy pedestrian route through the site. Lastly, Marcus affirms that it is possible that a building design which stands out amongst its surroundings may provoke a stronger feeling of community among cohousing residents than one that blends in.[44]

[44] Marcus, C.C. "Site Planning, Building Design and a Sense of Community: An Analysis of Six Cohousing Schemes in Denmark, Sweden, and the Netherlands." *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* 17 (2, Summer 2000): Pg. 146-63.

Clare Cooper Marcus' Scandinavian cohousing analysis confirms the importance of architectural elements of a community and their ability to ultimately influence the degree of socio-behavioral happenings within. Her insights about people-environment relationships are well argued. Such concepts should be examined in greater detail considering the rapidity with which cohousing communities are springing up in North America.

One paper which further examines these questions is "Designing Neighborhoods for Social Interaction: The Case of Cohousing."[45] In this article, Jo Williams indicates the need to identify common features present in American cohousing communities, and whether they in any way represent, encourage or channel the social contact desired by the residents of such communities. Williams initially addresses a variety of variables including an assortment of personality types, informal and formal social gatherings, and various design factors all occurring in one space. The author examined two contrasting cohousing communities in California in order to determine kinds of social interaction and the physical and architectural factors related to such occurrences. Williams investigated this through a mixture of observations, activity diaries, and interviews with residents in the two cohousing communities. The two communities were chosen due to their contrasting levels of personality types, social factors and physical designs.

The paper primarily presents the outcomes of the research through a number of tables, diagrams, images and graphs to reveal the influence of some design features on social interaction, for example how the aesthetic, functional flexibility, and design of the communal spaces, as well as the diversity of activities occurring within them, influence social interaction. Williams alluded to the need for increased density and associated concepts such as shared group structures or compact design. The common structure and the features usually associated with it,

[45] Williams, Jo. "Designing Neighborhoods for Social Interaction: The Case of Cohousing." *Journal of Urban Design* 10 (2, June 2005): 195-227.

including peripheral parking and a system of pedestrian pathways and courtyards, were identified as fundamental elements. Williams came to the conclusion that it is the constant inter-linking and reinforcing of various design features which promote socio-behavioral interaction in cohousing communities.

Conclusions reached from these studies have produced similar findings in both European and American contexts. As the popularity of cohousing increases in the United States and new archetypes emerge, post-occupancy evaluations (POE) should continue to be conducted in order to better understand the effect of the physical architectural elements on new dweller groups. Furthermore, such studies shall provide an opportunity to further develop an understanding of the contemporary models of cohousing and the distinctively different planning and design methods chosen by each community.

2.5 VOIDS IN THE COHOUSING LITERATURE

The literature review indicates that ample research has been conducted on the traditional concept of cohousing. However, given the increasing popularity of the cohousing phenomenon and some new variations, further examination of these factors seems a relevant pursuit. Currently, two distinct development models are being utilized for the design of cohousing communities: the project model and the more streamlined lot model. In the project model of development, members meet regularly over two or more years, hire their own consultants, decide on about three different unit plans, and agree on a common house design. This development process takes, on average, four years and primarily follows the Danish model of development.[46] It has been said that members utilizing the project development model often express positive

[46] Fromm, Dorit. "American Cohousing: The First Five Years." *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* 17 (2, Summer 2000): Pg 96.

feedback related to learned skills of group communication and decision-making by participating in the development process. This cooperative process occurs before members move into the completed cohousing community, and the skills gained ultimately help residents to maintain and manage their community over time.

Instead of creating a "group coalescence" prior to construction -- spending hundreds of hours in meetings over the location, tenure, financing, and design -- American hybrids of the European models are evolving, with less financial risks and more individualized dwellings in a less time consuming process.[47] The lot development process is what many of the currently planned communities are using and this raises some interesting questions regarding the initial objectives of cohousing communities. This process for the most part eliminates the initial cooperative decision making process and hands this responsibility over to a for-profit development team. They purchase the site and sell the lots with the understanding that the purchaser will put a certain amount of money into an account to construct the common house. The advantages of this development process, aside from an initially lower cost for development and a quicker process, is that a wider range of housing sizes and types can be built. On the negative side, group connections are difficult to maintain initially as residents are preoccupied with completing their own home and have no common house.

Cohousing orthodoxy raises the question of whether the lot development model might result in a lesser sense of community. A number of sources show that it is residents' involvement in the participatory stage of development that lays the foundation for the strength of community. However, it is certainly not possible for every potential cohouser to be involved in the development of a community as we know that often the longevity of buildings is greater than that of humans. The literature reveals neither development model as subordinate to the other. A

[47] Fromm, Dorit. “American Cohousing: The First Five Years.” Pg 96.

more specific organizational method of defining cohousing communities is needed to understand various degrees of communal developing and living.

3. METHODOLOGY
3.1 ARCHITECTURAL CASE STUDY STRATEGY
A. SITE SELECTION AND VISITS

In order to create a classification for this ever growing housing and community model, this thesis utilizes both quantitative and qualitative explorations of the complex interdisciplinary contexts of cohousing and community planning. As stated in chapter one, an analysis of four urban and community planning methods will be made. These inquiries have been established primarily through an architectural case study strategy coupled with Emily Talen's "Four Urbanist Cultures" research model.

In addition to readings, architectural case studies, also referred to as Post Occupancy Evaluations (POE), were conducted in order to obtain first hand evidence not accessible through the literature. Visits to several cohousing communities provided opportunities to make architectural observations of the buildings, spaces and circulation paths. The study of the physical environment of a cohousing community was especially directed at identifying the presence of the social contact or intentional neighborhood design features described by McCamant and Durrett. These features, which include the site plan, the common house and the private dwellings, are what the authors felt would support or negate the ties created when participating in the design of the community over time.

These investigations gathered statistical data on four cohousing schemes in order to determine the levels of communal living involved in various models in differing settings. Realistic parameters needed to be established regarding expectations of the assessment from the outset. This meant finding a setting which could provide a variety of cohousing communities which varied in size, orientation and beliefs. The chosen communities were primarily situated in Northern California and included N Street Cohousing and Muir Common in Davis, California,

Swans Market in Oakland, California and Ecovillage at Ithaca, New York. The latter was chosen for its unique characteristics which involve a theoretical portion of this thesis

Another reason for the selection of the Northern California communities was the discovery of a cohousing bus tour organized by The Cohousing Association of the United States (Coho/US). This bus tour focused on the variety of Cohousing communities in San Francisco's East Bay, Sacramento and Davis, California. Visits were made to, Swan's Market and Temescal Commons in Oakland; Pleasant Hill, Berkeley; Doyle Street, Emeryville; and Muir Commons, N Street and Southside Park in the Sacramento/ Davis area. While traveling between these locations, the tour leader gave participants the chance to introduce themselves, share general information about cohousing, answer questions and provided fact sheets and site plans. Through participant introductions, ideas regarding the types of people who may be interested in cohousing were revealed and can be found in Appendix A.

While a great number of physical data were obtained through these visits, it was also essential to develop a plan for Post Occupancy Evaluations (POE) prior travels. This included documenting both administrative and research responsibilities related to the selected communities. Architectural plans were obtained when available, and a preliminary estimate of the number of residents and the level of complexity of the buildings was made. It should be noted that floor plans never fully represent the complex network of activities occurring in a community and therefore, first hand observations need be made when possible.[48] Information provided on community websites and The Cohousing Association of America’s community directory was also accessed before site visits. This information proved to be exceptionally useful when identifying possible classification models related to community values and beliefs.

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[48] Preiser, Wolfgang F.E., Harvey Z. Rabinowitz, and Edward T. White. *Post-Occupancy Evaluation*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1988. Pg 57.

Within this study, the research planning phase ultimately provided the link between the community resources, including the cohousing literature, and the validity of the resulting POE process. It was of upmost importance to identify criteria for the performance elements through the development of research instruments including a post occupancy evaluation matrix. The matrix, found in Appendix B, provided a framework for studying various communities and comparing such considerations as the site orientation and conditions, the common house location and features, community circulation, focal points, community boundaries, unit sizes and environmental concerns. The information obtained through this matrix and other firsthand observations can be more clearly understood through the Post Occupancy Evaluations.

B. POST OCCUPANCY EVALUATIONS

It has been previously stated that American cohousing has spread across this country with currently 80 completed and functioning communities operating in the United States, and over 100 in the planning process.[49] Knowing this, it seemed relevant for Post Occupancy Evaluations to be made and compared to previously conducted POEs found in the literature. This process provided reasoning behind the growth of such communities and the variances among them. The goals of these investigations were to gather statistical data on cohousing communities, so as to better define the housing model; and to determine whether residents had achieved their stated goal of "creating a sense of community." Because of the vagueness of the term "community," four factors were investigated. These were hypothesized to create a "sense of community through design" for cohousing residents and included the development process, the site design, and the common house and dwelling designs.

[49] The Cohousing Association of the United States. “U.S. Cohousing Communities.” http://directory.cohousing.org/us_list/all_us.php (accessed April 28, 2007).

The evaluation process included a comparison between the actual performance of buildings with explicitly stated performance criteria, when available, and the identification of the differences between the two.[50] A post occupancy evaluation can measure the short, medium and long term benefits of the various development models and their effects, if any, on the degree of social interaction. Those interested in cohousing may ultimately benefit from such studies which may evaluate organizational structures of the existing varieties of cohousing communities.

The primary task of the POE was the collection and analysis of onsite data. Helpful and fundamental research methodologies for this process are included in *Post-Occupancy Evaluation*, a guidebook produced by authors Wolfgang F.E. Preiser, Harvey Z. Rabinowitz and Edward T. White. The authors present an organized tool for identifying and evaluating critical aspects of building performance systematically. These aspects relate to the communities' residents or occupants, performance criteria, and the community settings. It is necessary to undertake this analysis of the concept of cohousing in order to identify problem areas in existing

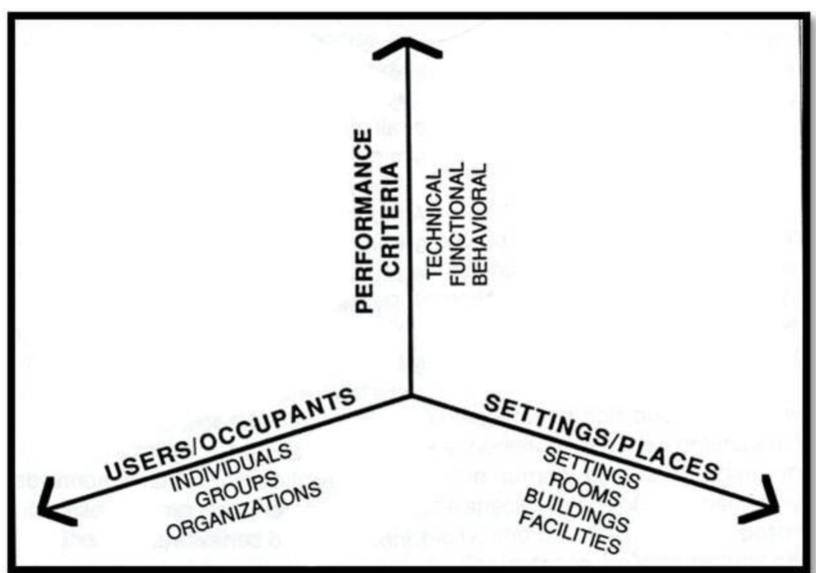


Figure 3.1 Elements of Building Performance[51]

[50] Preiser, Wolfgang F.E., Harvey Z. Rabinowitz, and Edward T. White. *Post-Occupancy Evaluation*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1988. Pg. 4.
[51] Preiser, Wolfgang F.E., Harvey Z. Rabinowitz, and Edward T. White. Pg. 39.

communities, to test new building prototypes, and to develop design guidance and criteria for future cohousing communities.

McCamant and Durrett's multiple case study approach is currently understood as the most feasible method for revealing facts about this increasing phenomenon. Being the first and only text concerning the subject, it set the tempo for subsequent research as well as for future practice. Unfortunately, this has encouraged cyclical series of studies in which researchers are reinvestigating the Scandinavian and pioneering American cohousing communities, rather than exploring new models of the community concept or developing new theories related to the field.

3.2 THEORETICAL APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING COHOUSING

A. EMILY TALEN'S FOUR URBANIST CULTURES RESEARCH MODEL

Most of the earlier studies have solely relied upon quantitative research methods in order to support a hypothesis. This suggests the need for cohousing research to be conducted within in the realm of a qualitative research model. However, the issue is not quantitative versus qualitative, each can and should support the other. In order to move away from the repetitive cohousing research, rich insights may be found in other fields of inquiry such as those related to community development and planning.

"Planning" refers to a wide range of systematic activities designed to ensure that desired goals are achieved in the future.[52] In the case of cohousing, these goals could include interior and exterior community development, particular forms of economic activity, environmental concerns and land development. As a formal profession, planning was traditionally concerned with managing regional and urban development. However, as the field has broadened, it can

[52] Wheeler, Stephen M. *Planning for Sustainability: Creating Livable, Equitable, and Ecological Communities*. New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2004.

now be said to encompass planning roles for desired future conditions at all scales of endeavor, within both public and private sectors.

Emily Talen, author of *New Urbanism and American Planning* provides a framework for analyzing the similarities and differences in the goals of New Urbanism and cohousing. Emily Talen's work summarized the connections and conflicts between four urbanist American cultures. This thesis uses her approach to trace the multi-dimensional ideas of four cohousing communities. Talen's survey of the past one hundred or more years of American urbanist ideals reveals four separate strains that she refers to as incrementalism, urban plan-making, planned communities, and regionalism.

Despite the strong and sometimes obvious overlaps, these four strains, or "cultures", vary in their level of intensity and sense of order. Talen graphically depicts these through the Grid/Group theory developed by cultural anthropologist Mary Douglas. While Douglas' version is conceptual in nature, it provides a systematic basis for defining types of social environments. These environments are understood in terms of two types of societal controls:

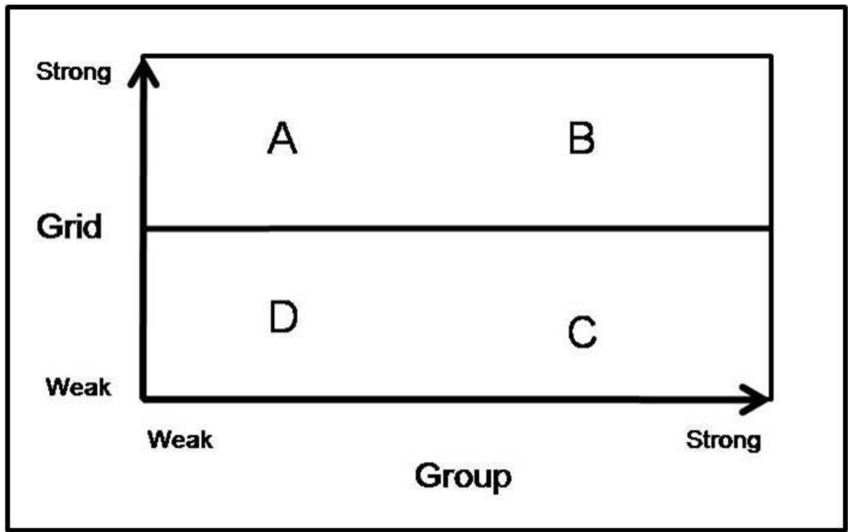


Figure 3.2 Four types of social environments postulated by Mary Douglas in *Cultural Bias*, 1978[53]

[53] Douglas, Mary. *Cultural Bias*. London: The Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, 1978. Pg. 7.

externally imposed rules, the ‘grid’ dimension; and bounded social groups, the ‘group’ dimension. The grid dimension captures the concept of power in society by defining the rules that guide individual behavior; leaving minimum opportunities for personal choice. The group dimension, on the other hand, indicates status and social boundaries by defining a social setting, determined by the degree to which an individual associates with groups of various kinds.[54]

Emily Talen’s interpretation of this framework incorporates a redefining of grid and group as well as an adaptation of structure. Where Douglas attempts to account for the social context in which actions take place, Talen accounts for the normative and environmental context in which ideas about urbanism take place. By analogy, Talen’s group dimension represents how ideas are ‘controlled’ by a normativly ordered framework, “by specific views about how cities ought to develop in response to physical plans that control their order.”[55] In terms of the grid dimension the externally imposed rules can be seen analogously as levels of existing urban intensity that form the basis of planning intervention.

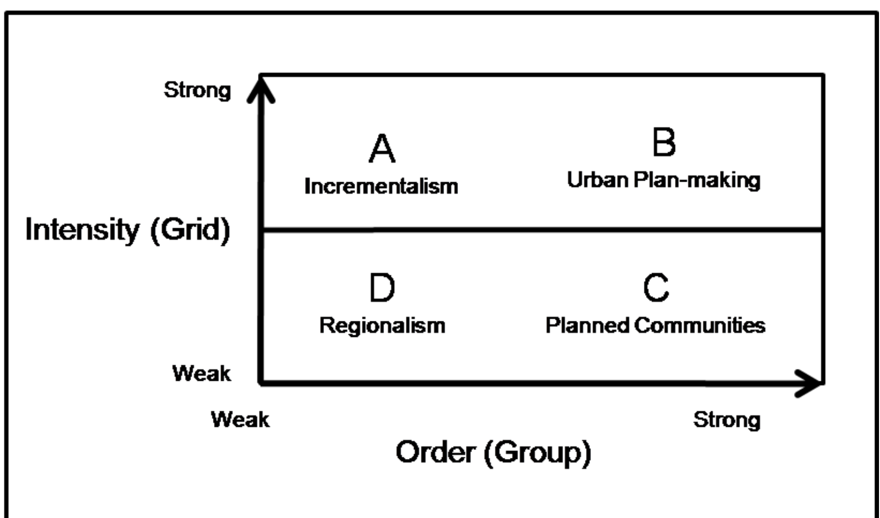


Figure 3.3 Four types of urbanist cultures adapted by Emily Talen from Mary Douglas, 1978.[56]

[54] Talen, Emily. Pg. 22.
[55] Talen, Emily. Pg. 24.
[56] Talen, Emily. Pg. 25.

Talen is equating grid, or a set of rules realized in the built environment, with intensity. In this situation intensity is understood as the physical context of the existing urban environment and is judged on the basis of whether the urban fabric is more, or less, pre-existent. The main distinction along the grid dimension comes about from the identified rules existing through both the materiality of the plan and the planner's involvement with this materiality. Therefore, this includes the tangible aspects of the physical environment, which often define qualities of place, along with how much an individual is classified by such external constraints. "If there is reduced insulation, there is a correspondingly higher attainment of individual freedom in the form of autonomy and self-expression."[57] Engagement with the existing urban context means a strong urban classification.

On the contrary, if urban intensity is low – indicating a correspondingly high rural context – knowledge of the existing urban situation is not seen as constraining. This portion of the grid dimension tends to produce a focus on natural contexts and rural communities. This does not exclude the importance of urban precedent, but it does mean that community planning will not be primarily focused on altering existing urban spaces.

While the grid dimension has to do with the existing urban intensity and engagement with it, group is understood more through the planning approach. Group, as Emily Talen defines it, can be recognized as "the degree to which normative structure is expressed as urban order and, consequent plan making."[58] Within the group dimension, these established sets of normative principles can be identified through idealized plans for physical arrangements. Such plans are more or less about the ordered positioning of built forms. However, different ideas about order will ultimately reveal different implications for how the existing environment is treated.

[57] Talen, Emily. Pg. 25.
[58] Talen, Emily. Pg. 26.

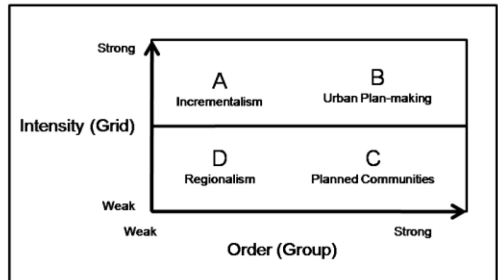
In low ordered urban environments, control frequently comes from somewhere other than the normative, ordered plan-making of cities. However, in terms of plan making, low ordered urban characteristics will be less fixed and relative. Talen describes this portion of the dimension as a physical plan which utilizes an incremental process which is less about implementing a set vision of the physical future and more about shaping the city or community in small steps. Furthermore, there is a focus on individual action or other behaviors that exist outside of specific designs and spatial plans. There may be more of a focus on discovery than design, and less concern with harmonious notions of order with a greater possibility of supporting subjective notions of beauty.[59] In particular, this emphasis on social welfare over social order will be clearly evident in N Street cohousing which will be presented in the following chapter.

In the high ordered extreme, there is often a harmonious order which coincides with the belief in an objective sense of truth and beauty. This type of order is frequently seen as both physical and social, with the former often having an impact on the latter. For instance, plans are often ideologically organized and tend to look static resulting in an initial group coalescence and sort of community building. While the planning proponents of high ordered communities provoke harmony amongst participants, strong ordered plans are likely to be less sensitive to existing environments, or they are likely to prefer starting from scratch. Some examples of previously discussed high ordered communities, while ranging in different intensities, may include the garden city concept or the Swedish *kollektivhus*.

The primary difference between the two is found in how order is treated. Planning on the right side of figure 3.3 is concerned with a visionary order which is unified, while order on the left side evolves organically through a series of incremental actions. Furthermore, these

[59] Talen, Emily. Pg. 27.

variances become more evident when understood in conjunction with the vertical grid axis. What Talen ultimately reveals is an embodiment of four conceptions of urbanism varying along two dimensions. The remaining task is to first understand these cultures more explicitly and thoroughly, and then link them to a more precise definition of American cohousing.



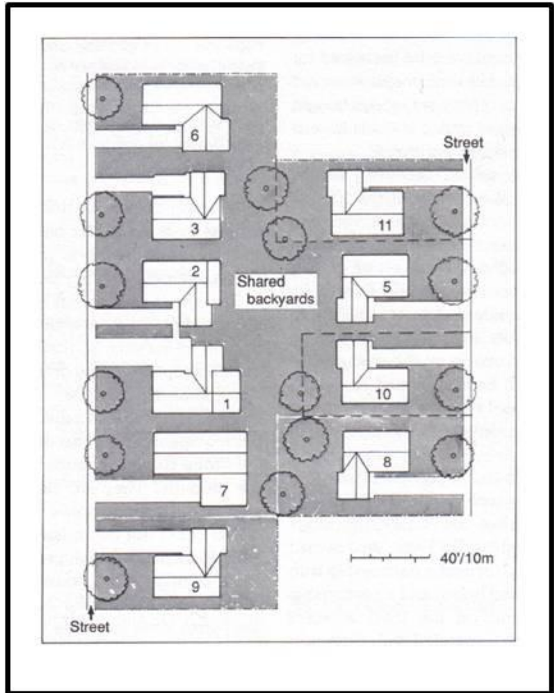
1. INCREMENTALISM

The first of Talen's planning cultures to be discussed is an approach she identifies as *incrementalism*. Positioned in the upper left hand corner – weak order, high urban intensity – incrementalist communities (A) focus on small scale, incremental improvements to the existing city, which are often intended to happen organically or from the bottom up. Such cultures have tended to vacillate between "romanticist aestheticism and universalist idealism."[60] This approach is currently at the forefront of American urbanism and is politically popular. Often it is interpreted through such concepts as 'revitalizing' and 'repairing', as will be the case in N Street Cohousing of Davis, California.

Incrementalists are focused on the urban interior: the inhabitants, the institutions, the physical structure, and the activities that occur in its' various spaces. There are no radical attempts to alter the nature of the city, but instead an optimistic outlook for improving the existing city. Many of these improvements are immediately achievable yet will take action in a successive order. Because of this direct involvement, incrementalists have produced plenty of ideas about how to make life better for city dwellers. As illustrated in figure 3.4 N Street

[60] Talen, Emily. Pg. 69.

cohousing created a system of shared backyards, through the removal of fences, in order to maximize available green space.



3.4 Site Plan of N Street cohousing illustrating shared space.
(Long dashed lines indicate fencing.)[61]

N Street provides an agreeable precedent through which to study the three strains of incrementalism which Emily Talen identifies as beauty, redemption and the combined topic, conservation and complexity. The concern for beauty as a small scale, incremental project can be better understood through the municipal arts movement seen first in New York during the 1890s. During the second half of the nineteenth century, America was rapidly urbanizing. There was a growing concern for finding a link between beauty and utility. The municipal arts movement focused on small scale adornment and decorative art such as stained-glass and murals in public buildings, and sculptures and fountains in public places like parks. It sought to improve the city's appearance through 'activated urbanity' rather than any specific ideology. Ultimately,

[61] Fromm, Dorit. Pg. 113.

these transformations promoted the birth of multiple organizations which yearned for civic improvement through cities' cleanliness, order and beauty.

From this concept grew another branch of incrementalism which focused on social redemption as a means of community improvement. Emily Talen identifies the redeemers as particularly interested in strengthening local communities and the 'parochial' world that exists between private and public realms. Physical improvement of neighborhoods was fundamental to their task, which utilized tactical methods including public protest to bring about change. Settlement houses, parks, playgrounds, and community centers were all movements with direct ties to the idea of social reform through improvements in social organization. This strain of incrementalism emphasized an interconnectedness of urban life at all levels, which required social mixing and social diversity.

While differing in scale from the urbanist examples, N Street shares the diverse ideals that are characteristic of other incrementalist cultures. Beginning with a couple of neighbors tearing down fences, N Street has evolved over 19 years and now consists of 19 houses on one block, currently housing 43 adults and 18 children.[62] Cohousing neighborhoods such as this "retrofit" example should theoretically provide examples of residential areas which strive for a redemption of social interaction through incremental changes.

Cohousing also provides a unique opportunity to study these variables in one setting. This will help determine the relativity of both social and physical factors present in incrementalist cultures. The design approach used in N Street cohousing adopts most of the redeemers' architectural and urban design principles. The redeemers' legacies can be narrowly interpreted as a physical manifestation of moralistic ideas. Much like the previous mentioned

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[62] Wolf, Kevin. *N Street Cohousing.* Online. *http://directory.ic.org/2092/N_Street_Cohousing*. (accessed April 6, 2008).

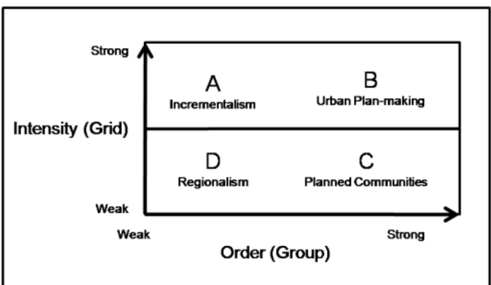
civic improvers and municipal art supporters, the redeemers felt that beauty and art must be constituted in all neighborhoods, particularly impoverished ones. This lead to a showing of vernacular art which was 'of the people', instead of art which was imposed from above. Another aspect of the redeemers' experience with art and beauty in the urban environment was recognition of the importance of variety and complexity.

This theory introduces the third strain of incrementalist cultures which are used to define American planning and urbanism. These are the efforts aimed specifically at the conservation and retention of urban complexity. As with all incrementalist ideas, there is an appreciation of the small scale, intricate nature and improvement of community life. This strain focuses on these qualities explicitly, and sometimes exclusively. The concept is hinged on the idea that urban change cannot be made in isolation, but must be cognizant of how it interlocks with other patterns.

Talen identifies the most current trajectories of the conservation and complexity strains of incrementalism to be following a particular path. This involves the celebration of urban pluralities without any accompanying agenda for urban design.[63] The phenomenon has been loosely identified as 'everyday urbanism', based on a book of the same title. Everyday urbanism reflects on the urban vernacular and is largely dependent on local customs and preferences that make everyday communities something to celebrate. Other works, such as Dolores Hayden's discussion of American diversity and the vernacular landscape in *Power of Place* present an indignant questioning of 'Whose Culture? Whose City?' in the attempt to beautify and improve. Ultimately, what is of value in urban places and the planning of them, is far more encompassing and opened than in the past.

[63] Talen, Emily. Pg. 94.

Beauty, redemption, conservation and complexity can be viewed together as similar attempts to find and structure the goodness of cities from the bottom up and will be further examined in the case of N Street. In this precedent there is an underlying structure which finds inspiration in the diversity, multiplicity and contrasts of urbanism, but utilizes many hands to implement these values. The goals of incrementalists have shifted from being implicit, then needing exact formulation, and now in the most recent phase, being subject to rule making. While this evolution has seen changes in its internal orientations, the incrementalists' common denominators of: existing context, incremental changes, a de-emphasis of plan-making and order, and self-determination of community values are all perspectives that continue to define this sub-culture.



2. URBAN PLAN-MAKING

Much like the incrementalists, the urban plan-making culture is focused on the existing city. Situated in the top right of figure 3.3 – strong order, high urban intensity – in this category, planning is both strongly contextualized and ordered. High order paired with high intensity situations can be seen as a case in which the materiality of cities often combines with ordered design to create a strong image for future development. Imaging plays a critical role and is frequently recognized in the form of graphics and plans. While this is generally recognized as being one of its greatest assets, it has also been acknowledged as a great liability. Therefore, this method necessitates a more forceful approach, since the prospects for altering what exists often require immensely complicated efforts.

As a reflection of this, the political analysis of this quadrant is characterized by top-down decision making and bureaucratic control. This type of planning method will not allow for individual deviations from the norm. Talen identifies the role of order and its legitimacy in procuring good urbanism as a basic theme running throughout the history of plan-making. In particular, the quest for order permeates its main endeavors of a reliance on experts, the tendency towards bigness in plan-making, the notion of social control, and the unfortunate trend towards separation and segregation in the urban environment.[64]

In terms of the evolution of urban plan-making, Talen explores two influential movements. The City Beautiful movement and its subsequent transformation into the City Efficient involved a strong emphasis on order, normative plan-making and imaging. The City Beautiful is the chronological center of the Progressive Era, which dated from 1890 to 1920. It was marked by rapid change, the rise of the metropolis, increased consumption, populism, social reform and control, and the rise of the Women's Movement. At this time, cities were the focus of such reformations and plan-making was the method by which these improvements could be achieved. While different methods of intervention were organized to create change, the same tensions that existed in incrementalism such as the conflict between freedom and control, and between localism and universalism, were core issues.

City Beautiful plan-makers were especially focused on the urban core, and had little interest in the 'agricultural village', industrial utopias, or the Garden City. Instead, urban plan-makers created plans for downtown, rail networks to link population to the center and later, attached housing to efficient industrial zones. They were additionally concerned with a plan that would guide city development towards 'good sense, attractiveness, sanitation, and convenience.' The remedy for these desires was a plan which bestowed a strong sense of order and uniformity.

[64] Talen, Emily. Pg. 112.

Figure 3.5 Exterior (l) and interior (r) views of Swan's Market Cohousing situated in Historical Oakland, CA .[65]

Swan's Market is a mixed use cohousing community which encompasses concerns analogous to the urban plan-makers. This community is one of a handful of cohousing communities with an associated commercial use. What most strongly connects this community to the characteristics of urban plan making is its involvement in an ambitious plan to bring back Oakland, California's neglected downtown. As will be further discussed in chapter 4, the design of Swan's Markets' site planning and overall design were largely left in the hands of the architectural firm associated with the project. Ultimately this provided a strong sense of planned order for prospective residents.

Urban plan-makers' desires are not only architecturally achieved. They apply to individual planned elements as well. There were focal points, such as formal public squares, monuments, and buildings of civic importance, connected by diagonals or straight streets understood as lines of communication. The spatial order of the city, which included a new imposition of various buildings and streets upon the existing urban fabric, was a highly

[65] Pyatok Architects, Inc. *Swan's Marketplace.* Online. *http*://www.pyatok.com/portfolio/swans.html. (accessed April 6, 2008).

regularized geometric order. This order is illustrated in the City Beautiful plan which was to be initiated in Chicago, Illinois.

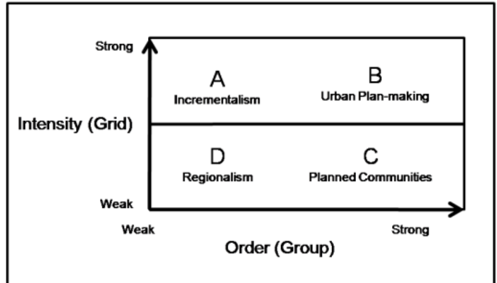
3.6 The Ultimate City Beautiful Plan, the 1909 Plan of Chicago.[66]

With the struggle to find a more utilitarian basis for existence, there was an increasing concern for an emphasis on efficiency. More specifically, the idea of efficiency was to be used for social control, based on the thinking that increased efficiency translated into increased wealth and a greater ability to appeal to the masses. The transition into the City Efficient movement required an understanding of practicality over aesthetics and a newly raised appreciation for commerce and transit. This did not mean that the City Efficient rejected beautification as a goal, but was seen as a subdued version of the City Beautiful with a new methodology and purpose.

Ultimately, urban plan-makers are a conservative group. While many incrementalists are open to radical change, the urban plan-makers are mostly content to work within the existing system through an ordered process. The dilemma which this strategy now struggles with is that contemporary designed urbanism by way of plan-making often occurs by means of the default zoning systems installed in our modern cities, which have been criticized as incapable of

[66] Talen, Emily. Pg. 121.

producing ‘good urbanism.’ While this strategy has been widely criticized, there is also a recognition that strong urban visions and plans have a better than average chance of bringing about real change.



3. PLANNED COMMUNITIES

Planned communities can be differentiated from Emily Talen’s other cultures of urbanism by this categories’ exclusive focus on the complete, well-designed, and self contained unit of human settlement. This quadrant is characterized by strong order and low urban intensity and is equated with egalitarianism because the principle of organization at work in this culture is equality. Because there is an inwardly motivated uniformity, often the relationship with the existing urban context is weak. In planned communities either the ideal of nature is given ultimate authority over and above existing urban intensity, or both nature and existing urban context are generally unobserved.

Planned communities are most closely associated with the overall concept of cohousing. However, there are variations within the cohousing community model. Muir Commons, situated in the outskirts of Davis, California, is the community which most closely parallels Emily Talen’s definition of planned communities. As the first developed cohousing community in the United States, Muir Commons embraces many of the ideas seen in the Danish *bofaelleskaber*. This includes a community which could be described as ecotopian, quasi-intentional, and family friendly. Of the four communities to be analyzed in this thesis, Muir Commons most strongly

Figure 3.7 Muir Commons inwardly focused site plan.[67]

embraced the participatory design process during development, which included a clear program of architectural and social goals to be met for the site.

When looking at this quadrant from a historical perspective, there has been a definite progression within this planning culture beginning with the earliest ideas about industrial-era planned environments, through the residential suburbs planned by Ebenezer Howard to his garden city concept. Such situations are now commonly interpreted as evidence of 'giving up on the city', much like the ordered plans of the garden city movement epitomized. These communities found themselves within the urban landscape yet disconnected from the whole. Furthermore, they had a seemingly appealing set of qualities which included a self-contained, usually picturesque plan which was holistically conceived and implemented.

While, planned communities are recognized as having a low urban intensity in contrast to their highly ordered internal structure, this is not to say that they are innately anti-urban. Many planned communities were established in response to the conditions of existing cities that were

[67] McCamant and Durrett. Pg. 211.

found to be unacceptable. Intimately scaled buildings, seamlessly integrated housing types, new traffic flows, public spaces with charm, and a pedestrian focus were all presented as resolutions to those feelings of distaste towards the congested industrial city.

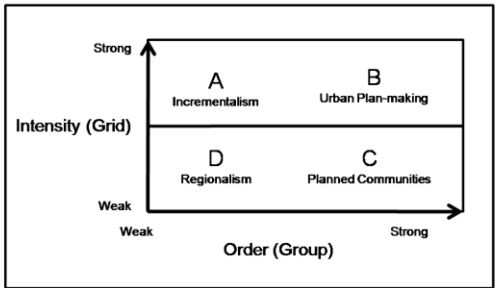
One of the most controversial aspects of the planned community is the notion of self-containment initiated by these new designs and the organization of human settlement within them. Critiques have surfaced which recognized the planned community as a packaged design which lacked innovation. The initial intention of many planned communities was one of creating diversity through design. However, the boundaries of such designs arguably create a sense of controlled diversity. Such instances clearly reflect the various interpretations developed in response to this urban culture. Where some will view the planned community as an embodiment of civic spirit, functionality, beauty and plain common sense, others will see it as escapist, exclusionary, and controlling. Some people will recognize an efficient reliance on past urban forms, while others will see repetition and expediency. [68]

Emily Talen hypothesizes that the problems planned communities confront are rooted in their low intensity, high order nature. Referring back to the City Beautiful, she recognizes that this movement at least took the existing city as its starting point. Much like community-planners, urban plan-makers made their plans for existing cities by thinking in terms of completing a settlement, creating a new town. \Incrementalists and urban plan-makers – the high urban intensity side of figure 3.3 – did not seek an alternative kind of city.

The planned community starts with a clean slate, which can be seen as an unrealistic attempt to freeze human activity patterns and oversimplifies the true nature of cities. The implications of designing complete communities in this manner are significant. Planned communities do not operate within the same rules and processes of urbanism, which generate

[68] Talen, Emily. Pg. 203.

spontaneity and gradual growth. The elements comprising the planned community are often conceived of simultaneously with a final idea exhibited in totality. Concepts like boundaries, edges, centers, separation vs. interconnection, and cohesiveness are driving factors used to illustrate the underlying social values these communities uphold.



4. REGIONALISM

Unlike the high-ordered plan-makers, the regionalists are classified as being more interested in affecting social relations than in imposing grand schemes for physical order. Situated in the bottom left of figure 3.3, this quadrant is characterized by weak intensity and low order. Interestingly, the cultural anthropologist Mary Douglas views this social context as individualistic, where, at the same time "nature is idealized as good and simple."[69] Emily Talen identifies the regionalist movement as having two distinguishing features which continue to be driving forces today. The first is a rejection of the large metropolis and the second is a deeply rooted connection to a notion of the ecological region.

As we have seen in the previous cultures, there are variants and interrelations within each classification exist and are ever changing. At one end is the view that true regionalism requires a new framework for civilization. At the other, regionalism is viewed simply as a more efficient and equitable way to manage resources. As a result, regionalists tend not to be as closely tied to design in terms of structure and order, but instead tend to be representations of community

[69] Douglas, Mary. Pg. 24.

values. Figure 3.8 illustrates Ecovillage at Ithaca's regionalist and sustainable architecture which reflects community values designed around an efficient lifestyle. This regionalist perspective is less about the specifics of internal urban form and more about how the community is positioned in its natural and regional context.

Figure 3.8 Ecovillage at Ithaca's pathway of homes.[70]

Another aspect of regionalism is its ability to simultaneously consider planning at both the regional and community levels. While this thesis will emphasize the rurally situated regionalist philosophies of Ecovillage at Ithaca, New York, it is important to recognize the early regionalists' attempts to penetrate both natural systems and an urban core almost simultaneously. This multi-scaled approach is one which Talen defines as a "manifestation of the importance of integration and connectedness that ran throughout regionalism."[71] What was achieved from such approaches was an integration of community planning and conservationism that naturally occurred at the regional scale, but had supportive connections to the planned communities as well.

[70] Bosjolie, Jim. *The Second Neighorhood Group or SoNG.* Online. http://www.ecovillage.ithaca.ny.us/etour/virtual.html. (accessed April 15, 2008).
[71] Talen, Emily. Pg. 234.

One of the most important principles of regionalist cultures was the notion of human cooperation. There was often a shared vision that the world should be guided, not by labor, discipline, and division, but by a sense of social justice, mutual aid, and communitarian spirit. From these ideas came a concern which was more about understanding society, place, and nature leading people toward discovery and empiricism rather than a design concern for the 'avant garde.' The regionalists have continued to offer American urbanism innovative and enterprising methodologies such as these. They include planning processes which place emphasis on an intimate understanding of the human landscape. Almost everything has meaning and is looked at creatively for potentially new insights.

B. INTER-RELATIONSHIP OF CULTURES

The main ideas within each of these four sub-cultures have been primarily explained in literary terms. The remaining task is to develop this set of ideas more explicitly through an architectural exploration, with specific regards to cohousing. It will be most important to understand the overlapping and interconnectedness of these community characteristics. While these models possess their defining events, main ideas, and key historical figures, there are many individual beliefs within each culture.

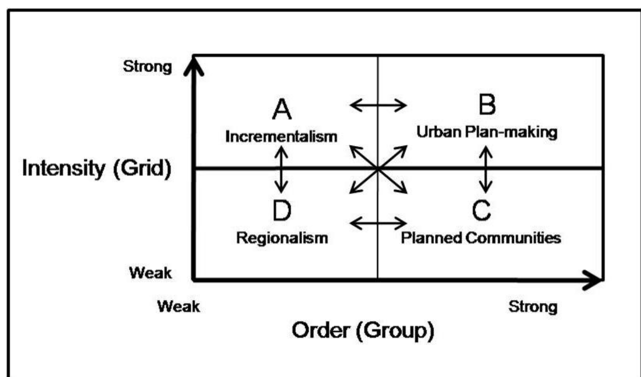


Figure 3.9 Four types of urbanist cultures and representative relationships.[72]

[72] Talen, Emily. Pg. 34.

Furthermore, each culture has its own expression of diversity. In low order culture, diversity may be more a matter of tolerance and recognition. For high order, it is a matter of using planning and design to facilitate diversity. On the vertical axis of the grid, high intensity cultures need to pay less attention to the connectivity and mix requirements of urbanism. These thoughts are more deliberate in low intensity communities. Emily Talen offers a more particular example of these overlaps. She says that regionalism is connected to incrementalism in that both try to accomplish change through the actions of individuals. Plan-making and planned communities overlap in their belief in the power of the visual image and the clarity of the plan. Conflicts about approaches are more likely to occur between cultures situated diagonally on the graph.

To summarize, an adaptation of Emily Talen's approach which accounts for the normative and environmental contexts of urbanism will be used to illustrate differences among cohousing communities. In chapter 4 a more in depth look into four cohousing communities in various contexts will present a better understanding of cohousing communities' overall strengths, and the abilities they have to reinforce one another.

4. DESIGN FACTORS IN COHOUSING

This study began with some thoughts and assumptions about cohousing. The first was a belief that the idea may be considered among the concepts of past intentional communities such as utopias. The second, which is now more applicable, was about identity. As these ideas have been sifted through, the importance of design has become apparent in defining the variations in cohousing communities. As cohousing has become better known and more clearly defined, the methods of planning, development and design have continued to evolve with these changes. This chapter will give an overview of the contemporary development processes and architectural methods seen in cohousing, and then attempt to understand these through four community evaluations.

So far, cohousing has been understood as a comprehensive community model which utilizes social, physical, ethical and cultural dimensions to strengthen its core concepts. The social environment of cohousing has been discussed as incorporating concepts of intentionality, democratic inclusion of residents, and the development of a support network through the urban surroundings or community. The physical environment is often designed for sustainability and social contact. The result of these two influences is a community model where the lifestyle aspirations of the residents seem to fit tightly with the shape of their built environment. Consequently, design plays a major role in the creation of cohousing.

Cohousing requires special design considerations because the residents have chosen it specifically because they want to know one another much better than neighbors usually do. Often, the impact of design on community is not considered, but in cohousing the social consequences of the designs are of particular importance. As cohousing has evolved, residents have become increasingly confident with the model. Since the first American cohousing projects

were built back in the early 1970s, various development, planning, spatial, and building size patterns have emerged.

The early projects, including those directly inspired from the *bofaelleskaber*, such as Muir Commons, included private units averaging about 1,300 square feet with a common house of about 3,000 square feet. As confidence grew, in the second generation of cohousing, the common house size continued to get larger, while unit sizes continued to get smaller. More emphasis has been placed on expansion of the common facilities and their location along better defined pedestrian pathways. With the common house size now increasing to nearly 7,000 square feet in some communities, the average size of the private unit has shrunk to 750 or 800 square feet. People are finding the benefits in the common house and just need the private areas to accommodate personal activity, retreat and sleep.

Currently, a new generation of cohousing is emerging, where clusters of first and second generation cohousing are brought together into a larger neighborhood or village. Jan Gudmand-Hoyer has recently designed a new neighborhood of 48 cohousing communities, in Ballerup, Denmark which includes shops and other commercial services. This model will also be seen in the Ecovillage at Ithaca's plan, where the third of three housing developments is being built. The village is taking a whole systems approach: developing a mixed-use community where people can live, work, and play in harmony with the natural environment. Clearly, many people are adapting McCamant and Durrett's original cohousing model and modifying it to fit community needs. These adaptations continue to affect the development models and physical appearance of cohousing.

4.1 DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN PROCESSES

Even before the creation of community plans, the development of creative visions and alternative methods are often identified. Cohousers have choices in how to develop their communities and the effects those choices may have on the surrounding society. Traditionally, an effective cohousing design begins through McCamant and Durrett's model. Twenty years later however, the parameters of the participatory design process have evolved into various methods of interaction and participation among cohousing residents. Currently, the number of residents who participate throughout the planning and development process varies from project to project.

The level of participation is often influenced by the development model chosen by the initial cohousing group. A variety of cohousing development models have appeared in North America in the effort to adapt the Scandinavian model to our customary practices. Dorit Fromm identifies three distinct development approaches depending on the future residents' degree of participation in the project prior to its construction. The project or traditional development model, inspired by Danish cohousing, entails some resident participation in all phases of the process from site identification, definition of goals, community design, project financing, and marketing and sales. Residents credit this process with letting them acquire communication and problem-solving skills to develop a "group coalescence." The development process begins by forming the individuals into members of a core group. Figure 4.1 illustrates a groups' commitment to meeting regularly to discuss community needs and the possible methods of fulfilling them. Through this struggle to develop housing, members begin to share a common history and an understanding of how they will live together in their community.

Figure 4.1 Cohousing member participation in the design phase of their future community[73]

However, being your own developer also means taking all the risk. These communities must put up all the money, and know when to appropriately spend it. For these groups it also means being able to make quick, effective decisions that are ultimately expressed with one clear voice. These groups need substantial amounts of cash, sufficient credit at the right time, knowledge of the development and construction process, and the wisdom to know where to do what. To many, it seems to be the only way or the "right" way to build cohousing. However, few groups choose this option because of its complexity, which entails assuming control at the beginning and maintaining that control through the end.

This process of creating collaborative groups is distinctly different from the process of participation seen in the lot development model. Swan's Market cohousing utilized this model for the creation of their community. It centers on a non-profit development team who buys the land, selects the architect, and constructs the housing. Resident participation in this model is voluntary and dependent on individual skills and commitment to the project. Some residents will participate later in the development phase when single lots are ready to be sold and further developed. Ultimately, the members lose some of their decision making power but gain some

[73] McCamant and Durrett (2005). *Senior Cohousing: A Community Approach to Independent Living*. Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press. Pg. 47.

help in the development process without committing too much time. Fromm claims that this model speeds the process, lessens financial risks, and tends to produce more individualized dwellings.[74]

The more recently developed streamlined model has been initiated due to the gained popularity of the cohousing phenomenon. In this for-profit streamlined model, a developer controls development, finances, and site and unit design. This method raises questions regarding the felt degree of community that exists in these cohousing communities when compared to the traditional project developments. Pleasant Hill Cohousing, a community visited during the Northern California cohousing tour utilized this model. The design which was created for this community was comprised of a highly ordered plan consisting of a system of interconnected pathways and sidewalks leading directly to focal points of the community. When understanding this community through the classification structure discussed in chapter 3, Pleasant Hill would most closely identify with the characteristics seen in Planned Communities.

Figure 4.2 Plan and image of Pleasant Hill Cohousing and its' system of sidewalks[75]

In the past, non-profit developers have been reluctant to undertake the development of cohousing until there was a proven record of well-functioning projects. While, the concept of

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[74] Fromm, Dorit. Pg. 160.
[75] Pleasant Hill Cohousing . *Site Map March 2000, Preconstruction*. Online. http://phch.org/SiteMap.htm (accessed April 10, 2008) Photograph 2 (*North facing common house and central pathway*), author's photograph.

cohousing has seemed to deliver rather high success rates in terms of occupied dwellings, some developers still maintain such reservations. In the U.S., unlike Europe, professional consultants and developers often work with emerging core groups to reduce the financial risk and time required for development. Fromm's survey data found that almost 50% of American cohousing groups hire development consultants, and another 30% work with for-profit developers or joint venture with a private developer. Only about 20% of U.S. cohousing fully utilizes the traditional model which develops the community entirely by themselves.[76]

The developer of Pleasant Hill Cohousing, The Wonderland Hill Development Company's mission is stated on their website as "build(ing) sustainable communities based on the cohousing concepts that combine personal values, community, organic design and sustainable building practices and principles."[77] While the company is partially including future resident's input, it can be questioned if Wonderland Hill is truly following the "cohousing concepts" as they develop their communities. McCamant and Durrett have determined the participatory process of development as one of the defining characteristics of cohousing. They would argue that some crucial steps, in which the residents should "traditionally" be participating, are being bypassed by developers. These include the establishment and organization of a group, agreement on general goals, location and financial expectations and the developing of a design program.

In the first American cohousing communities residents were playing a very active role during the initial planning stages and delegating greater control to the architect. However, as the process proceeds, the degree of resident interaction has changed. The success and popularity of

[76] Fromm, Dorit. American Cohousing: The First Five Years." *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* 17 (2, Summer 2000): 94-109.
[77] *What is Wonderland Hill Development Company?* Online. http://www.whdc.com/what_is_wonderland.shtml. (accessed April, 15,2008).

Wonderland Hill's 16 fully occupied cohousing communities may suggest that this streamlined process of development is producing respectable communities without such emphasis on the participatory process. This raises the question of whether the residents will ultimately feel the same degree of community that exists in "traditional" project development without being involved in the design of their community.

A. METHODS OF INTERACTION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Both during and after the design of a cohousing community, issues about community life are the central focus. In order to maintain a participatory lifestyle so as to enhance community life, members may come up with agreements regarding issues of participation and conflict resolution. In cohousing communities, a sense of community encompasses *membership*, a feeling of belonging to the group; *contact*, that members are available to each other; *influence*, where each person can have some effect on the group; *fulfillment of needs*, knowing that the group can help meet each member's needs; and a *common history* and sharing of common experiences.[78] Many cohousing communities have formulated an understanding of what types of responsibilities and behaviors can assist in attaining these goals. Figure 4.3 displays some common issues which cohousing members reach agreements on prior to move in.

[78] Fromm, Dorit. Pg. 159.

Use	Meetings	Behavior	Member Responsibilities	Cooking and Cleaning	Seller Restrictions
Landscaping, Fencing of Individual Yards and Common Spaces	Decision Making (Voting)	Children	Amount of Required work in the Community	Description and Assignment of Duties including Children's Tasks	Community approves new members
Rubbish Disposal and Recycling	Electing Officials and Directors	Pets	Meeting Attendance	Frequency of Commitment	Community has first option to buy new unit
Uses of the Common Facilities	Conduct of Meetings	Noise Levels	Joining a Committee	Method of food preparation and sanitation	A ceiling on unit appreciation
Maintenance, Additions and Repair Funds	Committees and Budgets	Work Times	Cooking and Cleaning	Non-participation, work excuses and absenteeism	Agreement on Renters and Sub-leasers
Vehicle Parking	Calling Meetings	Smoking and Alcohol use	Conflict Resolution	Use of produce grown on site, minimizing waste	Monthly payment for use of common spaces
Security of the common spaces	Annual Retreat or Evaluation	Roommates	Willingness to Socialize	Planning and Buying Costs	Preferred use of The Cohousing Ass. To resell

Figure 4.3 Responsibility and Behavior Agreements Chart

Almost all cohousing communities find a way of living with conflicts and values regarding these conditions. The conflicts that arise in cohousing will more frequently surface as the amount of interaction increases. McCamant and Durrett would support this idea and thus encourage involvement in the community development. Certainly the majority of decisions are made during the planning and developing phases, yet conflicts regarding other issues are constantly arising. Conflicts amongst community members typically fall into five categories including: miscommunications, territoriality, personalities, expectations of interaction, and values or beliefs.[79] These kinds of conflict can occur among neighbors in other types of housing, but in cohousing there is a much greater involvement in day-to-day decisions among residents. Along with greater intimacy and equality of power comes a greater potential for conflict among members.

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[79] Fromm, Dorit, Pg. 260.

The role of such tension in cohousing is complex, yet largely beneficial. Conflict allows for interaction where differences are expressed and the adjusting of these helps to establish cohesion. Overcoming problems together also helps to give residents a sense of accomplishment. Particularly important is that conflict can bring about change, and living collaboratively requires changes in attitudes and habits. Conflicts in cohousing differ from those that occur in other living environments because a resolution must be reached. Otherwise, the felt sense of community will recede and community members will spend more time in their individual units. To find a solution, different communities will address situations differently. In highly ordered communities, meetings will be held which more formally address the situation and a decision will be made by consensus of the entire community. Other communities will resolve the conflict by compromising amongst those directly involved.

The amount of time and energy devoted to a community changes over time. Cohousers cannot always sustain a high level of community participation. "There is a rhythm… in residents being more or less communal. People get together, ideas are discussed, projects accomplished; then the pendulum swings the other way, and people see less of each other and few projects are accomplished until another swing begins."[80] While the frequency of organized interaction varies, the entire layout of a cohousing community is designed to increase face-to-face communication and interaction and therefore encourages informal participation.

4.1 SITE SELECTION AND DESIGN

The physical attributes of cohousing – its location, site planning, and architecture – are its most immutable characteristics. Their careful consideration is critical for new groups in the site selection and development stages, when future needs and opportunities are defined. Whether

[80] Fromm, Dorit. Pg. 265.

or not prospective cohousers are involved with the design of their community a similar process of selecting a site can be recognized. Finding and selecting the right site is a time consuming process and requires special considerations. Some groups work out a formal process for finding and evaluating a site, while others simply drive around hoping to find a piece of land or existing community. Those interested in joining an already existing community may also utilize such methods of inquiry as the bus tours, which have been set up in several locations across North America.

The site selection begins with a sort of programming, in which future residents develop ideas about what it is they want in a community. For a couple or individual family seeking existing cohousing this will be an easier task. For a cohousing group seeking new development, it is often more complex and difficult to arrive at a common decision. In either case, many cohousers would argue that location is perhaps the most important choice when seeking cohousing. Whether it is urban, rural, or something in between, location fixes proximity to schools, employment, shops and services. Urban projects such as Swan's Market and Doyle Street Cohousing have set impressive precedents for building reuse and sensitive in-fill development of existing neighborhoods. Like the urban plan-makers, such groups often sacrifice affordability, private space, and amenity in order to remain fully embedded within mainstream society. They demonstrate a civilized, sociable urban lifestyle, and provide great motivation to broaden social change toward a more sustainable society.

In contrast, less dense, more travel dependent rural projects, such as The Ecovillage at Ithaca, enjoy peaceful, healthy and safe surroundings in close proximity to nature. Like regionalist cultures, this community has been instrumental in protecting the natural heritage of its locality. Most cohousing groups, however, have adopted the compromised position of a

suburban or small-town location where relatively affordable sites offer easy access to services, facilities, and recreational open space. Such sites are often large enough to accommodate modest employment, leisure and cultural facilities that can then be made available to the wider community.

As the case studies reveal, cohousing has been designed in many forms – detached single family houses, attached row houses, dwellings clustered around courtyards, rehabilitated factories and schools, and even high-rise buildings. An average U.S. cohousing development has around 24 units and often clusters the housing to conserve open space. While there are variances among site plans, the most common American design incorporates housing which is lined along both sides of a pedestrian walk, as seen in the suburban Muir Commons. This layout is also popular in Danish cohousing. This building type has many advantages over both detached single-family houses and high-rise apartments, especially when looking at them from an ecological perspective.

The range of development options made possible in such locations as Muir Commons and N Street Cohousing offer great potential for sustainable strategies, such as the application of alternative green-construction methods and materials. Cohousing groups are generally active in local affairs and their efforts are visible to a wider community. If the majority of cohousing communities have adopted the compromised position of a suburban or small-town location, which is also appealing to the mainstream, then it is important for cohousing to become a model of sustainability. New projects can demonstrate a potential for low-impact building, technology and lifestyles. Several projects have shown major reductions in water and energy use. For

example, one of Ecovillage at Ithaca's cohousing neighborhoods uses – compared to average housing – only 39% of electricity, 41% of natural gas, and 22% of the water.[81]

Sustainable design also has a great deal to do with location near services, not necessarily building on farmland, but rather in existing metropolitan areas and at higher densities. While some cohousing groups have a dream of living on acres of land, far from the city, others see cohousing as a way to improve city life, like the incrementalists. Cohousing appears to be one method of revitalizing urban neighborhoods, increasing home-ownership and stability, plus providing a built-in sense of security. Southside Park Cohousing, in Sacramento, California, and Swan's Market are redevelopment projects and good examples of cohousing helping in the revitalization of a declining neighborhood.

Many other projects have received environmental and innovation recognition. Housing layouts which include clustered units provide many of the same amenities as single-family houses while utilizing land, energy, and materials more economically. The ability to provide privacy, and community through an energy saving concept is what makes clustered housing such a popular form. Additionally, the treatment of spaces between the clusters or buildings contributes as much as the buildings themselves to the quality of life.

Placing parking at the periphery of the site creates a car-free interior, allowing for more open space for pedestrian circulation. Circulation to the individual units from the parking areas is often centralized along a limited number of paths to increase the chances for neighbors to pass one another. Site plans organized around a central street or courtyard seem to work particularly well at promoting such encounters. When houses are scattered around the site, connected by a multitude of small pathways, as seen at Pleasant Hill Cohousing, no one route gets enough use to

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[81] Walker, Liz. *Eco Village at Ithaca: Pioneering a Sustainable Culture*. Canada: New Society Publishers, 2005. Pg. 209.

ensure the likelihood of meeting others. Allowing residents to pass by other homes and the common house on their way to and from their car increases social contact. According to Dorit Fromm, in European cohousing, parking a distance from one's unit has not caused the kind of anguish that Americans express. Several new American communities have veered from the typical cohousing car tenet and have included parking next to their unit. Residents of these communities are more likely to head straight into their homes, thus reducing socialization.

On the other hand, the creation of community need not stop at the borders of the site. The larger neighborhood should be included in many ways and deserve more than views of parking lots and house backs. The choice of presenting a public front, quietly blending in, or screening the neighborhood will have a major impact on the site plan and the residents it attracts. This decision will affect the appearance and number of entrances, the location of the car entrances, and the different edges of the site. Muir Commons is situated across the street from a child care center and elementary school, with a large park beyond the school. A greenbelt with bicycle paths borders the site to the east along with an apartment complex and single family homes. The solution Muir Commons chose was to have a strong sense of enclosure on the south and west side where there was traffic, and to be more open on the north and east side toward the neighbors and greenbelt. The common house acts as the community's public face.

The design of common spaces is very important. In a small, urban retrofit cohousing project such as N Street, that might just mean tearing down the fences to create one big backyard with a shared garden and play structure. More often, the goal is to build a substantial common house that can house a kitchen and dining room, a kids' playroom, laundry, perhaps a workout room, a workshop, and guest rooms. These common facilities let residents build community by eating meals together a few times a week, and they are more efficient.

4.3 ARCHITECTURE OF THE COMMON HOUSE

The common house, which supplements the individual dwellings and provides a place for community activities, is the heart of a cohousing community. It is a place for common meals, resident meetings, laundry facilities, workshops and numerous other organized and informal activities. The common facilities provide both practical and social benefits. Ideally, no matter what kind of site plan, the common house is centrally located among the units, within view of each unit, so that residents can spot activity from their front door and be drawn toward joining the activity.[82] Findings from surveys and post-occupancy evaluations of Northern California cohousing communities revealed similar conditions. The common rooms and the outdoor common areas work in conjunction with each other and seem to be most effective when they are connected. Aside from the site plan, the relationships between the spaces in the common house including the kitchen, dining room, playroom and workshop largely determine how well it functions.

Common spaces function best when they have some transparency and can sustain a flow of people both inside and outside the space. In this type of situation residents have the choice of passing alongside and seeing into spaces without committing themselves to staying. Additionally, a variety of spaces should be incorporated into the design to promote these pockets of activity. Prioritizing the rooms and functions becomes necessary, and adjacencies of spaces often have an impact on the use of the rooms. The location and design of the kitchen are of particular importance in this regard. The kitchen is central to the idea of cohousing and is never isolated. The kitchen is most always immediately adjacent to dining. The excitement of common meal preparation is entertaining and inviting for residents passing by the common

[82] McCamant and Durrett. Pg. 177.

spaces. Often times cohousers will be drawn in through windows connecting the kitchen to other spaces.

Substantial space is allocated for other various functions. The specific feature of these areas depends on the interests and needs of the residents and site location. Their use is likely to change over time in response to new community needs. Childcare has been an important function in several of the communities visited and therefore, indoor and outdoor play areas were incorporated adjacent to the common house. The playroom serves a number of functions for these communities. During the morning and afternoon, it can be used for formal child care, and after dinner children can play while their parents eat and talk. Teen rooms were also included in several of the communities. Seen as a den or area to hangout, they seem to work best when they are located away from constant traffic but have a deck or window to overlook the action. Teenagers use these rooms for listening to music, watching movies, or hanging out with friends.

Many cohousing communities also include some or all of the following functional and special use spaces in their common house: an adult lounge area, guest rooms, a laundry room, community storage areas, workshop and craft spaces, office space for the community, a hot tub and work out room and a music room. As common houses get larger, more opportunities exist to include special uses. Additionally, as communities expand and vary in size and resident interests, the functions of these spaces will change. Over time, the initial design of the common house will participate in a cyclical pattern of resident participation and interaction. By allowing residents to become acquainted, discover mutual interests, and share experiences, common facilities and activities contribute greatly to the formation of tightly knit communities.

4.4 ARCHITECTURE OF THE HOUSING UNITS

Transitional spaces between the private units, common and public realms also affect the relationships created both inside and outside the community. Each transition, from the private dwelling, to the semi-private front terrace, to the common house, to the surrounding neighborhood (when existing), must be well designed. Design elements as simple as room and window placement make it easy for cohousers to informally interact. Often, kitchens will face the pedestrian pathways so residents can keep tabs on what their children are doing, see who is gardening or participate in a quick conversation with a neighbor. As the highest activity level of the house, the kitchen location seems to have a significant effect on how the community functions, and long-term effects on social sustainability.

Additionally, direct access between the dwelling and a semi-private garden increases the use of exterior space. This threshold to the common areas is particularly important for cohousing. Like a front porch, this semi-private area provides an easily accessible and comfortable place to be outside and interact with neighbors. In such communities as Pleasant Hill and Muir Commons, these areas were set back from the pedestrian ways and were identified as individually owned spaces by changes in paving, low fences and plantings. A more private outdoor space will sometimes be found in the rear of the individual units. Figure 4.4 illustrates

Figure 4.4 Semi-private exterior spaces provide transtional spaces from the highly active common areas.

the transitional spaces of Muir Commons Cohousing. While more private, social interactions can still occur in the rear exterior space which is adjacent to an un-groomed pathway. In situations such as this it is important that the level of desired interaction is compatible. Residents of Muir Commons use this path to observe nature quietly in peaceful surroundings just as residents will be using their more private back patios.

The amount of space held privately and in common differs from community to community. All cohousers have a need for privacy, but few people know how much they will require without having lived in cohousing. Often, the amount of private and common space is tied to the desired degree of shared chores and activities. Highly ordered communities that seek a high level of member participation tend to have larger amounts of common areas. On the other side, communities immersed in a highly intense urban landscape may have less common facilities, as they can utilize public spaces such as parks, playgrounds, or cafes.

Despite the concern for community togetherness, residents still spend the majority of their time in their own houses or private rear patios. Individual dwellings of cohousing communities differ amongst communities. Generally they will reflect special design considerations according to the types of shared facilities, the variety of residents, and the relationship among these residents. The average sizes of individual American cohousing units have been significantly smaller than the European units, which averaged 1700 square feet.[83] This reduction in cohousing dwelling sizes corresponds to several explanations. The first is that there has been a gained confidence in the overall idea of cohousing and the use of shared facilities. Thus, this has lead to a decrease in size of individual units and larger common facilities.

[83] McCamant and Durrett. Pg. 188.

With increased sizes in the common facilities, many residents see the common house as an asset which increasingly supplements the functions of the private house. Space is no longer needed in the home for laundry facilities, guest rooms, or workshops. This ultimately allows for a more flexible floor plan which can be adapted over time. Many cohousing communities have a diversity of household types so as to attract a diverse group of 'family' types. Newer communities, like Pleasant Hill Cohousing, offer four to six different house plans for prospective residents to choose from. These plans will often be adapted from a core plan which can accommodate different household requirements.

Figure 4.5 Flexible floor plans accommodate for future changes with ease.

Flexible architecture is important for a number of reasons. Not only does it allow for a diverse mix of family types to participate, but it may also support the growing population of aging baby boomers who wish to age in place. Cohousing can accommodate for future changes by creating adaptable floor plans which can potentially be tailored to special needs. Charles Durrett and Kate McCamant have identified the increasing amount of people over 50 and feel

that cohousing can provide a living arrangement which supports an "affordable, safe and readily-accessible neighborhood where people of all ages know and help each other."[84] While every unit in cohousing is not conforming to the highest accessibility standards from the beginning, it is important that there are plans that can easily prepare for this large population.

The small dwelling sizes often necessitated by today's economy, the groups specific goals, and the needs of seniors to age in place as comfortably as possible require residents to be particularly careful in establishing priorities, and designers to be innovative in their use of space. It is easy to accommodate many different functions in a large house, but cohousing units must do more with less. In the approaching segment of this thesis, various architectural methods for creatively designing with limited space will be demonstrated through four communities' designs.

4.5 ARCHITECTURAL AND COMMUNITY ANALYSIS OF FOUR COHOUSING COMMUNITIES

Similar to Emily Talen's approach, which was to summarize the comparison of urbanist American cultures, this analysis will use her approach to trace the multi-dimensional ideas of four cohousing communities. Cohousing residents are by definition acting on the belief that their environment is a significant variable for their social project. Referring to Preiser's elements of building performance, these analyses identify and evaluate critical aspects of building performance according to the community's settings, residents or occupants, and their performance criteria. The following communities will be investigated with these regards – N Street Cohousing and Muir Common in Davis, California, Swans Market in Oakland, California and Ecovillage at Ithaca, New York.

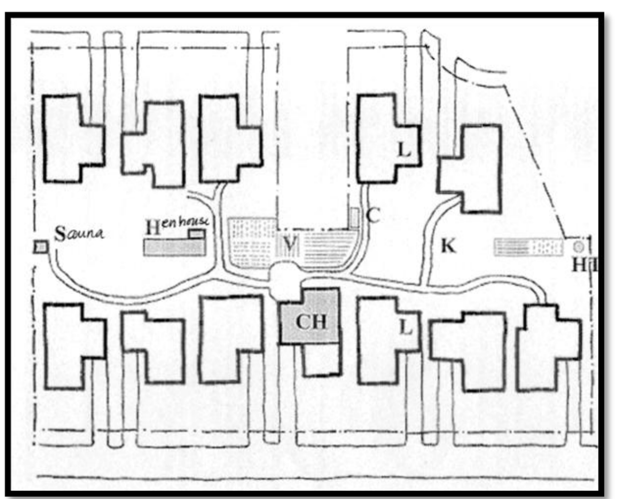
[84] McCamant and Durrett.(2005) Pg. 3.

A. N STREET COHOUSING

N Street Cohousing, located in Davis, California, is a community which started in 1979 as a cooperative household in a single rental unit. At the time, the community could be identified as a working class and student rental neighborhood. In 1984, one of the residents living in a rental unit on N Street decided to purchase their house, as well as the neighboring house. In order to maximize green space, the fence dividing the houses was torn down so as to create a shared backyard. Soon afterwards, N Street Cohousing originated as more houses were purchased and more fences were removed. Since then, the group has grown to include 19 units with 17 contiguous back yards without fences. The community is still in formation. Motivated and somewhat unstructured, they are continuing to take over the middle-class tract suburb through minor additions. There is an eclectic quality about N Street which utilizes diverse methods and a whole range of individuals eager to improve the city in a non-totalizing, non-aggregate kind of way.

The city of Davis is lined with typical suburban tract homes built in the 1950s. These suburban neighborhoods are spread out around the University of California, and N Street cohousing subtly blends into these surroundings. Ten miles to the east is Sacramento, California's state capital, which attracts thousands of students who are actively involved in political organizations. As incrementalist cultures have been known to do, N Street has focused on social redemption as a means of community improvement. In particular, residents of this community have particularly strong political views regarding alternative environmental lobbying. This combination of urban context, environmental interests, and an eager pool of renters and buyers has helped N Street Cohousing to grow.

The development process of N Street has been radically different than those seen in other cohousing communities. While some other communities work out their agreements through a participatory process before moving in, home owners new to N Street have done just the opposite. After a core group of six or seven homes were established, they began developing formal rules and policies concerning children, common meals, common ownership of tools, decision making and planning. N Street has no official association and decisions are made by consensus. Everyone has equal power in the community once they have attended three meetings and have been in the community for three months.



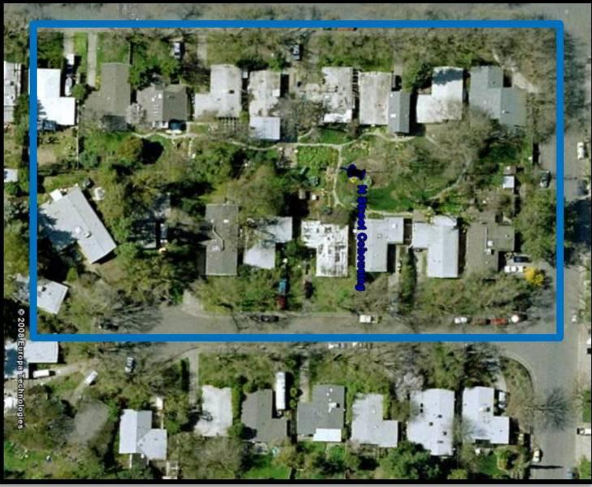


Figure 4.6 N Street Cohousing's Site Plan and Satellite View[85]

N Streets growing site has been an ongoing project which has been gradually enhanced through the addition of various common spaces. The development of the site, which is now at a little over 3 acres, was accomplished though both beautification and functional enhancements. According to Emily Talen, "the solution to urban disorder is not abandonment or constructing a new, but rather beautifying the existing in a multitude of discrete ways."[86] N Street has transformed their large shared backyard into an area which now includes an organic garden,

[85] N Street Cohousing. *N Street Cohousing, Davis, CA*. Online. http://googleearth.com (accessed April 14, 2008)
[86] Talen, Emily. Pg. 75.

providing food for the community as well as beautiful flowers. Additionally, the residents constructed a flagstone pathway connecting households to other common facilities such as the hen house, sauna, common house, play structures, compost heap, and outdoor patio.

Other small scale additions which have assisted in aesthetically enhancing the community include sculptures and art. Artists have been included in the shaping and beautification of the site plan in several cohousing communities. Often times funds will be set aside as part of the development costs. In the case of N Street, community artists decided prior to the construction of their new common house that handmade tile work would be incorporated. The artists used the themes of nature and natural shapes as a starting point and were able to design their pieces in the garage they were currently calling their common house.

Figure 4.7 N Street has incorporated art and sculpture as a way of beautifying their site.

After many years of using the garage, in 2005 the community planned for new common facilities to be constructed the following year. Currently their common house includes a communal kitchen, dining area, a meeting/TV room, a workshop with storage and laundry facilities with outdoor lines. Additionally, they rent two apartments which are connected to the common house. They include an upstairs four bedroom and a downstairs fully accessible one

bedroom apartment. The renting out of these spaces to tenant/community members assists in keeping monthly dues low for community members, which pay for common house utilities, food, furnishings, etc. Functional activities of the common house include eating together, playing foosball, watching videos and visiting one another.

At the time of the visit to N Street Cohousing in October of 2007, individual units were not being shown to visitors participating in the bus tour. However, there is something to be gained from this. In this situation a focus was made on exhibiting the community's efforts of conservation and connection to its existing urban context. Exterior views of the individual units revealed much larger footprints than those seen in other communities. As understood through the "Architecture of the Housing Units", a larger unit translates into more privacy and less group interaction. This provides useful evidence when placing N Street cohousing in a position of high intensity along Emily Talen's grid axis, and low order on the group axis.

Figure 4.8 N Street Cohousing's shared backyards and larger dwellings.

As with the other incrementalist ideas discussed, there is an appreciation of the small scale, intricate nature and improvement of community life. N Street focuses on a concept that urban change cannot be made in isolation, but must be cognizant of how it interlocks with other urban patterns. Therefore, N Street has exhibited a system of ownership that is as diverse as their surroundings. Some houses are owned by community residents, some by absentee

landlords, and others as partnerships of former tenants in the community. Over the years N Street residents have recruited their friends and others familiar with collaborative living to join the community. This has allowed for a variety of residents including students, couples, and 'families' to fill vacancies or occupy new units as they become available. The reality is that, at the time N Street was started, few of the residents could have afforded to buy their own home on their own, yet collectively they had the creativity, economic power and vision to help each other purchase their homes and even build a new common house.

Above all, this group is highly concerned with conservation techniques and improving the environment. N Streets efforts are aimed specifically at the conservation and retention of their natural environment and its larger positioning within its urban context. They have pioneered many options for making community life fulfilling and affordable just as the incrementalists did. Other communities have been utilizing similar methods and have begun to identify themselves as "retrofit communities". They're called a retrofit community because, like N Street Cohousing they transform existing urban neighborhoods into a cohousing community, rather than building from the ground up. By nature, every retrofit neighborhood is unique, and each community has its own timetable, depending upon financial resources, availability of adjacent properties, and the buy-in of neighbors. Particularly in urban areas, where new construction is expensive and building sites are few, retrofit cohousing offers an alternative to traditional cohousing communities in the U.S., which are built from the ground up.

B. SWAN'S MARKET COHOUSING

In the early part of the 20th century, Washington Street, extending from City Hall fourteen blocks to the waterfront across the Bay from San Francisco was the commercial core of

downtown Oakland, California. The building now known as Swan's Market is situated in the Old Oakland neighborhood between Ninth and Tenth Streets. Built in sections beginning in 1917, this white brick landmark served most of its early life as a department store and prepared food mart. It closed almost 30 years ago and remained empty until the early 1990s when it was turned over for development to the East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation (EBALDC), a non-profit developer dedicated to community economic development and the construction of affordable housing.

A hopeful cohousing group looking at possible downtown sites coalesced and started working in partnership with EBALDC through several stages of the development. Participation included working with the project architect, Pyatok and Associates and The Cohousing Company, on the site plan and its' positioning within Oakland. Additionally, the group was involved in the design of the common house and the individual residences. Much like N Street Cohousing, Swan's Market is highly focused on the existing city. However instead of a sort of grass-roots incremental change, planning for this development included a strongly contextualized and ordered strategy. Pyatok and Associates have a stated mission "committed to the idea that both client and community need to work together in the design and planning process."[87] The firm has developed an array of participatory design methods using easily understood graphics and models to help participants make well-informed decisions.

The project was under construction for a little more than two years, and all 20 families completed the purchase of their units prior to move in. The site which was ultimately produced includes a variety of uses such as a fresh food market hall, restaurants, street oriented retail, 20 cohousing units and their common house, 18 affordable rental units, live/work space,

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[87] Pyatok Architects, Inc. *Home.* Online. http://www.pyatok.com/index.html. (accessed April 6, 2008).

commercial office space, on-site parking and the Museum of Children's Art. The incorporation of a mixed-use development in the previously neglected downtown Oakland strongly fits with the ideas urban plan-makers had when creating highly ordered designs to create a strong vision for future development.

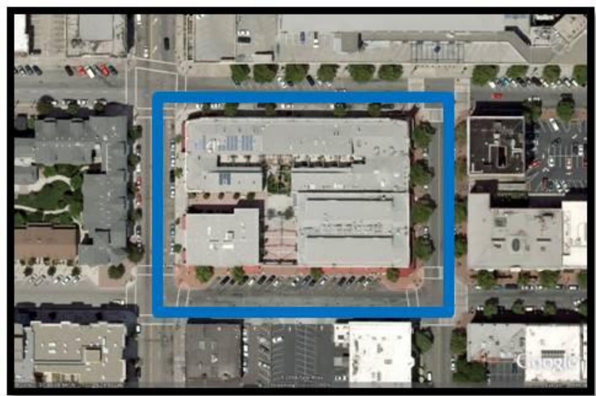

Figure 4.9 Satellite (l) and exterior (r) views of Swan's Market Cohousing situated in Historical Oakland, CA.[88]

This connection to the existing urban area is additionally enhanced through the direct access to the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) subway system. Dozens of bus lines are a two-block walk from Swan's Market which also provide direct access to downtown San Francisco. In urban plan-making the idea of efficiency was to be used for social control, based on the thinking that increased efficiency translated into increased wealth and a greater ability to appease the masses. Similarly, the ease of transportation to and from Swan's Market has introduced a mix of residents from surrounding neighborhoods coming for services and employment. For example, recent Asian and Latin American immigrants mix with African-American residents and newly arrived white residents in a jostle for the freshest produce, pastries and flowers on weekends.[89]

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[88] Swan's Market Cohousing. *Swan's Market Cohousing, Oakland, CA*. Online. http://googleearth.com (accessed April 14, 2008)
Pyatok Architects, Inc. *Swan's Marketplace.* Online. *http*://www.pyatok.com/portfolio/swans.html. (accessed April 6, 2008).
[89] Wann, David. Pg. 147.

Figure 4.10 Site Plan of Swan's Market Cohousing[90]

Above these amenities are the community's twenty attached homes and common house open directly onto the shared eighteen-foot-wide walkway with bay windows and small balconies projecting from the upper story above. The common house is centrally located and overlooks Swan's Court which includes a shared garden space and children's play area. The Swan's Market group worked closely with Kathryn McCamant on the common facilities' programming and design. The common house, like the individual units has an open, airy quality which is suffused with light almost any time of the day. The 3,500 square foot design utilizes contemporary industrial materials to further enhance the urban experience.

The kitchen, dining, and common sitting areas are positioned in the upper level in a large room which has utilized small-scale and flexible arrangements for divisions. Next to this is a glassed-in, carpeted children's room which holds play equipment and toys. As revealed in the "Architecture of the Common House", the relationship between the children's play area and the dining area is important. While parents want to be within hearing distance of young children, Swan's Market's play area is carefully separated from the dining area so the adults can relax

[90] Pyatok Architects, Inc. *Swan's Marketplace.* Online. *http*://www.pyatok.com/portfolio/swans.html. (accessed April 6, 2008).

while keeping watch. The ground level of the common house, which can be accessed by elevator, also includes a laundry room, exercise room, workshop, and guest room.

The urban plan-makers designs frequently integrated focal points, such as formal public squares, monuments, and buildings of civic importance to enhance the social patterns along the geometrically defined streetscape. Outside the common house of Swan’s Market, small trees, container shrubs and informal gathering areas are performing analogous functions. These areas are of particular importance considering the reduced size of the individual units. Residents

Figure 4.11 Swan’s Market’s transitional spaces

don’t seem to mind the smaller sizes, as they have access to large common facilities and a variety of public spaces. All the homes in Swan’s Market are twenty feet wide with kitchens positioned in the front portion of each unit. In total, there are 11 unit types ranging from studio lofts to three bedroom apartments.

Swan’s Market Cohousing suggests a new model for developing cohousing as part of a larger mixed-use or infill development. This community demonstrates how cohousing can be a part of a successful strategy to create change within an urban core. Ultimately, the community

has brought middle-income families to a downtown environment through an architecturally arranged support system such as cohousing. These feelings are encouraged through social interaction and group participation both in and out of the immediate development. Swan's Market has created a precedent which has established a stable residential core of a now healthy, diverse urban district. At the same time, the created community has incorporated an important infrastructure for cohousers to utilize which includes shops to shop in, restaurants and cafes to frequent, and cultural activities to participate in, all along a secured ground floor.

C. MUIR COMMONS

In 1988, Kate McCamant and Charles Durrett's dissemination of Scandinavian findings led them to Davis, California where they organized a slide presentation which ultimately led to the formation of the first cohousing community to be built in the United States, Muir Commons. This community's position as the pioneering American example presents important areas of discussion in how it relates to its Scandinavian predecessors. While a number of the Danish communities were developed solely by group members, most American groups do not have the financial, design, or construction expertise required for this process. The Danish model is an example of the participatory process where residents search for a site, find the financing, and design and build the actual structures independently. While soon-to-be residents of Muir Commons were extremely involved in the design and development process of their community, they introduced a model which was more appropriate for American developments.

The groups' enthusiastic core members had been meeting and studying the concepts of cohousing for several months when they were approached by a developer interested in their ideas. West Davis Associates wanted to include the groups cohousing model as part of an

affordable housing development to be situated in a larger planned community. Through this partnership the residents were able to save time and effort, but did sacrifice some degree of control when compared to communities designed solely by their residents. Over a period of two years, the group, developer, and project architect Dean Unger, met frequently to develop a design program, site layout, and common house design for the community.

Much like the planned communities discussed in chapter three, Muir Commons demonstrates an exclusive focus on the "complete, well-designed, and self contained unit of human settlement". [91] While, planned communities are recognized as having a low urban intensity in contrast to their highly ordered internal structure, this is not to say that they are innately anti-urban. Many planned communities were established in response to the conditions of existing cities that were found to be unacceptable and either too difficult or too intrinsically flawed to change. The residents of Muir Commons desired a site which would allow for a sort of experimentation with social forms. They ultimately settled in the outskirts of Davis, California where ample space provided the opportunity for a holistic design.

In traditionally planned cohousing communities such as Muir Commons, there are often deeper issues surrounding community visions or unmet needs. David Wann, author of *Reinventing Community*, describes Muir Commons' condition as one which embodies the competing visions of an eco-topian, quasi-intentional, spiritual, and family friendly community. The eco-topian aspect of the community is one which is in tune with nature, using green building materials, solar orientation and panels, and an abundance of site grown, organic and healthy food. Socially, while cohousing groups agree they are not an "intentional community", the founders of this group were seeking community support which Wann refers to as quasi-intentional. Instead of a "shared belief system" this type of arrangement can be understood as a

[91] Talen, Emily. Pg. 158.

community which is especially focused on fostering deep and nurturing relationships. Some were seeking a spiritual component, through yoga or some other dimension. Lastly, as in many cohousing communities, a number of parents were looking for a safe and supportive environment for their growing children.[92]

The indication of these social desires is evident in the inwardly focused site design. Figure 4.12 illustrates the various design strategies utilized to further enhance chances of internal social interaction. Concepts like boundaries, edges, centers, and separation vs. interconnection are driving factors used to exemplify the community's cohesiveness. Within the site, a large veranda and terrace in front of the common house looks

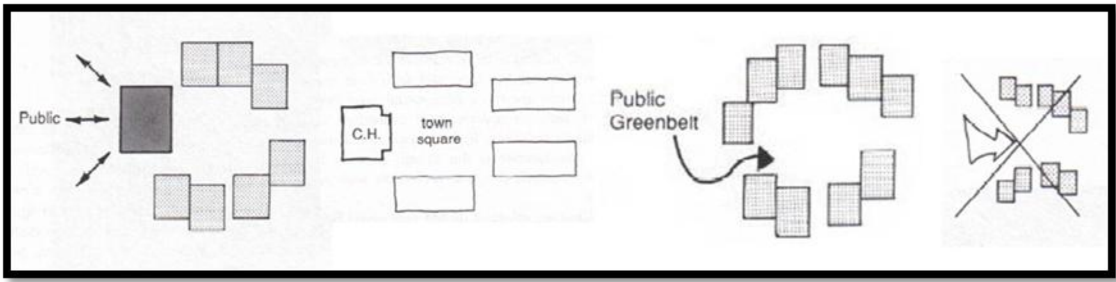

Figure 4.12 Design strategy ideas utilized to further enhance chances of internal social interaction

Figure 4.13Muir Commons' Site Plan and view of shared outdoor space.[93]

out to the central lawn, gardens and children's play area. Outdoor spaces such as these become an essentially exterior common house used for a variety of activities. Nodes or outdoor

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[92] Wann, David. Pg 181.
[93] McCamant and Durrett. Pg. 211.

gathering areas are positioned around the site and provide gathering places between the houses along an asymmetrical pathway. Such spaces provide areas for both informal and formal interaction. Each node is adjacent to about six to eight units and provides different functions. Other common places include a large garden and fire pit, garden equipment storage, bicycle and personal storage, a 900 square foot woodworking and automotive shop, a compost heap, community orchard, and natural and ungroomed pathways.

For this community, the 3000 square foot centrally located common house is most definitely the heart of their community. Central to the house is a large kitchen and dining area. Within this space is evidence of their highly ordered group structure; bulletin boards are hung and neatly divided into sections for meal sign-up and announcements, committee agendas and minutes, community activities, and other items of general interest. Every household is committed to the upkeep of the community and is responsible for cooking common meals, cleaning the common house, performing landscape and maintenance chores, participating in workdays, and attending general committee meetings. Along with these commitments is a membership agreement, found in Appendix C, which outlines the rules of membership, decision making process, organizational structure and waiting list conditions of the community.

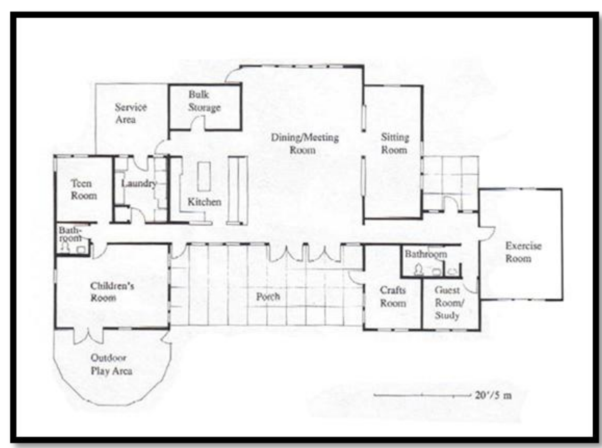

Figure 4.14 Muir Commons' common house plan[94]

[94] Fromm, Dorit. Pg. 228.

Other features of the common house include a sitting room with a fireplace, a children's playroom, an exercise and recreation room, an office, laundry room, and a guest room. At Muir Commons, as in many American cohousing developments, a condominium ownership system is in place whereby residents own their individual homes as well as a share of these common facilities. With the condominium structure, the 26 two and three-bedroom clustered dwellings appreciate and are sold at market rates. This is of particular importance for this community as it is the oldest, and strives to maintain a diverse group of individuals. As of October 2007, there were thirty-six children in the community compared to the twenty-four at move in. However, there are only five of the original twenty-six founding households still living in the community.[95]

As the first cohousing community in the United States, Muir Commons has hosted its share of visitors, including television crews from NBC, PBS, and CNN; and magazine crews from *U.S. News & World Report* and *Time*; and a number or newspaper journalists.[96] Field trips, such as The Cohousing Association's organized bus tours, have brought other cohousers or people generally interested in the concept to see Muir Commons' community life in action. Perhaps the community has welcomed these prearranged visitors in hopes of spreading the concept. While some developers have expressed interest in the possibility of building a cohousing community without resident participation, it can be hypothesized that residents of Muir Commons would strongly argue against this. As seen in other "planned communities", many of cohousing's design concepts are applicable to other housing types, but without active participation in the traditional planning process, resident use of the common facilities may decrease.

[95] Wann, David. Pg. 176.
[96] McCamant and Durrett. Pg. 279.

D. ECOVILLAGE AT ITHACA

In response to a growing awareness of the destructive effects of human activity on the environment, a movement has grown up that calls for a shift towards a more ecologically sustainable lifestyle. Cohousing communities like the Ecovillage at Ithaca (EVI), situated on the outskirts of Ithaca, in upstate New York, are of particular interest when attempting to understand concerns for blending environmental affairs and community cohesiveness through design. The community's planning began in 1991, as a group of individuals and families began meeting to plan a demonstration community that would challenge the existing social mode and offer a model for sustainable development. Four years later, construction of the first of three planned cohousing communities began on the 176-acre site the group had purchased.

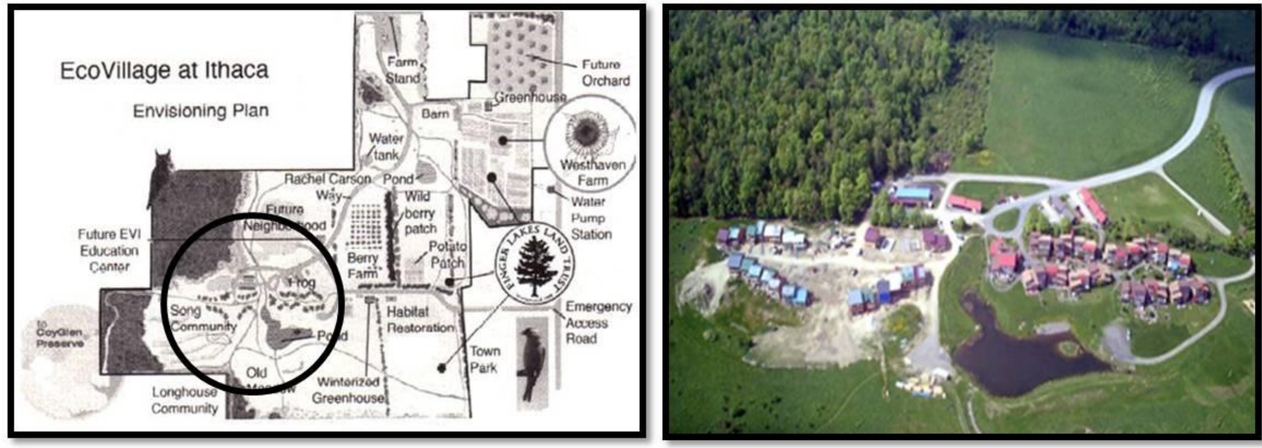

Figure 4.15 Ecovillage at Ithaca's envisioned site plan and cohousing plans.[97]

The site consists of 30 buildings which are clustered around a pedestrian courtyard, with a recreational pond, office and workshop space, and the two community's common houses. The compactness of the plan means that when all three communities are constructed, up to 80% of the land will remain as either woodlands, wetlands, open, or agricultural land.[98] It is the

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[97] Walker, Liz. Pg. 1.
[98] Kirby, Andy. "Redefining social and environmental relations at the ecovillage at Ithaca: A case study" *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 23(2003): Pg. 323.

marriage of this environmental concern and community building that distinguishes this cohousing community from others. The ways in which the community's residents connect both with the environment; through developing a relationship with the natural world, and with a community of like-minded individuals, which is facilitated by the physical design of the community fits closely with the regionalist ideas Emily Talen presented through her Four Urbanist Cultures Model. She identifies the regionalist movement as having two distinguishing features which continue to be driving forces today. The first is a rejection of the large metropolis and the second is a deeply rooted connection to the notion of the ecological region. The move back to rural areas and small town living, in recent decades, by disenchanted urban professionals and their families should be noted. EVI residents are aware of the destructiveness of the individualistic, capitalist, consumer lifestyle on both the social and ecological environment.

Affectionately known as FROG, from "First Residents Group", the Ecovillage at Ithaca's first neighborhood was completed in August 1997. FROG's decision making process utilized a very controlled design and construction process when compared to the subsequent communities, SONG and TREE. A core group coupled with local architects and builders, Jerry and Claudia Weisburd who had 20 years of experience of building affordable housing. The community design for FROG is fairly standardized, and includes few custom features. This can be credited to the developers' clear definition of deadlines in order to most efficiently and quickly produce an end product. Ultimately this resulted in less individual creativity, fewer cost overruns, and a more traditional product.

On the other side, SONG residents utilized the Danish or traditional model to develop their community which was completed in 2004. This meant a design and build process which took a much looser approach and allowed for more creativity and owner-builder participation.

However, this path also exposed many more challenges. The members of this group agreed to work independently until the project reached construction stage. This included getting town approvals, designing the site, house designs, and financing a plan. According to Liz Walker, author of *Ecovillage at Ithaca: Pioneering a Sustainable Culture*, the degree of intense participation at SONG proved to be overwhelming for many of the residents with no house building experience. Even with all the ups and downs of the process, SONG's homes have a sort of reflective character of the individualized tastes of the cohousers living there.

Figure 4.16 Ecovillage at Ithaca's common houses. (l) FROG's (r) SONG's[99]

In total, the village currently includes the two 30-home cohousing neighborhoods, FROG and SONG each with their own common house (shown in Figure 4.16), an organic vegetable farm, an organic berry farm, office spaces for cottage industry, a neighborhood root cellar, community gardens and varied natural areas. The 60 households are comprised of roughly 170 residents with about 60 of them being children.[100] A wide variety of occupants, from single person households to younger and older families, and retired couples live at EVI. The houses are constructed along environmentally friendly lines, with passive solar collection, triple glazing, and super insulation. Additionally, houses share hot water and heating facilities, which further

[99] Bosjolie, Jim. Online. http://www.ecovillage.ithaca.ny.us/etour/virtual.html. (accessed April 20, 2008).
[100] *Ecovillage at Ithaca*. Date of last revision – January 17, 2008. Online. http://directory.ic.org/1722/EcoVillage_at_Ithaca (accessed April 20, 2008).

increases efficiency. Both communities utilize five basic designs ranging from a 900 square foot one bedroom design to a 1,650 square foot five bedroom house. Almost all of these homes have a large, triple-glazed window wall on the south side and a cathedral ceiling, making the spaces feel light and open.

The decision to draw the houses together and cluster the community in the midst of an open and wild landscape creates a living metaphor for the "ecovillage" philosophy. The compactness of the dwelling space amid the immense openness of the natural environment serves to turn the attention back toward the community itself. The houses look inward to the central pathway which connects them and encourages chance encounters. The houses also look outwards, away from the community, to the vast amount of surrounding land. For residents, this provides a connection to the wider natural setting, and a recognition of responsibility that humans possess towards the natural environment.

Figure 4.17 Ecovillage at Ithaca's inwardly facing duplexes open up into a central pathway and open area.[101]

The level of community that each resident experiences is purely an individual decision at Ecovillage at Ithaca. Differing from some other cohousing communities, which require residents to attend a certain number of community meals, meetings or activities per month, EVI's activities are completely optional. As is typical in most cohousing communities, they make

[101] Bosjolie, Jim. Online. http://www.ecovillage.ithaca.ny.us/etour/virtual.html. (accessed April 20, 2008).

community decisions through a consensus process. The amount of community work is greater than other communities as they are independent from public services and have a much larger site to maintain. However community maintenance is still accomplished through a voluntary Work Team system, where residents apply themselves to whichever task areas they have most enthusiasm for. There are teams for cooking, dishes, outdoor up-keep, maintenance, common house up-keep, and community finances.

While some may argue that architecture can't bring about revolution, and spatial change by itself can't effect social change, the combination of intentional design strategies and participatory action offered by the Ecovillage at Ithaca holds promise in this direction. This is primarily evident when appreciating its contribution to the body of knowledge of environmental design and preservation. EVI has a stated goal to"build a replicable model of a cooperative, environmentally sensitive village, which can also serve as a demonstration site for teaching principles of sustainability."[102] The community has organized a non-profit educational organization which is affiliated with both Cornell and Ithaca College. The developing educational program provides hands-on training in community life and on building sustainable communities. The joint communities are a living laboratory which draws from the latest alternative practices in land use, organic agriculture, community living, green building, and energy conservation. Much like the regionalist cultures' attempts, Ecovillage at Ithaca has helped to initiate and contribute to a sustainability movement in its' locality with hopes of bringing about profound changes for all to see.

[102] *Ecovillage at Ithaca*. Online. http://www.ecovillage.ithaca.ny.us/default.html. (accessed April 20, 2008).

5. CONCLUSION
A. EMERGING TYPOLOGIES OF COHOUSING COMMUNITIES

Throughout cohousing's evolution, what has become relevant is that there is not one proven method to explain what is possible to build, or fully understand how the surrounding contexts, the common areas and housing units will work together, especially in various settings. A number of effective design strategies have been examined through the exploration of the Northern California cohousing communities and the successive community evaluations. The rising number of cohousing communities is powerful evidence that the concept will continue to challenge existing models within its own construct and cultivate new design methods to support such ideas. What can be determined is that American cohousing seems to be providing some real answers for the increasing number of people who stop to look at where and how their residential situations can ultimately have an impact on both the environment and their surrounding communities. Today more than 220 communities are in different stages of development or completion, and this escalation can be predicted to continue.

With over 50 communities in California and comparable numbers in Colorado, Massachusetts, and Washington, many developers and architects see a rather enticing opportunity which allows for a considerably large market of cooperative based clientele. Additionally, the nonprofit national association, The Cohousing Association of the United States (Coho/US), has worked to publicize and promote this housing model in North America by providing those interested with a community directory, resource center, online market place and the specialized journal, *CoHousing*. Through this network, developers and architects market their services, but towards a broad client base, simply seeking cohousing.

1. COHOUSING CLASSIFICATION STRUCTURE

My definition of American cohousing is based on bringing together ideas taken from four different urbanist approaches developed by Emily Talen, who refers to them as 'cultures'. These essentially come out of city planning, as there is a great deal of overlap between 'planning' and cohousing community planning. The main tasks are to sort out what is or is not contributory to a definition of American cohousing as it exists today, what the commonality consists of, and how it can be combined into something that can be used to define it more purposefully for those attempting to better understand the housing model.

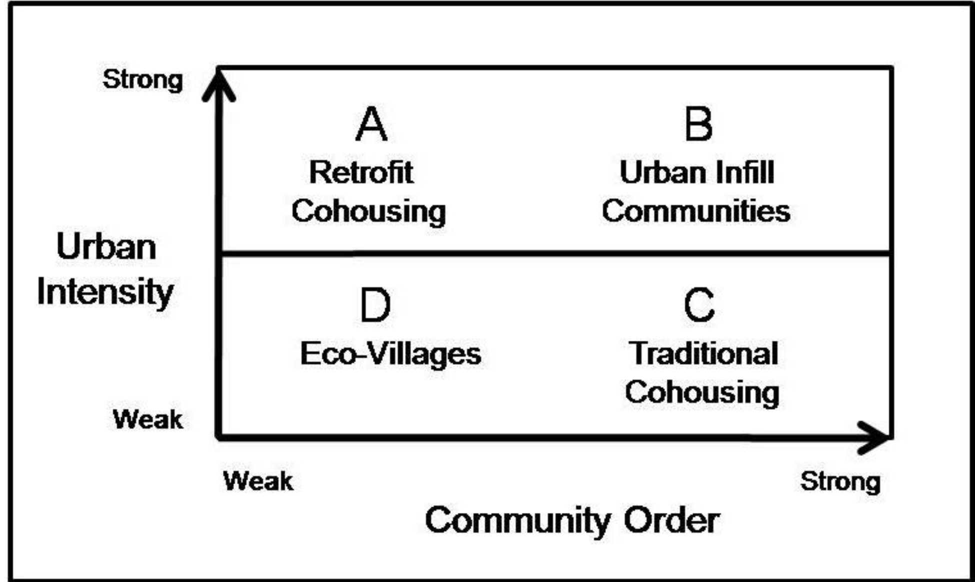

Figure 5.1 Cohousing Classification Structure - Four Types of Cohousing Cultures

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The typology of four cultures of cohousing can be summarized as follows:

Cohousing tied to the existing city:

A. Retrofit Cohousing – In this culture of cohousing, there is a concern for existing urban settlements in a way that is necessarily small scale, incremental and often preservationist. Residents of these sorts of communities start with a few existing homes on a block, and then find innovative ways to adapt the houses, alleys, backyards and courtyards to make them more pedestrian-friendly and community-oriented. By nature, every retrofit community is unique, and

each community has its own timetable, depending upon financial resources, availability of adjacent properties and the buy-in of neighbors. Like N Street's development, retrofit cohousing communities might share common meals in each other's kitchens for several years as they build up the financial resources needed to build a common house.

B. Urban Infill Communities – These sorts of communities also have a concern for the existing city. However, there is a strong focus on the larger and more comprehensive endeavor of planning the community which is often guided by its physical design. Infill developments are often part of a larger attempt to bring back historic downtowns and may be situated in long-standing buildings such as warehouses, fire stations, or old apartment buildings. The most popular arrangement for infill developments are seen in urban centers or adjoining a mixed-use development associated with commercial use, as was the case of Swan's Market in Oakland, California. These urban re-use and infill solutions offer affordability, reduced car use, an improved living environment, and a resident-managed community atmosphere.

Cohousing focusing on new development:

C. Traditional Cohousing – This quadrant is most closely associated with the Scandinavian and pioneering American communities. The belief of these communities is that thoughtful participatory design, involving as many future residents as possible, is the key to a successful cohousing community. Traditional communities, like Muir Commons demonstrate an exclusive focus on the complete, well-designed, and self contained community. Concepts like boundaries, edges, centers, and separation vs. interconnection are driving factors used to exemplify these communities's cohesiveness. They often follow specific principles both for the program, site layout, and common house, as well as for the management of the community once it is constructed.

D. Eco-villages – In this cohousing culture, human settlement is situated in its natural regional context. Ecovillages are characterized by numerous pedestrian-oriented community developments nestled around a community core, and sometimes a community transit. Consequently, there is often a rejection of the large metropolis resulting in a deeply rooted connection to their ecological region. Because of their geographically rural positions, there is a naturally occurring web of social interaction which need not be initiated by a formally ordered structure. Like Ecovillage at Ithaca, these communities have been at the forefront of initiating and contributing to a sustainability movement in its' locality with hopes of bringing about profound changes on a global level.

These four cohousing cultures represent distinct models of social and physical variances of American cohousing. In this thesis, I have used a definition of cohousing that considers the physical goals as both an ends and means, in which underlying social and economic systems must be considered in tandem with physical objectives. Furthermore, it is often the physical designs that become the vehicles of change. There is little doubt that specific perspectives on social, political and economic relationships go hand-in-hand with the specific physical outcomes of cohousing communities.

B. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Clearly, American cohousing, in all its various forms is the product of multiple actions coupled with a desire to impact a broader body. The question which this thesis should encourage dwelling upon is whether these cultures of American cohousing are having a good effect on this broader audience; and if so how will the classification structure better support new models and theories? Both the question and the answer are multifaceted. The most difficult challenge will

be differentiating between what is deemed successful or failing in terms of cohousing. Both are relative terms and the conditions that underlie them are often difficult to generalize. Some causes of failure in a cohousing culture may, in another place and time, be the identical causes for success.

Furthermore, as with any typological categorization, there are downsides. To begin with, some ideas are not easily categorized. There is a danger in attempting to force a particular idea about cohousing into a particular planning culture. Predictably, this has been a criticism of other attempts at cultural and planning typologies, as Douglas and Talen may have experienced. But the idea here is to understand a particular idea or approach in relation to a larger, community framework which encompasses ideas related to environmental, architectural, social, and cultural discourses. The typology can always be taken apart. This thesis has not been to prove whether the typology exists, but rather to create something which can be used as a tool for making relevant associations for cohousers and others interested in the concept. Therefore, my classification of cohousing cultures should be seen as a structure through which to view the rotating constellations of ideas about living communally in America.

C. OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

It has been 20 years since the concept of cohousing was introduced to an increasingly transient and individualized American population. There have been more than 100 communities fully realized in this country, with many more on their way. What was once a marginal endeavor now comes complete with an abundance of information and a network of very supportive advocates and professionals. Now more than ever, ideas about American cohousing can affect each other. They overlap in their adherence to the essential qualities of communal living –

diversity, connectivity, public space, equity, and place. Additionally, the articulation of differences of cohousing cultures can occur at different levels of urban intensity, and with different ideas about community. One of the recurrent themes of this thesis has been the possibility that many ideas related to cohousing have the opportunity of coalescing into new outlooks towards cohousing.

With all Western industrialized nations facing similar changes in demographics, resources, and lifestyles, along with improved communications between countries, it is not surprising that this concept is spreading to other countries around the world. Further research may look at the developed classification structure within an international context in order to reveal new typologies. This investigation could yield new understandings of how people in different environments with different restrictions can build to realize a shared vision of community and sustainability.

Additionally, many people hope that cohousing will offer a more affordable alternative to existing housing options. Thus far, the opportunities to work intensely with lower income groups to create participatory community have been few. The important, although limited, work that has been done with low income people in organizing for shared living communities demonstrates that, when given the opportunity and organizing tools, people eagerly seek self-sufficiency, co-ownership, and community responsibilities. Swan's Market integrated this concept into its mixed use development by providing several affordable rental apartments. Also, N Street's group has demonstrated that moderate to low-income people can improve their quality of life without going into debt. They have also shown that an urban cooperative block of existing houses can be created and maintained with less initial cash outlay and work than newly built communities.

Lastly, a growing trend, which McCamant and Durrett have specifically looked at, is the opportunity for an aging community to participate in cohousing. Not only is the largest portion of the American society aging all at once, but they are aging differently than ever before. There are more people growing older actively, living longer, healthier lives, and working long past the so called retirement age. They are no longer raising families, and their interests have changed to travel, gardening, cultural and educational pursuits, and volunteering. The aging of America is and will continue to aggravate economic pressures. Furthermore, the housing needs of this population are only beginning to be met in imaginative and sensitive ways. Several cohousing communities are preparing for this population by designing for the future. Aside from the physical designs providing for a comfortable atmosphere, McCamant and Durrett state that senior cohousing supports friendly cooperation and socialization and is a place where community is a way of life.[103]

Throughout cohousing's evolution, what has become clear is that there is not one proven method to explore what is possible in creating a sense of community. We may realize that each way of life needs the others, not as a matter of consensus, but as a matter of definition and utility. Adherents of each cohousing culture need the rival ways, as humans do, either to ally with, or define themselves in opposition against. The success or failure of any given cohousing culture is linked to its ability to think about its relationship to other cultures, both inside and outside the cohousing model

[103] McCamant, Kathryn and Charles Durrett. *Senior Cohousing: A Community Approach to Independent Living*. Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press, 2005. Pg. 1.

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APPENDIX A
COHOUSING BUS TOUR PARTICIPANTS

Cohousing Northern California Bus Tour – October 27, 2007
Group Leaders and Participants

GROUP LEADERS

Jeanne

Jeanne has been interested in alternative ways of living for many years. During the 1970s she rented a large house and additionally rented rooms until the turnover produced a group of people with complimentary personality traits. After moving away from this house and into a three unit property similar to a family compound in the 80s, she was introduced to cohousing through a presentation which took place at her church.

There were several iterations of cohousing groups to be developed, but the possibility diminished. It wasn't until 1995, when she received a postcard announcing the possibility of a cohousing community developing in downtown Oakland, which sparked the tinder of development ultimately resulting in her current living conditions.

A group formed and marketing took place over several years while meeting with a non-profit developer who was working on one of three blocks to be developed in downtown Oakland. The development was completed in 2000 and Jeanne is still a resident of Old Oakland Cohousing – the only one of 40 original members.

Jennifer

Jennifer has lived in Emeryville's Doyle St. Cohousing with her family (husband and two daughters – 6 and 2) since 2004. She is an elementary teacher by profession with facilitation training as well. Her sister and mother are 9 year residents at N Street Cohousing in Davis, CA, which is how Jennifer was first introduced to this way of living.

Jennifer went on a Cohousing bus tour in 2003, and spent the next year trying to create a community in the East Bay of San Francisco. She then took the "easy route" and moved into an existing community.

Neil

Neil moved into Swan's Market Cohousing in April, 2000 after being active in the Old Oakland Cohousing Group since 1997. Prior to living in the USA, he lived in many "community rich environments" in France, England and Spain.

Neil is a personal life coach and appreciates the value of process, teamwork and play. Additionally, he currently serves as a volunteer board and staff member for the Cohousing Association of the United States.

PARTICIPANTS

Nancy and Terry

North End, Napa City – Bay Area, Caucasian

Nancy and Terry have five children, one of which is in college at Berkeley.

They enjoy non-traditional living situations and currently reside in a rural and outdoor environment where shelters consist of a system of tents and sheds as they seek their permanent living situation.

Kim

California, Caucasian

Kim currently lives with his wife in a single family home. They used to live in communes in the 70s and are interested in how communal living has changed.

Steven and Patricia

Arizona, Caucasian

The couple is interested in starting a cohousing community in Arizona, where they are from. They currently live in a single family home with their two cats. While they had visited Emeryville, CA before and have been to some of the cohousing in the area, they were hoping to meet others interested in forming a group and obtaining helpful information related to the commencement of a community.

Karla

San Francisco, CA, Caucasian

Karla currently lives with her husband in a San Francisco apartment. Additionally they have a second home in Northern California and are wishing to consolidate and start a community with friends.

Molly

California, Caucasian

Molly is a librarian who currently lives with her husband in a rather large single family home. Her two children have moved away from home. She would like to move into a community with her husband, father and friends.

Marylee

California, Caucasian

Marylee is a sociologist who has been focusing her research on intentional communities. She is divorced with two children in college and lives alone in a single family home.

Paula

Caucasian

Paula currently occupies a room in a shared living space with three other people who don't "share" the space. She preferences communal living but also values privacy. Additionally, she has visited 34 countries.

Judi
Santa Rosa, CA, Caucasian
Judi was originally a part of the Santa Rosa cohousing founding group, but decided not to continue with the group. Instead, she moved into a large Victorian home which was converted into flats. She is hoping to find a cohousing community to live in.

Hadiah
California, African American
Hadiah is a single school teacher with two daughters and one son. She currently resides in a duplex and wishes to retire and move into a new community.

Stephanie and Bill
Arcata, California, Caucasian
Stephanie and Bill used to live communally with shared incomes 30 years ago. They have raised their children and are now wishing to live communally again.

Ed
Mountain View, CA, Caucasian
Ed has been living in the expensive Silicon Valley, California and feels that he is paying too much money for too much space. He feels that this is a waste and wishes to downsize.

Meryl
Australia, Caucasian
Meryl is originally from Australia, but has lived in South Africa, Belgium and Italy. She currently resides in a single family home in a community which she feels is lacking communal aspects. She feels that “noone gathers”.

Christine
Boulder Creek, CA, Caucasian
Christine was an original member of the Santa Cruz Cohousing Group and is currently looking for a new community to reside in. She has a 30 year old son.

Nancy
Santa Rosa, CA, Caucasian
Nancy is single with no children and is currently renting a house. She feels that neighbors are of extreme importance to her.

Rudy and Wanda
Berkeley, CA, Caucasian
Rudy is an architect interested in urban design and sustainability. His wife, Wanda was in construction. They are wanting to start a cohousing community with their friends and value community living.

Arielle
California, Caucasian
Arielle is a friend of Rudy and Wanda and is interested in community and efficient living.

Dean and Kathleen
California, Caucasian
Dean and Kathleen are interested in sustainable living and growing organic foods.

Karalee
California, Caucasian
Karalee is currently a Registered Nurse living in a single family home. She previously resided in Livermore Cohousing and wants to live communally again around friends.

Elaine
California, Caucasian
Elaine currently lives in a large house with a large yard, which she feels she can no longer take care of on her own due to her age. She is a member of the Livermore church and wants to start a cohousing community with her friends.

Melissa
Oakland, CA, Caucasian
Melissa's husband recently passed away in May. She feels the house she now lives in alone is too large for her and is currently in the investigating stage of starting or living in a cohousing community.

Angela
Quincy, CA, Caucasian
Angela currently lives with her husband and their 13 year old son in a suburban neighborhood. They and other people within their town have formed a small group and are organizing ideas for the development of a cohousing community.

Kristen
Boston, MA, Caucasian – 20s
Kristen is currently involved in forming cohousing in Boston with 11 other people. She is on the bus tour in hopes of investigating successful communities and meeting others interested in cohousing.

Deborah
Boston, MA, Caucasian
Deborah is also involved with the formation of the Boston cohousing group. She doesn't like roommates but loves neighbors. She likes privacy and community.

Evelyn
California, Caucasian
Evelyn is wanting to start a retrofit cohousing community in New Orleans. Her current ideas about the community would be that of an "art colony".

Pam
Bay Area, California, Caucasian
Pam is a retired Grandmother of 3. She currently lives in a large single family home on four acres and can not keep up with the labor that is involved with the property. She loves the country and wants to build and design her own energy efficient community. Additionally, she was involved and an original member of Muir Commons Cohousing.

Joanna
East Bay, CA, Hispanic
Joanna is a Community College Professor who grew up in Massachusetts. She strongly values a sense of community and currently owns a home where a number of her students reside as well. She wishes to start a sustainable community in Southern California.

Steven
California, Caucasian
Steven wishes to reside in an urban cohousing community and has lived in Kibbutz in the past.

Bruce and Dori
California, Caucasian
Bruce is an environmental engineer who grew up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He currently lives with his wife in a small single family home. They value community and sustainability and enjoy gardening.

Larry
California, Caucasian
Larry used to live in East Wind intentional communities in his 20s where the community had shared incomes and were involved in a peanut butter making business. He wishes to return to this way of living through cohousing.

Gabrielle
Santa Monica, California, Caucasian
Gabrielle is a middle school teacher wanting to start a community in Southern California.

APPENDIX B
RESEARCH MATRIX
Cohousing Northern California Bus Tour – October 27, 2007

	Temescal Commons 2000	Swan's Market 2000	Pleasant Hill 2001	N Street
Site Location	Urban Oakland, California 1/2 acre	Urban Downtown Oakland, California 1/3 acre.	Sub. Urban Pleasant Hill, California 2.2 acres.	Semi-Urban Davis, California 3+ acres Existing strong sense of community
Site Orientation and Conditions	Urban Infill Development Temescal neighborhood .5 miles from downtown.	Old Oakland Neighborhood Urban Retrofit Infill Development Mix use warehouse	Homes and pedestrian walkways fill the site. One mile to downtown. Very well groomed gardens.	Retrofit suburban block made up of 13 already existing tract homes (1950s)
Common House Location and Features	The common House is on the 1st level of one of four buildings.	Centrally located on Two levels. Kitchen Dining Living Elevator Workshop Guest Room Storage.	At the front of the site directly off of the parking. (CH, parking)	Centralized on N Street. Only newly constructed home in the community. Attached accessible unit.
Circulation	Inward circulation but connection to existing neighborhood.	(CH)	Alot of sidewalks and organized pathways leading directly to CH, units, pool, parking.	Tract homes tore down fences to share green space. Flagstone paths used to connect houses.
Focal Points	Central courtyard, shared back yard w/ another house not yet involved.	Central Courtyard and garden Adjacent Commercial Amenities (Museum, Bistro Businesses)	Common House, Pool, Home entrances face pedestrian pathways, well groomed gardens.	Common House Wild gardens, hen house, Sauna, patio Play areas Pathways.
Boundaries Privacy/ Shared Spaces	The Architecture defines the boundaries and differs from the surrounding homes.	Most privacy found in individual units. Cohousing is encompassed w/ in mixed use warehouse. Boundaries - City Block.	Not much exterior privacy because unit sizes are larger than other cohousing.	Fences which have not been torn down surround the community. Many shared spaces.
Vehicular Access Location of Parking	On street parking and access to public transportation	Parking on lower level. Access to public transportation - 1 block away. Some street parking.	Parking lot at entrance w/ car ports and garages. One mile to (BART) public transit.	Street parking (some Homes have driveways or garages.
Open Spaces Passive/ Active	Active, While resident numbers are low the homes face one another so social occurrences are frequent.	Active, Very strong connection to existing urban context.	Passive, Alot of sidewalks causing for less instances of informal interaction.	Semi-Active, open space, CH

	Muir Commons 1991	Doyle Street 1992	Southside Park 1993
Site Location	Suburban Davis, California 3 acres	Urban Emeryville, California 1/3 acre.	Semi-Urban Residential Neighborhood Sacremento, CA 1.25 acres.
Site Orientation and Conditions	Neighborhood- Across the street from an elementary school, direct access to greenbelt Near Wildlife Pond.	Retrofit Industrial Cohousing. Took old Brick Warehouse and redesigned.	Centralized w/in a neighborhood block made up of rennovated historic Victorian homes & new construction.
Common House Location and Features	Centrally located w/ central yard. Includes exercise room, Guest room, sitting area w/ fireplace.	Centrally located and easily accessed from entrance. Attached units Storage Shed.	Central CH Common House. Teens Room/ Laundry, Workshop, Storage, sitting Room.
Circulation	CH; Yard; private back patio	Centered around common house and outdoor garden.	Circulation occurs from the outward in direction. The common house is the thriving center.
Focal Points	Garden, Common House, Central yard w/ Childrens play area. gathering nodes.	Common House Central garden/ Fountain Intermingles w/ Urban District.	Common House Playground Vegetation and Gardening Areas. Residences.
Boundaries Privacy/ Shared Spaces	Individual porches and back yards. Patios which are fenced in for privacy. Shared gathering spaces.	City Block- Gated Parking area seperated from the surrounding Bay St. Shopping District.	Not many private areas other than individual units The community is very focused on the center.
Vehicular Access Location of Parking	Parking Lot includes 52 spaces for 26 units. plug ins for electric cars.	Sm parking lot 10 spaces for 12 units. Which becomes larger by moving a gate. Connected to garden.	Only 1 parking spot, but have on street parking. Carpool Kids to School.
Open Spaces Passive/ Active	Passive Meandering path but not many niches to stop. -Mentioned wanting front porches.	Active. Strong connection w/ surrounding community and shopping district.	Active May opportunities for spontaneous interaction. Also in the surrounding neighborhood.

	Temescal Commons 2000	Swan's Market 2000	Pleasant Hill 2001	N Street
Unit Sizes	9 units Ranging from Studio to 4 Bedroom. 3 Rental Units.	20 units. 675-1500 sq. ft. 3 studio Lofts, 2, 1BR, 3 1BR + Loft, 6 2BR, 4 2BR + Loft, 2 3BR 11 unit types.	32 attached townhomes in 7 buildings. 1BR 675 # - 4 BR 1707 #	19 units 830 # condo - 1600 # 4 Bed, 2 Bath House Avg. 1100 #
Materials Used	Wood Framed Town Houses Radiant Floor Heating.	Stick Built homes within brick and steel shell of 1917 public market building. original brick/ceramic tile exterior.	Laminate Floors. VCT, Stucco, Radiant Barriers on Roof.	No New Construction other than CH, Utilized existing tract homes, CH-Sealed Concrete.
Environmental Concerns/ Sustainability	Environmentally Friendly Insulation, Double paned windows solar heating.	Shared walls, passive cooling, Limited vehicular use. Southern exposure.	NO AC., 3 foot eaves, whole house fans, super-insulating windows, Common House has a cooling tower.	Residents are extremely environmentally concious. Solar Energy Recycled Insulation.
Design Process	Some residents involved with the participatory process. programming - The Cohousing Co.	Structured as Condominiums. included 12 financing sources complicated yet ordered.	Project was completely resident finance up to construction. programming - The Cohousing Co.	Because it was already existing community, participating residents were asked to add 1 communal contribution.
Development Method	Architects - McCamant and Durrett Architects.	Architect, Michael Pyatok and Associates The Cohousing Co. Kathryn McCamant.	Utilized the more stream-lined process done by Wonderland Hill. 1999-2001	Individual Homes which joined yards w/ neighbors through fence tearing down parties.

	Muir Commons 1991	Doyle Street 1992	Southside Park 1993
Unit Sizes	26 units Ranging from 808# 2 bedroom to 1381# 3 bedroom 2 Bath unit.	12 units 780# studio to 1600# 2 bed / 2 bath There were two rental units.	25 units 650# 1 bed/1 bath to 1423# 4 bed/ 2 bath.
Materials Used	One and two story newly constructed wood frame town homes with stucco.	Corrugated Tin Siding. Wood Frame town houses w/ lofts.	New Construction Wood Framed Homes. plus renovated historic 2-Family Victorian.
Environmental Concerns/ Sustainability	Common walls, solar gain from southern exposure. clotheslines in common house yard, solar panels, compost pile, gardens.	Superinsulation, common walls, heavy mass, solar gain from southern exposure, passive cooling, green areas.	Superinsulation, common walls in clustered homes, solar panels on CH, solar tubes for lighting.
Design Process	Programming and schematic design was developed by the Cohousing Company. particapatory design amongst initially involved residents.	Programming and schematic design done by McCamant and Durretts "The Cohousing Company"	8 out of 25 home owners (currently) were involved in the initial design process.
Development Method	Architect - Dean Unger Developer - Ridge Builders Group. Utilized a developer w/ some resident participation.	Utilized the Stephen Hannah corporation as their developer. Residents were involved w/ design process.	Architect - Mogavero Notestine Associates Developer - Ergos Construction Programming - The Cohousing Co.

APPENDIX C
MUIR COMMONS MEMBERSHIP AGREEMENT

SOURCE: FROMM, DORIT, PG 274.

Membership Agreement

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.

1. MEMBERSHIP

1.1.1 Membership in the Muir Commons group (MCg) is by household, with each member household having one vote. The following guidelines assume that involvement in the group is a reflection of commitment, and that those committed to living in the MCg should be the ones to make the decisions which will affect their community.

1.1.2 Continuous status is defined as the period of time during which membership status has not changed.

1.2 *Voting members* have full and equal rights in the MCg.

1.2.1 *Active voting membership:* to achieve and maintain voting membership a household must:

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 dues and 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.

1.2.2 Date of membership shall be the date of the first meeting of the three meetings a household attended which resulted in continuous voting member status, as defined in section 1.1.2. After becoming an active voting member, failure by a household to meet these requirements in any month, including failure to respond to a delinquency notice within 10 days by paying any overdue membership dues or fees, will result in the household's changing from voting member to non-voting member status.

1.2.3 *Membership during an absence.* A voting member may maintain active and continuous membership status during an absence by notifying the membership secretary of the intended period of absence. His/her vote will be considered an abstention during this period unless a proxy vote has been received.

1.3 *Non-voting membership.* A household may become a non-voting member by paying and maintaining membership dues. Non-voting members may attend general and working group meetings and will receive mailings. Failure to pay membership dues will result in the household's losing membership in the MCg.

1.3.1 Date of membership will be the date of first dues-paying which resulted in the household's continuous non-voting membership status. Voting members whose status changes to non-voting will carry with them the date of membership as defined in section 1.2.2.

2. DECISION MAKING

2.1.1 Our intention in decision making is to build a consensus among all voting members or quorum for every decision.

2.1.2 Decisions shall be reached only at General Meetings, except design decisions, which may be reached at Design Meetings.

2.2 If we cannot accomplish consensus after reasonable discussion in two meetings, a member may call for a vote. A motion to have a vote must be seconded and carried by a simple majority of those present.

2.3 A quorum consists of 2/3 of current voting members.

2.4 A draft proposal shall be published in the newsletter or distributed to all voting members before being discussed at a general meeting to reflect upon and to propose changes.

2.5 A vote may be taken only if a quorum exists, and a proposal must be passed by 2/3 of the *entire* voting membership.

2.6 If a 2/3 vote is not reached a decision may be held over until the next general meeting. To meet a deadline a special meeting may be called for the vote. In this case, the standard quorum still applies but the advance notice requirement is suspended.

2.7 If a voting member cannot attend a meeting, s/he may extend a proxy vote by contacting two voting members or by sending a written statement explaining h/her position. If a proxy has been extended, the member shall be considered present for purposes of reaching a quorum.

2.8.1 A verbal vote will be taken by a reading of the current voting member list and recorded by the membership secretary.

2.8.2 In special circumstances, the vote will be anonymous and tallied by two voting members.

2.9.1 Design Meeting agendas shall be set by the Design Committee and communicated to all members via newsletter, General Meeting announcements, or telephone to those absent from the General Meeting.

2.9.2 Design decisions made at Design Meetings shall be made in accordance with the above principles of quorum, consensus, etc.

2.9.3 All design decisions shall be reported at the next General Meeting. New input, questions, and dissent will be taken by a Design Committee member, and a decision may be reconsidered at the next Design Meeting.

3. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

3.1.1 The committees and appointed task-persons necessary for the MCg will come out of the *voting membership.*

3.1.2 Participation in the committees and tasks is done voluntarily and can be discontinued by notifying other committee members and finding a replacement, or giving proper notice to the MCg general membership.

3.1.3 Committees and task-persons will report to the general membership. They cannot make final decisions unless specifically directed by the voting membership.

3.2 Coordinating Committee

A) The coordinating committee includes one representative from each working group listed below and two representatives from the voting membership at large.

B) A 3-month commitment to this committee is necessary to ensure efficiency.

C) The commitment will start mid-month with a system of staggered participation to ensure continuity (e.g., two 3-month terms and two 2-month terms).

D) Terms may be served consecutively by a member or rotated.

E) This committee needs to be very flexible. It meets 2-3 days prior to each general meeting in addition to other times as needed.

3.2.1 Tasks of the Coordinating Committee

A) Liaison with WDA & M&D [the developer and design consultants].

B) General MCg correspondence with the public, contractors, etc.

C) Compiles monthly calendar.

D) Prioritizes issues and tasks.

E) Sets agenda for general meetings with input from committees, task-persons, working groups, and voting members.

F) Designates facilitators and minutes takers.

G) Coordinates tasks as needed.

3.3 Working Groups

3.3.1 Design

Subgroups: landscape, playground (more as needed).

3.3.2 Finance/Legal

Subgroups: Bylaws, insurance (more as needed).

3.3.3 Group Process

A) Oversees the direction the group is taking and its efficiency.

B) Makes sure everyone is heard.

C) Keeps the group focused.

D) Makes recommendations to MCg as needed.

E) Develops programming process.

F) Fields grievances.

3.3.4 Communications and Records

A) Is responsible for compiling, editing and sending the semi-monthly newsletter and other mailings to members.

B) Files minutes and reports.

C) Maintains mailing list and phone tree.

D) Compiles newcomer orientation packets.

E) Condenses minutes for the newsletter when necessary.

3.4 Tasks

3.4.1 Membership secretary

A) Maintains voting membership records.

B) Compiles attendance (from minutes).

C) Keeps track of the waiting list.

D) Arranges newcomer orientations and gives out newcomer packets.

3.4.2 Treasurer

A) Collects membership dues and fees agreed to by the group.

B) Sends warnings for overdue dues and fees.

C) Pays MCg bills.

3.4.3 Child care

A) Will be considered as equal to attendance at meeting of same date.

3.4.4 Minutes takers

4. WAITING LIST

4.1 The goal of the waiting list is to create an equitable method of determining which households, at any point, will be guaranteed the opportunity of buying or renting a house in MCg and in what order additional households will be extended that opportunity as houses become available. This method rewards active participation.

4.2 The following criteria shall be considered (in the order listed) for position on the waiting list:

A) Continuous voting members by date of membership, as defined in section 1.2.2.

B) Continuous non-voting members by date of membership, as defined in section 1.3.1.

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. All interested voting members must contact the Waiting list Coordinator (WLC) as soon as possible and a meeting date will be set for these parties by the WLC within two weeks. At this meeting the participants will work

out among themselves whatever house exchanges are necessary.

B. Waiting list for non-voting 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 Voting Member then the second household gets the choice and so on. Where there is a tie for eligibility for Voting membership the relevant parties must meet and decide which household becomes a VM. If an impasse results, a method of random selection will be used and supervised by the Waiting List Coordinator.

4.3 The list shall not be construed to determine the choice of houses within the group of households who buy houses in MCg.

Source: Fromm, Dorit. *Collaborative Communities: Cohousing, Central Living, and Other New Forms of Housing*. New York, New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1991. Pg. 274.