

Have You Considered Cohousing? Here's an Explanation and Some Examples

Cohousing puts like-minded people together in “intentional communities.” Many people, Rita and me included, resonate with the idea of community housing, where everyone has their own private home with kitchen and living room, but shares meals occasionally in a common house, perhaps work a community garden, but above all share the same values.

But bringing together like-minded families with the money to buy the land and build the individual units as well as the common elements can be difficult, resulting in few local examples of cohousing communities.

Just ask the people who tried a couple years ago to create the **Ralston Creek Cohousing** community next to the Geos Community in Arvada. They did all that work and were ready to put down the money when the land they wanted to buy was snapped up by a developer. Deeply disappointed, the community-without-a-home has now disbanded, no longer even publishing an email newsletter, according to www.RalstonCreekCohousing.org.

The concept of cohousing with like-minded neighbors has always appealed to me, but the opportunity never presented itself. In Golden

there's a long-established and highly successful 27-townhome cohousing community called **Harmony Village**, but turnover is close to zero because the members are so happy — and healthy!

Here are some other cohousing communities in the metro area, if you want to check them out. I've posted the websites for each at www.GoldenREblog.com.

Aria Cohousing, just east of the Regis University campus in northwest Denver, has 28 units under one roof. It was founded in 2017.

Hearthstone Cohousing, on the former Elitch Gardens site in northwest Denver, has 33 townhomes plus a common house. I sold a unit there in 2021.

Highline Crossing Cohousing, along the Highline Canal east of Santa Fe Drive and north of C470, has 40 homes, built in 1995.

Wild Sage Cohousing, in north Boulder's Holiday neighborhood, has 34 attached townhomes. A block south of this community is **Silver Sage Village**, an 18-unit cohousing community restricted to senior citizens — the first in the country. It offers only independent living, no assisted living or nursing care.

Other cohousing communities in

our state can be found in Colorado Springs, Ft. Collins, Bayfield, Lyons, Ridgway and Lafayette.

Looking beyond Colorado, I'm inspired by a project taking shape 20 miles north of Pittsburgh. It will be built on the campus of Chatham University's **Falk School of Sustainability and Environment**. (See aerial photo at right.) Chatham is the alma mater of Rachel Carson when it was called the Pennsylvania College for Women. You probably know Carson's groundbreaking 1962 book, *Silent Spring*, which is widely credited with sparking environmental consciousness in the United States and worldwide, leading initially to the banning of DDT.

The cohousing community being built there is appropriately named the **Rachel Carson Ecovillage**. What makes this project particularly exciting is that, by being located on the campus of a college devoted to sustainability and the environment, it serves as an onsite laboratory and example for the students as well as a great intergenerational home for environmentally conscious families.

As you might expect, the homes will be all-electric, built to Passive House standards, and solar-ready. See www.RachelCarsonEcovillage.org.

The Falk School of Sustainability and Environment was created in 2010 and occupies land donated with a stipulation that the land must remain under Chatham University's ownership, so the homes in the ecovillage can be purchased for prices ranging from \$225,000 for a studio condo to \$580,000 for a 2-BR suite that be customized as a 4-BR unit, but the land is subject to a 99-year land lease from the university.

While that may not seem ideal, it solves the problem of land acquisition which stymied the Ralston Creek Cohousing community. To quote from the Ecovillage website:



There is no profit built into these costs — they will be offered for sale at the cost to build them....

The Common House is a shared facility of approximately 2,500-3,000 square feet. It includes a dining/meeting room, a kitchen, mail/package pick-up, and two guestroom suites. Other amenities may be included, as well.

The units will be designed and constructed to conserve energy and minimize carbon emissions. To avoid combustion of fossil fuels, they will be all-electric, which makes it possible for them to be powered entirely by renewable energy. The units will be designed to meet high indoor air quality standards. It is our intent to be able to monitor building performance after construction to see how well they meet these goals.

Sustainability is a common theme in all cohousing communities, which makes sense, because valuing and caring for your neighbors translates logically to caring for the planet as a whole.

Learn more about the cohousing concept at www.Cohousing.org, or by reading *Creating Cohousing: Building Sustainable Communities*.

Residential Activity on REColorado in the week ending 12/25, in a 15-mile radius of the Capitol.



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Common houses are a typical feature of cohousing communities, such as this one at the Homestead Cohousing community. It has a guest apartment, woodworking shop, laundry room, mail room and meeting/dining room with a kitchen for preparing community meals.

Most cohousing communities are designed to leave cars on the periphery, as in Harmony Village, at right.



A community meal at least once a month is typical, as at the Aria Cohousing community (left), allowing members to get to know each other better, part of being an “intentional community.”

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