

***Aging-in-Place  
in  
Cohousing Communities***

*New Hope Village and Farm  
September 20, 2020*


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SPRINGER BRIEFS IN AGING

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# Senior Cohousing

A New Way  
Forward for Active  
Older Adults

 Springer

# *Our Study – What we did*

- Qualitative research - we asked open-ended questions
- Structured Interview – we asked the same 10 questions of every person/group
- Individual and group interviews
- 12 Senior Cohousing Communities
  - Different types & geographic locations
- Number of folks we spoke with = 76

# ***Our Study: Visits to 12 SCCs***

Alecequia Jarin (5 homes)	Albuquerque NM	Phoenix Commons (41 condos)	Oakland CA
Elderberry (18 homes)	Durham NC	Sand River (14 duplexes)	Santa Fe NM
Elder Family Fellowship (1 home)	Whittier NC	Sarah's Circle (36 apts)	Washington DC
Elderspirit (25 people, apts & homes)	Abingdon VA	Silver Sage (16 homes)	Boulder CO
Glacier Circle (8 homes)	Davis CA	Walnut Commons (19 condos)	Santa Cruz CA
Mountain View (19 condos)	Mountain View CA	Wolf Creek Lodge (30 condos)	Grass Valley CA



# Senior Co-Housing Communities





# Demographics

- Age – range 60-92 yrs; M = ; Median = 74 yrs.
- About 2/3rds women
- Vast majority white
- Majority affluent
- Liberal
- Large % highly educated



# *Aging-in-Place*

- AIP - being able to remain in one's own home
  - even when faced with increasing need for support due to progressive challenges/declines in:
    - functional ability
    - cognitive ability
    - health
    - social networks
  - Adaptation –due to aging, accidents or disability



# *Aging-in-Place in Intergenerational Cohousing*

- Important for adults of all ages!
- Older adults may have more functional impairment as time goes on
- Younger adults may have:
  - Disabilities
  - Accidents/injuries
  - Grow older at New Hope!
- Plan now for all for the above!



# *Aging-in-Place*

## *Benefits of Cohousing*

- Social engagement and connectedness - critical at every stage of life!
- Loneliness and isolation (think COVID!)
  - Associated with depression, cognitive confusion, heart disease, stroke, anxiety and suicide
  - 1/3<sup>rd</sup> adults  $\geq$  45 yrs – lonely
  - 1/4 older adults – social isolated due to living alone, loss of family & friends, functional impairment, not driving



# *Aging-in-Place Benefits of Cohousing*

- Social Support
- Reciprocal Practical Support
  - interdependence
- Team vs solo engagement in tasks
  - Easier plus community-building
- Group vs individual ownership
  - Smaller footprint
  - Lower costs



# *Social Support*

- Close connections

*"The new old-fashion neighborhood."*

- Shared Values

- Living in community, being responsible to each other, environmentally friendly, respecting diversity

*"people of like-minded philosophies...we share similar interests for the most part... wanting to be of help to one another"*

- Reciprocity

*"You both reach out in asking for help and you reach out giving help."*



# ***Social Engagement***

## ***How Social Support (Community) Develops***

- **Required Activities (teams)** e.g. gardening, maintenance, communications, recruitment, finance

*"We have six teams. It divides the community and all of its functions. Now we could hire that out but there's no (social) lubricant there."*

*"We've very intentional about what we agree to work on. We're given only what we volunteer in doing. So I have my assigned tasks that contribute to the wellbeing of the community."*

- **Planned activities** – planned by members

*"There's some good meals.. And it's a social group and you don't wanna miss a good conversation or speaker"*

*"We have special interest groups... a book club...music night...pizza night every Friday"*

*"We have a Merton group, meets on Wednesdays. And we get to know each other better and talk about the philosophies of Thomas Merton. It's just a 50-yard walk away!"*



# ***Social Engagement***

## ***Spontaneous Activities***

- **Spontaneous Activities**

*"I love to cook and experiment. There's so many people to invite, which I do constantly, spur of the moment. "What are you doing? Want to come to share the results of my experiments at potluck."*

*"People here are interesting, are interested in a lot of things like going to a concert, going to movies; it's not uncommon to see something pop up on our email list that says, "anybody want to do this or that?"*

*"Absolutely the best thing about living here, is sitting on my front porch and someone walks by, we start chatting and an hour later we're through the conversation. It's because of those one-on-one conversations where you really get a chance to know people."*

# *Practical Support*

- Providing neighborly help

- Going to grocery store, post office; giving a ride to the doctors or the airport, pet sitting, watering plants

“It is just a million little things that save you time, save you money, make life easier”

- Help when ill or with medical crisis

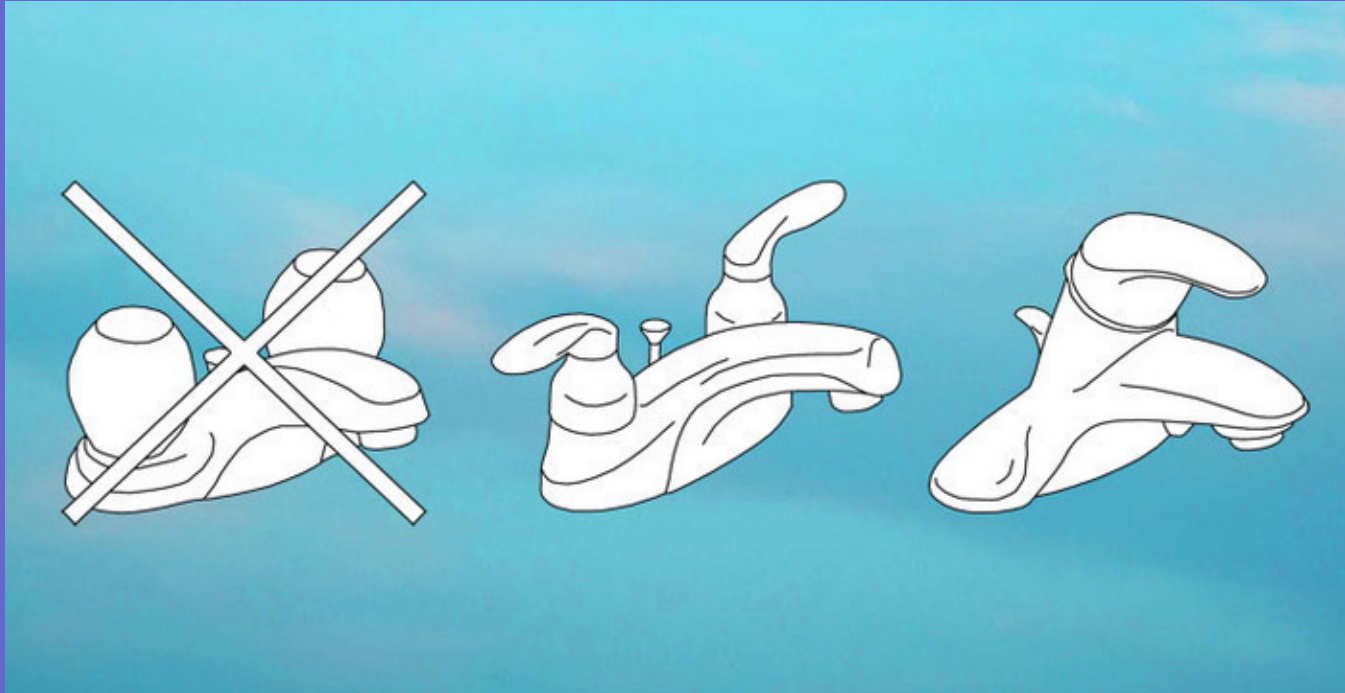
- Health care teams
- Friendly neighbors helping out

“I mean it really was a terribly healing thing for me. People fed me; they also drove me places and people brought me food and people visited him.”

# *Built Environmental*

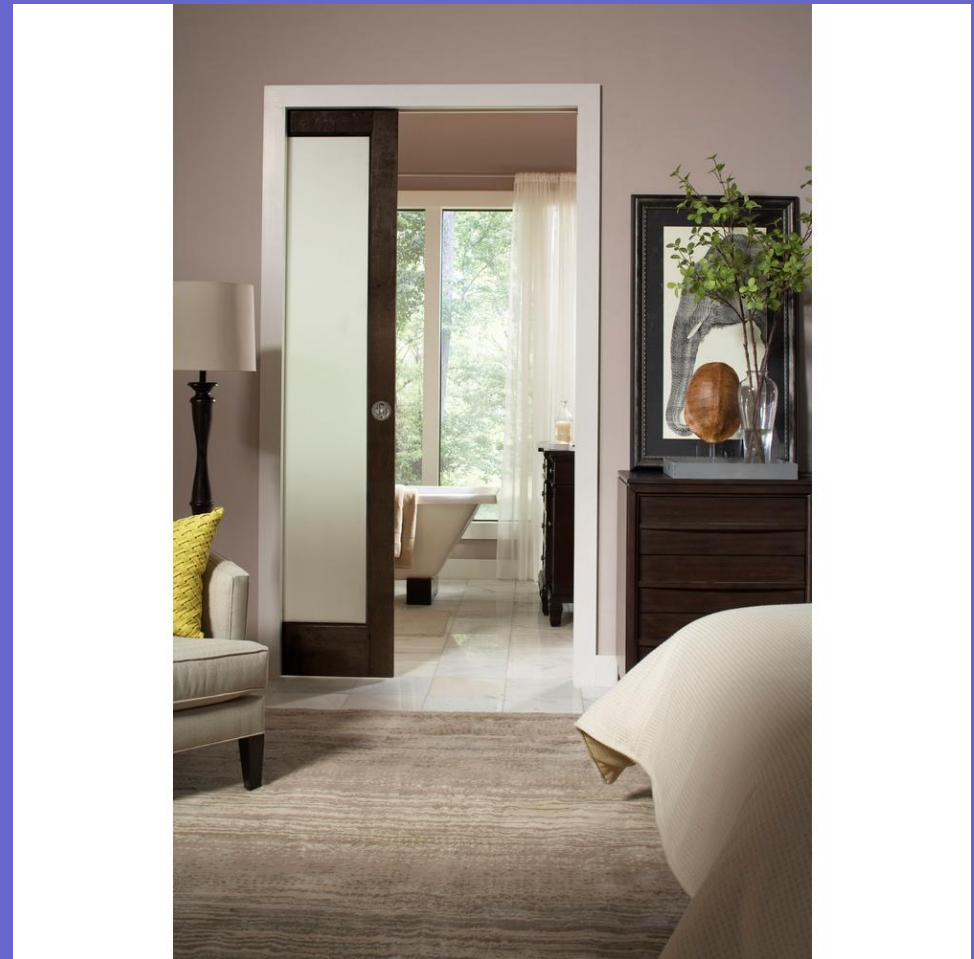
- Universal design - architecture enhances ease of living for all
  - Anticipating possible physical needs
    - Door handles
    - Width of doors – wheelchair friendly
    - Stairless entrance
    - Eliminate fall risks
      - » Proper lighting
      - » Extension cords













# *Environmentally Friendly*



- Down-sizing (smaller footprint)
  - Joint library, exercise room and laundry room
  - handicrafts and wood-working; common gardens
- Sharing – less needs to “things”
  - Lawn mowers, tools, books, magazines, board games, etc.
  - Saves space and money!





# *Aging-in-Place*

## *Incorporation into Intergenerational Cohousing*

- Community building among all residents
- Needs of all residents
  - Issues
  - Spaces
- Practical support – expectation for all
- Preparation for medical emergencies
- Universal design

