Advantages of Parenting in A Co-Housing Community

by Neshama Abraham Paiss

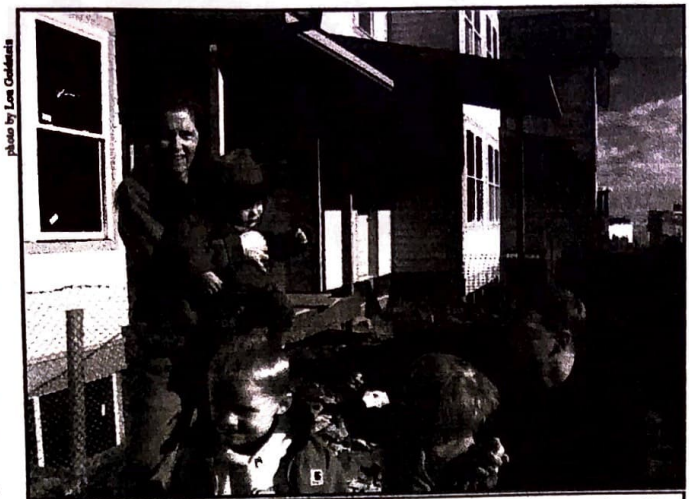


photo by Lee Goldstein

Wild Sage Cohousing member Anne Jefferson holding daughter Arum, 22 months, while future neighbors Phil Himot (right) with sons Isaac, 2, (center) and Peter, 4, (right) play on dirt pile which will SOON become Anne's backyard.

Normally, Cherry Anderson and her husband Aaron Brockett take turns grabbing bites of food while watching their nine-month-old son, Jasper. Recently, however, they were dining with the Nomad Cohousing Community and were delighted when a resident offered to hold Jasper so they could both enjoy the home-cooked community meal and conversation.

Such support for parents of young children is typical in an intergenerational cohousing neighborhood. In cohousing, future neighbors work together to plan their private homes and common spaces. Just as importantly, neighbors get to know one other before they move in.

"It has been our long-term goal to live where we have more connections with other people. The whole idea of other adults knowing our child was appealing to us. Cohousing sounded like a great place to raise a family," said Anderson.

Anderson and Brockett are among 34 households that will be moving into Wild Sage Cohousing in the coming months. Wild Sage is comprised of 30 attached townhomes, four carriage homes, a community-owned Common House, pedestrian paths, and an outdoor green. Each home has its own kitchen, living room, bedrooms, and baths.

Along with community, Wild Sage offers economic diversity with its mix of market rate, Permanently Affordable, and Habitat for Humanity homes. Its members range in age from 9 months to 65 years. They hold a variety of careers, such as computer consultants, an electrician, day care worker, architects, corporate trainers, scientists, and body workers. A number of members are self-employed, some are retired, others are stay-at-home moms.

What they all have in common is the desire to know their neighbors and stay connected while balancing career, community and raising a family.

Contrasted with typical urban neighborhoods, Wild Sage residents plan to eat community meals together several times a week, share resources (such as gardening tools and a community lawn mower), tend an organic garden and their land, take turns watching one an others children and managing their neighborhood. In cohousing, retirees enjoy the extended-community roles of grandparents, and neighbors become adopted aunts and uncles available to lend a hand when needed.

Essrea Cherin is one of six single parents who will be living at Wild Sage. Cherin has lived in a community setting before. In the early 1990's, she was a resident of the EcoVillage in Ithaca, New York. She believes that community will enrich her son Jordan, age six. "Jordan will be exposed to a variety of parenting styles, beliefs and people. I like being in a community where there are so many shared beliefs. And, I have a feeling of safety knowing that my values are supported by the other parents."

Wild Sage is part of the larger New Urbanist Holiday Neighborhood, located in north Boulder between Broadway, 28th Street and Lee Hill Road. The Holiday Neighborhood will include a two-and-half-acre park, community gardens, shops, and offices.

Wild Sage is now under construction and nearing completion. Residents will be moving in during the first half of 2004. The community meets regularly and a few homes are still available. For information, call Leigh at 303-449-3232 x116 or visit the group's website at www.WildSageCohousing.org.

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