Cohousing - A New Family Neighborhood - Blossoms in Colorado Springs

Imagine for a moment the ideal neighborhood for raising a family. Is it a neighborhood with a strong sense of community? Do the neighbors know each other? How often do people get together for dinners, work projects and social activities? Well, Colorado Springs will soon be the home of the city's first cohousing neighborhood that will offer all these options, plus exceptionally green construction and the added value of community-owned buildings and land.

Called **Colorado Springs Cohousing**, this family-oriented old-fashioned neighborhood is now under construction on a 4-acre site at 531 East Columbia Street, about one mile north of downtown. A few homes of the 34-household community are still available.

The relationship among the neighbors and families is what makes this neighborhood unique. The future residents have taken an active part in designing the site, their individual homes and the Common House (a community building used for optional dinners prepared by the neighbors twice a week). In addition, residents have a healthy balance between privacy and community. People own their own homes and can be as social or private as they choose.

Originally a Danish concept, cohousing came to the U.S. 10 years ago. There are now over 60 completed cohousing neighborhoods in America, including seven in Colorado in Denver, Boulder, Golden, Lafayette, Littleton and two in Fort Collins so there were plenty of examples to rely on for planning the one in the Springs.

The Colorado Springs Cohousing project stands out both for its "green" building features and as an example of a more sustainable lifestyle. "Many of our members have an environmental consciousness that is reflected in how we are building our homes and our neighborhood," says Sheila Pereira, a retired teacher and future resident of Colorado Springs Cohousing.

The low-maintenance energy-efficient homes will exceed "Built Green" certification requirements. Working with Wonderland Hill Development Company of Boulder, a "green" developer known for its pioneering work in passive solar design, the cohousing homes and the Common House include a long list of green features. Art C. Klein Construction, the primary contractor, is pleased to be part of the project. The future residents expect to save $450 per year /per household in energy costs because of the energy-saving features and the solid construction of the homes.

As part of the sustainable lifestyle, the residents plan to share childcare and help watch each other's children, share responsibilities for maintaining the site, car pool, garden and share gardening equipment, enjoy social activities, exchange ideas and resources, and help each other out whenever possible. "We are creating what will feel like a small town village where all the neighbors know each other," says Dick Kohlhaas, another member of the cohousing group.

- more -

Cohousers place a high value on strong communication skills and resolving conflicts openly and peacefully. "When you share a social consciousness you can work out any issue peacefully and cooperatively," says Kohlhaas. "Using a consensus process for making decisions is new for most of us, but we find the results are very satisfying." Kids from cohousing neighborhoods typically have more social skills and learn conflict resolution skills at an early age.

One of the newer families joining the Cohousing group was looking for a sense of extended family. "We want to live with children and adults who are within walking distance for our four-year-old to interact with, and regular opportunities for us to eat meals with friends," says Esther Mueller, a project manager for Colorado Springs Utilities. "The playground and open areas free of cars are a real bonus," she added.

Home prices range from $168,000 to $312,000 depending on the size of the house and its specific features. The purchase price includes use of all the common facilities, such as the community's Common House -- a 3,100 square foot building that will host a large kitchen, dining area for community meals, sitting room, rooms for overnight guests, office space and children's play room.

The Common House is often the social center of the community. In Nomad Cohousing in Boulder, the Common House is used every day by residents and by others who offer classes in the space. The Colorado Springs members have talked about holding Yoga and Tai Chi classes, English country dancing, and listening to the "Prairie Home Companion" radio show in their Common House. Activities the Cohousing group plans to do with children include crafts, baking holiday cookies, and French language lessons.

Cohousing children around the state love to eat together and look forward to community meals in the Common House. The optional dinners also give a break to parents when other neighbors prepare and clean up after a home-cooked meal, and give the adults a chance to connect with one another.

The Colorado Springs group hosts free weekly information sessions about cohousing at the site at 531 East Columbia St. (two blocks North of Uintah). Orientations take place on Sundays from 1-3 p.m. Observers are also welcome to attend Business Meetings which are held on the first and third Sundays of the month, at 4 p.m. For more information, please call **719-471-6611** or visit their Web site at **www.ColoSpringsCohousing.com.**

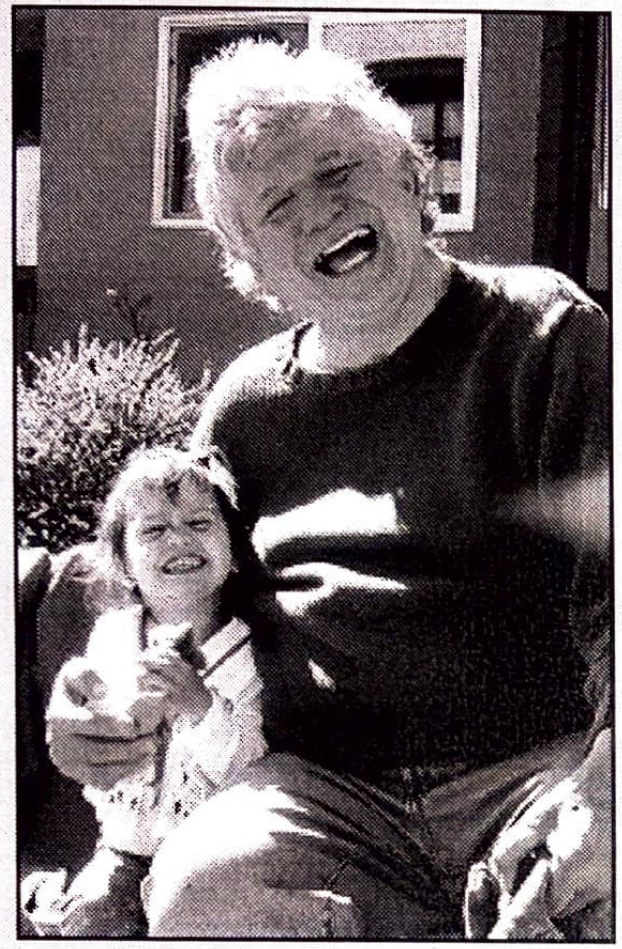
# # #

Neshama Abraham Paiss is a professional writer and a resident of the Nomad Cohousing Community in Boulder, CO, where she and her husband are raising two daughters.

(851 word count)

Make Your Next Home Part of Our Community

We are now building **Colorado Springs Cohousing**, a neighborhood that offers a unique balance between the privacy of home ownership and the advantages of shared land, resources and community activities. Our innovative lifestyle is designed for people of all ages and stages in life including, singles, couples, families, empty-nesters and retirees. We are creating an environmentally sound, 34-home cohousing neighborhood on four acres near downtown, Colorado College, Patty Jewett Golf Course, shopping, and adjacent to the Shooks Run Trail. Our site features a children's playground, grassy courtyards, xeriscaping, and a community garden.



Come meet us at 515 E. Columbia for **Open Houses** on Sundays, **May 5, 12, and 19** from 1:00 to 3:00 pm. For more information, please call **(719) 471-6611** or visit our web site at **www.ColoSpringsCohousing.com**

The New Extended Family

Free slideshow and talk
Saturday May 18 @ 1 PM

All Souls Unitarian Church
730 N. Tejon

Childcare & refreshments will be provided.

COLORADO SPRINGS COHOUSING

Building a more sustainable neighborhood