

THE TOP TEN REASONS

PEOPLE CHOOSE TO LIVE AT HIGHLINE CROSSING

- **DEMONSTRATED SENSE OF COMMUNITY**
  OPPORTUNITY FOR SHARED MEALS, RESOURCES, GARDENING AND OTHER ACTIVITIES. DECISIONS BY CONSENSUS.

- **SECURITY**
  PEDESTRIAN CENTERED DESIGN. KNOWING YOUR NEIGHBORS.

- **LOCATION**
  ON THE HIGHLINE CANAL FOR WALKING AND BIKING.
  VIEW OF MC LELLAN RESERVOIR AND MOUNTAINS.
  CLOSE TO CHATFIELD STATE PARK AND CHATFIELD ARBORETUM.
  CONVENIENT ACCESS TO C-470, SHOPPING AND OTHER OPEN SPACES.

- **QUALITY ECO-FRIENDLY CONSTRUCTION**
  90% EFFICIENCY FURNACES, WELL INSULATED, E-GLASS, 9 FOOT CEILINGS. WELL-APPOINTED COMFORTABLE COMMON HOUSE.

- **LOW MAINTENANCE**
  STUCCO AND BRICK WITH TILE ROOFS. XERISCAPE LANDSCAPING WITH NATIVE PLANTS.

- **MORE EFFICIENT LIFESTYLE**
  PROPOSED ON-SITE DAY CARE, SHARED MEALS, BULK PURCHASING, CAR POOLS TO SCHOOL AND WORK.

- **PEDESTRIAN CENTERED DESIGN**
  NO FUMES OR NOISE FROM AUTOMOBILES, SAFE FOR CHILDREN PLAYING AND DESIGNED FOR NEIGHBORLY CONTACT.

- **EXTENSIVE COMMON HOUSE**
  WITH LARGE VIEW ENHANCED DINING ROOM, EFFICIENT GROUP ORIENTED KITCHEN, ADULT LOUNGE WITH GAS FIREPLACE, PROPOSED DAY-CARE, GUEST QUARTERS AND HOBBY AREAS.

- **RESIDENT MANAGED**
  FOR EFFICIENT AND ECONOMICAL OPERATION.

- **EXTENSIVE XERISCAPE NATIVE LANDSCAPING**
  FOR WATER CONSERVATION WITH OUTSTANDING AESTHETIC QUALITIES

New Nests

Highline Crossing offers sense of community, with a twist of individuality

By Marlys Duran
Rocky Mountain News Staff Writer

LITTLETON — Rambunctious teens stalk one another with super-size water guns outside the Common House, while inside the cook of the day prepares a big salad.

It's Tuesday night at Highline Crossing, and a couple of dozen people are coming for pizza and ice cream. Afterward, a small cadre of helpers will pitch in to clean up the kitchen.

That's how it is done every Tuesday and Friday evening at the south metro area's experiment in co-housing, a 40-unit townhouse-and-condominium complex on the east bank of the High Line Canal.

Some residents show up for communal dinners; some don't. In the community garden, some residents plant tomatoes and pull weeds; others don't.

"And that's fine. People are involved to the degree that they want to be involved," said Eileen Russo, a nurse who moved in when the first homes were completed in March 1995.

Today, all the homes are built, and only one remains unsold. Highline Crossing is about to experience its first turnover in residents as two couples prepare to move out of state.

So far, no one has left because he can't tolerate Highline Crossing's brand of togetherness, said Kurt Walberg, one of four people who caught the co-housing bug in 1991 and launched the project.

"People who choose to live here have made a commitment to live more in a community setting," said Walberg, an attorney.

Linda Champney chuckles as she recalls how her mother, who lives in Texas, used to say, "Now tell me about that commune you joined."

Highline Crossing is no commune, though. It's a townhouse village with a communal state of mind.

"We interact a lot more. It's wonderful in a lot of ways. You make friendships like you never had before," said Champney, a teacher.

The homes are all self-contained, like any townhouse complex. With the High Line Canal, and access to miles of trails, right next door, open space is plentiful.

"We don't live in each other's laps. That would be intolerable," Walberg said. "When I want to hang out with people, I can find people to hang out with. If I want to be by myself, I can go to my house."

Highline Crossing is structured to foster interaction. Garages are lined up along the outer edges of the complex so that residents must walk to their front doors. Meeting neighbors is inevitable.

A wide, concrete walkway winds through the 3.6-acre complex, linking the units and, again, making it nearly impossible to avoid neighbors.

"The best thing is that the kids can play in relative safety," said Russo, mother of a 5-year-old. "I don't have to worry about somebody driving by my house and taking him from the front yard."

The homeowners' association meets twice a month, and often at least half the residents show up, Walberg said. Committees are called teams. And decisions are made by the entire group, not via yes or no votes but by consensus.

Residents concur that consensus-building is hard work, but they say it's easier when everybody knows one another.

"Some people, I'm sure, think that everybody here gets along, and how boring that must be," Walberg said. "It ends up that we don't always get along, but we've agreed that we can figure out how to solve our problems together. Culturally, that's a big move."

Highline Crossing is one of five completed, or nearly completed, co-housing ventures along the Front Range, Walberg said. Another two or three are in planning stages.

The word is spreading. Suzanne Avatar, a psychologist who belongs to Highline Crossing's membership team, spent part of Wednesday afternoon with some Arizonans who are considering a similar project.

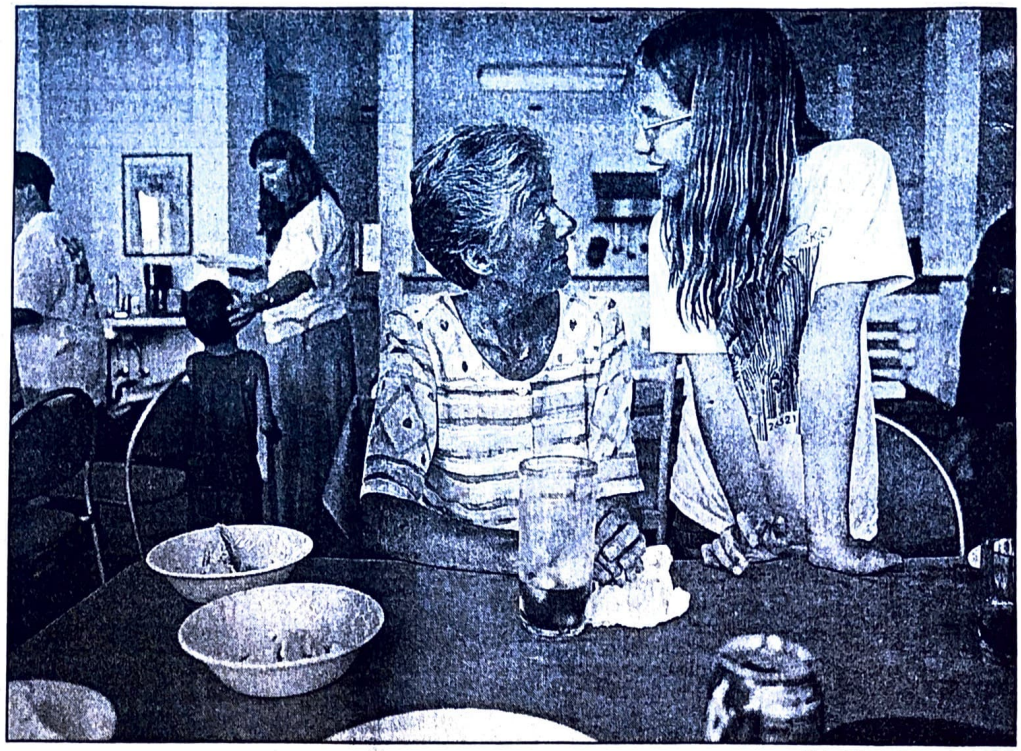
Highline Crossing residents acknowledge that the venture hasn't been all roses. Does Champney have any regrets? "Not today," she said, laughing.

The project's diversity, while intentional, has created some problems. Residents range from youngsters to empty-nest retirees. Home prices begin at about $140,000 and top out at more than $230,000. Individual priorities differ. "Trying to reconcile all that is a challenge," Champney said.

Avatar said there's a downside to the small-town essence of co-housing. "Everybody knows everything. You have to really create a sense of privacy when you live in a place this close. People here are pretty good about that."

Then, there's the upside. Avatar was walking through the complex one morning about 2 because she couldn't sleep. A neighbor's light was on, so Avatar knocked on the door.

"She said, 'Come on in,' and we had a great talk."



Linda McConnell/Rocky Mountain News

Highline Crossing neighbors Teri Lopez, left, and Erin Walberg, 12, visit after a community dinner at the Common House. Twice a week residents of the co-housing project who wish to participate get together for an evening meal.