Marketing and Membership Presentation
December 16, 2000

by Neshama Abraham Paiss

I. Marketing Program

Timeframe: 9 months: January - September 2001

Membership Goals
1. Achieve 40% committed households by February 2001 - (13 members)
2. Achieve 50% committed households by March 2001 - (16 members)
3. Achieve 70% committed households by June 2001 - (23 members)
4. Achieve 100% committed households by September 2001 - (33 members).

Seven Marketing Tactics
1. Fliers: generic and **event focused -** Distribution: health food stores, recreation centers, schools, alternative healthcare offices, community bulletin boards and friends.
Responsible People _____

2. Special Events
- Timed to coincide with visits by cohousing professional (Chris ScottHanson)
- Event should be informative, run smoothly and exciting. Not too slick.
- Alternate locations between Bay Area & Paso Robles, with one event in Santa Barbara.

Responsible People _____

3. Direct Mail
- Reach a targeted audience who have already shown an interest in cohousing.
- Include 4 month calendar (Jan - April), cover letter and group brochure.
- Commit to have mailed by December 29th.
- Plan a second mailing to the same audience in mid-February.

Responsible People _____

4. Newcomer Orientations
- One or two each month in each of the two main markets (Bay Area & Paso Robles).
- Could proceed a business meeting/special event or independently at member's home.

Responsible People _____

5. Media Coverage
Neshama will focus much of her time in this area. Why work with a professional? They know how to get the attention of the media, assist them in crafting the story and staying with the article or broadcast piece until it is done. More than 30% of what you see in print is sourced by PR professionals! Media placements will either **promote events** or **highlight community milestones** such as design workshop, contract with developer, groundbreaking, first move-in.
Responsible People _____

6. Website
Has become one of the most effective forms of marketing for cohousers, who are Internet savvy and expect a quick response to inquires!
- Create compelling, easy to navigate and up-to-date site.
- Link to The Cohousing Network.
- Link to other related sites - Paso Robles COC. Place web address on all materials.
- **Deadline** - complete by January 31.

Responsible People _____

7. Word of Mouth
Mention the project to everyone you see whenever you can. They may not be interested, but they might know someone who is. **You** are the Sales Force! You are **all** the Marketing Team and are the best people to promote this project to prospective members.
Responsible People: **EVERYONE!!!!**

II. Working with Associate and Prospective Members

From the Curious to the Committed: The Six Sale Approach
Selling Cohousing is not a one step experience. Before a household is willing to sign a purchase contract, six major factors must be met.

1. IDEA - Agree with the Cohousing concept
Do you like the idea of living in a community?

2. PEOPLE - Comfort with the existing members
Can you imaging having these people as your neighbors?

3. LOCATION - Like the location in Paso Robles
Can you picture yourself living in Paso Robles on this beautiful property?

4. COST - Have the financial resources to buy
Can you afford to purchase a home in this community?

If you can say yes to the first four, then the next question is "Can you create a home that works for you?" The advantages of becoming a full member **now** is that you will have the opportunity to help design your future home. Those who join later will need to be comfortable with what has already been created for them. There may also be early buyer discounts.

5. DESIGN - Home design that fits your individual needs
Does the house layout work for you and your family?

6. TIMING - Able to move in during fall/winter of 2002
Will you be ready to move to Paso Robles in two years?

Are any of these six items a challenge for you?

Have your concerns been addressed?

Working Lunch
Topic to be decided upon by the Group.

Question and Answer Period

Evaluation

Thank you very much!

Dear Interested Person,

We are delighted you have requested information about Oak Creek Commons Cohousing. Inside this Information Packet you will find:

- Frequently Asked Questions and Answers about the Cohousing Concept
- Description of Responsibilities and Benefits of Being an OCC Associate & Member
- Sheet providing home and lot prices
- Map showing the location of homes on the site with description of home size & type
- Our Fall 2002 "Community Update" Newsletter
- Fall Calendar of Upcoming Events
- Oak Creek Commons Brochure
- Articles written by and about our project in the media.
- Flyers (on golden colored paper) that we'd appreciate your passing on to friends you think may also be interested in our cohousing neighborhood.

What's unique about our project are the people, and our process for creating our cohousing neighborhood. Over the past few years, the future residents have provided input in virtually all areas of the project. For example, we have hired nationally recognized cohousing architects who worked with us to design a very special neighborhood. These designs came out of three weekend long retreats where the whole community shared ideas on what was important to us for the site, the homes and our community-owned Common House.

Those of us who have chosen cohousing are a diverse and interesting group often referred to as "Cultural Creatives." Some of us are extraverts; others are introverts. What we have in common is a keen desire to create a meaningful lifestyle, live in a community setting, and enjoy rich interactions with our neighbors and their children.

Speaking of children, cohousing offers a wonderful setting in which to raise a family where there is unprecedented safety and support. If you are parents, please see the enclosed article "I Want to Live Here Forever, Dad" written by a father living in a community in Washington. If you don't have children and have always wanted to play an active role in kids' lives, cohousing gives you a chance to become part of an extended family with ongoing contact and mentoring opportunities on a daily basis. And if you are a retiree, cohousing is an exceptionally supportive environment in which to enjoy this phase of your life.

Please feel free to call us if you have questions after reading the enclosed material and if you'd like to attend one of our upcoming events. You can reach us toll free at 800-489-8715 or email us at Info@OakCreekCommons.org.

Thank you again for contacting us about Oak Creek Commons. May this be only the beginning of your interest in our neighborhood!

Sincerely,

Oak Creek Commons Membership Team

Oak Creek Commons

1323 Stoney Creek Road
Paso Robles, CA 93446

Community Update

Cohousing in Paso Robles, CA

Fall 2002

Be Part of a Thriving Cohousing Community on California's Beautiful Central Coast!

Fall Greetings from the Oak Creek Commons cohousing neighborhood. We are excited to let you know about our community's recent activities. Our site plan, home drawings and Common House plans are finalized and have passed through the first round of approvals with the City. We are now in the last phase before we begin construction in the fall of 2002!



Future residents of Oak Creek Commons gather in Paso Robles during a recent weekend workshop retreat.

Building a Strong Community
Our membership has grown fourfold in the last year and a half. As a result, we have an active Process Team and Membership Committee so new people are warmly welcomed into our community, and can be easily brought up to speed on prior decisions. Recently, our Process Team organized our community's fifth weekend-long retreat (see photo). Retreats are an opportunity for members to spend non-business time together and develop deeper interpersonal relationships. In June, we brought in national cohousing consultant Zev Paiss, founding Executive Director of The Cohousing Network, who led us through activities for creating our "Living There Guide." This guidebook will form the basis on how we want to live together once we move in, and we will be focusing on its content during the next six months.



OCC members Cynthia Ransom (L), and Jim Cole (R) meet with Jim Leach of Wonderland Hill Development Company during a recent trip to Boulder to discuss a partnership to co-develop our project.

Working with Wonderland Hill Development Co.
We are pleased to report that we have entered into the final round of negotiations with the nation's most experienced developer of cohousing neighborhoods, Wonderland Hill Development Company of Boulder, Colorado. Wonderland has successfully completed 11 cohousing communities in the U.S. Recently, members of our Project Management Team traveled to Boulder to meet with the Wonderland staff (see photo). On June 30, Jim Leach, president of Wonderland, completed a trip to Paso Robles to discuss details of our working relationship. We are very excited about Wonderland taking us through the construction of our homes, and doing oversight on our budget and project management.

Oak Creek Commons Calendar of Activities

October - September 2002

Business Meetings

In the coming months, there are many opportunities to get to know us and see how we make decisions about our cohousing neighborhood. We invite you to observe one of our monthly business meetings where we'll be continuing work on the "Living Here Guide," as well as deciding on other community and project issues. Upcoming meetings are on Sundays, including: September 8, September 22, October 6 and October 20. in Paso Robles. Directions can be found on our web site at **www.OakCreekCommons.org** or by calling us at **1-800-489-8715.**



Oak Creek Commons members kayaking in Morro Bay estuary only a 30-minute drive from our Paso Robles property.

Social Events

Enjoying community time together is also a top priority for us and, recently, we got together for a kayaking adventure and a camp-out on our site (see photo). You are welcome to join us for upcoming social events. On Sat., September 14, we will host a Picnic, Kayak & Hike at Santa Margarita Lake starting at 12:30 p.m. On Sat., September 21, from 3 to 5:30 p.m. we will enjoy a Walking Tour of Downtown Paso Robles, and on Sat., October 5, join us for a Wine Tasting at local wineries from 12 to 4 p.m., followed by a Sunset Gathering on our land in Paso Robles at 6 p.m. Please call us at **1-800-489-8715** for more details.



Some of our Oak Creek Commons younger members set up tents on a recent camp-out on our 14-acre wooded site in Paso Robles, CA.

Informational Meetings

We hold free orientations for new people to learn about our project and to answer any questions they may have. Upcoming Informational Meetings will take place in Los Angeles on Sat., September 28 at 11 a.m., and on Sat., October 26 at 2 p.m. Please call Anne at 310-837-2048 for directions. In the Bay Area, Informational Meetings will be on Wed., September 18 at the Rockridge Library in Oakland from 7 to 9 p.m., and an Informational Meeting /Potluck Dinner on Sat., October 12, at 6:30 p.m. in Sunnyvale, CA.

Site Tours

In addition, we hold weekly site tours and orientations on our land in Paso Robles. If you've never walked our site, you're in for a treat! We have 14 beautiful acres, including over 1,000 mature oaks, a flowing creek, a scenic overlook, and a secluded natural habitat. We will be preserving 10 wooded acres in their natural state for wildlife and for ourselves to enjoy! Site tours happen at 10 a.m. on the following weekend mornings: September 1, 8, 22, 29 and October 6, 13, and 20. For more details, please visit our web site at **www.OakCreekCommons.org** or call our toll-free number **1-800-489-8715.**

Contact Us -- A Few Homes Are Still Available

We currently have 70% of our homes spoken for and are looking to completely fill our 36-household neighborhood in the next few months. A great place to learn more about us is on our website **www.OakCreekCommons.org** where you will find photos of our land, biographies of our members, site and home designs, and additional information about upcoming events. You can also call us at **1-800-489-8715**, and a member of our community will return your call promptly.

We are thrilled to be entering this final stage of development. We invite you to come visit us to learn more about our project, walk on our beautiful land, chat with our members, and discover why the central coast of California is a great place to live. We look forward to meeting you soon!

Looking for a closer connection to nature, your neighbors and a more enriching lifestyle?



If so, the Bay Area members of Oak Creek Commons Cohousing invite you to a free talk on:

Cohousing: Creating Safe and Supportive Neighborhoods

Saturday, June 15th 2:00 PM

450 Bryant Street, Room 216
Palo Alto

Cohousing offers a new kind of neighborhood combining private homes with shared land, resources and community activities. These innovative neighborhoods work for people of all ages including: **singles, families, and retirees.** We are creating an environmentally friendly, 36-home cohousing community on a wooded 14-acre site in Paso Robles.

Oak Creek Commons

Want to learn more?

Please call us at 800-489-8715 or visit our website at www.OakCreekCommons.org

Ten Great Reasons to Live in a Cohousing Neighborhood!

1. **Living in community offers security.** You can rely on your neighbors to help you, even when you don't ask. This is huge for me, that my family is in a safe and supportive place. My grandmother died recently, my neighbors knew all about it, sent cards and sympathy and support to my family. Her neighbors didn't even know she was sick, most of them didn't even know her name. How many of them could she ask for help if she needed it?

2. **Community offers social opportunities.** I can have wonderful and meaningful interactions with people I like, who are my neighbors, just by sitting out on my porch. I really enjoy hanging out and talking with folks about everything, politics, the news, kids. Sharing our histories and ourselves grows a wonderful bond among us. I know more about my neighbor's history and lives and why they do things than I know about some of my own family members.



3. **Supportive place for kids to grow up.** It's a safe place where kids can have lots of friends -- both other kids and adults. Kids can play and I know any adult in the neighborhood will be there for them in case of need. Children and adults become part of a large extended family. Kids have many adults to learn from and be mentored by. Fun place to be an adult and get support from other parents.

4. **Great place to collaborate with people who share similar interests.** Small groups form revolving around shared common interests, cooking, sewing, gardening, music, etc. I don't have to "go" anywhere to learn new skills or enjoy social activities -- The Common House is great for that.

5. **A sense of togetherness and belonging.** I am part of something that is really wonderful, it is a model for a better way to live, and we all together are doing it. I can't explain this in words very well but there is a strong feeling of happiness in me that comes from working towards a common good that I used to get as a teacher and environmentalist, and now get as I work with my neighbors on a variety of projects.

6. **A great restaurant in the middle of my neighborhood**, called the Common House where I can go have dinner and great conversation with friends. Plus, home-cooked meals are under $5/person!

7. **Great place to learn new things.** I always wanted to try making beer. Having a couple of neighbors share that interest got me home brewing. We learn and try new stuff all the time.

8. **A great place to share ownership of things** that I couldn't really afford myself, such as a workshop, play structure, tools, library, etc.

9. **Huge personal resources available.** Want to know about bee keeping? I go ask Mel, and get all kinds of info. Having problems with my car? Mary knows lots about such things. Want to build a shed? Bob can give me advice, help me scrounge materials, and did half the work one Saturday. A neighborhood like mine is a collection of 26 lifetimes worth of experience in all manner of things. What a treasure trove!

10. **Privacy.** I get ALL the great benefits of cooperative living, and also get huge amounts of privacy, whenever I want just by going home and closing the door or going into the 25 acres woods that surround my house that everybody shares ownership of.

This piece was written by Rob Sandelin who lives at Sharingwood Cohousing in Snohomish, Washington, with his wife and two children.

Oak Creek Commons

Cohousing in Paso Robles, CA

For more information about Oak Creek Commons Cohousing,
please call us toll-free at **800-489-8715**
E-mail or visit our Website:
Info@OakCreekCommons.org
www.OakCreekCommons.org



RADIO PSA - 30 SECONDS

Are you interested in a strong sense of community and living in nature? Would you like to know your neighbors before you move in?

Consider **Oak Creek Commons** – a new cohousing neighborhood being created on 14 wooded acres in Paso Robles off the Central Coast.

Los Angeles future residents are hosting a free talk and video presentation on **Saturday, September 28 at 11 a.m.** That's September 28 in the Pico-Robertson area of Los Angeles.

For more information, call **310-837-2048**, or visit their web site at **www.OakCreekCommons.org**. That's OakCreekCommons.org.

# # #

Exclusive to the San Luis Obispo County Journal

OAK CREEK COMMONS CREATES INTERGENERATIONAL COHOUSING NEIGHBORHOOD IN SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

By Neshama Abraham Paiss

After September 11, many people have been reassessing the meaning of safety and supportiveness in their lives. A group of pioneering Californians are developing a new kind of neighborhood in Paso Robles based on the notion that knowing all your neighbors creates a safe and supportive environment. These future neighbors are well along to make their vision a reality.

The neighborhood is Oak Creek Commons, and it is combining the advances of sustainable "green" building, permaculture and open space preservation, with the social technology of conscious listening skills, well facilitated meetings and a strong group process. The community is open to anyone who wants to participate in the design and development of the neighborhood they will then live in. The future residents include singles, couples, families, empty nesters and retirees who are all attracted to the idea of an intergenerational energy-efficient 36-household cohousing neighborhood on the central coast of California.

The project has taken large strides in the past six months. The membership has grown from eight households to 26, and the community bought the land on which it will build its cohousing neighborhood. The site is a 14-acre parcel on a wooded hilltop on Nicklaus Ave., directly across the street from Pat Butler Elementary School. The land includes a hiking trail, a flowing stream and hundreds of mature oak trees.

The cohousing neighborhood will consist of 36 energy-efficient homes, including 31 designed as clustered town homes with shared walls, and five single detached homes that will be built on individual lots. The City Planning Commission of Paso Robles has approved the initial site plan, and currently are reviewing the drawings for the individual homes and the landscaping plan.

There are over 60 completed cohousing neighborhoods in the U.S. However, the idea of cohousing is not new to San Luis Obispo County. The first cohousing neighborhood in the area was Tierra Nueva in Oceano, a 27-household community completed in February 1999. Oak Creek Commons will be the second in the county and the first to use a more streamlined approach to project development. While Tierra Nueva took about a decade to complete and was self developed by the residents for the first eight years, the membership of Oak Creek Commons has decided to hire a professional developer to complete their project in the next two years.

One of the most recent developments has been the hiring of Wonderland Hill Development Company of Boulder, CO, as a consultant to the project. Wonderland has been the developer of 11 of the completed cohousing neighborhoods in the U.S., including the completion of Tierra Nueva. Wonderland is now working closely with Oak Creek Commons Project Management Team on refining the project budget to keep the homes within an affordable price range.

Oak Creek Commons will include the following elements that are common to all cohousing neighborhoods:

- **Participatory process:** The future residents organize and participate in the planning and design process and are responsible as a group for all the final decisions.
- **Design Facilitates Community:** The physical design encourages a strong sense of community.
- **Private Homes Supplemented by Extensive Common Facilities:** Each household has a privately-owned residence – complete with kitchen – but has access to all of the common facilities.
- **Complete Resident Management:** Residents manage the ongoing activities of the neighborhood, making decisions by consensus that are of common concern to the community at monthly business meetings.
- **Non-Hierarchical Structure:** While there are leadership roles, the responsibility for the decision is shared by the community's adults.
- **Separate Income Sources:** Although many cohousers choose to work from home, there is no shared community income.

The central focus of the community will be the Common House, a commonly owned building where residents get together several times a week for optional home-cooked meals prepared by community members. The Common House is considered an extension of people's living rooms in cohousing, and typically has recreational spaces for yoga, painting, photography, woodworking, as well as guestrooms for family members and overnight visitors, play rooms for the children and office space that can be used by all residents. The neighbors will also park their cars at the periphery of the property and

use a pedestrian pathway linking the homes and the Common House to encourage social interaction among the residents. In addition, the neighborhood includes a large outdoor pool and a hot tub.

Construction is scheduled to begin on Oak Creek Commons in the fall of 2002. There are still a handful of homes available. The Group has Informational Meetings and free site tours on Saturday and Sunday mornings at 10 a.m. People meet at Bert's statue in Paso Robles downtown city park and then tour the site.

For specific meeting dates and further information about Oak Creek Commons Cohousing, please call 800-489-8715 or visit their website at www.oakcreekcommons.org.

Neshama Abraham Paiss is a professional writer who works with cohousing groups around the U.S. She and her husband and two daughters reside in the Nomad Cohousing Community in Boulder, CO.

# # #

Exclusive to Plus Magazine
San Luis Obispo, CA

The New Extended Family

When you meet Kay Tift, 83, of Oceano, and Arthur Okner, 60, of Boulder, CO, what may impress you is their outgoing personalities and their evident joy of life. What do they have in common? They are both active members of an innovative multi-age housing trend that is bringing back a strong sense of community to thousands of people across America. The concept is called cohousing and it's coming to Paso Robles.

Cohousing neighborhoods typically consist of 15-35 homes clustered around shared land and facilities. Each resident owns their home, complete with kitchen, dining room, living room, bedrooms, etc, In addition, each homeowner shares equal ownership in the common land, gardens and a Common House, the community building which is used for optional meals, overnight guests, meetings or community celebrations.

Cohousing is not new to San Luis Obispo County nor to California. In fact, California is the leading state for cohousing in the nation. There are 13 completed cohousing neighborhoods in California, including six in the Bay Area, as well as in both Santa Cruz and Oceano. The newest one soon to begin construction is Oak Creek Commons, a 36-household neighborhood that will be built on 14 wooded acres near downtown Paso Robles.

Future resident Sonja Eriksson, who currently lives in the Bay Area, will be retiring to the cohousing community and is looking forward to an intergenerational lifestyle. "I like the idea of cohousing because it combines community with privacy, and you can decide how much you want of each. Many people who retire choose retirement communities with people of the same age, but Paul and I are interested in living with people of all ages. It's more fun and rewarding and broadens your outlook to associate with young and old people alike and to have children around," says Eriksson.

Life Wisdom Valued

As compared to a retirement home or an assisted living facility, seniors in a cohousing neighborhood are valued as community "elders" because of their accumulated life wisdom. In a cohousing setting, elders have the historically significant role of teaching the younger members of the neighborhood about the ways of the world, and passing on skills and knowledge they have gained during their life.

For example, Kay Tift , who has her EdD in organizational development, has been instrumental in guiding the Tierra Nueva Cohousing Community in Oceano to establish close interpersonal relationships and strong group process. She and her husband Floyd initially met with the embryonic community regularly for eight years as consultants. What impressed them and ultimately led to their becoming residents a year and a half ago was"the members were willing to invest in their own group process. They realized that how a groups worked together is as important as the product or decisions the group makes," says Tift.

- more -

Feeling of Family

For elders in cohousing, it is especially fulfilling to become an adopted grandparent for a family whose birth grandparents live far away or are no longer alive. Such is the case in our Nomad Cohousing Community where our neighbor Arthur, age 60, has become a member of our family. He comes over every day between 8 and 8:30 a.m. to interact with our two girls. His own daughters live out of state and they don't yet have children. Arthur has become both the grandfather to our children, as well as at times a senior advisor for us. We value his opinion and have discussed important many life issues with him.

When I ask my three-year-old daughter Zipporah, who is her favorite big person in our 11-household Nomad Cohousing Community in Boulder, CO, she quickly answers Grandfather Arthur. While these two are 57 years apart, they see each several times a day, share jokes and stories together.

Although Arthur, who has a Master's Degree in Community Organization, served on the board of his NYC co-op apartment building for 25 years and is a retired business man, he attributes his cohousing lifestyle to why he truly feels part of a community for the first time in his life. He says it is specifically because of his ongoing contact with young people.

"One of the reasons I chose cohousing is because I believe it's important to live among children. When you see children every day, they start to interact with you as a person. You build trust and intimacy. You learn about their favorite foods and games and have spontaneous fun together. You see their richness and how they are different than their siblings. This is much more fulfilling than the brief conversations you may have once a week with a grandchild on the telephone. This is the happiest and most fulfilled I have been in any living situation in my life."

Staying Young Longer

"Does cohousing keep you young?" When I asked Kay Tift, she gave me an immediate Yes! She said: "It is such a good feeling to feel needed. It has been a blessing for me personally to share my knowledge of how groups work. So often, younger people do not know about the skills possessed by the elders and they in turn, do not have an easy way to offer them. I have a deep satisfaction living here at Tierra Nueva."

"The challenge to staying young is to keep finding new solutions. You won't find challenges in a retirement home where all your medical and food needs are provided. People often regress and go back to being dependent. One way I keep young is by signing up to cook with young people I want to learn from. I get to go in the Common House kitchen and become a student. I believe that taking part in group life is an important vehicle for personal health," Tift added.

Arthur Okner would agree. As someone who has at the bottom of his email: "90% of life is just showing up" he also believes that intergenerational cohousing neighborhoods are an anecdote to loneliness and a prescription for living longer.

"Loneliness is a killer among older people. Your friends die, you live behind closed doors. It's unhealthy physically and emotionally to only be with people of your own age. I spend time with the children both for the enjoyment of it and for the responsibility of handing on my life experience to others. I believe the meaning in my life comes from interaction with others and in giving back."

Contributing to and Being Supported in Community Life

Cohousing neighborhoods are based on the notion that residents will participate in community life to the degree they are able. In Arthur's case, he puts together the meal rotation for our optional community meals twice a week and he does the meal reconciliation every quarter. He also a consultant on insurance and business matters.

Likewise, Kay and other elders of the Tierra Nueva community, bring important social lessons and values to business meetings. "While our own kids don't always want ideas from us, the young people here (at Tierra Nueva) usually appreciate our ideas. Sometimes they tell us that our positive attitude and celebration for life surprises them. Just the other day, a neighbor came over to me and said: 'Kay you are my mentor. You are an inspiration to me.' That is my validation for being here."

New Cohousing Community in Paso Robles

There is now a new 36-household cohousing neighborhood being created on 14 wooded acres across the street from the Pat Butler Elementary School on Nicholas Street in Paso Robles. The community is called Oak Creek Commons, and as of this writing, about 70% or 26 of the 36 homes are spoken for. Members include families, partners, singles, and a number of retirees who are moving to Paso Robles from the Bay Area. Interested people are invited to attend a free orientation and site tour (held on most weekend mornings in Paso Robles) and to observe the community's monthly business meetings.

To learn more about Oak Creek Commons Cohousing, please call **800-489-8715** or visit their website at www.OakCreekCommons.org. For more information about cohousing in general, please visit the website for the national non-profit, The Cohousing Network, at www.cohousing.org.

# # #

Neshama Abraham Paiss is a resident of the Nomad Cohousing Community in Boulder, CO, where she and her husband are raising their daughters in an intergenerational neighborhood.

Exclusive to Central Coast Parent

PARENTING IN COMMUNITY: RAISING CHILDREN IN A COHOUSING NEIGHBORHOOD"

by Neshama Abraham Paiss

As a four-year resident of the Nomad Cohousing Community in Boulder, CO, I have found living in a resident-created and managed neighborhood has made my life easier and saved our family money. Our community is located on a one-acre site about two miles from downtown Boulder with 11 households, including 18 adults and seven children. Nomad is one of 52 completed communities in North America, including 12 in California.

COMMUNITY COMMON HOUSE

I love our Common House, a community owned building for meals, meetings and social activities. We just celebrated our daughter Halonah's third birthday in the main community room and she was very clear that the Common House was her first choice, even over her own home. Her comfort with the Common House is not surprising as she has been attending community meals there twice a week since she was two months old and knows my husband Zev and I go to the Common House once a month for business meetings.

For Halonah and my 2-year old, Zipporah, the Common House is an extension of our personal home and an integral part of our life.Both daughters were part of a Moms and Babies group I hosted every Monday morning with Halonah for over two years, and we have had a Friday morning play group in our Common House for toddlers that Halonah was part of for a year and a half. Now that the eight children in our playgroup are attending pre-school, the Moms continue to meet in the Common House twice a month as a Mom's Support Group.

Having a place that's large enough to hold 10 or more people next door to my home, that's free and easily available, has been a great convenience to our family. We have also used the Common House for pre-natal and post partum yoga classes and for holding a series of lectures about vaccines by local health care providers and we currently have music classes for children twice a week. Other members of our 25-person community also make good use of our Common House. My neighbor Alec recently held a reading of Rumi and he hosted a year-long study group and Aiym, our resident accountant/lawyer/author, has taught seminars in the Common House.

EASY PLAYDATES FOR THE KIDS

Another aspect of life in cohousing I appreciate as a parent is how easy it is for community children to play together. The physical layout encourages the kids to play outside in one central area so they can be easily seen by the parents. Our homes are on a pedestrian walkway encircling a central grassy courtyard. The kids love to ride their bikes and pull each other in the Radio Flyer wagon around the courtyard, or to play on a large wood play structure the parents jointly purchased. When one child is outside, all the others want to follow. No need for "play dates," telephone calls or scheduling. The kids just get together spontaneously and naturally. The children take turns going over each other's homes – usually after they check with their parents first – and we go on outings together to the nearby park and lake with one parent supervising.

HELP WITH CHILDCARE

Having help with childcare has been another benefit of living in cohousing. My daughters are especially close friends with our neighbor Wendy's two adopted children, a sister and brother from Haiti: Mika age six and Clarens age four. Our kids play together after school almost every day and on weekends, Wendy and I regularly take turns watching the kids to give each other a break. Another neighbor, Stephen, is a single parent of a four-year old girl Leslie. Wendy and I both help watch Leslie so her father gets time off.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

I will admit that I am a safety conscious, perhaps even an over-protective, parent. I feel my children are very safe in our neighborhood. Halohah clearly knows the boundaries of our property and stays within them. At three, she is now old enough to play outside with the other children while I'm in the kitchen doing the dishes. I know she's safe because I can stand at the kitchen sink and see her while still getting a chore done. Usually there's also another adult outside who is reading the newspaper, working in the garden or having a cup of tea and I know they will keep an eye on the children. However, if a stranger showed up, I can assure you that within a minute an adult would be outside. While we have no fences or gates, we have a high degree of safety and security. When you know all your neighbors and their friends and family, it's impossible for an unfamiliar face to go unnoticed.

Is life in cohousing perfect? While it's the closest mainstream solution I've found for people to live in a community setting and have personal privacy, there are the usual challenges of living with other people. The difference is that people tend to work them out right away and not let disagreements fester. I have found differences in parenting styles to be the most difficult. Our neighbor the single Dad Stephen, for example, is fairly indiscriminate in what he allows his four-year old daughter to watch on TV or video versus what I am comfortable with. The socializing aspect of community suppers is wonderful and the cost is great ($5/per person for a home cooked dinner), but common meals can be a challenge. Our girls are so excited about seeing their friends that it can be hard for them to stay at the table to eat enough of their dinner. Our solution has been to have one adult sitting with the kids at the children's table to make sure their supper gets eaten. Still, the kids love community dinners and look forward to them every week.

Does this sound like a lifestyle you'd like to try? There's a cohousing neighborhood forming in Central California in Paso Robles called Oak Creek Commons. The group owns a 14-acre wooded site with a flowing creek and hiking trail. The site plan has been approved by the City, an initial design of the Common House has been developed, and the families have just started designing their individual homes. This is an ideal time to join and be part of the creation of the neighborhood. The Group has free orientation meetings and site tours every Saturday morning at 10 a.m. For more information, please call 800-489-8715 or visit their website at www.oakcreekcommons.org.

Neshama Abraham Paiss lives in the Nomad Cohousing Community in Boulder, Colorado, with her husband Zev Paiss and their two daughters.

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What is Cohousing?

Cohousing is a planned intergenerational neighborhood where you know your neighbors before you move in.

Cohousing neighborhoods are designed to enhance interaction among residents. The kitchen or "public" side of the home faces a common courtyard where children can easily be watched while they play, and adults can spontaneously socialize. A pedestrian walkway leads to the homes, and cars are parked on the periphery of the property. Homes are clustered to maximize the open space.



Homeowners enjoy shared land and buildings, open space, gardens, play areas, including a "**Common House.**" Our community owned Common House will have a large dining room, kitchen, laundry, children's playroom, sitting area/ library, music room and guest bedrooms. Residents also regularly get together for optional common meals, business meetings to manage the neighborhood and social events.

Each home is self sufficient and fully equipped with its own kitchen and dining area. In addition, residents have the opportunity to cook and eat meals together several times a week.

The cohousing lifestyle provides a unique combination of private homes with the added benefits of shared resources and facilities. In the past 10 years, 62 cohousing neighborhoods have been completed in North America.

We own an incredible piece of land!

Our 14-acre site is located in the town of Paso Robles and faces 40 acres of preserved open space. We are a five-minute walk from shopping, schools, parks and public transportation.

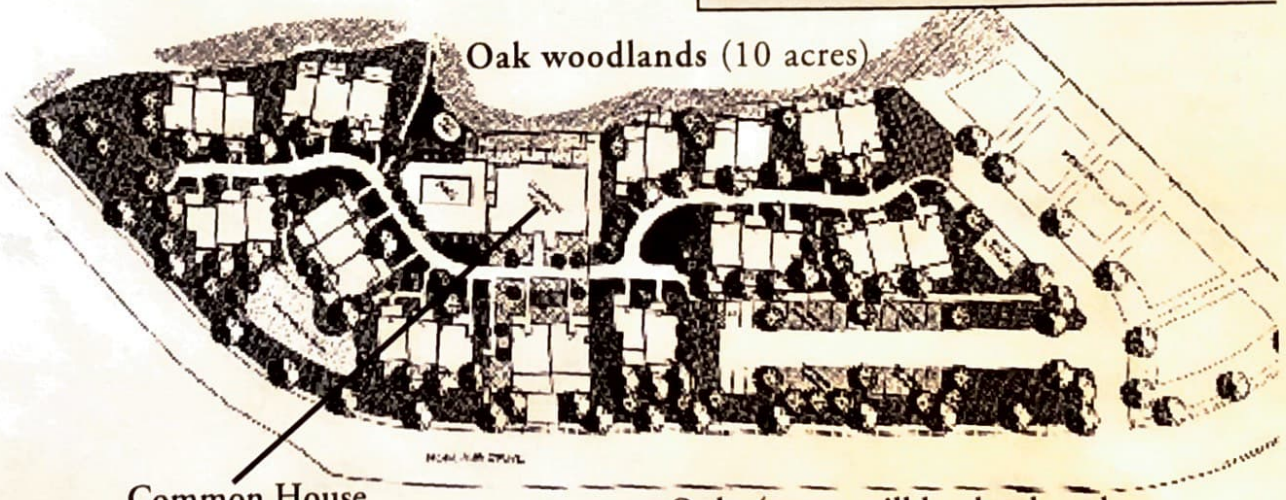
Our beautiful site offers:

- Over 10 acres of open space and more than 1,000 native oak trees.
- Sweeping sunset views over nearby rolling hills with both a hilltop and a valley on the property.
- A flowing creek with frogs and cattails.
- An on-site hiking trail which leads to a nearby shopping center.

Oak Creek Commons

Our Vision

- To create a community of 36 private homes, a Common House and shared facilities on 14 acres of land.
- To make responsible environmental choices to live more lightly on the land and build a sustainable and nurturing community.
- To welcome diversity in our membership.
- To make decisions by consensus so every resident has a voice in community decisions.
- To provide residents the opportunity to exchange ideas and resources, such as shared child care, community tools and gardening equipment, carpooling, plus growing our own organic fruits and vegetables.
- To offer members the option to eat meals together several times a week.
- To respect each other, cherish all our children and live in harmony with nature.



Only 4 acres will be developed out of the total 14 acres!

Rev. 8/02

Oak Creek Commons

Cohousing in Paso Robles, CA

We are singles, couples, families and retirees dedicated to building a "green" neighborhood friendly to people of all ages.

Home prices include ownership of more than 10 acres of woodlands, organic orchards and gardens, children's play areas, below surface parking, swimming pool and a shared Common House. In addition, we have five residential lots available for people who want to build their own custom home.

In order to expedite our project, we are working with a team of experienced cohousing professionals who are guiding us in building and development, engineering and design, project management, marketing and group process. Construction will start in the Spring of 2003 and we'll be moving into our homes the following year.

Are you looking for a great place to live -- that balances the need for privacy with a strong sense of community?

Cohousing makes it easy for you to have an on-going social life with weekly community meals, as well as, planned and spontaneous group activities.

- For **parents**, cohousing offers built-in playmates with neighboring children, and many caring adults to help you with child care in a safe, nurturing environment.
- For **couples**, cohousing allows for plenty of private time together, as well as, developing rich friendships with your neighbors in the community.
- For **elders**, or those about to retire, cohousing is an ideal setting where you can continue to contribute and be appreciated for your life wisdom.

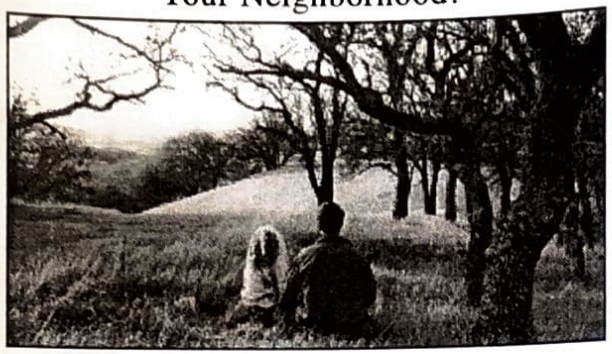
Our Location

Paso Robles (pop. 26,000) is 25 miles inland from the central California coast, halfway between San Francisco and Los Angeles, and a 30-minute drive south to San Luis Obispo (home of Cal Ploy University). Paso Robles has a picturesque downtown square, top-notch restaurants, a new library, transportation center (with daily bus and Amtrak stops), antique shops, hot springs, horse ranches and wineries. Cuesta Community College has built a new campus in town. The local wine industry brings many cultural events to the area. Nearby outdoor recreation is abundant with hiking, biking, camping, swimming, kayaking, sailing, fishing, tide pooling, beach strolling and lots more!

Come Visit Us!

We offer frequent guided Site Tours and Orientations in Paso Robles and Informational Meetings in the San Francisco Bay Area and Los Angeles. We also have regular business meetings, social events and workshops. For specific dates, please visit our website: **www.OakCreekCommons.org** You can also call us at our toll free number **800-489-8715** or e-mail us at **Info@OakCreekCommons.org**. We look forward to hearing from you!

Make Our Neighborhood Your Neighborhood!



The hilltop view from out 10 acres of open space.

There's no place like a Neighborhood...



...where people care about You!

Oak Creek Commons COHOUSING

Paso Robles, CA

800-489-8715

E-mail: **Info@OakCreekCommons.org**

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