

Fair Oaks Launches Co-housing Neighborhood

By Elise Spleiss

“Cohousing makes life more convenient, practical, and fun.”

Charles Durrett, author and architect

FAIR OAKS, CA (MPG) - Local residents have secured a 3.5-acre property in Fair Oaks for a 30-home cohousing neighborhood. The Fair Oaks property is located at 4025 New York Avenue and offers close proximity to the American River Parkway and its miles of bike paths, as well as Fair Oaks Village, Bannister Park, Sacramento Waldorf School, and Rudolph Steiner College. Cohousing provides social, environmental and economic benefits for a more sustainable lifestyle.

Cohousing combines privately owned homes with extensive community facilities to create neighborhoods that address the needs of working parents and seniors. Homes are clustered around shared open space and common facilities. A “common house” typically includes a dining room, kitchen, lounge, workshop space, kid’s playroom, and guest rooms; it is the heart of the neighborhood for a variety of other activities. Cars are kept to the edge of the site making the neighborhood pedestrian-friendly and safe for children. Future residents are involved in the design and development so that it reflects their needs and priorities, creating a truly custom neighborhood. There are now more than 130 cohousing communities in the U.S. and Canada, including 40 in California.



On February 22, 2014 eleven prospective residents visited the site of a new cohousing neighborhood being planned in Fair Oaks. Marty Maskell (3rd from the left), founder of Fair Oaks EcoHousing holds the civil engineer’s aerial shot of the site.

The use of this unique housing concept has been the vision of Fair Oaks EcoHousing founder Marty Maskell since 2005. After searching for a suitable property in over 100 different locations, it was exciting to finally be able to begin making plans to build. Maskell says, “We are excited to have secured such a great property for our community, with its easy access to the American River Parkway and Fair Oaks Village. We look forward to designing a beautiful neighborhood that will fit in well with the surroundings.”

The Fair Oaks community will be working with married couple Charles Durrett and Kathryn McCamant, both international cohousing experts and architects. They introduced cohousing to North America in the 1980s with their seminal book,

Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves, after studying the movement in Denmark. Together McCamant and Durrett have worked on over 50 cohousing projects with their firms McCamant & Durrett Architects and Cohousing Partners. They now live in Nevada City Cohousing. Durrett grew up in Sacramento

As part of the kick off for the new community, Durrett—who will be the architect for the new community—will be giving a public presentation about these socially and environmentally sustainable neighborhoods. The presentation will provide an overview of the cohousing movement with examples of communities that have built around the country over the last two decades including Southside Park

in Sacramento, Nevada City Cohousing, and Wolf Creek Lodge in Grass Valley, a recently completed community designed for pro-active adults. The presentation will be held on Saturday, March 29th at 7 pm at the Fair Oaks Library, 11601 Fair Oaks Blvd. Admission is free.

Environmental sustainability is a core value in these neighborhoods with smaller homes, green building attributes and renewable energy systems made possible by combined efforts and shared resources. On-site activities and companionship enable residents to socialize close to home

and reduce the need to drive as much for day-to-day activities.

McCamant and Durrett have won numerous awards for their cohousing designs and implementations including the Governor’s Award for Environmental and Economic Leadership in 2011 for Wolf Creek Lodge, a 30-unit senior cohousing community located in Grass Valley, CA. www.wolfcreeklodge.org. For more information on cohousing see: www.FairOaksEcoHousing.org and www.cohousingco.com. ★



Plans are to model a new Fair Oaks Cohousing neighborhood after this Nevada City, CA site completed in 2006.