

Group seeks friendly neighbors for Fair Oaks cohousing community

Sacramento Bee, Real Estate News, April 27, 2016

HIGHLIGHTS

- Cohousing offers private homes and common grounds
- Sense of community sought by young families, boomers
- Residents share weekly meals, special events



Children play in the common area at Southside Park Cohousing Community on Oct. 13, 2013, in Sacramento. Randy Pench, Sacramento Bee file

By Ed Fletcher efletcher@sacbee.com

In an era in which most people know – at most – just a few of their neighbors, Marty Maskall dreams of living in a community where all the residents know each other, backyards don't have fences and kids play together.

For more than a decade, she has been dreaming, plotting and taking commitments to build a 30-home [cohousing site in Fair Oaks](#). Last year, Maskall got County approval to move forward with the project, 30 residential units and a 3,800-square-foot clubhouse on 3.7 acres bordered by Fair Oaks Boulevard and New York Avenue. Now she just needs seven more families to sign on before she can get the loan needed to begin construction.

Site tours for prospective residents are planned Saturday, May 14 and May 28. Tours will last about an hour and be led by future residents of Fair Oaks EcoHousing.

Cohousing communities are clusters of privately owned home units bound together by some common grounds and a communal ethos.

While cohousing dates back to a Danish community formed in the late 1960s, the Sacramento region played a major role in the North American cohousing movement. Muir Commons, built in Davis in 1991, is believed to be the first community in the United States built specifically as cohousing. Sacramento's [Southside Park cohousing](#) followed two years later.

In a way, cohousing creates the kind of neighborhood bonds that were present in eras gone by, said Katie McCamant, a national cohousing consultant, author and resident of the 34-unit Nevada City cohousing community. She said she typically hears from people looking for a better balance between privacy and community.

“It’s a mix between a traditional condominium and a commune,” McCamant said. Residents get together for shared meals multiple times a week, plan special events together in the common house and are generally present in each others’ lives. She said she knows all the residents of Nevada City cohousing by name.

Fair Oaks EcoHousing will feature 12 flats and 18 townhouses, likely selling from \$300,000 to \$500,000, depending on square footage and floor plan.

“I have a hard time keeping track of all the cats and dogs,” McCamant said.

She said demographic and social changes have pushed people away from social connections. Three factors she cited were women working outside of the home, the evolution of an auto-centric culture and the proliferation of air conditioning.

“People don’t sit on the front porch because they have air conditioning,” said McCamant, author of a book called “Creating Cohousing: Building Sustainable Communities.”

She said studies have shown people live longer with strong social connections. Nowadays most people drive to connect with people, including to book clubs, to exercise and to take kids on a play dates, she said.

You don’t have to love or even like everyone in your cohousing community, but you do have to want to work through issues, McCamant said. She said she still maintains friend circles outside of her neighborhood, but it’s great to have community close to home.

She said the lifestyle appeals to young families and baby boomers alike.

Fair Oaks EcoHousing will feature 12 flats and 18 townhouses, with units ranging in size from 934-square-foot, two-bedroom, one-bath flats, to 1,726-square-foot townhomes with four bedrooms and two baths. Maskall said the homes likely will range in price from \$300,000 to \$500,000, depending on the square footage and floor plan. Monthly homeowner association dues typically are \$300 to \$400, she said, depending on the services, such as wireless Internet service and water, that are covered.

Unlike buying in a traditional neighborhood, Maskall said it’s important for the community to fit together. To that end, a community website details its vision and values. Supportive

relationships, respect and cooperation, and sustainability are three of the seven listed values. The website also features a three paragraph write-up on each of the committed families.

Maskall said she began her quest to create Fair Oaks EcoHousing after visiting a friend who lived at Southside Park cohousing. By chance, she glanced out the back window and was surprised when she didn't see a privacy fence.

“He said we have plenty of privacy, but we connect with our neighbors,” Maskall recalls. “I said, ‘I want to live like that.’ ”

Ed Fletcher: [916-321-1269](tel:916-321-1269), [@NewsFletcher](https://www.facebook.com/NewsFletcher)

Site tour: 10:30 a.m. Saturday, Fair Oaks Coffeehouse, 10223 Fair Oaks Blvd., on the patio
Information: Linda Tanforan at 916-359-3742

Read more here: <http://www.sacbee.com/news/business/real-estate-news/article73878142.html#storylink=cpy>