



Cohousing: An Affordable Housing Solution

Sooke, British Columbia

By developing their own cohousing project, a group of 31 householders in Sooke, British Columbia, found an affordable solution to their vision of self-contained, sustainable homes with plenty of shared space and services, and a superb waterfront location. In winter 2015, they moved into Harbourside, built on time and on budget — a 31-unit mix of duplexes, fourplexes and three-storey apartment building.

How the group did it – on time and on budget

In 2011, they began with intensive study groups on cohousing and aging well in place. They then looked for a suitable site and found two acres with a wharf and 3,900-square-foot resort building easily convertible to a common house, all just a three-block walk to shops and medical centres.

Eight households created a company with the help of an experienced cohousing project manager and committed equity of \$20,000 each. All members contributed to the project's design and development at every step, with three focus teams channeling their input to the project manager. CMHC provided Seed and Project Development Funding of \$70,000.

Why Harbourside is affordable

Equity members' investment eliminated the need for a developer, and associated profit margin and marketing costs. Harbourside cohousing is also excellent value: the average \$375,000 cost per unit is 15 per cent less than the average for a waterfront condominium in Greater Victoria, and residents have a superb dockside location they could not have afforded as individual purchasers. Strata (condominium) fees are also cheaper than average fees in Victoria. The units' high energy efficiency means low utility bills, and residents also save through car pooling and group buying.



Highlights

By developing their own cohousing project, a group of Sooke, B.C., householders built an affordable 31-unit mix of duplexes, fourplexes and three-storey apartment building, with waterfront and shared services.

Client group: Independent seniors

Tenure: Cohousing

Who was involved? Government of Canada (CMHC), Individual stakeholders

The Harbourside founders, most of whom are seniors, embraced the idea of cohousing, born in Denmark 50 years ago, because it brings together the autonomy of private dwellings with the benefits of shared amenities, like guest suites and communal kitchen, and places a high value on social interaction. They wanted their project design to encourage a culture of mutual support to help each other as they grew older.

Cohousing can be an affordable housing option when individuals join forces to pool their equity and develop the projects themselves, keeping the costs down.

CMHC Contact

Contact a representative of CMHC's Affordable Housing Centre www.cmhc.ca/contactahc

