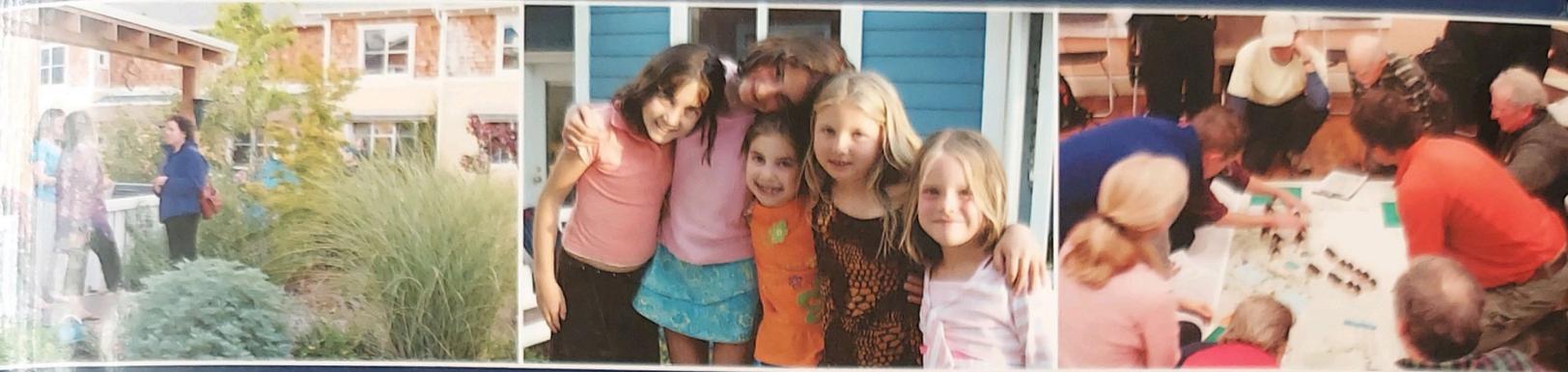


Kathryn McCamant *and* Charles Durrett
Foreword by BILL MCKIBBEN



Creating Cohousing

Building Sustainable Communities



Foreword

By Bill McKibben

I can remember, years ago, touring some of the very first cohousing communities in the US. People had asked me to come to see the good work they were doing on energy conservation, but I was immediately struck by the fact that there was so much more going on. Indeed, the story of cohousing is not the story of energy conservation at all — it's the story of energy generation, the kind of human energy that we so badly need at this turn in the history of our country.

For fifty years, our economic mission in America, at its core, has been to build bigger houses farther apart from each other. And boy have we succeeded: a nation of starter castles for entry-level monarchs, built at such remove one from the next that the car is unavoidable. It's no wonder that we use twice as much energy per person as western Europeans.

And it's no wonder that we're not so happy, either. Because the ecological effect of that sprawl is dwarfed only by its psychological

effect, by the fact that we've allowed ourselves to become the first members of our species to have no practical need of our neighbors for much of anything. Americans say that they are not as happy, on average, as they were fifty years ago, despite a trebling of "living standards." And the reason they give is loss of community, loss of connection. This is not some sentimentality: the average American eats meals with friends, family, neighbors, half as often as fifty years ago. The average American has half as many close friends.

So the cohousing community is a wonderful challenge, the best kind of challenge: it doesn't tsk tsk at Americans for their selfish ways, it just offers them a subtly different take on how the future might unfold. The possibility of sharing some of the chores of daily life, from cooking to childcare, is enough to render them not chores at all, but the pleasures that they've been for almost every other human culture we know of. That cohousing uses architecture to accomplish that change is

no surprise either: how we arrange our daily lives defines what those lives will be like.

This volume helps define a movement — a movement we need very badly for all kinds of reasons. Some movements are hard: it's going to be a hell of a fight to take on the energy companies and change their business model before it heats the world past all

coping. But some changes are easier, because they fit so naturally with where we want to go, with what we've evolved to desire. Living in close physical and emotional proximity with other humans — that's what social primates were built for. Now we've got to make sure our built environment will support that ancient habit!

BILL MCKIBBEN is an American environmentalist and writer who frequently writes about global warming and alternative energy and advocates for more localized economies. In 2010 the *Boston Globe* called him "probably the nation's leading environmentalist" and *Time* magazine described him as "the world's best green journalist." He is the founder of 350.org, and author of several books, including *The End of Nature*, *Deep Economy*, and *Eaarth*. For more information about Bill McKibben and his work, see www.billmckibben.com.