

The Cohousing HANDBOOK

Revised Edition

BUILDING A PLACE
FOR COMMUNITY



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Project feasibility checklist

Land use and zoning

What do the comprehensive plan, the neighborhood plan and the current zoning allow?

- Zoning requirements
 - ✦ rezone requirements
- Specific allowable uses
 - ✦ housing density or floor areas
 - ✦ clustering, townhouse, or stacking units, etc.
 - ✦ setbacks and yard requirements
 - ✦ definition of family
 - ✦ kitchens
 - ✦ unrelated people sharing
 - ✦ accessory dwellings
 - ✦ guest facilities
 - ✦ common house definition/treatment
 - ✦ will it be counted as a separate unit?
 - ✦ parking requirements
- Subdivision requirements 

- ✦ ownership alternatives, such as condominium, strata title, air rights, transfer of development rights, etc.
- Conditional use requirements
 - ✦ daycare, for instance
- Development permit requirements
 - ✦ site plan review
 - ✦ design review

Utilities

If we expect to use local utilities, what utilities are available at what cost and what schedule?

- Sewer
 - Municipal system timing and/or requirements
 - Individual or site specific system requirements
 - Potential for neighborhood collaboration
- Water
 - Municipal system timing and/or requirements
 - Individual or site specific system requirements
- Power
 - Local system
 - Off grid
- Communications 

- TV options
- Telephone options

Road and access

What are the requirements for vehicle access?

- On-site road or driveway requirements
- Curb cut and driveway locations at public right of ways
- Emergency vehicle access requirements

Surface water management requirements

What requirements are there for managing surface water runoff?

- Storm water drainage control
- Special detention requirements
- Effects on or by neighboring properties

Fire and life safety requirements

What fire and life safety considerations will affect our project?

- Building codes and structural requirements
- Building locations and required distances between buildings
- Common kitchen treatment 

- Special seismic requirements
- Fire department access
- Fire hydrant special requirements or location

Permits and approvals required

What approvals are required, when, and how much will they cost?

- List of required approvals
- Special requirements
- Timing
- Cost

Off-site improvements, soon or in future

What off-site improvements might be required, and when?

- Road upgrade requirements
 - ✦ curbs
 - ✦ gutters
 - ✦ sidewalks
- Sewer upgrade and participation
- Water upgrade and participation
- Parks and recreation contribution 

Project costs and pro forma development

What will all this cost?

- Land cost
- Portion of unit cost
- Carrying costs
- Overall cost
- Soft costs (any extraordinary or unusual conditions)
- Construction costs (any extraordinary or unusual conditions)

Estimated unit pricing

What will we have to charge for these units to break even?

- Affordability evaluation
 - ✦ minimum unit costs
 - ✦ alternative affordable unit design options
 - ✦ alternative financing opportunities
- Unit pricing requirements for existing members

Financing

How will we finance our project?

- Seller financing of land purchase
- Available construction financing 

- Available take-out financing
- Mortgage insurance conditions

Membership, sales and marketability

Will we find other members to buy units in our proposed project?

- Local market conditions
- Comparable unit prices in neighborhood
- Other cohousing?
- Does this site meet the needs of our group?
- Size and location
- Allowable uses (businesses, animals, crops, etc.)
- Number of housing units allowed
- Are there other sites that might be better for us?
- Is the group stable enough at this point to move forward together?
- Group finances and cash reserves
- Group process and decision making
- Development skills or professional resources
- Our attitudes and beliefs about success ■