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## **Guest Commentary: Cohousing offers connection with neighbors**

**By Marty Maskall -**

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Four years ago, I visited Southside Park Cohousing in downtown Sacramento, and I fell in love with the beautiful common green surrounded by attractive homes. I thought it would be wonderful to live in a close-knit community with neighbors who know and care about one another.

That day, I decided to start a cohousing community in the Orangevale-Fair Oaks area. I'm often asked why I want cohousing. I'm attracted by the convenience, the connection to my neighbors and the safety. All of that translates to increased quality of life.

Cohousing is convenient. Residents have fully equipped private homes. The common house typically is three times the size of any of the individual homes, and it is the hub of social activity.

It features a large kitchen, dining and meeting area, kids' play area, laundry room, guest rooms and more. With shared meals and entertainment, much of my social life will be a few steps from my front door. It will be wonderful to walk instead of driving everywhere.

Imagine coming home several times a week to a meal cooked by someone else. For many years, I've wanted someone who would cook for me. In cohousing, cook teams rotate.

I will happily cook and clean up when it's my turn. The rest of the time, I get to enjoy home-cooked, healthy meals and the fellowship of neighbors who have become good friends.

The typical suburban home and yard requires a lot of maintenance. We have a swimming pool, and I'm tired of maintaining the pool just for two people. I'd so much rather share a swimming pool with other families.

Cohousing provides connection between neighbors. Most cohousing communities are designed with parking on the perimeter. When you have to walk a short distance from your car to your front door, you run into your neighbors. It's easy to chat and catch up on the latest news. When you share meals, you build friendships.

Where I live now, I rarely see my neighbors. We whiz by each other in our cars, without a chance to say hello. I want a life where I have a front porch, where my kitchen looks out onto the common green, and where it's easy to connect with my neighbors.

Kids who live in cohousing tend to play outside more and watch less TV. They have fun "running with the pack" of other kids.

Most cohousing communities run their meetings by consensus. This method teaches people to listen to each other with respect. As a result, kids in cohousing learn to work out disagreements verbally rather than by fighting.

Cohousing provides safety. There was a time when people felt that building a big wall made them safer. Now we realize that the best way to be safe is to have lots of "eyes on the street." In cohousing, people watch out for one another.

A couple of years ago, a refrigerator fell on a woman who lives in Sun City Roseville. She was trapped for four days before someone found her.

Her neighbors didn't miss her. Her gardener came and left. She was rescued by a politician campaigning for office who knocked on her door. She could have died.

In a cohousing community, a refrigerator might still fall on you, but it would be a matter of hours, not days, before someone discovers you.

I don't want to live in isolation. I want to live in a close-knit community with people of all ages, where life is convenient, connected, and safe.

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