Cohousing Symposium Booklet
Introduction

Welcome!

The UWSA Virtual Symposium Series

Info Question

As we are all living the effects of COVID-19, we are increasingly faced with the stark inequity within our communities. As the lack of affordable housing, healthcare, and food security is exposed, we are turning to each other for guidance – asking ourselves 'what changes as designers and architects can we make to this broken system?'.
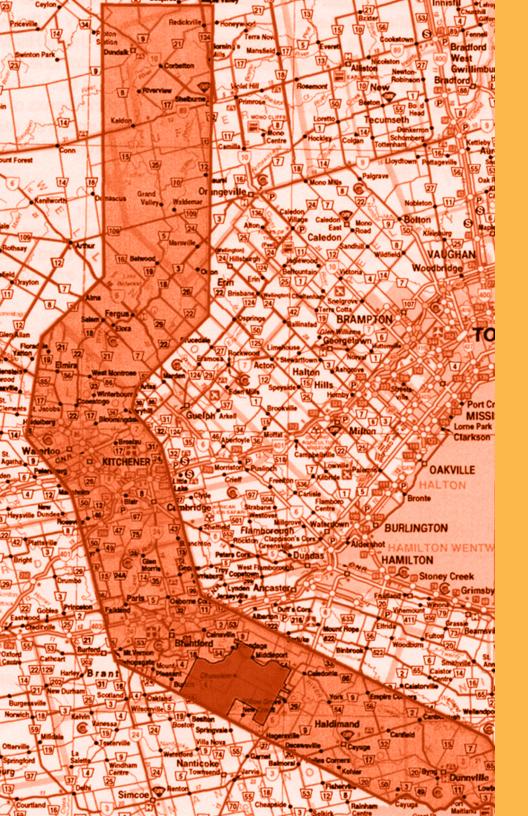
Today we are being asked to think about the ways architects can contribute to this relatively new housing model. Centered on community building, cohousing challenges our existing notions of property, ownership, collaboration, and affordability. The dream of building communities that have integrated support

networks which are economically, socially, and ecologically sustainable are realized in models such as cohousing.

Designing for collaborative living forces us to consider: how we design collective spaces, what we can learn from non-hierarchical structures of living, how participatory-design and community engagement are integral to the design process, and how these ideas of community-centered living can begin to restructure systems to be more resilient in times of crisis such as these.

In this symposium speakers bring their expertise and insight into the process of creating cohousing, while offering critical perspectives on how to ensure cohousing is designed to be diverse, inclusive, and equitable.

While a typical land acknowledgment rec-ognizes the tradition-al territories on which the School of Architec-ture is situated, today as we connect across Turtle Island in this virtual space, we are reminded of the wide-spread and deep-root-ed colonization that has affected all of us. We recognize that this history of stolen lands extends far beyond our Cambridge campus.

Land Acknowledgment
Towards A Collective

A Note on Reconciliation

In prelude to this symposium it's imperative to lead this conversation by centering our commitment to reconciliation with Turtle Island's original inhabitants.

As we tune into this virtual symposium the Waterloo community is scattered across the globe. From Seoul, Korea to Vancouver, Canada, many of us are feeling disconnected from the school, it's facilities, our studios, and each other. As we shelter in place, we are reminded of the importance of home, community, and land.

While we dream of playing a role in creating a better future, we must recognize architecture's historic and current role in colonization. A history which has uprooted indigenous peoples from their territories and imposed a force of assimilation. This land acknowledgment recognizes the important relationship between land and community and serves as a small step in a larger architectural commitment to continue to repair settler relationships with First Nations, Metis, and Inuit peoples through community building.

While I speak to you from the borderline of Treaty 6, I acknowledge that the Waterloo campus is situated on the Haldimand Track. 6 miles on either side of the Grand River, this piece of land was promised to the Haudenosaunee of the Six Nations of the Grand River in 1784. What was once 950,000

acres, is today only 48,000 acres. The school, our home, sits on the unceded territory of the Neutral, Anishinaabe, and Haudenosaunee peoples.

While listening to these talks, I encourage you to think about the role intentional communities can and must play in repairing settler - indigenous relationships. Some questions to spark reflection:

"How can learning from indigenous ways of knowing improve cohousing design?"

"How can alternative land practices disrupt existing property and

ownership models?"

"In an effort to build community, how can we center reconcili- ation as a part of this process?"

"How can a sharing economy improve our local communities?"

"How can we partici- pate with local Indig- enous communities when designing?"

Brief Information
What you need to know before this talk.

What is Cohousing?
Cohousing is an alternative housing model that is based around community, sharing, and a non-hierarchical organizational structure. Originating from Denmark in the 70s, cohousing is realized as a series of private residences that are gathered around a common space.

Who is Cohousing for?
Individuals that want to live in a community where they know their neighbour, can share amenities, and have a built-in support network would love cohousing. Demographics that greatly benefit from the cohousing model are seniors seeking to age-in-place, and young families and individuals hoping

to enter a prohibitively expensive housing market.

How are Cohousing projects created?

Cohousing often begins with a group of individuals; when like minded people come together to find land, acquire a builder, and design an intentional community. Sometimes cohousing complexes are created by cooperatives, non-profits, or other financial and legal structures, but they always center the community.

Successful communities are actively engaged in the designing of their homes though a participatory process. Architects that work with these communities foster strong client-architect relationships that greatly contribute to success of the design.

The Round Table

What to consider at the round table

The round table will bring speakers together to discuss intersecting topics on cohousing including:

- affordable housing
- diversity and inclusion
- participatory design
- accessibility

Students are encouraged to ask questions at this time, especially ones that place speakers in conversation with one another.

Vic Mantha-Blythe
Your Moderator

Vic (she/her) is a grad student at the University of Waterloo. Her thesis explores the house of the Witch as a home of the abject woman. With a passion for collaborative design, accessibility, and creating intersectional feminist spaces, Vic is consistently investigating the potential of cohousing.

Credits
This booklet was created by Vic Mantha-Blythe for the University of Waterloo 2020 Cohousing Symposium