



## ***ARBORETUM COHOUSING COMMUNITY***

### ***PROSPECTIVE MEMBER GUIDE***

Greetings from the Arboretum Cohousing (Arbco) Community in Madison, Wisconsin. We offer this information to those who have recently joined or who are considering joining us and purchasing a home in our community. We hope the guide helps you understand who we are, our values and vision for our community, and what it will mean to become a member of Arbco. The guide also provides information about how to purchase a home. Nearly all the information in this manual – and more – can be found on our web site:

<http://arboretumcohousing.org>

You may also call 608-229-7906 to leave a message

The checklist at the end of this guide is included to help you navigate the process of becoming an active member in the Arbco community.

Your feedback about this guide will assist us in producing a more helpful next edition. We will appreciate hearing from you. Feedback can go to Karen Carlson, [kcarlson2@wisc.edu](mailto:kcarlson2@wisc.edu) (or 608-233-7989).

January 21, 2008

## ***Getting Started***

If you have not done so already, we urge you to attend one of our regular information sessions. Many of your questions will be answered, and you'll also have an opportunity to meet informally some of our members. For time and location, see our web site home page, these are generally scheduled every other Saturday at 10:30AM. You may also contact Carey Dachik at 608-577-1155. You will find the session more informative if you've taken a look at our web site first ([www.arboretumcohousing.org](http://www.arboretumcohousing.org)).

## ***People***

Arbco membership includes single individuals, couples, single parents, young families with children at home, and empty nesters. We are little ones through elders who represent different cultural backgrounds and lifestyle choices. (See our web site "About Us" for bio sketches and photos of some of our members.)

## ***The Site & Our Homes***

Arboretum Cohousing will be a condominium community consisting of six single-family houses and a triplex already on site, plus a new duplex and two larger, newly constructed multi-unit buildings, for a total of forty households in all. The existing houses were built between the late 1800s and early 1930s, with the triplex constructed in 1975. Some houses currently on site will be moved or deconstructed, (materials recycled to the extent possible), to make way for the new multi-unit buildings. The common spaces (community kitchen and dining room, guest rooms, small gathering spaces, etc.) will total about 5,000 square feet and be located primarily on the lower levels of the new multi-unit building on Erin Street. Habitat for Humanity will construct the one duplex in the community. Parking will be off-street for houses and underground for the multi-units. The new constructions will be environmentally friendly, in fact, we hope to have them Green Built Home certified.

Our site is a good portion of a block across the street from Lake Wingra and near its swimming beach, with the University of Wisconsin's Arboretum just beyond the lake. To the east is St. Mary's Hospital, from whom we will be purchasing the properties and land. To the west is Vilas Zoo. We are located a few blocks from the University of Wisconsin (UW) campus and Edgewood College. Our location also allows easy access by bus (multiple city bus lines and one UW-supported free bus line), bike, or foot to the Capitol Square, area restaurants; it is a short walk to a neighborhood coffeehouse (ZuZu Café) and convenient to the wide range of amenities comprising the rich cultural life of our city.

## ***Our Vision and Values***

Arboretum Cohousing is a community designed to encourage interactions among people and enrich our lives with the pleasure of cooperation and friendship. We care about the Earth and are committed to environmentally sustainable practices and building techniques. Our multigenerational community welcomes diversity and values the input of each person. Arboretum Cohousing includes 4 IZ (income qualified) and 2 Habitat for Humanity Homes.

Our core values involve

- Sharing our lives
- Acting with environmental consciousness
- Committing to a diverse community
- Living with safety and trust
- Sharing decision making
- Balancing community and privacy
- Participating in the larger community
- Providing for personal and shared outdoor spaces
- Honoring the interconnectedness of life
- De-emphasizing the automobile
- Integrating livelihood and life

(The full Arbco Vision Statement is included at the end of this guide.)

## ***What is Cohousing?***

Cohousing is a type of collaborative housing designed to foster a deeper sense of community and interconnectedness than is commonly found in modern housing. This is done by recruiting members who are looking for such a situation, and by building common spaces that enable and encourage interaction. By means of cooperation and sharing cohousing is a way to have less and more at the same time – to enrich life while living more sustainably. There are over ninety established cohousing communities in the United States, including two established communities in Madison (Village Cohousing and Troy Gardens). More on the definition and history of cohousing plus discussions can be found at [www.cohousing.org](http://www.cohousing.org).

## ***Our History***

The nucleus of the group now known as Arboretum Cohousing held its first get-together in early 2003, with no particular site yet in mind. Planning began in earnest when Madison's St. Mary's Hospital, as part of its expansion efforts, offered a block of houses for sale to a developer who would meet the hospital's and the neighborhood's goals of home ownership and affordability. In late 2003, our group's proposal was accepted by St. Mary's after extensive negotiations. Both St. Mary's and neighborhood representatives liked our proposal, and Arboretum Cohousing sprang into life as a not-for-profit development corporation.

## ***Development***

In a typical housing development project, there is a development corporation that builds and sells homes to the eventual owners. For Arbco, *we* are the developers, and Arboretum Cohousing Inc. is the member-owned and operated development corporation. From 2003 until the present, there have been many meetings to plan the size of the community, decide which houses would stay and which would be torn down, get to know our future neighbors, design the new buildings, decide agreements for shared living in the forthcoming Arbco community, welcome new members, and create a plan for selling the remaining homes. We have paid professional staff (development consultant, architect, and attorney) to advise us during the development phase.

Arbco does have a professional development team, which includes our Architect, Jim Glueck, Development Consultant Steve Silverberg, and as our general contractor McGann Construction. 2 members of Arbco are also working as paid staff, Janet Kelly provides administrative services and Dirk Herr-Hoyman is the Owner's Representative for construction matter.

Arbco is now in active construction, which started in September 2007. The current schedule calls for move-in to the existing homes during the Spring 2008, and move-in to the new homes during Summer 2008.

## ***Decision Making and Governance***

Our decision-making process is strongly centered on building consensus. Toward this end, we have a short list of ground rules for membership meetings, and one of us helps the process by serving as a meeting facilitator. We recognize that the consensus form of decision making is complex and requires that we each become more educated and skillful in how to participate. We work hard to find a way for everyone to have input into an acceptable outcome for every decision. Our Bylaws specify that when consensus cannot be reached, a two-thirds majority of those members voting is needed to pass an item.

The Arbco Board of Directors consists of a president, chair of the board, vice-chair, treasurer, secretary, chair of the Finance Committee, and three members-at-large. The Board terms are for two years, and the Board is elected at the annual meeting each January. The Board of Arboretum Cohousing Inc. will continue in effect until the construction process is complete, all homes have been sold, and all legal and administrative matters related to the development process have been concluded. Board meetings are open to all members and interested visitors.

After construction is complete and we move in, a Homeowners Association will govern the life of the Arboretum Cohousing community. Legally, we will be a condominium association. Each household will pay a monthly fee (as in a condominium) to support such things as heat and exterior maintenance for multi-unit buildings and common

facilities. Fees will vary based on home size and whether a member lives in an existing home (responsible for own exterior maintenance and heat) or a newly constructed one. Everyone will own the inside of their home, and we all will own the land and common spaces together. There are **Bylaws** (a legal requirement) and **Arbco Agreements** (a body of guidelines for living together we have agreed to over time) that govern us. These documents are available on the web site under “Our Homes” on the Legal Documents page. Because Bylaws are part of our condominium structure, they are not easily changed once they are finalized and submitted as a legal document. We have crafted our own Agreements so these can be modified over time as the community evolves. To date our Agreements address these topics: smoking, pets, firearms, open-air clothes drying, toxic chemicals, business use of residences, parking, external alterations, nuisances, rentals, signs, children, community participation, use of community spaces, and committees.

Most of Arbco’s work is done by committees, with the Board providing guidance and coordination as needed. The board operates under policies set by the membership as a whole and brings decisions implementing those policies to the membership when it believes the decisions would benefit from broader member input.

### ***Membership and Participation***

Arboretum Cohousing is a self-selecting group – we have no formal approval process or vote on membership. Essentially, we feel that if you attend several meetings; meet most members of our group; acquaint yourself with the group’s values, policies, and decisions; and decide you are a good fit, then you probably will be. You should know that there is more work – and there are more benefits – involved with cohousing than with typical home ownership. Not only will you have endless opportunities to practice open communication with many neighbors, but you will also be able to participate in remaining work of the development and design of our community and the selling of the remaining homes. There is plenty of work to go around! We believe the benefits – a cohesive community made up of familiar faces, living in housing that was designed from community input, plus the assurance of being able to borrow rarely used kitchen implements – far outweigh the extra work that goes into it. We ask that you attend three events (general meetings, committee meetings, social events, etc.) before applying for membership. If you’re visiting from out of town for a short time, we would be happy to arrange an opportunity for you to tour the site, ask questions, and get together with some members over coffee or a meal. For help with arrangements, contact Cynthia Sampson at 608-233-6383 or [cysampson@aol.com](mailto:cysampson@aol.com).

To become a member of Arbco, you will need to paid an membership fee of \$500 and put in an Offer to Purchase with a \$10,000 down payment, see the section on Purchasing a Home for more details. Membership entitles your household to one vote on issues that require a vote, though we typically make decisions by consensus in which every person has a voice. We have a members-only listserv to help you participate in discussions among members. Minutes from Board and general meetings are sent online

to help you keep up with topics discussed and decisions made at meetings you were unable to attend. Understanding decision making and the history of decisions will help newer members understand what ground has already been covered. Reviewing the decision log and talking with long-time members also helps build an understanding of our history for newer members.

Members are expected to offer their talents and skills to those joint efforts that most interest them, that is, to share in the work and benefits of community life. There is a four-hour-per-month expectation per adult. During the present development phase, work is distributed among these committees: Community Building, Facilitation, Finance, Marketing and Membership, Offer-to-Purchase Contingency Review. There are also tasks that members assume on an ad hoc basis. After we move in, some of these committees will no longer be needed, and there will be additional committees, such as, Conflict Resolution and Mediation, Social, Garden and Grounds, etc.

The members of Arboretum Cohousing Inc. are committed to being an inclusive community. To that end, we welcome diversity in race, age, income level, sexual orientation, religious belief, ethnicity, and physical ability.

### ***Purchasing a Home***

Individuals who are interested in living in Arbco should first consult the web site by going to the home page and linking to *Our Homes* to find the homes that are currently available, along with floor plans for units in new buildings. Legal documents can be downloaded from the *Our Homes* link. Site tours and house showings are currently scheduled for every other Saturday. See our web site for details. For additional house showing possibilities contact Carey Dachik 608 -577-1155 or Dirk Herr-Hoyman 608-250-055p or email [info@arboretumcohousing.org](mailto:info@arboretumcohousing.org)

Making homes affordable to people at various income levels is an important element of this project. Six homes are reserved for people whose earnings are at or below designated levels (60 or 70 percent of the county median income), including 4 IZ (Inclusionary Zoning) homes and 2 homes to be built through a partnership with Habitat for Humanity. There is an *Inclusionary Zoning FAQ* link under documents, which can be accessed from the *Our Homes* page. For questions about IZ Homes contact [info@arboretumcohousing.org](mailto:info@arboretumcohousing.org) or call Carey Dachik at 608 577-1155. For information about Habitat for Humanity homes call Dane County Habitat for Humanity at 255-1549.

To purchase a home (N/A for Habitat for Humanity homes), a member must submit an Offer to Purchase (OTP) along with a down payment of \$10,000 (for IZ homes amount differs) to be held in trust and a pre-qualification letter from a lender or evidence of self financing. Some members have used the services of an attorney to review the OTP and condominium documents before submission. In your packet to purchase, Arbco will

provide a copy of the Offer to Purchase, as well as a copy of our Association Bylaws and community Agreements.

Someone who intends to be but is not yet a member may make an OTP after they have:

- 1) Attended an Info Session, a General Membership Meeting or a Board Meeting, 2) Submitted the \$500. Membership Fee, 3) Agreed to attend 2 additional meetings (including committee meetings) as soon as reasonable

## Arboretum Cohousing Community Values

**Sharing Our Lives.** We are a community in which we share work, celebrations, laughter, and tears. We support each other through the milestones of life. We sustain each other as we learn, raise children, and become wise elders. We strive to build a community where we can all belong for a lifetime.

**Environmental Consciousness.** Arboretum Cohousing strives to make our community as environmentally sustainable as possible, while still providing affordable housing. We weigh long-term environmental impacts as we decide how to create our village. We support one another in making sound day-to-day living choices that reduce our impact on the earth. We recycle, reuse, and share resources whenever possible. We welcome opportunities to integrate our personal lives and livelihoods and conserve resources by bringing our work into our homes.

**A Diverse Community.** We are committed to creating a diverse cohousing community. We embrace diversity in race, age, income level, sexual orientation, religious belief, ethnicity, and physical ability. We honor our differences and support the uniqueness and growth of each person. We respect individual beliefs and encourage diverse traditions, celebrations, and explorations of the spirit.

**Safety and Trust.** A feeling of safety and trust is a key component of community. We foster this element within our community by respecting each other's beliefs, accepting each other as individuals, and communicating openly and honestly. We build a safe and nurturing village for everyone, and with special care for our children. We have governance structures and processes that maintain the social community and the physical spaces.

**Decision Making.** We make decisions using every member's participation and innate wisdom. Each of us is empowered as an individual while we work toward furthering the community's needs and goals.

**Balancing Community and Privacy.** We value both community and privacy and seek to have a balance between the two. We have shared spaces, such as the common house, in which we can participate in common meals, celebrations, and activities. We also have the independent private space of our own homes.

**Participating in the Larger Community.** We value the riches that being part of the community brings to us. We seek healthy interactions with our neighbors, with the Greenbush Neighborhood community, and the city, state, and global communities. We strive to be an inspirational resource locally, and a bridge to other communities in the world at large.

**Outdoor Spaces.** Arboretum Cohousing includes both community and personal outdoor spaces. Gardens, natural spaces, landscaping, and architectural design all work together to create a unique sense of place. Working together in the garden fosters our connection to the Earth and our connection to one another. We work to create an aesthetically pleasing place to live.

**The Interconnectedness of Life.** We recognize that we are a part of the interconnected web of life, so we strive to treat the natural community with responsibility and respect. We consider this community when making decisions. We create and maintain habitat for native plants and animals.

**De-emphasizing the Automobile.** To encourage connections between people and to reduce environmental impacts, we commit to de-emphasizing the automobile. Arboretum Cohousing is a pedestrian-oriented community. Parking and streets are on the periphery of the community. We encourage the use of alternative means of transportation by locating our community within walking distance of bus lines and within biking distance of central Madison.

(Adapted from the Corvallis Cohousing Community.)

**Arbco Checklist: From Info-Gathering to Home Purchase to Active Membership**

Use this checklist to navigate your way from the initial stages of information gathering to purchase. Any Arbco member will be happy to help you along the way.

1. Attend an Information Session. A review of our web site beforehand will help you know what questions to ask.
2. Meet informally with members, and be sure to ask questions. Our potluck after the Information Sessions is a great opportunity for this.
3. Attend a Member Meeting.
4. Become a Member of Arbco.
  - a. Attend 3 Arbco meetings. These include Information Sessions, Member meetings, Board meetings, and committee meetings.
  - b. Send your membership fee of \$500 to Janet Kelly at Wheeler Law Office, 25 W. Main St, Suite 801, Madison WI 53703, 608-255-7277
  - c. Sign up for the member listserv and request a member contact list from Carey Dachik at careydachik@yahoo.com.
5. Review information about Arbco on our web site including legal documents at <http://arboretumcohousing.org/plans/legalDocs.php>.
6. Learn more about cohousing from handouts, books, web sites (for example [www.cohousing.org](http://www.cohousing.org)) and existing communities.
7. Determine financial capability to purchase. Obtain a mortgage pre-qualification letter from a lender. For IZ homes write [info@arboretumcohousing.org](mailto:info@arboretumcohousing.org) or call Carey Dachik (608) 577-1155 for pre-qualification information. For Habitat for Humanity Homes qualification contact 255-1549.
8. **Making an Offer to Purchase.**

You eligible to make an Offer to Purchase (OTP) on a home at Arbco after you become a member. For non-members, you must attend 1 major meeting (Info Session, Member, Board) and agree to attend 2 more meetings within a reasonable amount of time, as well as paying the \$500 membership fee.

Submit the following to Janet Kelly (608-280-9617, [janetkelly28@gmail.com](mailto:janetkelly28@gmail.com), 1808 Adams St., Madison, WI 53711). You may also ask her questions about the OTP document.

- a. Offer to Purchase (OTP) document with information filled out and signed where needed (see lines 349-351 on first doc; A-1, A-3, A-4, A-12; a list of extras may be added on Exhibit B, first page, but there will be a later opportunity to make these requests official).
  - b. A down payment of \$10,000 (IZ amount differs) by check made out or endorsed to: "Arboretum Cohousing Inc."
  - c. Pre-qualification letter from a lender or evidence of self-financing.
9. Prepare yourself to fully participate knowledgeably and confidently by gaining an understanding of the consensus process and the history of decisions.
10. Attend general meetings and board meetings when possible and contribute by applying your talents to committees and tasks that are of interest to you. (You are welcome to do this before submission of an OTP!)
11. Look forward to our shared future!

**Contacts**

Madison Area Code 608

Web site	<a href="http://arboretumcohousing.org">http://arboretumcohousing.org</a>
Touring existing homes	Carey Dachik, 577-1155, Dirk Herr-Hoyman 250-0559, <a href="mailto:info@arboretumchohousing.org">info@arboretumchohousing.org</a>
Information Session	<a href="http://www.arboretumcohousing.org">www.arboretumcohousing.org</a> Carey Dachik, 577-1155
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IZ Homes	<a href="mailto:info@arboretumcohousing.org">info@arboretumcohousing.org</a> Carey Dachik 577-1155
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