PDX Commons

PDX Commons is a senior cohousing project located in close-in Southeast Portland, Oregon. It is the first senior cohousing development in the Portland metro area. After 4.5 years of planning and construction, 39 adults were thrilled to move into our 27 units starting in August 2017.

Here are some of the major principles incorporated in our project:
- Forming an intentional community and living in a building designed to enable aging in place.
- Sharing this unique time in our lives with other seniors in mutually supportive relationships.
- Living in a walkable urban location with pedestrian and bike access to amenities like shops, restaurants, library, entertainment, etc.

Our building
Our concrete and light steel building, situated on an 18,000-square-foot urban infill site, encompasses almost 48,700 square feet of living space on four floors. It was built to qualify for a Leadership in Energy Environmental Design (LEED) platinum designation, although we did not pay to become certified. Our roof solar panels produce 25 kilowatts of power, which serves the needs of our common spaces.

The building has 24 covered parking spaces and more than 5,000 square feet of indoor common space, including a great room and commercial-style kitchen, living room and library, project/exercise room, media room, bike storage, laundry, shop, office and two guest rooms. We also have a patio and flower garden behind the building, a sauna on the west side, large courtyard on the second floor, and a deck and container garden on the roof. The ground floor includes a 985-square-foot retail space that we own.

The residential units are stacked flats served by an elevator and two sets of stairs. This means wheelchair users can have access to all spaces in the building, which includes five three-bedroom units averaging 1,250 square feet, 10 two-bedroom units averaging 1000 square feet, and 12 one-bedroom units averaging 750 square feet. In 2017, purchase prices of the units ranged from $360,000 to $720,000. Monthly HOA fees, based on square footage, currently range from $371 to $678 per month.

How we function
We are structured as a condominium with all households included on our board of directors. We make decisions by consensus and have a 75 percent voting fallback provision if we ever cannot reach consensus. So far, that has not happened. We are self-managed through several strong committees that do the work of running the community. Active participation is expected of all members.

On the social front, we have community dinners twice a week prepared by volunteer teams. We have a book group, movie nights and a group that goes hiking most weeks. We celebrate holidays together and have occasional game nights. We also have a health team that organizes presentations on issues of healthy aging and a mitzvah squad that arranges special help for members who need it (e.g., following surgery or illness). And we have a group of serious gardeners who cultivate a cutting garden in the backyard, flowers and herbs in containers in the courtyard, and vegetables in containers on the roof.

We feel our community is a better way to grow older together while enjoying the benefits of city life!