Columbia Ecovillage

www.columbiaecovillage.org

Who are we?
We are a multigenerational community of about 65 people united by our commitment to living sustainably and cooperatively with each other and on the earth.

Description of property and buildings
Columbia Ecovillage is an urban cohousing community located in the northeast section of Portland, Oregon. Our 37 individual units are condominiums, renovated from existing apartment buildings for energy efficiency and healthy indoor air. The five residential buildings surround a parking lot with native plantings. Our units range in size from cozy studios to spacious three bedroom, two bath apartments.

The 3.73 acre property contains many common spaces and buildings. This includes the Farmhouse, a 1912 house where we have 4 guest rooms, an office, children’s room, media room, kitchen, living room, freezers for preserving food, and pantry. We have a large multipurpose Common Hall for meals, meetings, parties and is available to outside organizations. Other common spaces include a crafts room, laundry room, storage building, and three older outbuildings.

We are proud of the large and beautiful trees that are scattered around the property. They include huge black walnut trees, sequoia, pines, cedars, and Douglas firs. CEV is a secret oasis in the middle of a city.

Useful qualities to have, or What does it take to live at CEV?
Community living is not for everyone. It takes work to maintain and grow our community. Do you like meetings? Working in groups? Are you willing to abide by the sociocratic process and community decisions? Are you able to put aside personal needs for the good of the whole? Does the concept of safe enough to try, good enough for now resonate with you? Can you be inclusive and open minded to the ideas of others? Do you like to learn and discover?

Farming and Gardening at Columbia Ecovillage
Growing food on our land is a major community value. The common gardens, which supply produce to the common meals, are maintained by the community through work parties and participation hours. In addition, we care for fruit trees, grapes, berries, nut trees, and ornamentals. Each household is assigned an individual garden plot. We build hot compost piles throughout the year in addition to an ongoing compost pile for kitchen scraps. We keep two large worm bins going. Feed and bedding for our chickens are paid for by sales of eggs to members.
Community Life
Mealtime is a major way we gather together. Though not required, most residents enjoy eating the bounty of our gardens and appreciate the creativity the cooks bring to the meals. Our Meal Pod and cooks offer dinners on Monday and Wednesdays and other times if a cook wants to organize it.

Other times we gather are at work parties, Council and Pod meetings, Whole Village meetings, holiday gatherings and field trips. We hold an annual Talent Show in January or February.

Parents and children at CEV
Currently, the children who live at CEV range from 5 to 17. Recently a small group of older ones formed a Children’s Pod so they could have a voice in our sociocratic governance structure.

How did you begin?
Columbia Ecovillage was developed by Joe and Pam Leitch. In 2004 they bought a farmhouse property located just north of a 1970s era apartment complex on Killingsworth St and 46th Avenue. In late 2007 they partnered with Rick and Ron Gustafson, local Portland developers. After researching other cohousing communities, Pam and Joe decided to use the developer driven model, which meant that they would take the majority of the financial risk for the whole project. This team sold completed units to future members. In July 2008, the community held a groundbreaking ceremony and the rehabilitation of the apartment buildings began. In February 2009, the first residents moved into their units.

Participation Hours
Maintaining and developing our land and community requires work. Currently, we require 9 hours a month of participation hours from every adult over age 18 and participation at quarterly work parties. Members may spread their participation hours over a 3-month period or bank them for 3 months. We also assist members with special circumstances to make arrangements for their participation requirements.

Governance
The Board of Directors is the legal entity for our condominium homeowners association and has delegated many of their responsibilities to the four councils, Administration, Social, Facilities, and Land. We have used sociocracy for our structure and decision making process since 2013.

Unit availability
We offer monthly tours on the first Saturday of the months at 10 am. Other times by appointment. We also have an email list people can join through our website. We also encourage people to spend time with us at a meal and meetings to learn about us. We do not keep a waiting list. Units are rarely available.