Sustainability in the City and Beyond

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Collaborative housing: How intention makes the village

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Collaborative housing (cohousing) is a form of community led development, whereby those eventually living in the community participate in the project's design, development, and management. It is both a form and a process of design for cooperation, that has led to the development of dense, clustered communities where members have less personal space but greater commons as well as the organisational capacity to collaborate on the labours and celebrations of life. An example of drawing back to the past in order to leap forward to a future that is both more livable and sustainable, cohousing is one model of community-led development that allows people to understand firsthand how design can shape their lives for the better – leading to clustered, village-like designs with walkable, car-free environments where neighbours know and work with one another to bring their communities to life. Only about a quarter of Canadian cohousing communities are found in rural areas, as most recent developments have taken place in the cities and in their peripheries. Within these small communities people have a place to play, commune and contribute to something bigger than themselves, allowing people to live out much of their lives closer to home and out of their cars. This presentation will outline the basic design principles that guide these communities physically and organisationally, outline some of the challenges that come with developing them, and suggest some ways that local governments can play a role in facilitating such projects.

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