

Explore Eastern Village Cohousing (EVC)



To explore Eastern Village Cohousing, click one of the links below and then click “bookmark”.

Intro, Virtual Tour, Q&A

- [Welcome!](#)
- [Cohousing in the news](#)
- [Side by side comparison of cohousing vs. conventional housing](#)
- [Helpful books & other resources on cohousing](#)
- [EVC in the news](#)
- [Intro to cohousing](#)
- [What makes cohousing unique](#)
- [Intro to EVC](#)
- [EVC values statement](#)
- [EVC's decision making & finances](#)
- [Virtual Tour of building features](#)
- [Green building awards & features](#)
- [Social life -- regular pot lucks & cookouts](#)
- [Social life -- working together](#)
- [Social life -- fun](#)
- [Social life -- mutual support](#)
- [Contacts for more information](#)



Your neighbors are your first family; in emergencies, it's to them that you run. --Ugandan proverb

WELCOME!

Thank you for your interest in [Eastern Village Cohousing](#) Community (EVC). This self-guided tour is based on our regular live tour and open house. If you're considering cohousing or EVC as a place to live, we hope this gives you a real sense of EVC life. Just click the links below to visit videos, images, news & other, publications, & websites.

We still “village” online with safe-distancing during COVID-19!

We still enjoy neighborliness, create consensus, self-organize, enjoy rooftop sunsets (with social distancing), gather and share online, through our listserv & virtual courtyard.

- If you have questions not answered here, on our [Intro to EVC handout](#), or on our website, please contact EVCtours@easternvillage.org
- For a quick visual sense of EVC, see:
 - EVC visual [montage #1](#)
 - EVC visual [montage #2](#)
 - EVC visual [montage #3](#)

[Return to beginning](#)

COHOUSING IN THE NEWS

- Cohousing has been described by many leading media organizations
- [TedTalks and NPR](#), again [NPR](#)
- [The New York Times](#), again the [New York Times](#), and again the [New York Times](#), and again the [New York Times](#), and again the [New York Times](#), and again the [New York Times](#)
- The [Washington Post](#), again the [Washington Post](#), again the [Washington Post](#), again the [Washington Post](#), again the [Washington Post](#)
- [PBS Newshour](#), again [PBS Newshour](#), again [PBS Newshour](#), again [PBS](#), again [PBS](#)
- [Atlantic Monthly](#)

[Return to beginning](#)

SIDE BY SIDE COMPARISON: Cohousing vs. Conventional Housing

Feature	Conventional Housing	Cohousing
Homes come with kitchens, living rooms, bedrooms & bathrooms	Standard	Standard
Homes purchased legally/financially as condominiums or houses	Standard	Standard
Residents enjoy as much privacy as they want	Standard	Standard
Residents participate in design of homes and neighborhood	Seldom	Standard
Neighborhood design encourages a “sense of community”	Seldom	Standard
Neighbors share a “common house” with dining room, living room, kids play area, exercise room, workshop, guest rooms, etc.	Seldom	Standard
Neighbors are very community-spirited	Occasionally	Standard
Neighbors share weekly meals	Seldom	Standard
Neighbors join teams to help with landscaping, building maintenance, organizing social activities, etc.	Seldom	Standard
Neighbors share tools, lawn/sports equipment, etc.	Occasionally	Standard
Neighbors socialize during movie nights, barbeques, etc.	Seldom	Standard
Homes & neighborhood have “eco friendly” design	Seldom	Standard
All neighbors have a voice in decision-making for their community working towards consensus if possible	Seldom	Standard
Adults look out for kids in the neighborhood	Occasionally	Standard
Neighborhood seniors and kids interact frequently	Seldom	Standard

[Return to beginning](#)

HELPFUL BOOKS & OTHER COHOUSING RESOURCES

- The husband and wife architect team of Katy McCamant and Chuck Durrett authored several [Helpful books on cohousing](#)
- The [Cohousing USA website](#)
- The [Midatlantic Cohousing website](#)

[Return to beginning](#)

EVC IN THE NEWS

- The [New York Times](#) ran a fairly long story on October 22, 2021, about cohousing, highlighting EVC throughout. Here's the opening:

"Eastern Village, a 55-unit apartment complex off a commercial strip in Silver Spring, Md., is a surprisingly lovely place, considering that it once housed the drab offices of a social workers' association and then stood abandoned for nearly a decade ..."
- The Washington Post ran ...
 - a [story in 2003](#) about EVC
 - a [story in 2006](#) about EVC
 - another [story in 2006](#) mentioning EVC,
 - and a [story in 2015](#) mentioning EVC
- The [Washingtonian](#) Magazine ran a story in 2015 mentioning EVC

[Return to beginning](#)

WHAT IS COHOUSING?

Cohousing blends the elements of a modern village where people truly care about each other, support each other, do fun things together, have rich conversations, and help build, maintain and grow the community. Cohousing communities are designed and operated by the residents to encourage high levels of cooperation, social engagement, ecological responsibility, and connection.

The physical spaces and the community culture encourage conversations or at least greetings any time members see each other, whether in our building or in the larger community. Beyond all the features of a conventional home, each cohousing community includes a large common dining area, a large common kitchen, children play space, and guest rooms as part of a "common house." Many cohousing communities offer shared workshops, courtyards, gardens, yoga space, gyms, and other recreational areas. Neighbors use these spaces to play together, cook for one another, share tools, and work collaboratively.

Decision making is highly inclusive and collaborative. Cohousing communities offer regular, optional shared meals and a wide range of social activities. Cohousing communities cultivate a culture of sharing and caring.

[Return to beginning](#)

WHAT MAKES COHOUSING UNIQUE?

Every major element is designed to build strong community:

- The development process
- Building Design
- The decision-making process
- The management approach

Let's break it down

- Participatory development & design process
 - Future residents/owners play major roles in designing building, units, common spaces
- Neighborhood design that brings us together
 - Clustered units
 - Pedestrian friendly
 - Cars on periphery
- Common facilities to supplement private homes
 - Usually this means a great deal of common space, usually far more than you'd ever see in a condo building, a housing development, or apartment building
 - Wide variety of commons spaces designed to encourage and build community
- Resident management (maintenance, policies)
- Non-hierarchical decision-making (formal consensus process, dynamic governance)
 - Every voice counts
 - Every voice is welcomed and is considered in decision making
 - It teaches that accommodation is essential to agreement
 - This differs from many HOA (Homeowner Association) boards where a simple majority can decide everything for everyone in the community
- Status in USA: [165 established cohousing communities](#); 140 forming

[Return to beginning](#)



INTRO TO EVC

Some basic facts about EVC:

- We started meeting in 2002
- We partnered with a developer to redesign our home, formerly an abandoned office building
- We're part of the downtown Silver Spring Arts & Entertainment District
- Actual move-ins began in 2004

- EVC is 55 homes (units) in a U-shaped building surrounding a park-like courtyard
- Home sizes range from a 612 sq ft 1 bedroom unit to a 1,660 square foot, three bedroom, 2-floor loft unit
- There is also a commercial space adjacent to EVC with several artists & other businesses

- We have about 110 members in our community
- We are diverse in many ways (life stage, ethnicity, religion/spirituality, profession, interests, LGBTQAI, etc.)
- We have every age group from babies to people in their 90s
- We strive for racial, ethnic, LGBTQAI, and income inclusion and diversity.

How does EVC differ from a conventional condo?

Though we are legally listed as a condo, here are several differences:

- Community building features designed with many common areas
- Community building activities ... there are many!
- Community building organizational structure & decision making
- Many money/energy-saving eco features & many eco awards
- Beautiful calming green features: Courtyard, balcony gardens, & a garden rooftop with seating and dining area!
- Full community engagement is a core value
- Support we provide each other, while respecting everyone's privacy
- Members participate together in managing community needs & events

- EVC people: thoughtful, kind, intelligent, fascinating, open, with a commitment to community.

[Return to beginning](#)

EVC VALUES STATEMENT

The members of EVC spent many months developing the following values statement when the community was first formed:

EVC is committed to inclusive decision-making through consensus and the following principles:

- we cherish and support diverse ages, ethnicities, interests, abilities, relationships and spiritual beliefs
- we value ecological responsibility, sustainable design and a balance of aesthetics and affordability
- we foster interconnectedness, growth, care, communication and respect among our membership
- we engage responsibly with our neighborhood and the wider world

[Return to beginning](#)

DECISION MAKING & FINANCES

Our units are legally and financially structured as condominiums. Like any condo building we have bylaws and a board of directors, but most of our biggest decisions are not made, however, by our board.

- The work of our board is limited: They deal only with specific legal, financial, or building system issues.
- The wider community uses a [cohousing consensus process](#) for most decisions to ensure every voice is heard.

Consensus: Through a very thoughtful, facilitated cohousing consensus process, we have established a wide range of community policies all agreed to by consensus. Though at first glance this may sound unusual and difficult, we've made it both practical and valuable.

- Visitors to our consensus process see that we try to tap the wisdom, perspectives, concerns, and ideas of everybody present in order to reach a decision acceptable to all.
- We use highly trained facilitators and a clear, specific process to encourage rich discussion in a respectful and generous manner
- Our decisions may take a little longer to reach but are usually incredibly thoughtful and, because they are so inclusive, achieve a very high level of support or buy-in across the community
- Because of the consistency and maturity of our meetings, both adults and children find their communications skills move up a few notches. This is valuable for both work and play.

Monthly Meetings: At EVC, like all cohousing, every voice matters. Through monthly Membership Circle meetings (MCs), our facilitators ...

- Work hard to ensure everyone gets chance to express concerns & ideas
- Ensure everyone feels heard so their concerns and ideas are properly considered
- Allow many discussions about issues to happen in small groups
- Invite small groups to bring proposals to the entire community for discussion and decision

While the EVC community hires contractors for cleaning common spaces, maintaining our HVAC system, doing major landscaping, etc. much community work is done by community members. We do hire contractors for cleaning common spaces, maintaining our HVAC system, doing major landscaping, etc. But instead of hiring contractors to do every job We have teams and workdays. We have individual contributors, “stewards” who will tend to a different common area room or space.

Finances: EVC operating budget and reserve funds

- Our condo fees range from approximately \$310 to \$661/month
- This is very low for our neighborhood
- We are proud to say that we’ve never had to experience a special condo fee assessment

[Return to beginning](#)

VIRTUAL TOUR OF BUILDING FEATURES & COMMON SPACES

Like all cohousing communities, we have many common spaces.

VISUAL MONTAGES

- EVC visual [montage #1](#)
- EVC visual [montage #2](#)
- EVC visual [montage #3](#)

FIRST FLOOR

Courtyard [see photo](#) or [see other photos](#)

- Popular spot for BBQs, kids playing, people chatting
- Geothermal heating/AC means NO noise from these eco-friendly systems!

First floor Dining Room [see photo](#)

While each unit is self contained with its own kitchen, The dining room (with a large kitchen) is where we have regular public/private events (it can be reserved for private events too)....

- Pot lucks (3 times/week-including vegan night--some fine cooks live here!)

- Dance & dinner parties for any occasion
- Regular yoga sessions
- House concerts & other artistic performances
- Our monthly community consensus meetings
- Public affairs, advocacy causes, charity & fundraisers
- Weddings, family reunions, anniversaries, major birthdays, etc.
- Board gaming and other fun events
- VIP visitors: Congressman Jamie Raskin, County Executives Ike Leggett and Marc Elrich, many county council members, state senators, and other officials.

Large shared kitchen [see video](#) or [see photo](#)

- While each unit has a kitchen ...
- We also have a large, commercial-type of kitchen ...
- For large gatherings, events, etc.
- We have a commercial dishwasher making cleanup much faster and easier

Living room [see video](#) or [see photo](#)

Just off the main Dining Room, this large, cozy living room is often used for various salons, discussion & book groups, shared film nights, and impromptu meetings and visits.

- Has a flat screen TV
- Has a puzzle table
- Has an entrance/exit to the courtyard

Kids playroom [see video](#) or [see photo](#)

Multi-purpose (meeting, craft & music) room & library. We have various meetings in this room. Kids often play musical instruments or use crafts in this room. [See photo.](#)

Bike storage closets in several building locations, and bike “pods” on the roof

Game room [see video](#) or [see photo](#)

Where folks play games, watch movies, or just hang out

- Traditional foosball table
- Has an original (retro) Space Invaders game
- Has a large, flat screen TV for movies
- This room is due to be “spruced up”.

Exercise [see photo](#)

- Several exercise machines
- Free weights

Workshop

- Every major tool and power tool you can imagine

- Several people in the community use this space for building things repairing things, working on school projects, etc.

SECOND FLOOR

2nd floor guest room

- EVC has 3 guest rooms you can reserve for family and friends coming to visit (in case you don't have space in your unit).
- So if you think you might need a three-bedroom unit just a few times a year, you might consider a two-bedroom unit and then use the guest rooms when friends or family come to visit (if they're available).

Give away closet

- For clothes, toys, electronics, sporting goods, etc. that you no longer need
- Anyone in the community is welcome to come by and take whatever is here.
- Periodically, we donate the remaining items to a charity.

Quiet / meditation room

- Members are welcome to use the room for quiet activities such as meditation & contemplation

THIRD FLOOR

3rd floor library [see photo](#)

Laundry room

Bike parking

Share closet

- This is for tools, vacuums, anything we may need periodically, but want to share with neighbors

3rd floor guest room

- See 2nd floor guest room for same details

Commercial side of the building with artist work-living spaces

FOURTH FLOOR

4th floor guest room

- See 2nd floor guest room for same details

ROOF DECK

Morning meditation, afternoon chats or walks, house concerts, a beautiful treeline view of Rock Creek Park, firework watching, or exquisite sunsets. This award-winning green roof is truly a breath of fresh air!

Green roof [see photo](#) or [see other photos](#)
won the [National Green Roof of the Year](#) award in 2006

Playground on the roof [see photo](#)

Bike storage pods

Gazebo with tables and chairs [see photo](#) or [see other photos](#)

- Community members throw many parties up here
- Host many planned and spontaneous dinners, brunches, etc.
- Kids birthday parties are often held up here

Sunset viewing area with a table and chairs [see this photo](#) or another [see another photo](#)

Many members watch the sun go down over Rock Creek National Park with a glass a wine, beer, or tea

[Return to beginning](#)

GREEN BUILDING AWARDS & FEATURES

- EVC won [many eco awards](#)
- To build EVC, we did a “gut rehab” on an old, abandoned office building that was just a few blocks from a major transit center, the Silver Spring Metro.
- EVC was one of the first residential buildings in the world to earn a [LEED rating](#) from the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) It's a Silver rating, earned in 2005
- EVC was named [Green Project of the Year](#) in 2005 by the National Association of Home Builders
- EVC won Excellence in [Design award from Environment Design + Construction Magazine](#)
- EVC won the [National Green Roof of the Year award in 2006](#)
- EVC also won many county-wide awards for recycling, etc.
- We have super-efficient and comfortable [geothermal heat and air conditioning](#). It's powered from renewable energy using the heat of the earth, keeping energy bills very low.

[Return to beginning](#)

SOCIAL LIFE -- MEALS

Like all cohousing communities, we have several weekly community meals, including vegan. During COVID-19 times, we still meet virtually for potlucks, and afternoon teas. Many neighbors arrange virtual dinners together to catch up and share recipes.

- EVC shared meals are a major part of village living for many people at EVC.
- We have some real chefs living at EVC!
- We also have vegan night

- Some dinners are larger
- Some dinners are quieter, more intimate
- Some are grand annual events.
- We even enjoy the quick kitchen ballets of setting up and cleaning up.

[Return to beginning](#)

SOCIAL LIFE -- WORKING TOGETHER

While the EVC community hires contractors for cleaning common spaces, maintaining our HVAC system, doing major landscaping, etc. it's expected that much of the work of the community is done by community members. The old adage "many hands makes for light work" applies here, and it's also often fun and inspiring to find moments or afternoons to work and play together.

- Contractors clean common spaces, maintain HVAC, major landscaping
- We have teams, individual contributors, "stewards" of different common area rooms
- We have an expectation that every community member makes a contribution to support the community if he/she can.
- You might serve as the bike parking coordinator or the coordinator of the landscaping
- You might serve as facilitator of our meetings
- You might serve as steward of the roof playground
- You might help with the community's computer network or website
- Most of us enjoy pitching in during our EVC work days, in couples or teams; helping with painting, weeding, fixing minor issues in common spaces, etc.

[Return to beginning](#)

SOCIAL LIFE -- FUN & RECREATION

Like all cohousing communities, whether working, playing, or meeting, we have a ton of fun together:

- Poetry nights, dance nights, craft nights, movie nights, house concerts, sports event viewing parties, yoga. Our diverse abilities and interests forge our diverse events.
- Wine, beer, and tea on the roof watching the sunsets
- Bike rides, hikes
- Outings to plays, musicals, live music concerts, & pubs
- Random and not so random BBQs, dinner parties on the roof, etc.
- Many celebrations, especially halloween and our annual anniversary parties

[Return to beginning](#)

SOCIAL LIFE -- MUTUAL SUPPORT

Like all cohousing communities, we have amazing mutual support. It's simply amazing how many times you see people posting messages like, "Need a cup of sugar, need poster board,

need a special tool, need a costume for a kid, have extra spinach, And within minutes, that need or offer is met

- Meals when a family member is sick
- Help watching each other kids and joint babysitting “clubs”
- Taking each other to the hospital or doctor
- Help Jump each other’s car in the parking lot
- An EVC “Sages” discussion group
- When a new baby is born, meals are cooked and brought to the family with the new baby, often done by either a “TLC team” or just informally
- Thousands of other ways

[Return to beginning](#)

CONTACTS

- If you have questions about cohousing please contact EVCtours@easternvillage.org

[Return to beginning](#)