

# Collaborative Housing

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## What is collaborative housing?

Collaborative housing is shaped by the people who'll live there and is specifically designed to encourage social connection and be more affordable. It's a broad term that covers a variety of housing types, but there are a few common features.

- It contains a mix of private and shared space – residents agree on what's private and what's shared, allowing them to live more affordably and build a sense of community.
- Sharing typically extends beyond the buildings to include vehicles, equipment and resources.
- It's designed to encourage informal social contact, whilst also allowing for privacy
- Residents have formative input in design and play a significant role in the ongoing management of the community, though the level of input and how things are managed will vary from project to project.
- Residents may be extended families, a group of friends, or strangers who've connected because they share a common vision for where and how they want to live.
- Collaborative housing comes in all sizes, from a few homes sharing a single block to much larger developments. Collaborative housing often aims to make more efficient use of land than comparable developments.
- Collaborative housing can be for both owners and renters, and there are options to suit all ages and demographics.

There is a spectrum of collaborative housing, from alternative to mainstream. It entirely depends on resident preferences. At the alternative end are 'intentional communities' like Narara Eco Village, and at the mainstream end are examples like Nightingale Housing. The main types are outlined below.

### *Cooperative housing*

Cooperative housing is a popular housing model around the world. In Scandinavia, as much as 30 per cent of housing is cooperative housing. In Australia, there are already more than 8,000 people living in cooperative housing. It is one of the best models for providing affordable, secure rental housing in a collaborative way.

### *Building groups (Baugruppen)*

Building groups involve a collective of prospective owner-occupiers coming together to have input into the design of a development. There are a number of ways this might occur, ranging from groups of friends coming together to develop, to strangers being brought together by an architect or developer who is facilitating a development.

### *Small blocks*

This is collaborative housing at the smallest scale – redevelopment of single family dwellings or adjacent blocks to accommodate a small cluster of households, or redevelopment of small walk-up apartment buildings to increase shared facilities.

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## *Cohousing*

Cohousing is one of the most well-known - and collaborative - models of collaborative housing. Since gaining popularity in northern Europe in the 1960's, cohousing has spread across Europe and North America, with a small number also in Australia. Cohousing developments typically aim to create a sense of community and social belonging through a design that emphasises shared space and social interaction. Typically, a co-design and management process gives residents greater say in the design and ongoing governance of their home and community.

## *Collaborative retirement*

The housing marketplace has many options that are aimed specifically at meeting the needs of older people. Many older people become interested in 'downsizing' after children leave home and their family home becomes too big to meet their needs. Some may consider moving into a retirement village or another form of retirement living. Later in life, older people may come to need a higher level of aged care. Collaborative retirement is about applying the principles of collaborative housing to these options.

## *Intentional communities*

Intentional community can be used as a broad label for many types of communities that have joined together to collectively create the place that they live in, to address perceived shortcomings of mainstream society. In the Australian context, intentional communities would typically be thought of as located in rural (or suburban fringe) areas, and are generally larger – both in terms of land size and number of members - than other collaborative housing models. They typically have a shared vision and place a strong emphasis on sharing and communal living. Often associated with having a 'consciously devised and usually well thought-out social and cultural alternative' to mainstream society. It would typically be associated with ecovillages, eco-communities and communes.

## *Co-living*

Co-living has been described as a 21st century version of dormitory living for adults that helps to address urban housing affordability, while reducing resource use and supporting social connection. Typically developed under new generation boarding house provisions, co-living provides rental accommodation in buildings that also include significant communal spaces. Some properties employ a dedicated community manager to help the community to thrive.

For more information on collaborative housing, and all of these models, check out:

[www.collaborativehousing.org.au](http://www.collaborativehousing.org.au)