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A Case Study of Cohousing as a Building Block for Urban Communities

This case study will focus on two urban cohousing communities in Metropolitan Washington, D.C. that revitalized urban blight into thriving residential communities.

The first case study will focus on Takoma Village Cohousing (TVC) in Washington, D.C. The lot is in a prime and historic section of the city, just one block from the Takoma Park Metro Station. Before being converted into an asset the residents, their neighbors and the city could be proud of; it was an automobile junkyard, complete with the rusting hulks of cars, debris and pollution.

Two previous attempts to develop this property by other developers were turned down by the community. When the cohousing project was proposed, the developer and the future residents of this planned community met with and communicated with the local residents to convince them of the viability of the project and its many contributions to the neighborhood.

Today, TVC boasts 43 living units that are affordable, comfortable, attractive and safe. Many of the residents are first time homeowners, with 70% of them falling into the category known as “workforce housing,” which means they earn 80% of the median income or below of the local area incomes. TVC was completed in 2001.

The second case study will review Eastern Village Cohousing (EVC) in Silver Spring, Maryland. This community was built utilizing an office building that was built in the 1950’s and had been abandoned for the previous ten years. The site is two blocks from the Silver Spring Metro Station. There was strong support for redevelopment of this infill site, and cohousing was the perfect answer.

Today, EVC features 56 dwelling units in the refurbished office building. The former parking lot for the site is now a community green. Workforce housing represents 50% of the residents. EVC was completed in 2004.

Urban cohousing can be used to transform blight and unused infill into vibrant neighborhoods.