

COHOUSING SURVEY (Design Suggestions)

Surveys as a Tool for Information Gathering

Surveys, as modelled by Greenedge WA for EcoVillages in Australia and traditionally used for establishing Cohousing communities in the USA, are increasingly widely used as a tool for:

- Canvassing the size and range of interests in a potential Intentional Community population
- Assessing degree on general interest in Intentional Community in a given 'catchment'
- Part of a marketing strategy: recruiting new potential residents
- Pre-educating a potential Cohousing population prior to a public meeting
- Collecting strategies for pattern analysis to inform detailed design
- Discovering preferred legal relationships (if not already decided)
- Fine-tuning descriptors for an established community group
- Find out who your group are (indicative only): what they think they want & expect, incomes, skills, preferences, family sizes etc.
- Contributing to a sense of engagement & getting buy-in for later collective ownership
- Selecting out people who realise that this is not for them.

Possible Questions about Community & Site Character

Set up as 5-step range of multi-choice questions, 'Please indicate what is important to you on a scale of 1 = not important, 5 = extremely important (set out as a table).

or 'please circle all that apply to you', some with one response, some with several responses, or open questions 'other: (please explain)'.

Remember that if you ask open questions with no suggested responses you will have a lot more work assessing the information; however too-prescriptive questions may not fit the subject well, so 'other please explain' is often useful and may lead to a better-designed questionnaire the next time.

Avoid making the survey so long that people will refuse to complete it on time grounds. It would be too long if all the items listed below were used. Be accurate about time required. Don't say '10 minutes' if it requires far more. Test it first on someone external.

First consider what you really need to know and what would be nice to know. A follow-up survey may be needed and preferable.

The following is a list of possible elements for survey designers to consider. Select the most relevant to your own project and add any others.

See: www.greenedge.com.au/

Introduction

Explain purpose of survey

Explanation of what will be done with the information gathered (and note that this is legally equivalent to a contract if they respond)

Elements identified will not necessarily be implemented (no implied contract around action)

Explain purpose of Cohousing: any existing Vision

Introduce Core driver Group

Describe land if secured; use land questions if not

Request to complete & approximate time commitment (make it relevant to potential residents, investors, observers, experienced Cohousing people sharing knowledge).

Possible questions about local linkages, community & site character

Regional Access

City/ business centre; maximum travel time tolerable car/transit

Airport

Major hospital

Health practitioners (types, orthodox, complementary, geriatric, paediatric, general, specialist, physio etc)

School(s), university, TAFE (list)

Particular types of education (which?)

Recreation, leisure, team sports

Shops (kinds)

Public transport

Churches

Local Access

Gym, leisure facilities, sport, walks

Children's play facilities

Adolescents' centre, 'dive', skateboard or mountain bike infrastructure

Shop, shopping hub (list shop types)

Café, restaurant

Any/all of regional list

Whole System

Interest in sustainability focus, integrated into all decision making

Community size, type envisioned

Bio-System

Type of setting eg natural, coastal, urban, suburban, rural

Water reuse

Type of sewage management: dry composting toilets/ community scale composting toilet system

Lot use preferences: own garden, community gardens, chooks, community small businesses

Composting centre, all bio-wastes

Non-toxic, organic, no chemicals, termite barrier methods, no PVC in ground

Glue: Social Structures

Common House & meeting facilities (list elements)

Community infrastructure (shared) BBQ, pizza oven, meditation place, library, office, training facilities etc

Community activities desired, social opportunities

Ageing in place, wheelchair access; preferred age ranges; child-friendly design

Shared meals (frequency), gardening, child minding

Child minding centre

Intranet, communication systems, newsletter

Recycling centre for household goods, books, white goods, toys, clothes

CoHousing to save costs & facilitate social aspects

Ride share

Community vehicles

Companion animals policy

Volunteering (& skills on offer)

Governance

Committees you might contribute to (suggest some)

Interest in developing decision making, conflict management, By-laws; preferences

Legal structures preferred: individual ownership (titled block), collective ownership, co-operatives, Community Title, Strata Title, Multiple Occupancy, , other

Economic System

Village-owned enterprises (eg under items under access heading above)

Village shop front

Offsetting levies through Village businesses

Job/ business opportunities wanted (& your skills offering)

Home offices/work

LETS

Shared income ('common purse')

Investment opportunities

Coordinated building to save costs

Built Environment

Ecologically Sustainable design (suggest local materials)

Passive solar design, reverse metering

Energy self-sufficiency (renewables), wind turbine

Zero carbon design or zero carbon net lifecycle or better (eco-healing)

Design for social interaction

Walkable community

Pedestrian (child safety) <—> Car (convenience) priority

Clustered housing (& houses per cluster)

Visitor's cars peripheral, all cars peripheral

Attached housing

Cohousing (self-managed clusters sharing

Guest accommodation

Recycling centre all building material surpluses, recycled materials for housing

Provision for different age groups, disabled, formal child minding

Modular design

Individual Buildings

Price prepared to pay to buy/ rent at current market rates (offer ranges for selection)

Type of funding you would access

Type of housing preferred: detached house/ townhouse/ attached house/ apartment/ Cohousing

Passive solar design

Active solar

Materials, PVC free, health issues

Preferred house size

Number of bedrooms

Work from home?

Placemaking

What special facilities would you like to see (eg shed, studio, workshop, meditation room, gym, shared meals (commercial kitchen), BBQ area, library, IT centre.

Land Characteristics (If not yet found)

Location

Preferred & preferred not

Aspect, Character

eg North-facing, rural, hilly, large natural component, arable, overall size, location etc

Lot size

Lot size

Consider common facilities that could mean a smaller house? (what could you share eg commercial laundry, library, office)/would you appreciate a smaller private house if it meant all these extras ...?

What proportional uses would you envisage for your lot area?

Contributor Details

Biographical Details

Name, address, State, country, postcode

Email

Family size & occupations of employed

Ages of all living in household (offer group ranges for circling)

Skills available to community

Type of Interest in Project

Where did you hear of us (marketing info)

Are you planning to move (how soon)

Would you consider moving into a Cohousing?

What would be the top 3 considerations in making a decision?

If you did move in, what would be the main things you would look forward to that would not be available in an ordinary housing development?

Would any aspect of location be critical? (what)

Would you consider investing?

Interest in being a 'Friend of'? A supporter in any other way (which)?

Do you have previous experience of Cohousing or other types of 'intentional community' such as EcoVillages, Co-ops? (details, duration)

Any observations/ suggestions (open question) about strategies, locations, feedback, contacts

Areas of Concern About Sustainability

Water, climate change, pollution, biodiversity over-population, social/community fragmentation, economic issues, other

Level of concern (table with above)

Any significant changes you have made to your lifestyle already?

Request to Receive Progress Updates

Contact Us