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HAPPI HOUR

Reimagining how we live together

Learning from intergenerational communal housing within Australia and the United States

Savannah Fishel

Santa Rosa Creek Commons

Intentional community where everyone is a stakeholder and manager

"I look out my window and see my kid pop into other apartments, talk to anybody and be herself... She is **accepted**, **encouraged** and **thanked**, and understands **boundaries**."

- Residents are people interested in cohousing
- Around 30 residents aged 0 - 80
- Move in year: 2000
- Urban
- Not low income, but rates are about half of market rate, a limited equity coop meaning all shareholders collectively own the community not their own units

"I know if I need something, people are **there**."

Quotes from current residents
Photos from website and submitted by community

I conducted 53 visits to intentionally intergenerational, community-orientated permanent housing models with a mix of private and shared spaces, guided by the following questions:

- Within increasingly individualistic societies, what intergenerational communal housing **models** exist and what **benefits** to they bring?
- Within intentional intergenerational communities what conditions contribute to **social cohesion between generations**? Which strategies, interventions or designs are effective in mitigating friction and help a community to thrive?

I acknowledge the **Traditional Owners** of the land in both Australia and the US, recognising the enduring impacts of **colonisation**, and that these lands were never ceded.

Why this project?

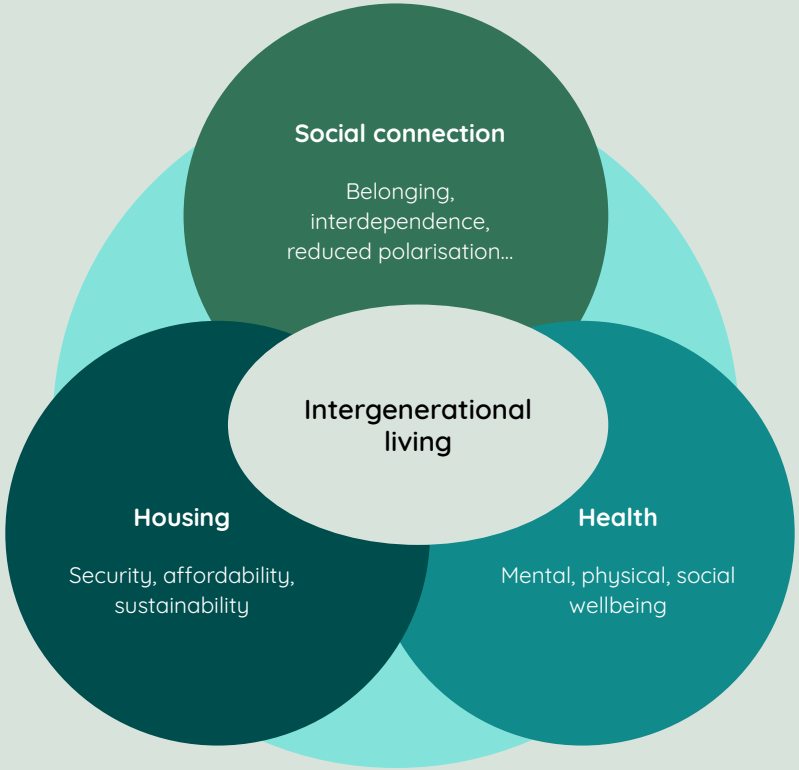
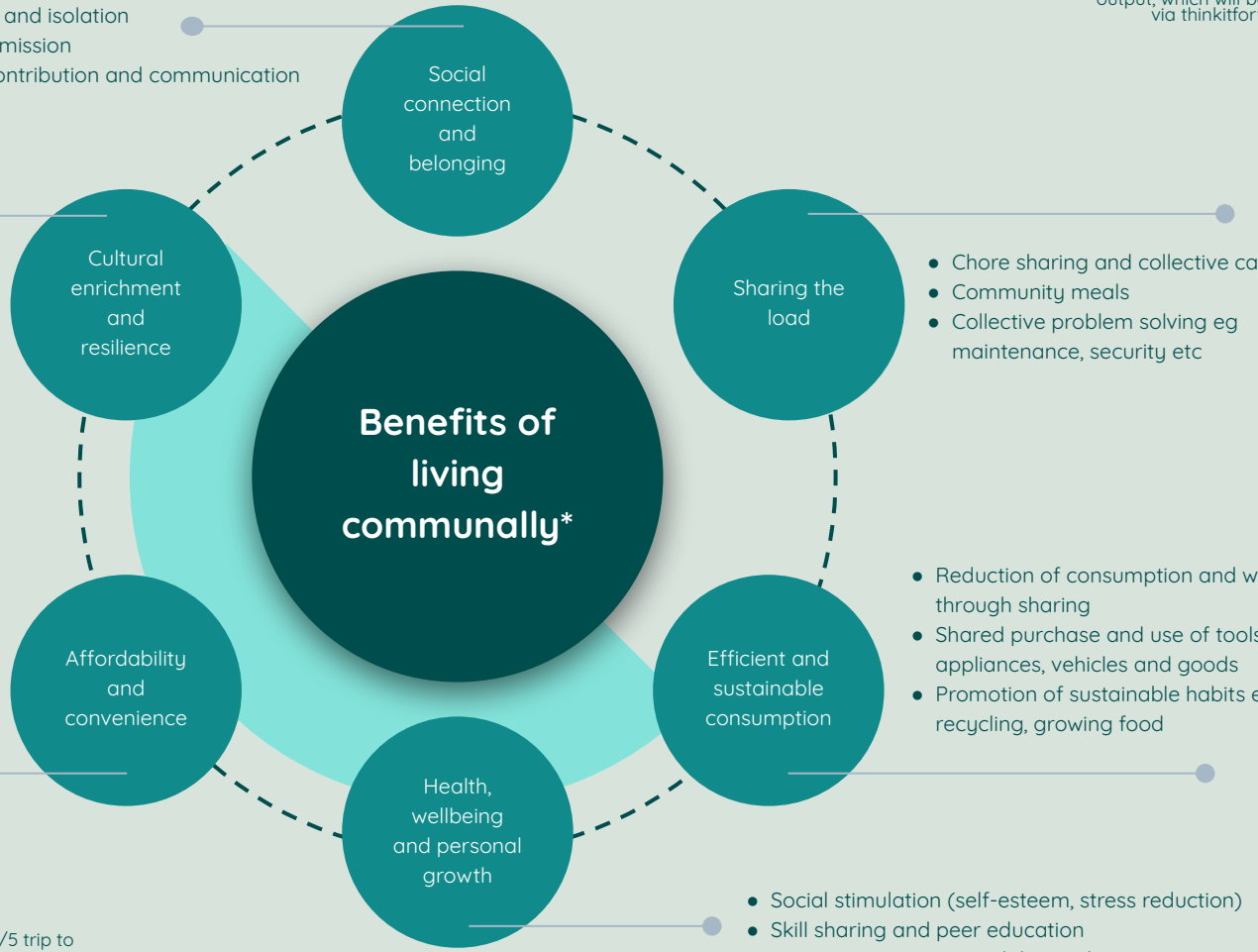


Diagram will feature in final output, which will be shared via thinkitforward.net



- Reduced loneliness and isolation
- Shared purpose or mission
- Opportunities for contribution and communication

- Chore sharing and collective care
- Community meals
- Collective problem solving eg maintenance, security etc

- Reduction of consumption and waste through sharing
- Shared purchase and use of tools, appliances, vehicles and goods
- Promotion of sustainable habits eg recycling, growing food

- Social stimulation (self-esteem, stress reduction)
- Skill sharing and peer education
- Activities promoting mobility and cognitive engagement

- Collective purchasing (food, utilities, goods)
- Access to shared amenities and spaces eg gardens, creative spaces
- In some cases compact living arrangements

- Empathy, inspiration and advice across silos
- Collaboration during crisis
- Flexibility and support through life's stages (multi-purpose housing)

*These are reported benefits from Savannah Fishel's 2024/5 trip to Australia and the US. This list is neither comprehensive nor will each benefit be experienced in every communal living situation.

“As a single dad if I get home late from work, there’s always people here. It’s like my daughter has lots of aunts and uncles… People watch out for each other.”

Cooperative resident, early 40s

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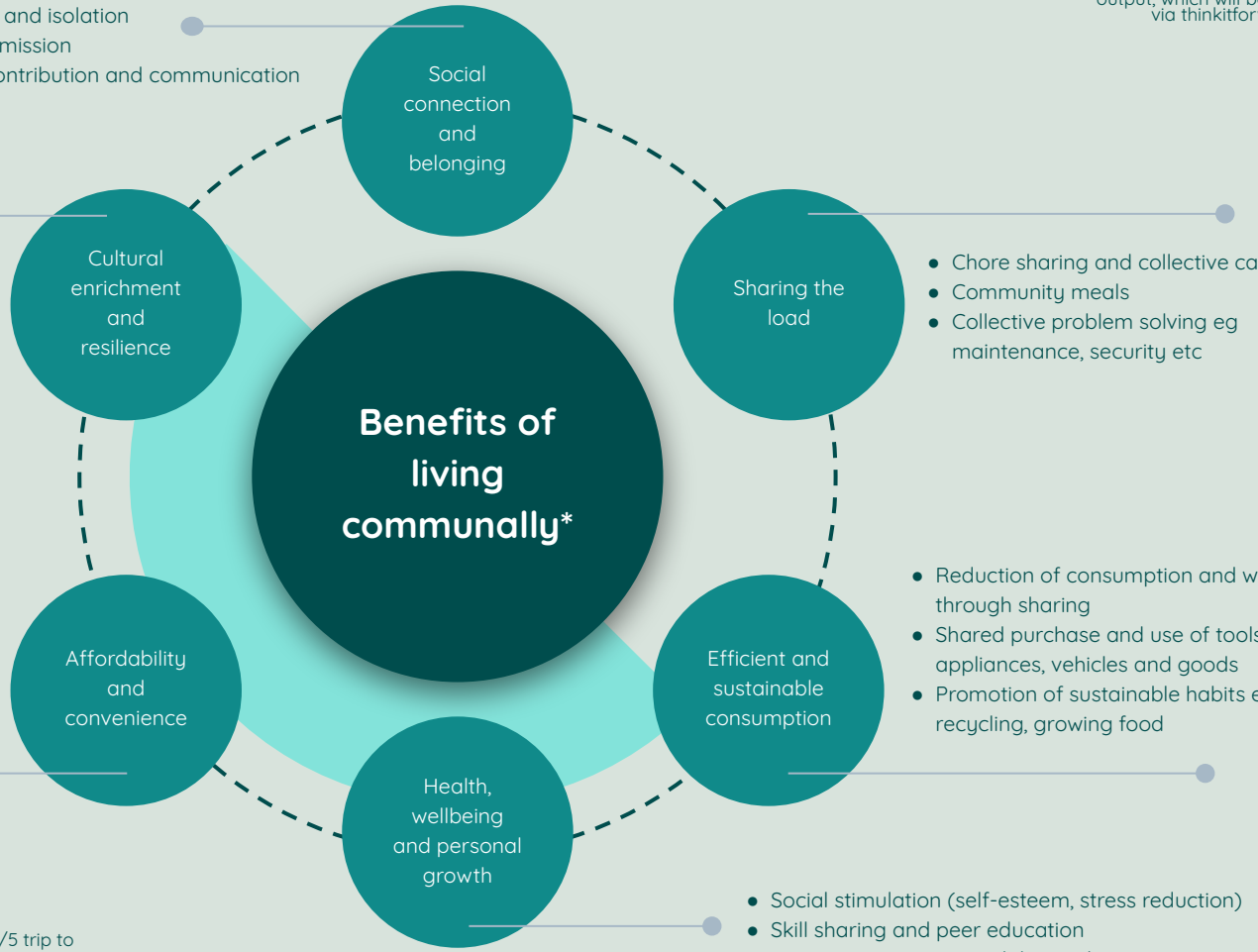

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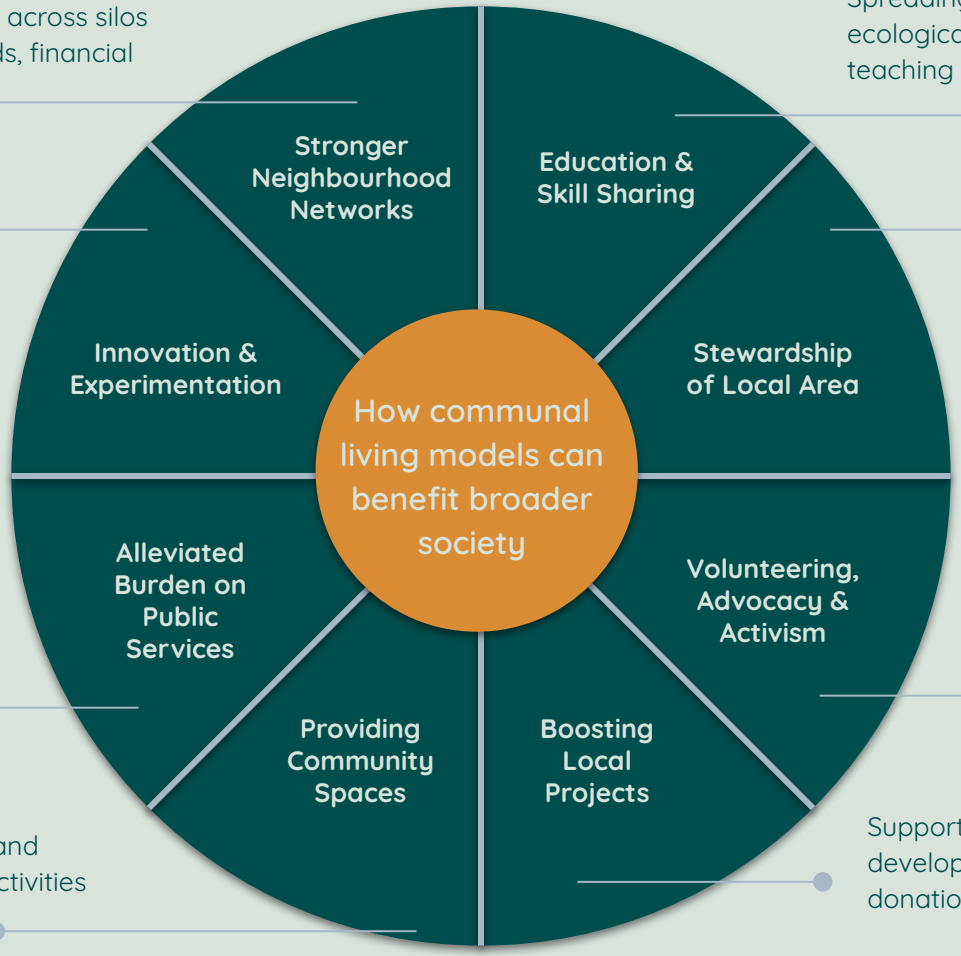


Building social capital across silos (eg ages, backgrounds, financial brackets)

Spreading approaches to social and ecological sustainability as well as teaching hard skills such as carpentry

Piloting and demonstrating new approaches eg around governance, sustainable living, conflict resolution

Promoting ecological responsibility, safety, and shared care for public and natural spaces.

Collective caregiving and proactive support which may reduce usage of health and social services

Functioning as a hub for social causes and initiatives

Offering rooms and buildings for regular and one-off events and activities

Supporting ethical businesses and development projects through space, donations, advertising and labour

See the following pages for examples

LA Ecovillage, Los Angeles, USA

Urban intentional cohousing cooperative committed to demonstrating an economically and socially sustainable way of living.

Approx 50 residents aged 3 - 87

Residents are primarily very low to middle income and intentionally diverse across age, ethnicity, gender, house composition, age and income

Urban

Move in year: 1993

Limited equity cooperative. Land Trust ensures permanent affordability through a ground lease arrangement.

"Living in LA can be ruthless, nuclear, **anonymous**. Here people know each other. There's a coziness"

"One resident recently had a stroke and straight away we started a meal chain... I know that I can **rely on anyone**"

"The **intergenerational** aspect is particularly important - I could be around a homogeneous group"

All quotes are from current residents. Top right photo submitted from resident. Bottom left photo taken by me.

Wild Sage & Silver Sage Village, Boulder, Colorado, USA

Silver Sage Village and Wild Sage are two adjacent cohousing communities, integrating aging and intergenerational living within a single development.

- Wild Sage has 34 townhomes, while Silver Sage has 16 units made up of flats, duplexes and townhomes
- Move in year: WS 2004, SS 2007
- Mixed income. Residents at Silver Sage are seniors, while Wild Safe is intergenerational
- Suburban
- At both, 40% of units are affordable through City of Boulder income and deed restricted

"The goal is to generate a better, more delightful life, to share resources, and to live in a way that is more **fulfilling** and fun"

Photos from community websites

Nightingale Village and Urban Coup, Melbourne, Aus

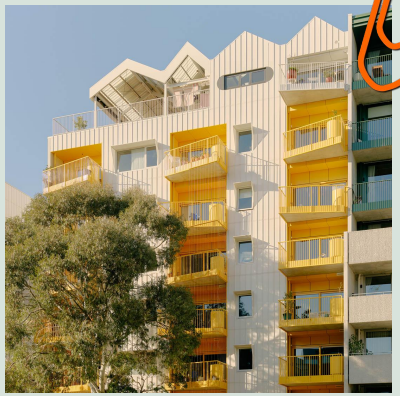
Nightingale Village is six neighbouring buildings designed with an emphasis on social, environmental and financial sustainability. Within it is one multi-story cohousing block, Urban Coup

Urban

Some of the buildings are 20% rented social housing, owned by a Housing Association. Other than that buy in is market value

Urban Coup has around 50 residents aged 5 - 81

Unlike the rest of the buildings, Urban Coup is an intentional community. Residents put time in their governance processes which are based on a sociocratic model.



"I've been on my own for a very long time. Cohousing just made sense... having **people around me**"

One photo submitted from Urban Coup, the other is of Nightingale Parklife, taken from the Nightingale Village website.
The quote is from a current Urban Coup resident

Neighbourisms

Informal practices of care that strengthen neighborhood bonds

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Building blocks for intergenerational communal living

Not exhaustive or prescriptive.

Skill sharing and learning
Collaborative projects eg gardening, DIY, storytelling spaces.

Celebration and care
Mutual aid processes, recognition of cultures, acknowledging life transitions, showing gratitude

Evolution and renewal
Changing roles and governance approaches as needed, integrating new members, reflecting.

Belonging and Purpose

Community rhythms and rituals
Social and task-oriented events, sharing food, spontaneous activity

Community agreements and processes
Proactive agreements around key decisions and conflict resolution

Accessible communication
Digital tools for regular comms, decision-making transparency, meetings at convenient times

Social Infrastructure

Ageing in place
Safe and accessible architecture. Transition opportunities for life's stages eg bigger units or units without stairs

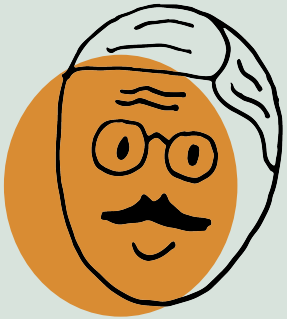
Multi-purpose spaces
Child-friendly design, spaces appropriate for a range of activities and spontaneous connection

Designing for connection
Through zones, visibility balanced with privacy, green space, spontaneous opportunity

Physical Foundation

Resource security and sustainable policy foundations
Income streams, land tenure, regulation navigation and advocacy

“If I lived in a senior community it would drive me mad. No matter how crazy it can get having kids around is enlivening and invigorating”



Cohousing resident, aged 84

Thank you!

These communities speak to the very core of our existence today:

- How do we want to live and age?
- How can we design for longevity, instead of designing in inherently short-term, age segregated ways?
- Why are so many of us so dissatisfied with our housing arrangements and social connections?

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https://www.thinkitforward.net/communal-living