



COOPERATIVE FUND of New England

Borrower Profile: Burlington Cohousing, Burlington, VT

The cooperative model offers an effective way for people to work together to provide for their own needs, including housing. One example is Burlington Cohousing, in Burlington, VT, which was organized with the goal of creating an urban community where residents actively participate, share common spaces, and also enjoy the benefits of home ownership.



A vibrant, participatory community is central to the mission of Burlington Cohousing.

Joan Knight, secretary of Burlington Cohousing Development LLC and a member of the steering committee since the beginning of the effort, recounts that in order to reach their goal, “those who planned to live in the community became the developers.” Starting with just a couple of families, the community now includes 28 families and about 55 individuals who are members of the Burlington Cohousing’s East Village Owners’ Association.

Living space includes 32 units — a variety of apartments, townhouse, duplex and freestanding homes — and more than 5,000 square feet of indoor common space consisting of a large kitchen, dining room, living room, mailroom, office, multipurpose room, laundry, various storage rooms and utility rooms.

Ecological Living

In a time when people are attempting to have more control over their homes and reduce their negative impacts on the environment, urban co-housing is an attractive alternative. “As an urban community, we enable less dependence on the automobile,” says Joan. “We can walk, ride bikes, and use buses—promoting a healthier environment for all.”

Cohousing also strengthens the community. “When we are compared to standard neighborhoods, cohousing

communities have a smaller ecological footprint, require smaller amounts of financial resources, and increase social capital because residents are very mutually supportive to both adults and children.”

CFNE’s Role

Despite the benefits of cohousing, finding affordable financing for such projects can be a challenge. In Joan’s opinion, the Coop-



Multigenerational activities, such as this May Pole celebration, are an example of the community spirit at Burlington Cohousing.

erative Fund of New England (CFNE) played a central role in the success of Burlington Cohousing: “They loaned us the money for the start-up costs of designing and building our community. Without the loan from CFNE, our community would not exist.”

After many years of hard work, Burlington Cohousing is a reality. “It’s like a dream come true,” says Joan.

“Worth all of the hard work to bring it into being.” To learn more about Burlington Cohousing’s story, please visit www.bcoho.org. And

for more information on how you can apply for loan for your co-op or community organization, or invest in community development in New England, visit CFNE’s website at www.coopfund.coop. —Profile by Erbin Crowell

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