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Modern Housing With Village Virtues

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Courtney E. Martin - SEPT. 20, 2016 - New York Times

Susan Friedland, the executive director of Satellite Affordable Housing Associates, an Oakland-based nonprofit organization, was part of a team that built a cohousing community designated affordable housing in Sebastopol, Calif., in a project funded by the federal government as well as private dollars. She said the federal support latter hamstrung them in many ways.

?Federal fair housing policies are in place for good reason ? to prevent discrimination,? she

said. ?But they also prevent us from giving preference to people who want to live in cohousing or involve low-income residents early in the design process.?

As a result, Petaluma Avenue Homes, as it?s called, has had a mix of people, some of whom love the cohousing aspect, and some of whom are understandably lukewarm to the experience, quite possibly because they?ve been subjected to the obligatory bureaucratic requirements and vetting often required of the poor by government agencies.

Nevertheless, Friedland retains faith in the concept. ?Developers, architects, builders, we could all learn from the design principles of cohousing ? the common house, moving the parking out of the central space, having the front porches, the centrality of the gardening. All of these are based on human experience and a balance of privacy and connectivity.?

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