SIX-MONTH INTERNSHIP FOR ARCHITECTS

Welcome to The Cohousing Company internship program

INTENT

The intent of the internship is to give an architect the opportunity for professional growth while they contribute to a studio doing cutting-edge design work in cohousing and other community-enhanced design. You will be contributing to the completion of real projects and unlike the majority of jobs, this internship provides a much wider array of experiences designing cohousing and multi-family and writing projects, we have published 14 books in the last 32 years. In this internship, you would be an activist and an organizer, as well as, an architect. The internship is not “limited” like typical entry jobs are, nor is it like school. You’ll do a little of everything, from design programs to design to construction drawings to construction administration and land use planning, all in the context of community-enhanced design as a basis to building a viable and sustainable society. We design cohousing communities, affordable housing, childcare centers, and town planning. Although in these COVID times, we are mostly doing housing and planning consulting, schematic designs, but also doing a lot of planning and housing books, and activist architecture projects. You will definitely work on a book these days. It’s a great experience to venture into the world of activist architecture.

We take the internship and the growth of the individual intern very seriously. Interns learn specific design information and techniques and develop skills not readily accessible to someone fresh out of school, or typical architectural practices, such as participatory design and sustainable architecture in the production of inexpensive multi-family housing. An internship at The Cohousing Company is an opportunity to participate in an office with a distinct social agenda—promotion of community, creating more sustainable environments and contribution to the human experience. “If it doesn’t work socially why bother”, is our mantra. It turns out if you can make it work
socially, then cooperation will allow other goals like sustainability to more readily fall into place. Within The Cohousing Company framework there is opportunity for interns to explore their individual interests and their role in the fields of architecture, planning, and environmental design. We have also been doing more urban design of late.

**DESIGN PHILOSOPHY**

It is our aim always to honor natural resources and to facilitate environmental design of the highest standard possible. We strive to make the buildings and environments beautiful and to employ energy and resource-efficient building techniques at all times. We specify low or non-toxic materials. And just because we are designing state-of-the-art housing does not mean that it is okay if the roof leaks—construction and architecture are one. In the end, we attempt to practice the art to its highest level. Once we agree that a proposed project is congruent with our basic philosophy and values, it is then our intent to fulfill it to its highest potential. This is where the intern comes in—developing models, sketches, research, and other means by which we can see, and thereby solve the problems and challenges posed by each project always trying to take the design to the next level.

**PROJECTS**

The Cohousing Company intern is engaged in whatever projects are currently on the boards. This usually includes cohousing projects (mostly schematic designs in the COVID times), an affordable nonprofit housing project (activism), a planning project, and a book project.

*Written Projects:* Usually, each intern performs a research project, such as a post-occupancy evaluation project or similar.

**EXPECTATIONS**

We expect that you come to the internship with basic drafting and presentation skills. We are a Macintosh office and use Vectorworks, SketchUp, Photoshop and InDesign—it is important you know these programs prior to interning here, at least the basics. Vectorworks has a free one-month trial. If a foreign student, we also would like
you to be familiar with the feet and inches system. In recent years, we have had extremely qualified interns who
were able to grow extensively from their previous experiences, and go forth and implement high-quality, yet
affordable, multi-family housing, and highly functional neighborhoods.

THE OFFICE

We like a friendly, informal atmosphere. Our office has a full kitchen for your lunch preparation as well as many
fine local cafés. We are fully back in the office, and everyone is fully vaccinated.

*Compensation:* Interns are paid $13.00 per hour for the first six months. We do not attempt to make money with
intern labor. The intern wage demonstrates more than anything else, that this is a steep learning curve scenario.
You will learn a lot that you are not currently familiar with. If a six-month internship is not possible for you, a
shorter not paid (all volunteer) option may be possible—but we don’t recommend it, because it’s hard to learn
enough in a shorter amount of time. I thought that I would learn what I need in 6 months in Denmark but stayed
for 13 months for no pay. The internship is designed for a post undergraduate or post master’s degree, and is often
a practicing architect and often after they have started working in the studios of other architects.

*Employment:* Many interns have gone on to work for us. We give employment preference to former interns, but
it depends on the nature and volume of what is on our boards at the time. We encourage interns to keep in touch
with us; over the years several have come back to work here.

*Evaluations:* Chuck Durrett will meet with you at the end of each month to discuss how the internship is going.
The focus is the growth curve and critical reading (2-3 books per month). The last meeting will concentrate on
what you want your professional trajectory to be and how we can help you accomplish it. In the past, our letters
of recommendation seem to have been helpful. There is a thorough evaluation after the first month. Two of the 50
plus interns that have interned here over the last 30 years and from around the world did not make it past the first
month. Even after a great portfolio and references, it sometimes has not been a perfect match. That risk always
exists, and you should be aware of it.
NEXT STEP

We will try help you find rental housing, possibly in the cohousing community (if you really want to participate in cohousing), once you give us a definitive start date. We are currently looking to have the intern start in mid-October to late November.

RECOMMENDED FOR INTERN CANDIDATES:

1. Read *Creating Cohousing, Building Sustainable Communities*
   

2. Read *The Senior Cohousing Handbook, a Community Approach to Independent Living*
   

3. Read *A Solution to Homelessness in Your Town*
   


5. Foreign candidates: Be familiar with the feet and inch system

6. Foreign candidates: Absolutely must be fluent in English

Thanks so much for considering an internship at The Cohousing Company. The internship is a great way to grow as an architect or planner, and more importantly, add to the small covey of architects that are competent at community based and participatory design and that make new cohousing communities a great success. We have had interns just out of college, and interns who have already practiced architecture for many years—both have been successful.

Charles Durrett

Principal, AIA, Architect Emeritus