

But not all “Co-”s are created equal, nor are they mutually exclusive. “Co” can stand for collaborative, cooperative, collective, communal, community, co-living, or co-housing, each with a different focus, and different implications for residents.

The residential frameworks listed below are flexible, may take on different forms and sizes, and can be combined with other frameworks.

GLOSSARY OF CO-

COHOUSING

Households typically have a fully self-contained unit and share spaces with other households, which often include a large kitchen/dining room, children’s play room, guest room(s), workshop, etc.

Most projects are initiated by future residents who are involved in the building design. Residents will often make decisions by consensus, and usually share common meals at least once weekly.

CO-LIVING

Residents typically have a bedroom, and sometimes a private bathroom plus a small fridge and/or food heating ability in their private space. Common spaces are shared with other residents; these may include a kitchen, living room(s), shared baths, and a flexible area where meals and other social gatherings may occur.

CO-OP HOUSING

In Canada, most housing co-operatives (co-ops) were developed during the 1970/80s under social housing programs targeted to people with low-to-moderate income levels. Each housing co-op is controlled by members; there is no outside landlord or management group. They provide at-cost housing for members at three levels: standard rate, and basic or subsidy levels, depending on income.

CO-DESIGN

Also known as participatory design or collaborative design, this is a design strategy in many “co”-residential projects, wherein initial plans are developed with future residents (or in real time alongside user participation). A team of professionals later develop the building design, landscape design, and budget through a multi-staged process with regular user feedback.

Introducing the CO-CO-MO

This proposal represents a case study of CO-, where facets of various collective housing approaches are combined in a single intentional community located in Richmond, BC, a prominent ethnoburb of Vancouver.

The study rejects a “one size fits all” housing approach, opting to develop a user-led design and project delivery process that aligns with cooperative project financing and community-focused lifestyles. By developing layered “personas” based on demographic data, interviews, and direct observation, we enacted an expert-led workshop, operating empathetically to develop critical design criteria.

The site is a leftover from Richmond’s agrarian past, a large lot with double street frontage in a largely developed area. Richmond’s unique history and geo-location support a cultural mosaic and a large number of working and middle class families, resulting in a rich opportunity for diverse intentional communities.