PROJECT DESCRIPTION
Design a relatively dense cohousing community for 15 to 20 families and/or individuals, with modest home sizes, including common and shared interior and exterior spaces (i.e. meeting hall and courtyard etc.). The living units may be detached, attached, or a combination of both. Sustainable practices such as passive solar, passive cooling and ventilation, rain water harvesting, storm water management (infiltration or flow through planters), green roofs, and community (food) gardening, should be integrated into the project if possible. The landscape design will need to be integrated with the design of the building(s).

SITE
The site is a vacant 100’x 200’ lot, located on the SW corner of the intersection at N. Freemont and N. Mississippi Ave. The site is prominently positioned at the beginning, or end, of north Portland's ("upper") Mississippi Avenue Shopping and Restaurant District and exists within a rich context of historic neighborhoods, industrial areas, and art/design communities.

CONTEXT
Portland has experienced a considerable increase in high-density housing development over the last decade. With the exception of a few examples, most of this architectural development has been based on standard speculative/developer models with the primary goal being to maximize the saleable/leasable space, while providing an “appropriate image” of housing. These models result in housing units that generally lack spatial variety and flexibility; leaving few options for those seeking permanent urban housing in which to raise a family or provide space for extended family and guests (i.e. a sustainable way of living). Many of these developer driven models are also remiss in providing a variety of adequate functional private and common exterior spaces (i.e. courtyards, terraces, roof gardens, play areas for children, etc.): spaces that provide and allow for planned or spontaneous social and/or communal interaction between occupants/neighbors within the building. These inadequate models tend to reinforce an isolation and interiorization of their inhabitants. It is not surprising, therefore, that the housing mentioned above would be targeted for, and appeal to, a market of transitory professionals who are not necessarily interested in establishing and/or committing (long term) to a community. This begs the question: What alternative and/or new models or housing types are appropriate for laying the foundation for sustainable urban living and community today?

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODOLOGY
Students will be allowed to work individually or in groups (as a design team) while collaborating on a common design. Individual and group critiques will take place each day of studio. There will be an emphasis on the exploration and development of design concepts within the context of “spatial fields” and “spatial order” (hierarchies). This emphasis or approach to organization will help the students generate or discover a spatial language and expression within their projects. Exploration through physical, conceptual models will be required.
COHOUSING HISTORY/BACKGROUND

Cohousing is a type of collaborative housing in which residents actively participate in the design and operation of their own neighborhoods and/or communities. Cohousing residents are consciously committed to living as a community. The physical design encourages both social contact and individual space. Private homes contain all the features of conventional homes, but residents also have access to common facilities such as open space, courtyards, a playground (or play area), and a “common house.” The “common house” is the social center of a community, with a large dining room and kitchen, lounge, recreational facilities, children’s spaces, and frequently a guest room, workshop and laundry room. Communities usually serve optional group meals in the common house at least two or three times a week. Cohousing communities are usually designed as attached or single-family homes along one or more pedestrian streets or clustered around a courtyard.

The cohousing idea originated in Denmark, and was promoted in the U.S. by architects Kathryn McCamant and Charles Durrett in the early 1980s. The Danish concept of “living community” has spread quickly. Worldwide, there are now hundreds of cohousing communities, expanding from Denmark into the U.S, Canada, Australia, Sweden, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Germany, France, Belgium, Austria, and elsewhere.

Six defining characteristic of cohousing are:

1. **Participatory process**: Future residents participate in the design of the community so that it meets their needs. Some cohousing communities are initiated or driven by a developer. In those cases, if the developer brings the future resident group into the process late in the planning, the residents will have less input into the design. A well-designed, pedestrian-oriented community without significant resident participation in the planning may be “cohousing-inspired,” but it is not a cohousing community.

2. **Community design**: The physical layout and orientation of the buildings (the site plan) encourage a sense of community. For example, the private residences are clustered on the site, leaving more shared open space. The dwellings typically face each other across a pedestrian street or courtyard, with cars parked on the periphery. Often, the front doorway of every home affords a view of the common house. What far outweighs any specifics, however, is the intention to create a strong sense of community, with design as one of the facilitators.

3. **Common facilities**: Common facilities are designed for daily use, are an integral part of the community, and are always supplemental to the private residences. The common house typically includes a common kitchen, dining area, sitting area, children’s playroom and laundry, and also may contain a workshop, library, exercise room, crafts room and/or one or two guest rooms. Except on very tight urban sites, cohousing communities often have playground equipment, lawns and gardens as well. Since the buildings are clustered, larger sites may retain several or many acres of undeveloped shared open space.

4. **Resident management**: Residents manage their own cohousing communities, and also perform much of the work required to maintain the property. They participate in the preparation of common meals, and meet regularly to solve problems and develop policies for the community.

5. **Non-hierarchical structure and decision-making**: Leadership roles naturally exist in cohousing communities, however no one person (or persons) has authority over others. Most groups start with one or two “burning souls.” As people join the group, each person takes on one or more roles consistent with his or her skills, abilities or interests. Most cohousing groups make all of their decisions by consensus, and, although many groups have a policy for voting if the group cannot reach consensus after a number of attempts, it is rarely or never necessary to resort to voting.

6. **No shared community economy**: The community is not a source of income for its members. Occasionally, a cohousing community will pay one of its residents to do a specific (usually time-limited) task, but more typically the work will be considered that member’s contribution to the shared responsibilities.

For more information on cohousing go to www.cohousing.org.