



A5. Cooperative Housing

Cooperative housing is a form of rental or ownership housing where unrelated individuals live in one or more residential buildings owned by a membership-based corporation. Cooperative housing is characterized by shared management and consensus (i.e., arriving at a common decision rather than voting) or other egalitarian governance. Cooperative rental housing typically features shared common areas (e.g., kitchen, community room, bathrooms) and private bedrooms, though there are many variations on this model.

Key Issues:

- Advocates for cooperative housing have cited the following barriers to using the [Cooperative Housing Ordinance B.R.C. 1981 9-6-3\(b\)](#) (CHO):
 - Conditional land use with 5-year renewal period;
 - 6- to 8-person occupancy limit: 10+ residents would be required for a viable co-op;
 - Ownership requirement: Existing legal co-ops in Boulder are 501(c)3-owned;
 - Parking requirements are too high for cooperative housing;
 - The bus pass is expensive for low-income residents; and
 - There is a one-time revocation of conditional use for code violation (i.e., weeds, trash, noise).
- The ordinance was written for ownership cooperatives, yet the greatest interest has been expressed for rental co-ops.
- Concerns related to cooperative housing in existing neighborhoods include noise, activity, trash, traffic, and parking.
- Cooperative housing, as practiced by the Boulder Housing Coalition (BHC), is a more efficient use of land and advances many city sustainability goals.
- Cooperative living is a lifestyle that will work for and/or appeal to a relatively small portion of the population; thus enabling cooperative housing is likely to create additional housing opportunities for only a small niche of Boulder residents, including primarily service and nonprofit workers, seniors and some families. It is often cited as an affordable housing option.
- Cooperative living builds the capacity of residents who must equitably share responsibility for the household, participate in governance, and navigate shared living. Many residents translate these skills into volunteer efforts, work in local nonprofits, and community activism.

Background:

- The existing CHO was adopted in the mid 1990s and has yet to produce any cooperative housing.
- [Boulder Housing Coalition](#) (BHC), a HUD-recognized CHDO (pronounced “chodo”—Community Housing Development Organization), reports strong demand for their rooming and family units.
- A handful of informal rental cooperatives exist in Boulder, demonstrating interest in this model as well.
- BHC bypassed the CHO to establish its 3 affordable rental cooperatives as grandfathered non-conforming uses.

Implementation Options:

1. Amend one or more of the current restrictions to encourage this housing type (e.g., requirements for homeownership, minimum habitable space, EcoPasses, off-street parking, and the six-person occupancy limit) and also respond to neighborhood concerns. See also, “Occupancy Limits”.



The Masala Co-op. Source: [boulderhousingcoalition.org](#)

Goals Addressed Through this Tool:

Strengthen Our Commitments

Maintain the Middle

✓ Create Diverse Housing Choices in Every Neighborhood

Create 15-Minute Neighborhoods

Strengthen Partnerships

✓ Enable Aging in Place