Haus Coterie: A Sustainable Solution for Bellingham's Housing Needs

In the face of rising housing costs and the urgent need for affordable solutions, Haus Coterie proposes a housing community in Bellingham's South Hill neighborhood. This community aims to provide healthy, socially connected, and sustainable homes suitable for various demographics. Inspired by courtyard apartments found in Northern Europe, Haus Coterie centers on green spaces and fosters natural connections between residents. By accommodating the diverse needs of different ages, the project combats the isolation often experienced by young families, recent transplants, and elderly residents. This innovative solution addresses housing challenges while incorporating design elements that reduce construction costs, limit long-term expenses, and provide energy-efficient, comfortable homes.

Affordability & Constructability. Housing affordability is a fundamental issue in our region, largely due to high land and construction costs. Haus Coterie prioritizes simplicity and efficiency through standard framing conventions and straightforward building shapes, minimizing construction waste and speeding up the building process.

Each unit is designed to maximize space efficiently, allowing four units to comfortably share a typical 55' by 125' lot. This grouping reduces upfront construction costs by consolidating resources and infrastructure. The strategic siting of the homes not only enhances efficiency but also allows for a central courtyard and ample green space, increasing natural areas for residents. By designing the units along existing site contours, we significantly reduce excavation needs, creating unique views of Bellingham Bay while ensuring privacy.

Addressing the needs of diverse demographics is key to affordability. Haus Coterie aims to provide housing for young families, couples without children, students, and the elderly. While any unit can adapt to different family types, one unit is specifically designed to be fully accessible, featuring single-level living, wider doors, an accessible bathroom, and flat access to parking. Incorporating universal design standards promotes long-term independent living, ensuring affordability for all residents.

Sustainability & Resilience. Sustainable technologies align with reducing ongoing costs, promoting both affordability and environmental stewardship. Each unit at Haus Coterie features high-efficiency windows, superior insulation that exceeds energy code requirements, and heat pumps. These elements lower utility bills and provide

comfortable living spaces, while photovoltaic solar panels on each roof generate renewable energy to offset energy use.

Given the resource-intensive nature of construction, Haus Coterie is designed to minimize embodied carbon by using regionally sourced wood for much of the structure, siding, and finishes. Cellulose insulation, made from 80% recycled material, further supports sustainability. More carbon-intensive materials, such as metal roofs and cement siding in weather-exposed areas, are strategically selected to ensure the building's longevity.

The site plan incorporates effective stormwater management, with gutter systems directing runoff into planted swales to enhance percolation. Permeable pavers in parking areas and walkways reduce overall runoff, supporting the local ecosystem while creating appealing outdoor spaces.

Innovation & Creativity. The walking path and central courtyard at Haus Coterie draw inspiration from Northern European courtyard apartments and co-housing communities. This design fosters natural interactions among residents and creates a beautiful, healthy living environment.

Entering the property through a large barn door leads to a covered shared entry featuring bike storage, mailboxes for all units, and private storage for outdoor gear. This design not only enhances security but also promotes unity among the units. Secure bike storage encourages cycling over driving, while one designated parking space per unit addresses accessibility needs in the South Hill neighborhood.

The central courtyard offers vibrant green spaces with garden plots for each unit, planted swales attracting local wildlife, and a small patio for relaxation. These communal areas foster collaboration and camaraderie, essential for a thriving community.

Conclusion. Haus Coterie represents a functional solution to the housing crisis facing Bellingham's middle class while addressing the universal desire for well-being and community connection. By prioritizing sustainability, affordability, and innovative design, this project can help Bellingham become a stronger, more connected community that meets the needs of its diverse residents.