

The Friends & Family Home

Live Close to the People You Love.

The Friends & Family Home is built on the belief that intentional sharing gives us more rather than less. Three homes and amenity spaces gather around a central courtyard, offering more connection, more support, and more possibilities than any one household could find alone.

Innovation & Creativity

Most middle housing projects today repurpose single-family logic for shared lots, delivering lower prices at the cost of less room, less backyard, and less joy. The *Friends & Family Home* rejects that compromise and is built on the belief that intentional sharing gives us more.

Take the amenity room. Spaces like a sauna or a woodshop are often too costly and too rarely used for one household to justify, but shared among neighbors they come well within reach. A home theater, recording studio, playroom, gear library - the space can become whatever helps residents live the lives they want to lead.

Likewise, the guest suite gives every home more for less. One shared suite effectively adds a bedroom and bath to each unit, replacing the spare rooms that often sit empty most of the year.

These shared spaces all orbit the courtyard, the nucleus of the community. Its gravitational pull draws each home outward, creating unplanned collisions that foster natural connection. Balconies layer over it from above, and at ground level, large sliding doors open to let life flow freely between home and courtyard, blurring the line between private and shared.

But residents can bring that line back into focus using simple, readable signals. A wide-open door says come on in, closed glass invites a knock, and drawn curtains ask for quiet. The plan reinforces this balance: living spaces face the courtyard and bedrooms sit along the periphery, giving each home a gradient from connection to retreat.

Affordability & Constructability

The economics of this model follow the same principle as its design: sharing gives us more. Three households on one lot divide the cost of land that many can no longer afford alone. Building together lowers the price of each home, as per-square-foot construction costs fall as project scale grows. The everyday savings add up too: one set of power tools, one grill, and one lawnmower are plenty for everyone, and shared subscriptions and childcare traded across the courtyard trim monthly bills further.

Homes range from one- to three-bedroom layouts, offering a variety of sizes to fit diverse households. The project is designed to be condominiumized, so each home can be owned independently. HOA agreements govern shared spaces, maintenance, and reserves, ensuring upkeep is planned for and divided equitably.

Construction is conventional wood framing on a slab-on-grade foundation, familiar to any residential builder. At the same time, three units plus shared amenities make the project large enough to interest commercial contractors, giving owners more choice in who builds it. Financing works in the owners' favor too, as the project stays within the four-unit threshold for conventional residential loans, with their lower rates and down payments.

Sustainability & Resilience

Sustainability is often described as a three-legged stool: environmental, economic, and social. The economic leg is addressed above, and the environmental leg is met through proven, practical measures. Walls are insulated to R-21 plus R-5 continuous; high-efficiency mini-split heat pumps and ERVs provide comfortable, efficient conditioning; a heat pump water heater reduces energy use further; and rooftop solar offsets what remains.

The site plan contributes too. With no internal driveway and homes gathered around a single courtyard, far more of the lot stays green than in conventional middle housing, absorbing stormwater and leaving room to preserve existing trees. This courtyard is designed to celebrate a tree while harvesting southwestern light, and a communal garden on the level above lets residents grow food together.

But the third leg is where this project stands apart. The *Friends & Family Home* is designed around connection, with a shared courtyard, gathering spaces, and amenities that bring residents together naturally. That matters for health too: loneliness is increasingly recognized as a public health concern, with a 2015 study¹ linking perceived social isolation to greater inflammation and a weaker immune response. And beyond the physiology, a close community provides a safety net. Neighbors can more easily check in on one another, older residents stay woven into daily life, and help is always just a few steps away. That network of care is its own form of resilience.

Universal Design & Flexibility

The *Friends & Family Home* is designed to adapt as its residents' lives change. The Ground House, at the rear of the lot, is a Type A one-bedroom unit that supports aging in place, making it a natural fit for intergenerational living.

The shared spaces are just as flexible. The amenity room can evolve with residents' interests or host a home business, and the garage can be replaced by a fourth unit for a new resident or renting tenant. That adaptability lets the community stay together through whatever comes next, whether it's a new hobby, a growing family, or the need for extra income.

Parking

The project includes a shared two-car garage. With a Transit Score of 50, the Lettered Streets neighborhood offers only moderate transit access, and most prospective residents we spoke with said a garage would be essential for them to consider this development model. Providing two spaces for three households keeps parking modest, and if parking is less of a priority, a fourth unit can take the garage's place.

Project Site

The *Friends & Family Home* is designed for an Option 1 lot representative of the Lettered Streets neighborhood. It assumes a 50 ft x 100 ft property without alley access, demonstrating that thoughtful density is achievable on even the most constrained standard lots.

¹ Steven W. Cole et al., "Myeloid Differentiation Architecture of Leukocyte Transcriptome Dynamics in Perceived Social Isolation," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 112, no. 49 (2015): 15142–15147, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1514249112>.