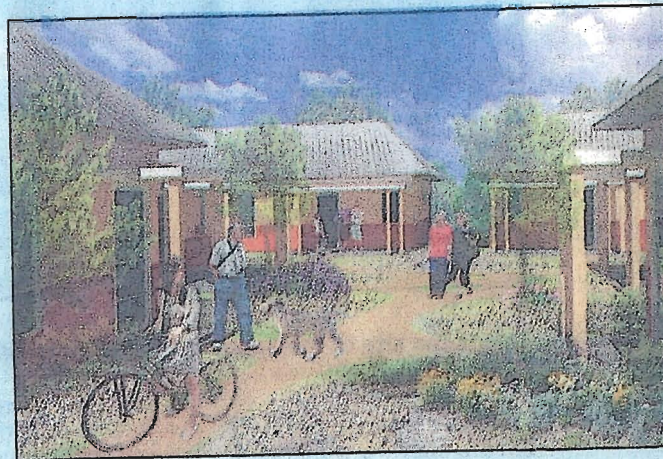


# Downsizing community



This rendering of the Acequia Jardin co-housing "pocket neighborhood" project shows what the North Valley project will look like.

## North Valley infill project creates co-housing

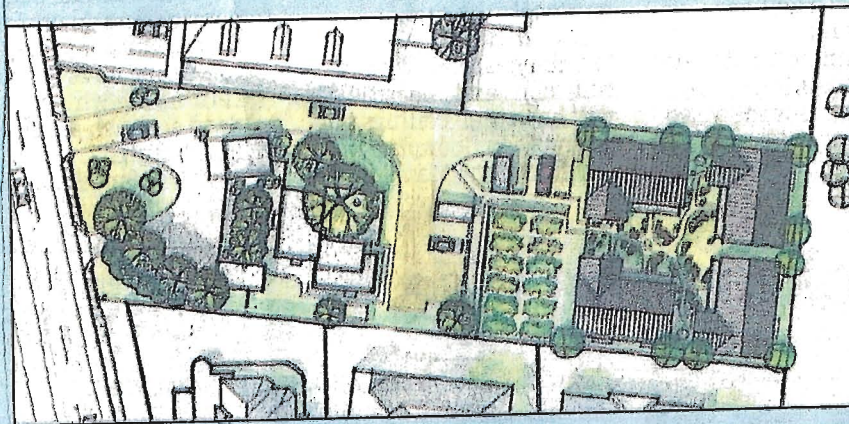
BY TANIA SOUSSAN  
For the Journal

**M**ost baby boomers approach downsizing simply by selling their large, family home and moving to something smaller, maybe even a retirement community. Not Marianne Dickinson.

The Albuquerque community activist and designer spent years researching co-housing and educating others about it and now is part of a team developing a "pocket neighborhood" where residents will live closely together with a strong sense of community and shared amenities.

"It just seemed to make a lot of sense," said Dickinson, 62.

She said many downsizing options are sterile and can be isolating for seniors. Co-housing,



COURTESY OF GARRETT SMITH

This rendering shows planned infill homes in the Acequia Jardin "pocket neighborhood" development. Part of the project site is pictured below.

on the other hand, brings people together, creates a social network and offers a sense of security both in the sense that someone can watch your home when you

are on vacation and that someone will notice if you are not well, she added.

"It's quite a close-knit community," Dickinson said.

The Acequia Jardin project in the North Valley is being developed by Dickinson, architect Garrett Smith and Realtor Pamela Heater and is the first of its kind in Albuquerque. In a true co-housing model, the future residents would be involved in the development and building phase. Although that's not the case with Acequia Jardin, the community will operate like a co-housing project once it's complete with the homeowners managing their own facilities.

The one-acre property, at 2334 Rio Grande NW, is adjacent to La Montanita Coop and has a canopy of mature trees that will be preserved. Eight new townhomes will be built around a central plaza tucked behind a renovated farmhouse and studio home. The homeowners will share a large acequia-irrigated vegetable garden

See INFILL on PAGE G2

# Infill project employs downsizing co-housing strategy

from PAGE G1

and a dozen fruit trees, a guest casita and a meeting room.

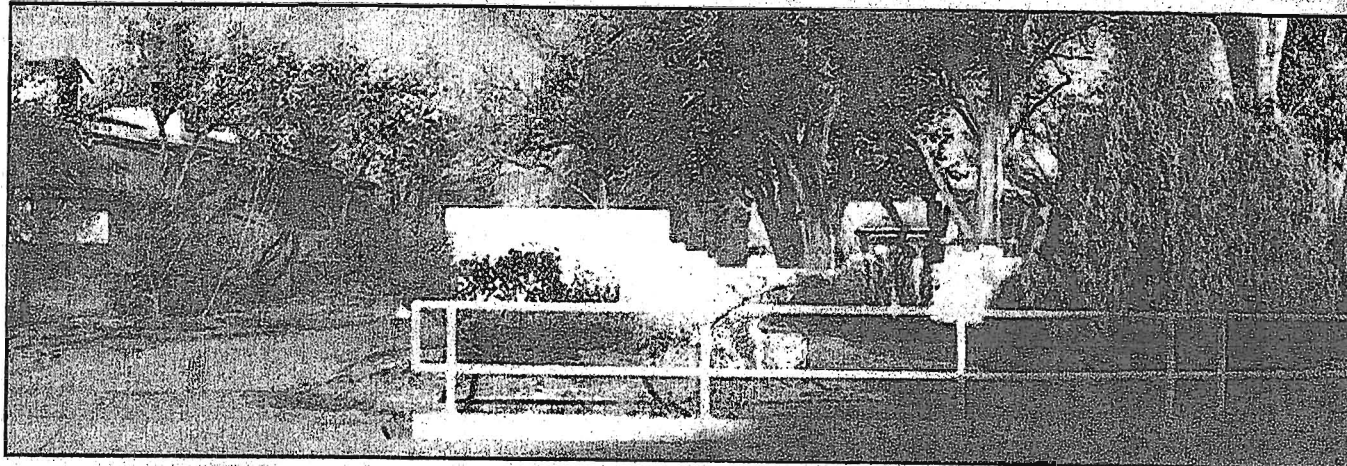
The homes — each just 800 to 900 square feet — with front porches, shared spaces and clustered parking instead of garages are designed to promote sociability among residents. Prices range from \$190,000 to \$245,000, and homeowners' association fees will be about \$75 a month.

"We feel it's innovative, but it's something people want," Heater said.

That seems to be the case. Five of the 10 homes already have been snapped up, and Heater said she expects to sell all 10 before construction begins in January.

The city Environmental Planning Commission unanimously approved the project earlier this year.

"It's a remarkable and refreshing and intelligent project that stands head and shoulders above," said Jonathan Siegel, an Albuquerque architect who sat on the commission when the Acequia Jardin project



COURTESY OF GARRETT SMITH

This is the site of the Acequia Jardin infill neighborhood housing development project in the North Valley.

came up.

Siegel said Acequia Jardin shows a wonderful integration of landscape and structures, both new and old, to create areas where people will come together.

The location of Acequia Jardin also is a key, the developers said.

"People want to be close to services, to walking trails, to hospitals ... is what we've found," Heater said.

Smith agreed and said

the site is on a city bus line, about a mile from Old Town and within walking distance of the co-op for groceries and the acequia system and river trails.

"You don't necessarily have to get into your car to go places," he said.

The single-story townhomes, each with two bedrooms and one bathroom, will have high ceilings and a very open floor plan in a northern New Mexico style.

They also will be very green, probably the equivalent of the Build Green New Mexico gold or platinum level, Smith said.

The sustainability of the project was a big draw for Nancy Kilpatrick, a baby boomer who has been considering downsizing for a couple of years. Trips to Europe have left her rethinking why Americans need so much space and so much stuff.

"Part of me is concerned

about the sustainability of the lifestyle that we all lead," she said.

Kilpatrick said living in a community of people who also are interested in things such as recycling and growing their own food is appealing and added that she hopes the residents can organize some joint activities such as community meals, service projects or preserving food from the garden.

Kilpatrick learned of Acequia Jardin through her friendship with Smith and also happens to be friends with Dickinson. She plans to move from her current 1,500-square-foot home into one of the 900-square-foot units.

"It will force me to downsize in a dramatic way," she said.

Studies show that living more closely together and enjoying a sense of community aids longevity, Heater said.

"I think it's a direction that a segment of our population is interested in, particularly people that are maybe a little older and looking to downsize and maybe age in place," Smith said, adding that the concept goes back to a time when people lived more communally and with more interdependence between family and friends.

"The important thing is the idea of people living a little closer in harmony with each other," he said.

For more information: [www.acequijardin.com](http://www.acequijardin.com) or call Pamela Heater at 505-710-0021