



Photo: Adam Mørk

BOLIGLABORATORIUM: A DANISH HOUSING LAB

Nordic-inspired sustainable living

**USA Exhibition Tour
2024-2025**



Advancing Danish-American Relations

ABOUT

A Danish Housing Lab: Nordic-Inspired Sustainable Living

How do we create housing that addresses some of the greatest challenges of our time? This question forms the basis for *Boliglaboratorium: A Danish Housing Lab*, curated by NORD Architects and sponsored by Realdania. The exhibit features six groundbreaking Danish architectural projects that explore how housing can respond to the current climate crisis, future urban challenges, shifting family patterns and new ways of living. Common to all of them is that they are being realized as full-scale housing experiments in Denmark.

The exhibition has been timely to tour around the US, where recent state-level policy changes mean that more communities will need to add housing and density. The Danish examples offer models that can help new housing better fit into neighborhoods through design excellence and a wider set of residential typologies.

The Housing Lab was first exhibited in Copenhagen in 2023 as part of the UIA World Congress of Architects.

From November 2024 to December 2025, it premiered in the USA where it was exhibited in six locations including Seattle, Portland, Chicago and Washington, DC.

This tour was presented by Scan Design Foundation, in partnership with the Danish Embassy in Washington DC.



The COurban EcoDistrict masterclass visiting the exhibit in Copenhagen in 2023. Photo courtesy of Katy Scherrer.



New ways of living

The nuclear family structure is still in center when designing family homes. However, Danish architects have been experimenting with new ways of living – for patchwork families, single parents, seniors or the more modern nuclear family. The models demonstrate a new way to utilize scarce space in cities, combat loneliness, and accommodate today's diversity of families and households.



Climate adaptation & new communities

New forms of housing enable new types of communities. This often means fewer square meters per person – but more space for community and a better use of resources. The building sector is responsible for more than a third of our CO2 emissions - new housing options are a necessary development for climate mitigation.

PARTNERS

The USA exhibition tour was successfully coordinated thanks to the following host partners:

- Seattle Architecture Foundation
- University of Washington - College of Built Environments
- Portland State University - School of Architecture
- Nordic Northwest
- Chicago Architecture Biennial
- District Architecture Center, DC

In conjunction with the exhibition, themed panels and events were organized. Programming partners included:

- COurban Design Collective * Framework * Futurewise
- Urban League / Capitol Hill EcoDistrict * World Oregon * MAS Studios
- *Washington Architecture Foundation * AIA|DC

TIMELINE



2024

Boliglaboratorium exhibit premiered at the Seattle Architecture Foundation.



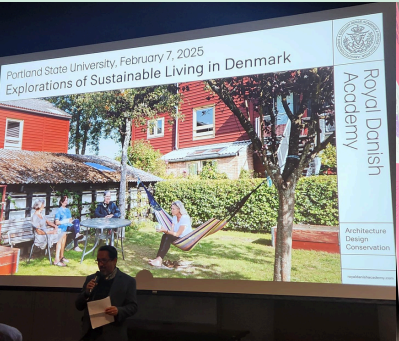
2025

The exhibit moved to the University of Washington, hosted by the College of Built Environments. Programming included panel discussions and local walking tours of sustainable housing projects.



2025

The exhibit moved to Portland State University, hosted by the Architecture Department with curated panels and local housing tour programming.



The exhibit moved to Nordic Northwest with local panel discussions. From the NW, the exhibition traveled to Chicago and then concluded in Washington, DC.

SEATTLE ARCHITECTURE FOUNDATION

November - December 2024

The mission of the Seattle Architecture Foundation (SAF) is to enhance the public’s awareness of and engagement with the built environment through educational programs and collaboration with community partners.

SAF envisions a public that understands the important role the city’s built environment plays in the lives of Seattle residents and visitors and is empowered to engage with and improve the beautiful city of Seattle.

Innovative design can help to lead the way in not only addressing housing affordability, but also building at densities that support public transportation and sustainable development. The Danish Housing Exhibit provides housing models that can spur needed architectural innovation.

*Jim Bourney
Executive Director*

Exhibition launches with Scan Design Foundation and the Royal Danish Embassy in DC

A reception to welcome the exhibit to the Pacific NW was held on November 19th, featuring Danish-inspired refreshments provided by Café Hagen and remarks by:

- Frederikke Møller Kristiansen (Pictured right), Cultural Attaché, Royal Danish Embassy
- Jim Bourney (Pictured middle), Executive Director, Seattle Architecture Foundation
- Fidelma McGinn (Pictured left). President, Scan Design Foundation

Photos courtesy of SDF unless otherwise noted



Read the article by
David Quicksall from the
Evergreen Echo



UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON COLLEGE OF BUILT ENVIRONMENTS

January 2025

PANEL 1: Circular Construction and Beyond

Danish architect, Søren Nielsen, from the Aarhus School of Architecture, joined Moderator Rob Peña - Architecture, Associate Professor and Graduate Program Coordinator in the Department of Architecture at the University of Washington for a virtual panel about circular construction.

Circular construction is a key technical characteristic of sustainable building as it facilitates future reuse. Principles of circularity come with both restrictions and potentials in architectural design. Among the potentials is an aesthetics based on disassembly, configurability, modularity, and prefabrication. However, circularity is only a single dimension in a far more fundamental strategy for keeping construction within planetary boundaries.

PANEL 2: Design in Depth- New Housing Models for a Changing PNW

What inspirations can experimental Danish housing provide for the PNW housing industry? Using the Danish Housing Lab as a starting point, we heard from local architects and community leaders about applying co-housing, creative reuse, and medium- and high-density housing principles in our local Seattle context. Panelists shared examples of creative housing designs in Seattle and how these designs can help our city respond to population growth, zoning changes, and cultural shifts in family and living patterns.

PANELISTS:

- Grace H. Kim, FAIA, Co-Founding Principle, Schemata Workshop
- Leah Martin, Co-Founder, Architect + Partner, Allied8
- Rev. Dr. W. Tali Hairston, Executive Director, Nehemiah Initiative Seattle
- Rick Mohler, FAIA, NCARB, Professor and Chair, UW Department of Architecture



Watch the recordings here:

Panel 1:

[Circular Construction with Søren Nielsen](#)



Panel 2:

[New Housing Models for a Changing PNW](#)



Image: Rob Peña introducing the panelists at UW

PANEL AND WALKING TOUR: Planning for Better Housing and Better Neighborhoods: Drawing on Local Examples and Learning from Danish Models

The **Planning Panel** included planners from varied size cities and experts in delivering alternative forms of housing. The panel focused on the question: "How can we create more housing and more variety in green and livable neighborhoods?" The panel and walking tour were organized by Alex Brennan, Executive Director of Futurewise, Jeff Arango, a Principal and Planning Director of Framework, Katy Scherrer, a Landscape Architect and leads the U.S. office of COurban Design Collective, and Lesley Bain, FAIA, a Principal and Design Director of Framework.

[See the slides here.](#)



The guided **Walking Tour** included visits to local housing models in the Capitol Hill neighborhood, led by Framework Cultural Placemaking, Futurewise and COurban Design Collective, offering a chance to look at and discuss best-practices and possibilities for applying lessons from Danish housing. A pamphlet with a self-guided tour in a geographically larger area can be found via the QR code.

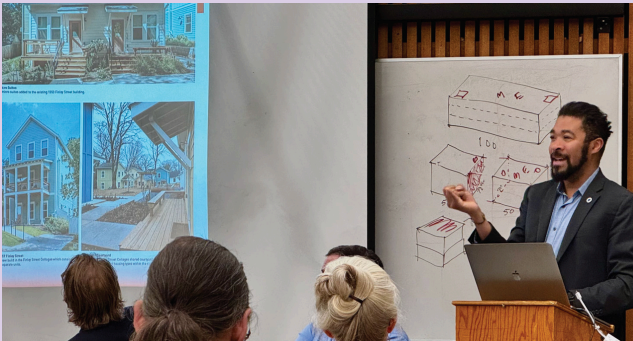
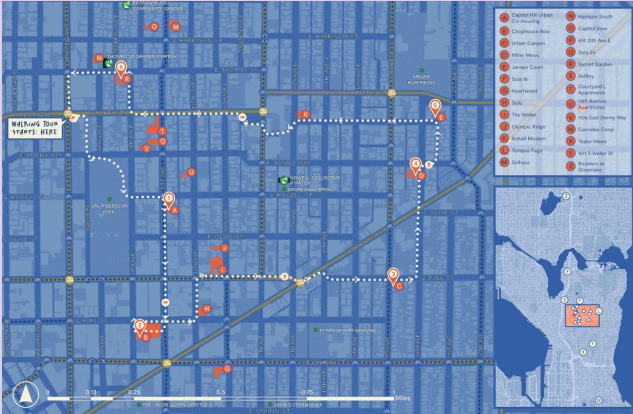


Image: Panelist, Rico Quirindongo



Walking Tour
[Download Brochure](#)
[and Map](#)



Walking Tour Brochure Example

"While many cities and counties in Washington State are doing their best to comply with regional growth and housing regulations, as well as new state legislation, land use and regulatory policy changes alone are not enough. Only by treating this work as a public-private partnership between jurisdictions, the design community, developers, investors, and property owners will we truly realize the much-needed housing stock and placemaking required to create the vibrant neighborhoods we envision. Working together, we can better serve communities to earn a living wage, have an affordable roof over their head, and support their families."

-Rico Quirindongo, AIA, City of Seattle Planning Director

How do we envision the future of housing in Portland and the Pacific Northwest? *Boliglaboratorium: A Danish Housing Lab* was displayed at PSU's School of Architecture, offering a basis to investigate housing models responsive to imminent urban challenges, diverse ways of living, and climate-conscious lifestyles. The associated panel discussions at PSU listed here focused on designs for new housing types, exploring the existing diversity of families and households, community-oriented projects, sustainable approaches for urban density, and policies promoting affordable and vibrant neighborhood developments.

PANEL 1: COHOUSING IN DENMARK: EXPLORATIONS OF SUSTAINABLE LIVING

In this panel, Danish Architect Michael Asgaard Andersen shared his studies on Cohousing models in Denmark. The interest in community, sharing, and climate-conscious living is more widespread than ever. Since the first cohousing communities were established in Denmark in the 1970s, this form of housing has become widespread and recognized in Denmark and internationally – not least for its ability to provide a framework for sustainable living.

The lecture discussed how cohousing is considered a way of living that fulfills our individual needs and contributes to addressing societal and global challenges. It took a historic trajectory leading up to the current housing experiments shown in the exhibition.

PANEL 2: COHOUSING DESIGN IN PORTLAND

This panel focused on co-housing projects designed by Portland architects. Panelists included Kim Olson from Mahlum, Dustin Furseth from Holst, and Keith Alnwick from Waechter Architecture to hear about the specific design processes and strategies for housing types centering on community and sharing space.

The presentations by each architect were followed by a discussion about the particular approaches to co-housing models addressing the complexities between individual needs, cultural desires, and societal challenges embedded in the design process. The panel discussed the co-housing projects' scale, density, and affordability as a framework for transformational ways to envision sustainable urban living.

Watch the recordings here

Panel 1:

[Cohousing in Denmark](#)



Panel 2:

[Cohousing in Portland](#)



PANEL 3: ROOTING
COMMUNITIES IN PORTLAND

In this panel, a different aspect of housing was discussed - how co-housing projects can be deeply grounded in building urban communities committed to justice, equity, and inclusion.

Panelists included Ernesto Fonseca from Hacienda CDC, Cleo Davis from Albina Vision Trust, and Mark Lakeman from Communitecture. These experts could provide perspectives about culturally specific approaches to housing that center on urban community building.

The project presentations opened the discussion about various methods and concepts for lasting urban integration of diverse communities with their dreams, desires, and needs. The urban projects address the cultural complexities of the restorative redevelopment of Albina, re-rooting the Black community, rooting the Latino community, and integrating permaculture as new territorial practices in urban co-housing strategies.

PORTLAND

PANEL 4: HIGHER DENSITY +
COHOUSING POLICY

This panel included a discussion of the framework conditions for co-housing projects. The panelists were city planner Bill Cunningham from BPS, Christina Bollo from the University of Oregon, Eli Spevak from Orange Splot, and Jonathan Bolch from Woofter Bolch Architecture. They shared variations on the concept of co-housing and possibilities of generating similar housing types that integrate sustainable community building aspects.

The presentations of both planning and research conceptions associated with co-housing and urban clusters led into a discussion about urban settings, policies, and incentives for integrating programmatic elements to housing types, supporting affordable neighborhood developments with community-oriented concepts, and integrating initiatives for transformational urban density in an appropriate scale for Portland.



Watch the
recordings here

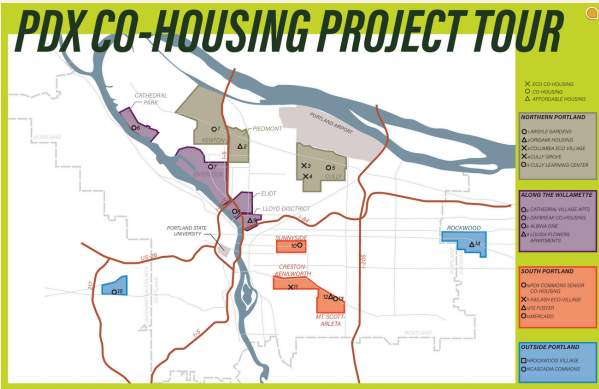
Panel 1:
[Rooting Communities
in Portland](#)



Panel 2:
[Higher Density and
Cohousing Policy](#)



Portland Self Guided Walking Tour



Enjoy this [self-guided
tour](#) to explore co-
housing around
Portland!



NORDIC NORTHWEST

April - May 2025

Nordic Northwest is a nonprofit organization focused on the five Nordic nations: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

The mission of Nordic Northwest is to:

- Highlight, honor, educate, communicate, promote and celebrate Nordic culture and traditions, ancestral, modern and contemporary.
- Provide value and serve members by developing and making available and accessible Nordic cultural and educational programming that is rich, authentic and forward looking.

Nordic Northwest partnered with WorldOregon on public programs related to this timely exhibition.

PANEL 2: COMMUNITY-BUILDING AND HOUSING: EQUITY, INNOVATION, & BEST-PRACTICES

This panel featured Azalea Renfield, Executive Director Williams & Russell Community Development Corporation (CDC). Under her leadership, this CDC was a recent recipient of \$2.5M investment from the 1803 Fund to support Black communities in Portland; Tyler Bump of ECONorthwest, who brings a unique perspective to advance equitable housing, economic development, community revitalization, and sustainable development goals; and Steve Messinetti, President and CEO of Habitat for Humanity Portland, who has helped to successfully mobilize community, volunteers, local businesses, faith organizations, and empower low income families and first-time homeowners to help build affordable, high quality, energy efficient homes.

PORTLAND

PANEL 1: HOUSING, ACCESS AND INCLUSION: A PACIFIC NORTHWEST LENS

The Honorable Mayor Lacey Beaty of Beaverton is a featured speaker here. She has been at the forefront of championing policies that focus on housing, sustainability, and accessibility, ensuring that Beaverton remains affordable and inclusive for all residents. Her forward-thinking on these issues garnered her a role on the Advisory Board of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, where she is deeply engaged on housing policy.

Mayor Beaty jumpstarted the conversation and was joined by architect Sergio Palleroni, director of the Center for Public Interest Design at PSU and co-founder of the Homelessness Research & Action Collaborative.

Watch the recordings



PANEL 1
[Housing,
Access and
Inclusion](#)



PANEL 2
[Community-
building and
Housing](#)



CHICAGO ARCHITECTURE BIENNIAL

CHICAGO

July-August 2025

Chicago Architecture Biennial stands as North America's largest international survey of contemporary architecture and design. CAB partnered with MAS Studio to create insightful programming as a local companion to the Housing Lab exhibition.

PANEL 1: TOWARDS A NEW STANDARD: NEW HOUSING STRATEGIES IN CHICAGO

The City of Chicago is developing comprehensive initiatives and long-term policies to foster sustainable housing models. During this program, architects, developers, and city officials shared initiatives they are leading to provide well-designed and affordable housing across the city.

- *Future Now* is an emerging design-develop model focused around a family of twelve new infill typologies for Chicago's typical lots, from "mini" to "super-long," which use emerging building technology and code opportunities to produce more abundant housing at lower costs.
- Duo Development's *Homekeep* initiative aims to design new models of ownership that preserve affordability, provide ethical investment opportunities, and protect residents' rights. A project to imagine a reality without landlords and tenants.

PANEL 2: MIA BAARUP TOFTE: LEARNINGS FROM A DANISH HOUSING LAB

NORD Architects' partner, Copenhagen-based Mia Baarup Tofte, shared learnings from her leadership in the curation of the Housing Lab project, as well as highlighting the firm's extensive experience with residential architecture as an important social component, focusing on the highest degree of sustainability.

Recordings available [here](#)



WASHINGTON, DC

DISTRICT ARCHITECTURE CENTER

October 2025

Located in DC's Penn Quarter neighborhood, the DAC storefront location presents DC architecture to the profession and the community. It is also the home of AIA|DC, the fifth largest chapter of the American Institute of Architecture, and the Washington Architectural Foundation. Exhibition information and program recordings are available [here](#)



MODEL HOUSING & RESILIENT NEIGHBORHOODS MASTERCLASS

The 2025 COurban Model Housing and Resilient Neighborhoods Masterclass Program

This program was an international forum for sharing knowledge and experiences about housing models for sustainable, human-scale neighborhoods in the Pacific Northwest and Denmark. The study tour examined a range of successful and compelling housing and neighborhood examples that incorporate medium-density housing, walk-ability and bike-ability, resilient stormwater solutions, and shared green spaces in the Pacific Northwest and Copenhagen. The program had a strong emphasis on understanding the tools, strategies, and key players that made them successful, and how these stories can add to our understanding about how such models might be implemented in the Pacific Northwest.



"We will become the world's most liveable city: a sustainable city with urban space inviting people to a unique and varied urban life."

—A Metropolis for People, City of Copenhagen

Who Participated?

Elected officials and housing sector leaders, community organizers, planning professionals, and creative economy experts from across Washington State.

Program Partners

The Masterclass program was funded by Scan Design Foundation. COurban, a design collaborative based in Copenhagen and the Pacific Northwest, led the program together with Seattle-based partners Framework Cultural Placemaking and Futurewise. Participants viewed the Boliglaboratorium exhibit, participated in panel discussions at UW and joined the Innovative Housing Walking Tour.

Program Takeaways

The cohort returned from the study tour with several key takeaways and actionable ideas on innovative development, and new typologies of middle housing and livable neighborhood models. They will host an event to share their community action plan and the program's local impact. Some of the key takeaways include how to incorporate afford-ability and people-centered design strategies, how to make the most of publicly owned property to meet society's needs/goals, how to engage in strong private and public partnerships with relevant stakeholders, the importance of partnerships, including levels of government, ports, and NGO's throughout the development process, the importance of incorporating housing with urban forestry and climate adaptation plans and how to use Land Value Capture for housing and neighborhood development in the US context.

Learn more about the COurban Masterclass Program: courban.co/masterclass

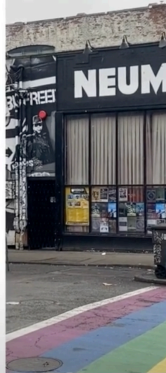
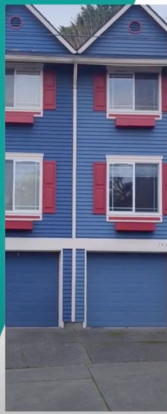
FROM IMPACT TO ACTION

MEETING IN THE MIDDLE:

Imagining
gentle density
in Washington



FRAMEWORK CULTURAL PLACEMAKING



www.weareframework.com

VIDEO

[*Meeting in the Middle: Imagining Gentle Density in Washington by Framework Cultural Placemaking.*](#)



PLACEMAKING PARTNERS

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Futurewise

<https://futurewise.org>

Nehemiah Initiative Seattle

<https://www.nehemiahinitiativeseattle.org>

Center for Public Interest Design

<http://www.centerforpublicinterestdesign.org>

Habitat for Humanity

<https://www.habitat.org>

ECONorthwest

<https://econw.com>

Co-housing Association

<https://cohousing.org>

Urban Land Institute

<https://uli.org>

Watershed Development

<https://watershedcommunity.org>

Housing Development Consortium

<https://www.housingconsortium.org>

Urban League/Capitol Hill EcoDistrict

<https://urbanleague.org/ecodistrict>

DESIGN FIRMS

Hybrid Architecture

<https://www.hybridarc.com>

Framework Cultural Placemaking

<https://www.weareframework.com>

COurban Design Collective

<https://courban.co>

Frolic Community

<https://www.frolic.community>

Schemata Workshop

<https://www.schemataworkshop.com>

SMR Architects

<https://smrarchitects.com>

DEVELOPERS

Conlin Columbia

<https://www.conlincolumbia.com/>

Williams & Russell Community Development Corporation

<https://www.williamsrussellcdc.org/>