

Costanoa Commons:
a new resource for adults with
developmental disabilities and their families

Parents who have a child with any type of developmental disability know how challenging life can be. As our children get older and naturally seek additional independence, we also come to a fuller understanding of the importance of supporting them in a situation that will outlive us. For parents, the prospect of finding a living situation that our adult children embrace, and that can offer them the level of support they need, is not easy. Many barriers exist to making affordable, life-long housing a reality for our children. Costanoa Commons is one approach to meeting this challenge.

Our vision is to create accessible and affordable housing for our adult children with developmental disabilities, and others, where they can live without fear of their home being sold, or their rent raised beyond their means, for as long as they like. Ten Bay Area families have come together to form Coastal Haven Families, LLC, and have purchased a 6.75 acre property in Santa Cruz, CA, for this purpose. CHF plans to build housing for approximately 18 adults with developmental disabilities. Residents will rent their units from the LLC, at an affordable rent, and enjoy a neighborhood with excellent access to downtown Santa Cruz only $\frac{3}{4}$ mile away.

CHF is also partnering with Costanoa Commons, Inc., a non-profit organization, to operate a neighboring organic farm. The farm will offer people with and without disabilities from the local area the opportunity to participate in all aspects of a community farm. Vocational training and employment, social gatherings, and other farm-based enterprises are planned. A barn/community center will provide needed farm infrastructure as well as an accessible event space. The farm plan includes specialty row crops, a small orchard, a wheelchair accessible aquaponics greenhouse for year-round production, and small farm animals. Costanoa Commons' emphasis is on building relationships and providing people with disabilities another opportunity to contribute value to their community, including through enhanced local food production and stewardship of increasingly rare urban agricultural land and riparian habitat.

Implementing universal design features, the built environment will enable access and visitability by those with physical or mobility impairments. Person-centered planning will work to ensure residents who are clients of the regional center will have the opportunity to access all available resources within the wider community.

At Costanoa Commons, we believe that meaningful volunteer, employment, and social opportunities for people with disabilities, just like for everyone else, are what matter. We believe relationships, more than anything else, will allow people with disabilities to thrive and to have fulfilling lives that are also safe and enjoyable. Central to this vision is a commitment to nurture the many various elements that contribute to making any place a good place to live. We intend to grow for life.