

**Conflict: Community Member as "Lightning Rod"**

# COMMUNITIES

Journal of Cooperative Living

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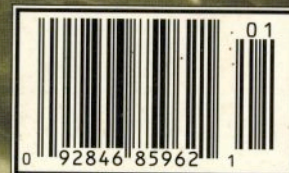
## ***Cohousing: Building Community One Neighborhood at a Time***

***Finding the People, Finding the Money***

***"Process" Issues vs. Development Issues?***

***Ten Principles of Construction Management***

***Building Green Community on a Budget***





# THE COMPLETELY UPDATED, ALL NEW COMMUNITIES DIRECTORY

## COMMUNITY DESCRIPTIONS

Over 600 North American and 100 international communities describe themselves—their structure, beliefs, mission, and visions of the future, and provide contact information.

## 33 NEW ARTICLES

Topics include: how to visit communities; why live in community and what it means to do so; financing and setting up the legal structures of communities; opportunities for older people in community; communities and the “cult” issue; consensus process; raising children in community; dealing with conflict; an overview of Christian community; and more.

## MAPS

Complete maps of North American communities. See at a glance what’s happening in your area.

## CHARTS

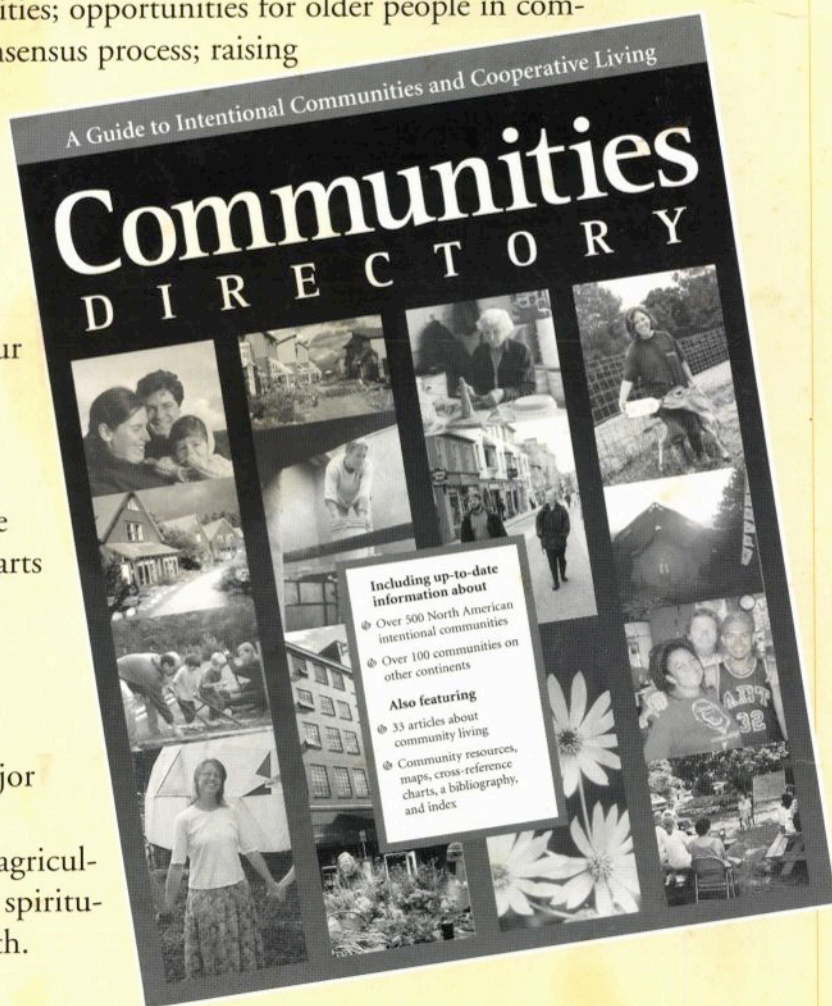
These charts allow you to quickly scan for the communities that fulfill your criteria. The charts will show you in a flash which communities match your needs and desires.

## RESOURCES

Descriptions and contact information for major organizations within specific interest areas. Categories include: community networking, agriculture, ecology, energy, economics, technology, spirituality, education, sexuality, and personal growth.

## NEW SECTION— RECOMMENDED READING LIST

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SEE ORDER FORM ON PAGE 86.





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a prog. of the Foundation for Feedback Learning  
(a nonprofit tax-exempt educational corporation)

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**GANAS IS THE NYC RESIDENTIAL FACILITY of a 20 year old intentional community** committed to applying on-the-spot feedback to the development of improved learning capability and self-determined behavior change. We want to create and govern our world together, by bringing empathy, emotion and reason into daily dialogue.

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If you enjoy working productively and want valuable work; if you'd like to share a full, exciting life full of love and open communication — in the city, in the country, or both; and if you would really like to try to learn how to do all that

**IF SUCH THINGS FEEL RIGHT FOR YOU ... YOU ARE INVITED TO VISIT AND PERHAPS TO LIVE AND WORK WITH US**



# COMMUNITIES

Journal of Cooperative Living

## FRONT COVER

Mayumi and Serena enjoy the sunflowers at Pioneer Valley Cohousing, Amherst, Massachusetts.

Photo: Janice Doyama.

## BACK COVER

Greyrock Commons Cohousing in Fort Collins, Colorado.

Photo: Willie Schreurs.

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# COMMUNITIES

Journal of Cooperative Living

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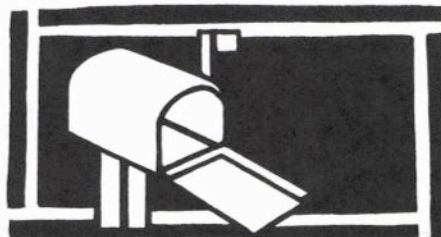
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# LETTERS



Send letters to *Communities* magazine, 290 McEntire Rd., Tryon, NC 28782. Your letter may be edited or shortened. Thank you!

## 21st Century Community

Dear *Communities*:

Kudos on publishing an important magazine on a topic the world needs to learn more about. My dream for the new century is that we will see more and more "community" growing and taking root around the globe in various incarnations, and that we all come to realize that the pursuit of happiness is not found by individuals seeking riches and power, but by individuals in community seeking relationships that are deep and honest and rich with love.

**Gregg Kleiner**  
Western Oregon

## More on "Conflict and Community" Issue

Dear *Communities*:

I am greatly encouraged by the changes at the Lost Valley Educational Center through their use and adaptation of Naka-Ima, as described in Larry Kaplowitz's article, "Living Naka-Ima at Lost Valley" in your Fall '99 Conflict and Community issue. That a community can learn a process in which the attachments underlying conflict can be identified and let go of in the normal course of a day is a major advance in the evolution of sustainable culture. Seems like the last and most important piece of the puzzle, the tool that completes the set.

**Mike Chilcote**  
Lincoln, Nebraska

Dear *Communities*:

I am teaching a class in conflict resolution, and have had experience living in community. Your last issue on conflict was really excellent and thought-provoking. I

thought the article about the community dealing with the child molestation was groundbreaking, and was written with clarity and balance.

**Lorena Cassady**  
San Francisco

## Tolerance, Intolerance in Community?

Dear *Communities*:

I understand that your magazine and *Communities Directory* will not list communities which interfere with members' freedom to leave the community.

The general public tends to lump us all into one pot as the bad guys, assuming that all communities are a bit suspect because of the close fellowship that accompanies community living. But even amongst those of us who have experimented with community living, there can be a false assumption that this nice neat line between those who have freedom and those who do not can be easily defined and recognised. With regard to your requirements for listing communities that there must be no interference with freedom to leave, for example, it helps for us to realise that the closer knit any society (or community) becomes, the more difficult it becomes for someone to act in opposition to the dominant paradigm. Even in a community which teaches extreme tolerance, there can be extreme intolerance of someone who does not measure up to the community's understanding of tolerance.

I think it is the close-knit quality of communities that most frightens those who have not been involved in community living (and even quite a few who have been involved). They fear for friends or loved ones who may not be able to muster the courage to pull out of a community after they have decided to join it. Of course we who live in community also feel concern at how many people lack the courage to pull out of mainstream lifestyles and experiment as well! But it would be helpful if people could consider the issues with an understanding that consensus on a universal code of ethics in such matters may not be all that easy to achieve.

**Dave McKay**  
Jesus Christians  
Sydney, Australia

Dear *Communities*:

To say I am upset by the article on Bo Gritz' violent right-wing terrorist community, "Patriot Survivalists on an Idaho



Mountain," in your Fall '98 issue on Political Activism would be putting it very, very mildly. Although you presented Almost Heaven as a relatively mild community which values the US Constitution and individual self-reliance, there is abundant information on Bo Gritz's beliefs on the Internet—do a search! I expect not to renew my subscription because of this article.

**Pete Gardiner**  
Larimer, Wyoming

### **Community as an Ideal**

Dear *Communities*:

Membership in a stable, cozy, caring community can greatly facilitate the deep relationships that are needed for us to be of optimal help to each other. Such membership has a distinct advantage over our living as disconnected individuals, even if such individuals are community-minded.

Intentional communities are such an important aspect of our common health, they will surely become increasingly prevalent in the 21st Century. But it is important for all of us, whether members of an intentional community or not, to be aware that the word "community" also refers to an ideal, which, like "democracy," is unlikely ever to be wholly achieved but is, absolutely, very much worth working for. The more nearly we approach the ideal, the healthier we all will be.

**Rex Barger**  
Hamilton, Ontario

### **New Many-to-Many**

Dear *Communities*:

I'd like to start a Many-to-Many on the subject of polyloving and community. In a Many-to-Many (M2M) people write letters on a subject and send them to one central person who xeroxes them, binds them together and sends them out to everyone on the list. The next time the M2M is "published," it contains all the responses to the first batch, and so on.

Polyloving—which to me, is the ideal of community living—is about loving, loving, and loving deeper, evolving an intimacy that goes from birth to death. It's not primarily about sex. It's about blending.

**Bruce Shearer**  
Namaste Greenfire  
373 Peacham Rd.  
Center Barnstead, NH 03225

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interested in community?  
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**FIC Community Day, 2244 Alder St. Eugene, OR 97405;  
541-343-5023; tree@ic.org**



### Communities Editorial Policy

*Communities* is a forum for exploring intentional communities, cooperative living, and ways our readers can bring a sense of community into their daily lives. Contributors include people who live or have lived in community, and anyone with insights relevant to cooperative living.

Through fact, fiction, and opinion we offer fresh ideas about how to live cooperatively, how to solve problems peacefully, and how individual lives can be enhanced by living purposefully with others. We seek contributions that profile community living and why people choose it, descriptions of what's difficult and what works well, news about existing and forming communities, or articles that illuminate community experiences—past and present—offering insights into mainstream cultural issues.

We do not intend to promote one kind of community over another, and take no official position on a community's economic structure, political agenda, spiritual beliefs, environmental issues, or decision-making style. As long as submitted articles are related to the theme of community living, we will consider them for publication. However, we do not publish articles that 1) advocate violent practices, or 2) advocate that a community interferes with its members' right to leave.

Our aim is to be as balanced in our reporting as possible, and whenever we print an article critical of a particular community, we invite that community to respond with its own perspective.

### Submissions Policy

To submit an article, please first request *Writer's Guidelines*: 290 McEntire Road, Tryon, NC 28782; 828-863-4425; [communities@ic.org](mailto:communities@ic.org).

### Advertising Policy

We accept paid advertising in *Communities* because our mission is to provide our readers with helpful and inspiring information—and because advertising revenues help pay the bills.

We hand pick our advertisers, selecting only those whose products and services we believe will be helpful to people interested in community living, cooperation, and sustainability. We hope you find this service useful, and we encourage your feedback.

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### What is an "Intentional Community"?

An "intentional community" is a group of people who have chosen to live or work together in pursuit of a common ideal or vision. Most, though not all, share land or housing. Intentional communities come in all shapes and sizes, and display amazing diversity in their common values, which may be social, economic, spiritual, political, and/or ecological. Some are rural; some urban. Some live all in a single residence; some in separate households. Some raise children; some don't. Some are secular, some are spiritually based, and others are both. For all their variety though, the communities featured in our magazine hold a common commitment to living cooperatively, to solving problems non-violently, and to sharing their experiences with others.

## PUBLISHER'S NOTE



# Cohousing Comes of Age

TEN YEARS AGO, WHEN THE FELLOWSHIP CREATED ITS FIRST edition *Communities Directory*, we included an article about an up-and-coming phenomenon that looked like a cross between intentional community and suburban tract development: cohousing. Well, it's been a wild decade for this Danish import.

Cohousing is now well established as an alternative, community-oriented housing option for those looking for the twin satisfactions of owning their own home and enjoying the company of neighbors with like values. In 1990 only a few cohousing communities had been built and most of the rest existed only on drawing boards or in the excited conversations of forming groups sprouting up around the country. Today there over 50 cohousing communities either built or under construction. It is no longer a question of whether cohousing will persist. Now we ask a more subtle question: Of what will cohousing consist?

## Mainstream homes ... in clustered housing

Cohousing is drawing unprecedented numbers of first-timers to community living, and has been doing a tremendous public service to the communities movement by supplying a visible link between the mainstream and the misplaced image of communitarians living on wild dandelion greens and homemade bread in unheated log cabins. Cohousers are more apt to be eating home-grown arugula and heated Log Cabin (if not pure maple syrup) on their whole-grain pancakes.

Many of these folks are coming from the middle class and up—folks with enough savings and income to bankroll houses with six-figure price tags. While the principles of cohousing could also be applied to lower income groups and be used to gain leverage on the challenge of affordable housing, that has not been the trend so far. Nonetheless, cohousing has been providing some interesting alternatives to suburban sprawl—the pernicious tendency of moneyed folks to build a large single-family house every 2 to 3 acres. By making a virtue out of clustered housing and banishing cars to the perimeter of living space, groups are pioneering designs with a small footprint and wide swaths of green space.

With its strong showing in the '90s, cohousing has amply demonstrated that you can market community to the mainstream. In fact, Jim Leach of Wonderland Hill Development (who has developed more cohousing projects than anyone else in North America), thinks popular university towns like Boulder and Fort Collins, Colorado—each with populations of 100,000—could probably support one cohousing project after another into the indefinite future. That is, as soon as one project is filled, you can reliably start another in the same town. Cohousing has proven beyond question that there is broad-based desire for community in the wider culture.



Unfortunately, the marketing of cohousing often comes with a soft focus on what is meant by "community." Part of this has been worry over negative associations with hippie crash pads, and part has been worry that too much clarity will define a boundary that some will be on the wrong side of. In the marketing game, you want to keep customers interested as long as possible, and it is tempting (especially given the pressure to sell vacant units and spread the financial risk as widely as possible) to get everyone to buy now and take the chance later that you can sort out the differences. When it comes time to pay the piper (defining "community") sometimes you can dance your way through it, and sometimes the music stops without everyone having a chair.

Today, there are North American cohousing groups that have been occupied for more than 10 years; with several others for more than five. What is the depth of commitment in these established groups, and how much impact is cohousing having on the landscape of American neighborhoods? Will cohousing projects anchor urban renewal? It is probably too early to tell. The nascent Cohousing Network is struggling to garner support from already-built cohousing communities, who are showing an understandable tendency to exhale after the rush of design and construction. Some groups—even ones who were eager for a helping hand when in their own infancy—blink when you ask them to support new projects coming up behind them. The vision of most cohousing groups—just as for other intentional communities—is simply to build a decent home for their members, not to transform the city, neighborhood by neighborhood. And there are individuals in whom the fire burns just as strong today as it did before their home was built. It remains to be seen what these "burning souls" will create in addition to homes.

### Banking on favorable perceptions

Finally, cohousing has made significant strides in gaining acceptance among traditional financial institutions as an attractive investment. Building community is good business and this is paying dividends not only for new cohousing starts, it's helping all kinds of intentional community with access to funding. With apologies to Garrison Keillor, another American institution that had a good decade, "Once your bank has tried 'em, you know you've satisfied 'em. They're a real hot item ... communities!"

*Laird Schaul*

### COMING IN FUTURE ISSUES

**"Song, Dance, and Celebration."** Summer 2000. How community members bond, connect, and generate community spirit or "community glue" with singing, dancing, celebrating, ritual, and other (sometimes surprising) activities. Favorite community rituals, celebrations, songs. Also highlighting strong, bonded non-residential communities formed by people who regularly sing, dance, drum, play, or do ritual together.

**"Let's Go! Learning Opportunities in Community."** Fall 2000. Learning about communities and community living through community educational and/or internship/apprenticeship programs. College-credit tours of sustainable communities. First-person accounts of program participants. How your community can sponsor an educational program. College and university programs, courses; community conferences, workshops, study groups; videotapes and other resources—where they are, what they offer. *Guest Editor, Daniel Greenberg, daniel@ic.org; 413-259-1199.*



## Art of Community Audiotapes

**Multigenerational Living in Communities: Meeting Everyone's Needs**  
*Caroline Estes*

**Finding Your Community: An Art or a Science?**  
*Geoph Kozeny*

**Manifesting Our Dreams: Visioning, Strategic Planning, & Fundraising**  
*Jeff Grossberg*

**Raising & Educating Children in Community**  
*Diana Christian, Elke Lerman, Martin Klailf, Judy Morris*

**Conflict: Fight, Flight, or Opportunity?**  
*Laird Sandhill*

**Consensus: Decisions That Bring People Together**  
*Caroline Estes*

**Six "Ingredients" for Forming Communities (That Help Reduce Conflict Down the Road)**  
*Diana Christian*

**Building a Business While Building Community**  
*Carol Carlson, Lois Arkin, Harvey Baker, Bill Becker, Judy Morris, Ira Wallace*

**Legal Options for Communities**  
*Allen Butcher, Aiy'm Fellman, Stephen Johnson, Tony Sirna*

**We Tried Consensus and Got Stuck. Now What?**  
*Caroline Estes & Laird Sandhill*

Each tape, \$8.95. S+H, \$2, 1-4; \$3, 5+. *Art of Community Audiotapes, Rt 1, Box 155, Rutledge, MO 63563; 660-883-5545; fic@ic.org.*



# COMMUNITY GRAPEVINE



The brand new 2000 edition of the **Communities Directory** is here! According to *Directory* co-editor *Elph Morgan*, more communities are listed than ever before: 728 communities in the new *Directory* as compared to 620 in the 1995 edition and 350 in the 1991 edition.

Of the 600 listed communities that

noted which year they were formed, 255 were in the 1990s. "In fact," he reports, "at least one community in the *Directory* was formed every year since 1960. And at least one in every decade back to the 1890s." Here's the decade breakdown:

1990s - 255 communities formed

1980s - 133

1970s - 164

1960s - 46

1950s - 9

1940s - 16

1930s - 18

1920s - 2

1910s - 1

1900s - 1

1890s - 1

Of the 420 listed communities that picked one of the *Directory's* categories to describe themselves, here's what they picked:

104 cooperative houses

71 ecovillages

69 cohousing communities

55 intentional neighborhoods

47 communes

40 land trust/coops

34 ashram/monastery/temples

Note that Christian communities, rural sustainable communities, or non-specific, "eclectic" spiritual communities are like "flavors" of these larger categories; for example, Christian cooperative houses, eclectic spiritual ecovillages, and so on. You'll find all these, and more, in the just-off-the-press 2000 *Communities Directory*.

You can order your copy for \$34 post-paid. Just call 800-462-8240, email [order@ic.org](mailto:order@ic.org), or sent a check to *Communities Directory*, 138 Twin Oaks Road, Louisa VA 23093.



## European Community Women and "Gentle Power"

"ISN'T IT GREAT TO SPEND TIME WITH OTHER COMMUNITY WOMEN?" This simple question, raised on a warm night last summer in **Lebensgarten** community in Germany among communitarians *Lepre Viola* (Damanhur, northern Italy), *Marti Mueller* (Auroville, India), and *Agnieska Komoch* (Lebensgarten), led to the idea for the first European Women's Community meeting. "Women, Communities and the Earth" took place October 21–25 at Damanhur.

Lepre Viola and her community believed it extremely important that the gathering occur before the new millennium, so she organized the meeting in only four weeks. Nearly 30 women attended, from **Findhorn** (Scotland), **Auroville** (India), **ZEGG** (Germany), **Tamera** (Portugal), **Lebensgarten** (Germany), **Yomea** (France), **GEN (Global Ecovillage Network)**, headquartered in Denmark), and some smaller communities. Damanhur itself was astonishing, nestled in the foothills of the Southern Alps with its 800 inhabitants, colorfully painted and mosaic-covered houses, underground Temple of Mankind (hand-excavated 30 meters into the mountain, and kept secret for 15 years), sacred forest, hundreds of spiral meditation walks, and its own currency.

The term "Gentle Power," from the book of the same name by Tamera community founder *Sabine Lichtenfels*, became a main discovery of the meeting. Gentle Power—woman-inspired power, the power to heal, to give birth, to protect life—has the chance to replace the old, often harsh power of the male-dominated society. And we women are in position to learn about Gentle Power, use it, and teach it. Just how can we do this was the main topic during these intensive three days.

How do we give birth to our children? What education can we provide? How do we live our spirituality? Which female cycles can we honor? How can we cooperate in the most efficient way among communities, learn from each other, work together in peace projects? We developed plans for a youth exchange, for "Gentle Pages" on our Web sites, and for one-year "how-to" courses for founders of new communities. *Hildur Jackson*, cofounder of the Global Ecovillage Network, described her work and showed ways how this already existing network could serve our aims. One evening was devoted to the issues of love and sexuality: I described our free and committed sexuality at ZEGG, and *Husky* and *Gungko* from Damanhur described the "Way of the Couple" (monogamous and esoteric marriage—for one year—at Damanhur), and the "Way of the Monks" (containing sexual energy within), respectively. The issue of sexuality generated a big discussion, and many intimate talks about our desire and needs.

Sharing our night's dreams, singing, and dancing were always part of the gathering, and we felt a deeper connection in spite of all the differences we have as individuals and communities. The vision is that we, the women, will connect the communities from the inside. And by doing so, remaining different, but not competing, all the communities together will build a diverse and rich mosaic: a global alternative for the not-always-constructive mainstream society. We decided that this was the first of a series of Gentle Power gatherings. The next will take place March 31–April 3, 2000 at ZEGG in Germany. For information please contact *Sarah Vollmer*, ZEGG, +49-33841-59522; [s.vollmer@zegg.dinoco.de](mailto:s.vollmer@zegg.dinoco.de). Ω



The first two-continent meeting of **Eco-village of the Americas (ENA)** gathered at **EarthArt Village** community near Crestone, Colorado in early October 1999 with 29 representatives from 10 South and North American nations. People from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Columbia, El Salvador, Mexico, Peru, the United States, and Uruguay met for eight days, "working and playing together until we interconnected like willows by the streambed," note participants *Jeff Clearwater* of Sirius in Massachusetts, *Albert Bates* of The Farm in Tennessee, and *Enrique Hildago* of Bolivia.

A fruitful discussion of group autonomy vs. coherency resulted in a new simplified ENA Council/regional structure. Initial representatives to ENA will be *Liora Adler* (roving), *Albert Bates* (US), *Silvia Balado* (Argentina), *Corinna Bloom* (US), *Giovanni Carlo* (Mexico), *Lee Davies* (Canada), *Linda Joseph* (US), *Claudio Maduane* (Columbia), and *Andre Soares* (Brazil). The central ENA office will move to Colorado with Linda Joseph as President.

"It was clear to us all that the South needs and the North and the North needs the South," note Jeff, Albert, and Enrique. "The South can be proud of being in the lead in creating ecovillages, by being less developed, and therefore naturally more ecological. One task we take from the meeting is to help people in the South see what development has done to the North, and assist in creating the recognition that the South has beautiful solutions to problems by retaining its harmonic interaction with nature."

ENA contacts: Canada, *jdavies@interhop.net*; Eastern US, *corinna@ic.org*; Western US, *linda@ecovillage.org*; Mexico/Mesoamerica, *sircoyote@aol.com*; northern South America, *fundarien@hotmail.com*; southern South America, *gaia@wamani.apc.org*; Brazil, *ecovilas@hotmail.com*.

*Stephen Gaskin*, founder of **The Farm** community in Tennessee, who's running for president on a platform advocating

universal health care, campaign finance reform, marijuana decriminalization, education, and curbing corporate control, is now on the ballot in New York State as a Green Party candidate.



On December 28–30 television network CNN broadcast a two-minute segment, and a shorter news segment on the 28th, about the Y2K preparations of **Sirius** community in Massachusetts. "We've been stressing the opportunity of Y2K to foster a more sustainable society and a greater sense of community," according to member *Jeff Grossberg*.

More communities in media: the *Car Talk* program on National Public Radio on December 11, 1999, featured a call from radio listener *Halle Bennett* at **Dancing Rabbit** community in Missouri regarding the biodiesel fuel community members make from used fryer oil. Halle specifically identified herself as being from an intentional community of 13 people that shares three cars and a tractor. (*Car*



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*Talk* host: "You're from a what?" Halle: "A 'commune!'" Program hosts were very enthusiastic, and provided helpful suggestions as to why one of their vehicles might be having problems with the biodiesel fuel while the others were running fine. It could be that this one listener phone call created more publicity for biodiesel, car co-ops, and intentional communities than years of other efforts—some estimate that *Car Talk* is heard by millions of listeners!



**Bellingham Cohousing** in Bellingham, Washington, is celebrating a \$125,000 grant awarded by the state of Washington to set up a revolving loan fund. To be administered by the Low-Income Housing Institute in Seattle, the money will help make five of the community's planned 33 houses affordable and to give down payment assistance to people buying them. "A inexperienced grant writer (me) wrote the grant!" notes Bellingham cohousing member *Kate Nichols*.



Members of **Acorn Community** are ecstatic over their new community business venture: raising heirloom seeds. The 19-member community near Charlottesville, Virginia, purchased Southern Exposure Seed Exchange (SESE) in November 1999. A member of the **Federation of Egalitarian Communities (FEC)**, they now receive and ship orders for seed in what used to be their upstairs living room.

"The purchase has led to a renewed sense of excitement on the farm," says *Helen*. This spring members planted out precious heirloom and open-pollinated varieties, and soon will harvest seed for SESE's seed bank. Since 1982, SESE has maintained the only stock in the world of certain plant varieties. Acorn expects to ship over 4,000 seed orders annually, including seeds for vegetables, flowers, herbs, garlic, onions, root crops, specialty grains, cover crops, and naturally colored cotton, as well as seed-saving supplies and

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reference books. "Running SESE supports our goal of living out FEC values," says *Cricket*. "We're supporting organic gardeners, small market farmers, and the preservation of genetic diversity." Catalogs are available at [www.southernexposure.com](http://www.southernexposure.com). For more information: *Acorn Community*, Box 460, Mineral, VA 23117; 540-894-9480; [gardens@southernexposure.com](mailto:gardens@southernexposure.com).



Brother *Johannes Christiansbrun* of **Mahantongo Spirit Garden** in rural Pennsylvania and cofounder of the **Queer in Community** network, reports that someone in their local area used their listing in the FIC's *Communities Directory* to suggest to county supervisors that the community should lose its nonprofit property tax exemption. The letter writer stated that the *Directory* listing said the gay men's community was "not a religion," although that's not what the listing actually says. Pitman Township supervisors and the community worked out a compromise: the county will continue the community's tax exemption on the parcel that has the community's congregation house, school, and cemetery, and the community has agreed to pay property taxes on the two parcels that are strictly farmland. For more info: [brojoh@yahoo.com](mailto:brojoh@yahoo.com).



Northwest folks, mark your calendars! **Fellowship for Intentional Community** will hold a Community Day on Saturday, June 3 at Lost Valley Educational Center in Dexter, Oregon (near Eugene). You can meet other community people; build skills in conflict resolution, consensus, business planning, ecological sustainability, and more; and have fun in a great community setting. You are also invited to their semi-annual organizational meeting June 1-3 and June 5 at Lost Valley. They welcome newcomers who want to see how consensus works in action or get more involved with FIC. *Tree Bressen*, 2244 Alder St., Eugene, OR 97405; 541-343-5023; [tree@ic.org](mailto:tree@ic.org).

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## Twelve Ways You Can Help Us Spread the Word

**T**HE FELLOWSHIP FOR INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY (FIC) is doing amazing and wonderful work these days, and we'd like to get word of our information and services out to a much wider audience. One of our greatest strengths is our network of people interested in and passionate about community—and if that describes you, will you commit three hours a month, or three hours every quarter, to do one or more of these outreach efforts?

**1. Distribute FIC's "Craving More Community?" brochures**, and our new Community Bookshelf catalogues, in coffeehouses, bookstores, natural food stores, libraries, co-ops, etc.

**2. Visit bookstores** and talk with the buyers, showing them

- the new *Communities Directory* flyer and a copy of the current edition (or the new Spring 2000 edition, once it's released), and
- a sample issue of *Communities* magazine.

**3. Organize a local Community Dialogue evening** (remember—we have a great info packet to make this a simple and enjoyable project).

**4. Tell your friends and acquaintances** about FIC's publications and projects, and encourage them to (a) buy a *Directory*, (b) subscribe to *Communities*

magazine, and (c) come to an event. Be their "buddy" in their exploration of community, and encourage them to join the FIC. *If you're not already an official member of the Fellowship, use the form on p. 86, or call our office. We rely on your support!*

**5. Visit intentional communities in your area**, telling them about FIC's products and services, and encouraging them to join FIC.

**6. Staff a table at events like Earth Day**, political rallies, and so on, and sell the *Directory*, *Communities* magazine, and books there. Pass out lots of FIC literature (our office will send you some if you request it) and have a great time meeting interesting people.

**7. Write articles about intentional community**, community-building skills, etc. and include them in your newsletters and submit them to your favorite publications. Be sure to mention the FIC, the *Directory*, the magazine, the web site, and FIC's contact info.

**8. Make media contacts** (with local radio and newspapers) and either help them do a story about intentional community or forward their contact info to the FIC office so we can mail them a press packet and call them to set up an interview. Always plug the *Directory*, the magazine, and the Web site.

### FELLOWSHIP NEWS



BY GEOPH KOZENY

*Geoph Kozeny has been active in the Fellowship for Intentional Community since 1988 and a board member since 1989.*



**9. Make a donation** to support our work. Think about who you know who would resonate with FIC's vision and its projects—and ask them to donate their skills and/or funds to support FIC projects (your asking is the best), or forward their contact info to our Development Committee.

**10. Adopt a library**, a student co-op, a community, a local cafe, a Unitarian church, or ... ? Buy them a copy of the Communities Directory or a subscription to Communities magazine. Get creative in thinking about places people interested in community might gather.

**11. Download our email broadcast announcement** from our Web site, [www.ic.org](http://www.ic.org), and forward it to everyone you can think of who likely shares your interest in finding out more about intentional community.

**12. Put a prominent link to [www.ic.org](http://www.ic.org) on your Web site**, or on the website of any organizations you are involved with.

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- For copies of the information packet to sponsor a Community Dialogue:

*FIC Dialogue Project, c/o Tree Bressen, 2244 Alder St., Eugene, OR 97405; 541-343-5023; tree@ic.org. Ω*

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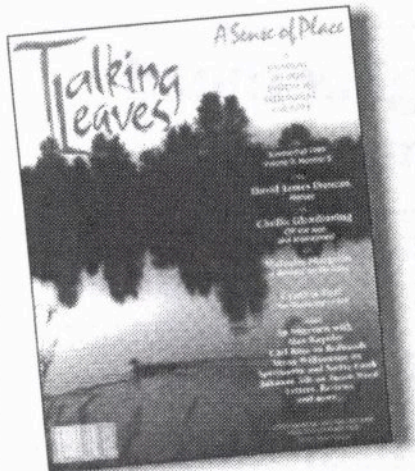
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# Decision Making in Cohousing Communities

**L**AST SUMMER A COHOUSING community about to break ground contacted me. They were facing many urgent decisions, not the least of which was what to put in their bylaws about their decision-making process. They wanted to know how other cohousing communities had handled these issues, so a research project was initiated. Here's what we found out.

Most cohousing communities make decisions by consensus. While many groups technically have a voting fallback procedure, most have used it never or only once, or at most twice, even after five or ten years. I did speak with a member of one cohousing community who said, "Oh, we hardly ever go to a vote," and when asked how often "hardly ever" was, replied, "We've only done it three or four times"—in a community that had only been living together for 18 months! When asked if they'd received training in decision making, the representative replied that they had lots of professionals living there who were already knowledgeable, so they didn't need any training.

"While this defensive response came from a newer community, it may be more typical of the older cohousing communities." According to Zev Paiss, executive

director of the Cohousing Network, at the time cohousing was first getting off the ground in North America, awareness of decision-making skills was not as widespread as it is now. Kevin Wolf, of N Street Cohousing in Davis, California, recalls conducting a training at a cohousing community which had been going for eight years without any agreements on ground rules for meetings, communication norms, agenda setting, how and when (and why) to block, or how much money its committees were authorized to spend. These days, start-up cohousing communities are far more likely to see the need for early training in consensus and facilitation skills, and occasional fine-tuning later too.

If the fallback "go-to-vote" option is rarely used, why would a community include it in their procedures? One prominent reason, particularly in the case of cohousing communities, is to satisfy bankers. While some lenders may not care, most are likely to look suspiciously on an organization that requires unanimous consent for every decision. It is not uncommon for a community to maintain two sets of agreements, one designed for external legal purposes and a second set that actually explains how the community operates.



*Tree Bressen, consensus facilitator and teacher, lives at Du-má Community in Eugene, Oregon. Former outreach manager at Acorn Community (1994-99) and delegate to the Federation of Egalitarian Communities, she is currently a board member of the FIC.*

*Questions for the process column? Tree Bressen, 2244 Alder St., Eugene, OR 97405; 541-343-5023; tree@ic.org.*



Another reason to include a voting fallback is to provide some comfort for people who have never experienced well-functioning consensus process and therefore haven't yet learned to trust it. And finally, such a fallback can be helpful just in case it is ever genuinely needed to serve the group. However, even when a voting fallback is invoked, no cohousing communities in our research were discovered that passed proposals based on "majority rule" voting, in which only 51% of the members would need to say Yes. Rather, a "super-majority" is needed to pass a proposal, typically 75%.

**Consensus only works if participants have a cooperative attitude.**

For both consensus and voting, community groups set boundaries to determine who is empowered as a full participant with decision-making rights. For example, limits on these rights might include a rule that a new person must attend a minimum number of meetings (such as three meetings, or the previous meeting on that topic); a specific time period of residency (e.g. three months or more); or be a particular minimum age (18 being the most obvious). Rules such as these help keep the decision-making process orderly and prevent those who lack basic information from affecting the group's immediate outcomes.

**When to Go to a Vote**

Here are some reasons the cohousing communities we studied go to a vote:

- After "x" number of meetings without resolution of an issue—ranging from one to six meetings.
- If two-thirds of the group want to vote.
- If the group consensually agrees to vote.

Sharingwood Cohousing in Snohomish, Washington, has adopted the following guidelines to distinguish when to vote and when to use consensus.

*Sharingwood uses voting*

- when the greater good of the community is not at stake, and when the issue has no individual stakeholders—people

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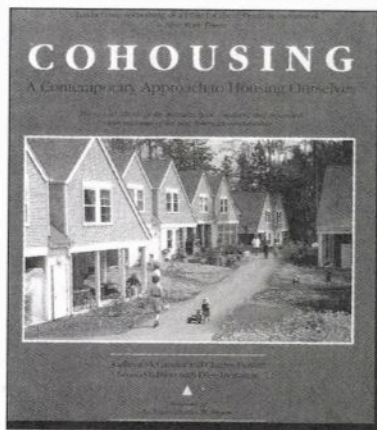
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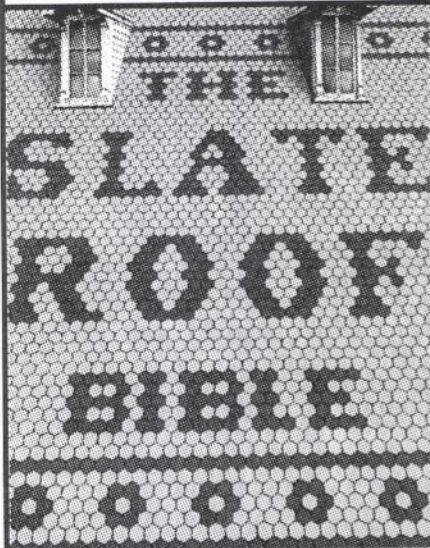
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whose property, family, finances or well-being would be directly affected by the outcome.

Assuming the above two conditions have been met, Sharingwood votes

- when there is a time deadline more important than resolving everyone's preferences.

- for design and detail issues about which members have conflicting but equally valid opinions.

*Sharingwood uses consensus*

- when the issue involves or affects the whole group or the future of the community;

- when one or more individuals have a personal stake in the outcome;

- when the issue relates to ideals or principles.

Some communities also use a form of voting such as ranking priorities (listing items in order of importance) in order to allocate resources, say for the annual budget. In this case voting is usually seen a tool within the regular meeting process, rather than a departure from consensus.

If a vote is needed, arising from an unresolved issue in a regular consensus meeting, the vote is usually taken at the following meeting, with adequate notice to all members.

## Consensus Systems

Many consensus trainers suggest that having a common vision and purpose is a requirement for any group that wants to use consensus as their decision-making method. In fact, in C.T. Butler's "Formal Consensus" process, a person may only register a block to consensus if the rest of

the group agrees that the person blocking is doing so only because to pass the proposal would violate a genuine core principle held by the group.

However the difficulty in applying the Formal Consensus model to communities, according to Rob Sandelin of Sharingwood, is that communities often don't have a clear mission or purpose. In contrast to a political group whose aim may be very specific, most intentional communities are created to serve a variety of needs of their members.

However, people who use consensus know that it only works if the individual participants have a cooperative attitude, and at times this means a willingness to lay aside one's own personal preferences in order to allow the group to move forward. If someone blocks a proposal it must be based on the overarching, long-term interests of the group, not that person's own

**No decision-making procedure can replace person-to-person relationships.**

## CONSENSUS TERMS

**Consensual Agreement:** Everyone in the group can support, or at least live with, the proposal. People don't "vote." Rather, after adequate discussion, with the proposal modified as needed, there is a general sense of support for the essence of the decision.

**Blocking:** A group member, after careful reflection, is convinced that the proposal would greatly harm the whole group's interests or contravene a core principle or purpose held by the community. It then becomes that person's responsibility to stand in the way of the group moving forward on that proposal. When properly understood, blocking is used extremely rarely.

**Standing Aside:** A group member, for reasons of personal conscience or strongly held opinion, does not support the proposal. However, the person is willing to let the group move forward, and is still bound by the agreement.

**Facilitator:** Consensus decision-making groups benefit by having a trained facilitator. The facilitator helps discussion stay on track, keeps attention on the process, and allows participants to focus on the decision at hand. Facilitators generally avoid participating in the content of the discussion while facilitating, in order to avoid the appearance or reality of bias.

—T.B.



priorities. Therefore, establishing the rare use of blocking as firm ethic during early consensus training and practice is an essential condition for group success.

Some groups find ways to formalize such expectations. For instance, N Street Cohousing insists that after anyone blocks a proposal he or she must attend bi-weekly meetings for three months with a rotating committee including people who support the proposal, in an effort to try to work out a common solution. With regard to blocking, it appears that most groups rely on a combination of training and goodwill, with some amount of policy or documentation to back that up.

Decentralization is also an important component of keeping consensus effective without wearing everyone out. For example, when Sharingwood needed to make a series of fast decisions about their common building, they set up an "Emergency Bullshit Committee" that had authority to make decisions on construction details. Rob Sandelin recommends using a Decision Board, where committees and managers can post notices, such as: "The grounds committee will meet at Judy's house on Thursday at 3 p.m. to decide about landscaping around the common house." Anyone interested in common house landscaping would be expected to show up. Or the notice might say: "No pets in the common house' will become an official decision unless someone indicates within the next two weeks a need for more process." Sharingwood has a list of criteria for what kinds of items can go on the Decision Board.

During general meetings, many cohousing communities use the "Colors of Clarification" process—colored cards to give the facilitator information before speaking. At Winslow Cohousing on Bainbridge Island, Washington, for example, participants hold up yellow cards if they have questions; green for answers; blue for opinions, ideas, or statements; orange for something that's more emotional or personal; and red for "Stop the process, we are off track."

Experienced practitioners of consensus have a variety of approaches available. They may take a straw poll using hand gauging (e.g., "Hold your hand up high if you enthusiastically support this proposal, and lower if less enthusiastic, with no hand up if you don't support it at all"). They

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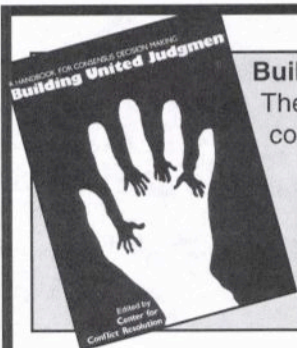
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may ask two parties in conflict to try switching roles and arguing each other's points or go through a list of concerns one by one to see how they can be resolved. Training four or five facilitators to work as a rotating team for a year or two can provide a solid base for community decision making, as well as occasionally hiring outside facilitators as a back-up if needed, especially for challenging topics.

We found that groups relying on a published source for consensus procedures referred either to Butler and Rothstein's little book, *Formal Consensus* (available for free on the Web at [www.ic.org/pnp/ocac/](http://www.ic.org/pnp/ocac/)), or *Building United Judgment*, by the Center for Conflict Resolution, available from the Fellowship for Intentional Community (800-995-8342; [fic@ic.org](mailto:fic@ic.org)). However, several cohousing communities have written their own meeting or process manuals to meet their specific needs. The very process of writing such a document forces a group to achieve greater clarity, as well as being a valuable resource for orienting newcomers.

Finally, when starting a new community—cohousing or otherwise—it's easy to get caught up in the needs to simultaneously work with architects or designers; research ecological design features; approve bylaws; and decide how to handle perennial issues such as parenting, pets, money, food, and guests, not to mention each individual member's need to continue making a living. In the midst of the impossibility of doing all this at once, it's easy to overlook building community together. No official decision-making or conflict resolution procedure can replace the person-to-person relationships that are the basis of community living. So amidst all the urgency, remember to take time to eat together, play together, and simply be together! Ω



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## 'Don't Go Back to Sleep'

**S**O WROTE THE PERSIAN POET Rumi in his poem of the same name. "You must ask for what you really want. Don't go back to sleep."

This advice applies to my own cohousing experience and to where I see cohousing going in some quarters today. I lived in a cohousing community for two years, and wrote my masters thesis in conflict resolution about that community. For the past two years I've participated in the formation of another cohousing community.

What happened at the first community (where I was chairman of the development committee) and what is happening in the current forming community, is that people start with a more or less clear vision of how they see community and then get sidetracked, or rather swamped, by the trajectory of financial priorities. People seem to long for the connection of community, for being held in the support of relationships with neighbors, for the vision of family dinners at the common house. But somehow these visions get lost around the excitement of planning for the houses and under the pressures of meeting construction loan payments.

Community living can be a rich experience and, like tending a garden, it needs to be fertilized by the disciplines of building relationships through visioning, conflict resolution, and decision making. It's

not all about the bricks, mortar and money. In my judgment, a lot of community is about process.

In the cohousing community where I lived, when I finished my thesis a neighbor told me that he didn't want to read it and he didn't want anyone else to read it either. In the community where I currently

sometimes participate, the group made decisions to cut back on social times together in favor of time to do business, to limit access for the disabled, to require attendance at business meetings, and to limit participation for those who might be financially disadvantaged. Sometimes it feels like my cohousing community is a virtual gated community

in the making—bounded not by fences but by strict adherence to politically correct norms which uphold egalitarian values in word, yet practice exclusion and hierarchy in deed.

When Rumi said, "Don't go back to sleep," I think he meant for us to keep those visions which nurture us alive. I think Rumi opposed denial. I often go back to that poem and I feel sad when the material trajectory takes over. I was thinking of proposing to my current cohousing community that we not acquire land but just meet as supportive friends. I don't think, however, that that is the answer. I think the answer has to do with awareness. Ω



*Jon Kent, who has a Masters Degree in Conflict Resolution, lives in Hadley, Massachusetts.*



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JACOB STEVENS

## COMMUNITY MEMBER AS 'LIGHTNING ROD'

BY HARVEY BAKER

**O**VER MY YEARS AT DUNMIRE HOLLOW, I have several times heard people who were leaving or had recently left say, "I could never live in Dunmire Hollow again as long as So-and-So lives here." The person named always seemed the most difficult to live with—often angry, insensitive, abrasive, or some combination of these. It seemed curious to me that, after the first such person left our community, these remarks were almost immediately directed at a different community member.

Similarly, I was always the slowest in our community, sometimes generating impatience from others. Then Bill began living with us, giving new meaning to the word "slow." Suddenly I was only "kinda slow" instead of "real slow." The group's impatience with slowness began to be directed at Bill.

From these and other experiences in small groups, I have made the following observations:

1) Given any small group and any personality characteristic, there is always one person in the group who has the characteristic the most. (OK, there might occasionally be a tie.) This is not a very profound observation. At any given time, someone is always the shortest, tallest, thinnest, smartest, loudest, or whatever.

2) When our group attaches negative labels to the characteristic (e.g., "anger," "insensitivity," "laziness," "materialism," even certain leadership



qualities), the person at the extreme attracts all the group's negative energy about that attribute. We can call this person the "lightning rod": the person who sticks up the most gets the heat.

3) We exaggerate the degree of difference between the person with the highest amount of any characteristic and the rest of the group, which masks the presence of that characteristic in everyone else. The extreme person then defines/embodies the concept for the group. For example, we often react most strongly to attributes (such as coveting material possessions) in others that we dislike in ourselves. By rejecting another who is identified with that attribute and pushing that person farther from us, we lessen our own internal tensions. We reassure ourselves that we're not really materialistic, he's being materialistic (with a point of the finger). There is also the reassurance that everybody else in the group agrees with us; that must make it true. Our focused attention can create a downward feedback spiral that actually increases and hardens the person's negative behavior. If the person is already judged, convicted, and punished for being worse than they really are, the person might as well indulge in as much of the behavior as they want. This further distances the extreme person from the rest of us.

4) Only when the "angriest" or "laziest" person leaves does that negative quality seem to magically spring up in another person, though it was there unnoticed all along. Our focused attention can make the previously unnoticed characteristic now seem extreme, and can again create a feedback spiral that worsens the person's negative behavior.

5) The more closed and isolated a group is from the rest of the world, the less people outside the group count compared to people inside it. The more we focus only on our small group, the more personal differences

are magnified within it. The more the internal differences are magnified, the more extreme the lightning rod effect can be. On the other hand, the more we see our group as a part of the whole human race, the less the lightning rod person is perceived as extreme, diminishing our negative energy toward him or her. When we work within this larger global perspective, we realize that in our group, the extremes are actually very close together. On a theoretical scale from 1 to 10, we might encompass an actual range from 3.2 to 4.8, though we would make it feel like a range from 1 to 10. If the "4.8" person leaves the group, we might have a new range from 3.2 to 4.5. Yet our

tendency is to magnify that new range so it still feels like a range from 1 to 10. And, as noted above, virtually all the expansion occurs between the most extreme person and the next most extreme.

Our societal model is to demonize, isolate, and exclude such "extreme" people from our lives and our groups. It's so easy to think, "Our group would be so perfect if only So-and-So were gone!" Unfortunately, we now see that once we start down this seemingly easy road, there is no end to it until we are a group of one person. It is clear that the same mechanism, the same distortions, the same tendency to isolate and exclude can operate in couples just as it does in larger groups. (And even for a group of one, the struggle can go on internally as we try to wall off or exclude parts of ourselves we don't like! "I'd be perfect if only I ...") The other option is to take on the often difficult, potentially

unpleasant (and often surprisingly rewarding) task of dealing with each other and ourselves. This task is made even more daunting by the momentum that groups of people can build up by mutual reinforcement. It's hard enough to change our personal ways of operating; changing how our groups operate can be downright intimidating. Besides having to pit our individual energy against the considerable energy/momentum of the rest of the group, we risk being labeled extreme in our idealism. In fact, being the extreme person for an officially good characteristic can leave us a target for cynicism, envy, and marginalization.

### ***There is always one person in the group who has any given characteristic the most.***

Fortunately, if we need motivation to improve our group behavior, there are a number of possible benefits we might receive by intentionally changing how we treat such "extreme" lightning rod persons. Instead of isolating and excluding, we can recognize the same tendencies in ourselves, build bridges to the people at the edges, and believe they have contributions to make to the group. Consider the possible benefits:

First, as our groups operate with more integrity, avoiding scapegoating, gossip, and demonizing, we learn to trust them more, and put ourselves more whole-heartedly into them and their operation. As we operate our groups in ways that honor and uphold both the group and all its members, we can acquire both a stronger sense of self and a better feeling of ourselves as part of an effective, honest, caring group.

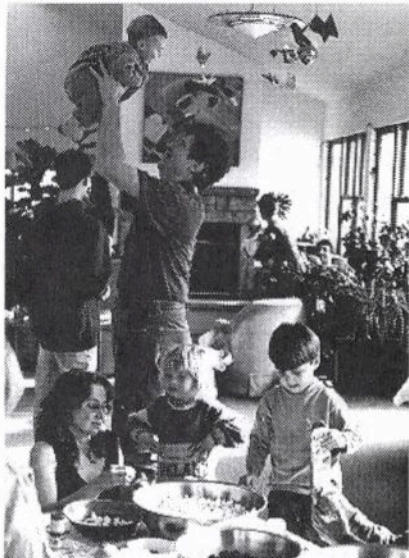
Second, we may get opportunities to practice better interpersonal skills,



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conflict resolution, tolerance, and so on, in minor situations, preparing ourselves to use (and trust) these developed skills in more difficult times. At one point many years ago, our community doubled in size very quickly. When the newcomers began to squabble among themselves, we discovered that they had little commitment to the idea of conflict resolution, had not learned conflict resolution skills, and had not developed trust for the process. They completely blamed the other

person/people in the conflict, accepting no responsibility for their part in the struggle. Those of us caught in the crossfire decided to bring in an outside expert to increase the trust, commitment, and skills. We were frustrated but not surprised that those who most needed the help refused to participate. We continued to put slow steady pressure on them to grow in this area; most of them chose instead to leave the community. Calling in an outside expert in a crisis has a low probability of success. Developing



## AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION ...

In spite of the "lightning rod" phenomenon, there are times when, for good reasons, a group may wish to ask an existing member to leave, or may identify characteristics in potential new members that might indicate a high risk of their generating later conflict. The sense of community and connection that a group of people can cocreate is both valuable and vulnerable. It is the responsibility of each member who values the community to nourish and protect it. There may be a conflict between nourishing and protecting: nourishing can mean bringing in new fertilizer (new members with new perspectives, enthusiasms, and energy); protecting can involve not accepting risky new people. Each community must find its own balance point between risk and safety. This balance point may change over time, as the needs and strengths of the group vary. At any given time, a group's physical and interpersonal resources are limited; choosing carefully which people (and how many) to try to integrate can make the most efficient use of these limited resources.

In my experience, "red flags" for high risk occur in potential new members who

- have not gotten their financial trip together before they come,
- want to get away from it all,
- expect that living in community will be easy,
- must have everything they want in terms of physical comfort, work assignments, and so forth soon after joining the community,
- have few or no ongoing connections to family, friends, or people from their previous living and working arrangements,
- appear to be "hiding from themselves,"
- lie or steal,
- blame everybody/everything else for their problems and/or failures,
- are looking for authority figures to rebel against.

—H.B.



deep experience in dealing with smaller personal and interpersonal problems can carry us through the bigger challenges that might otherwise tear us apart.

Third, the "extreme" person may be doing valuable work for us in identifying problems and calling for our attention and resources to resolve them. Many times we would rather ignore problems, hoping that they will go away. The person who always is first to get uncomfortable and start making noises can be seen as negative

***The person attracts all the group's negative energy about that attribute.***

or a troublemaker. In the early days of our community, my woodshop partner David was the one person who always brought up the problems, especially the interpersonal ones. Being impatient and fairly loud, he would confront the problem person(s) before the rest of us had really gotten on board, and tended to be more brashly confrontational than the rest of us were comfortable with. As a result, he started being seen as more of a problem, and less of a positive force in the group. Once he realized what was happening to him through this process, he asked the rest of us to begin to take more of the load that he had been carrying. We accepted that we had more responsibility for identifying and correcting problems than we had been fulfilling. Our request to him in return was that he try his best to back off and let us learn to do the work at our own pace and with our own style. This is not easy work for most of us to do; it's

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a lot more comfortable to work in our garden and keep our head down. The turning point for me came when I realized the pain my inaction was causing my friend David. If others of us can share the work of identifying and confronting problems, we spread out a load that can burden and isolate an individual.

Fourth, the person may be keeping group discourse open to a range of options that would be closed to discussion if their perspective were lacking. What could be interpreted as

smoothly moving to a happy consensus to buy a dump truck, he seemed frustrating and irritating with his repeated "A dump truck isn't much good without a way to load it" observation. We bought the old dump truck without considering his comment, sank a bunch of money into it, and then discovered that he was right. We sold the dump truck for the price of its new tires.

Fifth, we might discover someday that we are in the uncomfortable position of being the extreme person. Will

**Only when the "angriest" or  
"laziest" person leaves does that  
negative quality seem to magically  
spring up in another person.**



laziness might provide clues that the rest of us are working too hard and inefficiently, facing imminent burnout. What might seem to be bourgeois materialism in an ascetic community could be a call for a slightly wider range of lifestyle options that would increase the community's long term stability. In our community, there is Andy, who is blessed/cursed with always being able to see both sides of every situation. It often feels to others that he is just playing devil's advocate to stir things up. When the rest of the group was

our group value us and build bridges to us, or will it isolate and exclude us? I know which feels better; I guess it's time to get to work building a more understanding and compassionate group culture. Ω

*Harvey Baker, a founding member of 25-year old Dunmire Hollow community in Tennessee, has been active in the Fellowship for Intentional Community since 1986 and a board member since 1988. He is past president of the Communal Studies Association, in which he's been active since 1986.*





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# COHOUSING

## *Building Community One Neighborhood at a Time*



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WILLIE SCHREURS

### FROM THE GUEST EDITOR • MICHAEL MCINTYRE

**“W**E’RE BUILDING THE COMMUNITY first, the real estate is secondary,” explained my fellow Sunward Cohousing member Mickey. I was in the early stages of exploring membership with this first pioneering cohousing community in Michigan. Mickey’s comment gave me confidence that I was in the right place and that this diverse, intergenerational group, faced with an epic construction project, understood the real work of building community.

My own path into cohousing began in the Ann Arbor student co-ops during college. The practice of cooperative living and key connections there led me to my first Twin Oaks Communities Conference where I was swept away with the rush of energy,

ideals, dreams, actions, and fun of a widely diverse gathering of communitarians. I was hooked. The great life of my student co-op days had many possible futures. I first heard of cohousing at Geoph Kozeny’s famous Intentional Community slide show at the NASCO Institute. He was enthusiastically explaining the shared meal system used at a new community called Muir Commons.

Sunward popped into my awareness in the summer of ’96 as the most ambitious forming community project in southeastern Michigan and I was on board for the community-building roller-coaster ride some five months later. I hadn’t imagined home ownership and diving into a cohousing group just a year before but there I was beginning, as Zev Paiss has described cohousing, “the longest, most expensive personal-growth course you’ll ever take.” It was the



people that drew me in and held me in the face of daunting financial figures and endless work and decisions. It's been the dominant feature of my life for three years now.

The great appeal of working to create cooperative community is that it's the most effective means I've found for raising awareness and making long-term grassroots progress on issues of social, environmental, and economic sustainability. Solutions to the widespread ills of our world in these realms can begin and rise in our small, connected, interdependent communities simultaneously as we create a great life for ourselves.

Cohousing has such exciting potential because it offers greater accessibility to the benefits of intentional community living to a broad population, notably the home-buying middle class. This includes folks who may not find appeal in joining an urban co-op house, spiritual ashram, rural income-sharing aspiring ecovillage, or any number of other existing forms of community, but for whom the benefits of living in community are just as real, for themselves, their children, and for our world's future. Even more exciting is that the model is really working and is quite possibly the fastest-growing form of community today, with over 40 communities completed in North America in the last dozen years along with hundreds in Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and elsewhere. Future growth potential is huge, as is the positive modeling for mainstream urban planning and alternatives to sprawl. Sustainability scholar and activist Jim Crowfoot observes that cohousing is a template that can be readily replicated and adapted for community building in our society.

Credit for leading the drive that has brought the cohousing model of community into the national limelight goes to pioneering architects, Katie McCamant and Chuck Durrett, who coined the term in

1984. Their 1988 book, *CoHousing, A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves* (Ten Speed Press, 1988) effectively and beautifully presented the model and defined this new term. This catalyzed the boom in cohousing community formation across North America, with an accessible image and method to fulfill a largely unmet need in our society. Their book has

sold some 50,000 copies to date. As with the introduction of this housing form in Denmark in the early '70s, many individuals resonated with the new term and definition of cohousing as something they'd been seeking much of their lives. Likewise, when their book came to these shores, some existing and forming communities, such as Sharingwood in Washington state and N Street in California, embraced the cohousing concept as a crystallization of what

## ***Cohousing appears to be the fastest growing form of intentional community today.***

they were already about.

So just what is the cohousing model? In addition to a clear common denominator of people joining together intent on cooperation as a means of improving their lives, Katie and Chuck offer six defining characteristics of a cohousing community:

**1. Participatory Process.** Members organize and participate in the planning and design process for the housing development, and are responsible as a group for all the final decisions, either with or without a separate developer.

**2. Intentional Neighborhood Design.** The physical design encourages a strong sense of community and increases the possibilities for spontaneous social contact.

**3. Private Homes Supplemented by Extensive Common Facilities.** Each household has a complete private residence but has access to common areas and facilities which are integrally designed for daily use to supplement private living areas, including a large common house.



**4. Complete Resident Management.** Residents manage the development, making decisions of common concern at community meetings using inclusive, participatory decision making processes.

**5. Nonhierarchical Structure.** While there are leadership roles, the responsibility for the decisions is shared by the community's adults and no one person dominates the decisions or the community process.

**6. Separate Income Sources.** Households are responsible for their own income and finances and do not rely on the community for their primary income.

DOING COHOUSING ISN'T EASY! FOR MANY IT MAY REPRESENT the first experience of living in community or of consensus decision making. I encourage those considering living in cohousing to drink deep of the accumulated wisdom of the communities movement. I've seen cohousers creatively reinventing the wheel over and over when viable models were available. In this issue we hope to paint a picture of cohousing, outline its various approaches to development, offer honest opinions, share heartfelt experiences, explore its struggles and potential, and give practical advice to forming and established communities alike. Many people generously contributed their time and talents in many ways to weave this issue and pass on their wisdom and experience. We hope these articles will inspire discussion, feedback, and further learning for community seekers, long time cohousers, and other interested folk.

Co-Guest Editor *Rob Sandelin* chronicles the growing phenomenon of cohousing in North America. *Roberta Wilson* of Winslow Cohousing offers the perspective of 10 years in cohousing, while *Virginia Lore* of Duwamish Cohousing and *Steve Walmsley* of Cranberry Commons share glimpses of the ongoing thrill and struggle to create new communities.

Consensus facilitator and mediator *Laird Schaub* challenges us to more carefully examine the meanings and means of community for both forming and established groups, while *Elana Kann* explores the dual worlds of development company project manager and community member.

*Zev Paiss* of The Cohousing Network shares well-seasoned tips for working the traditional financing systems and attracting large numbers of people to a cohousing project.

*Chuck Durrett* and *Danny Milman* of The Cohousing Company bring us an updated look at the evolution of cohousing from Denmark to North America.

*Liz Walker* of EcoVillage at Ithaca shows how cohousing can be a powerful vehicle for sustainability; *Katie McCamant* and *Danny Milman* of The Cohousing Company show how urban cohousing can be an innovative model for urban renewal.

We weren't able to include many important cohousing topics such as levels of membership, renters, home sharing, compatibility of cohousing with introverted personalities, the pros and cons of self-developed as compared to developer-driven projects, racial diversity, issues and barriers around class and money, and elderly folks and aging in cohousing. We encourage other writers to explore these further in future issues of *Communities* and other forums. A wealth of related topics have also been featured in the back issues of *Communities* as well as the newly released *Communities Directory*.

Read on and enjoy! Ω



*Michael McIntyre, who with Rob Sandelin is Co-Guest Editor of this issue, has been active in community networking and promoting cooperative living with the Fellowship for Intentional Community since 1994. He has deep interests in consensus facilitation, group process, and community systems and structures. Michael lives in a cooperative household of four adults within the 40-home Sunward cohousing community in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Contact: michael@ic.org; www.sunward.org.*





MARY KRAUS

Some say cohousing brings community living to the middle class. Here, "French chefs" prepare one of Pioneer Valley's first community dinners.

# 'CLEARLY SOMETHING IS HAPPENING HERE'

BY ROB SANDELIN

**T**HE FLIERS AT THE CO-OP, THE BOOKSTORE, and at the deli had brought a group of people together at the library meeting room to learn about and possibly help create a cohousing neighborhood. It was a mixed crowd: two single moms, a computer programmer and his family, a lawyer and his partner, two retired couples, a Unitarian minister, and a half dozen of her congregation.

At this first meeting, they learned that cohousing is a cooperative neighborhood designed by the future residents. The homes are privately owned and a central community building—the common house—provides community space for activities such as meals, childcare, meetings, parties, children's play, workshop projects, and whatever other shared activities the residents want to organize. The slide show depicted people gathered together at community meals, children of different ages playing, adults in small groups sitting in common areas chatting. The slides showed wonderful common houses with well-designed kitchens, dining areas, children's play areas, bulletin boards for neighborhood notices. It was inspiring to realize that people working together had created such places. After the meeting many of the people were so excited that conversations continued spontaneously in the parking lot.



From this meeting would come many others, stretching over four years. Those that became involved would embark on a journey of community building and real estate development that none of them could have foreseen. They traveled the mazes of land-use regulation, learned the skills of collaboration, hired engineering, design, and construction professionals, surmounted legal mountains, scaled the sharp rocks of financing. They learned the skills of group decision making, effective communication, cooperative problem solving, and conflict resolution. Some of the travelers lost faith along the way and were replaced by other pioneers, eager and enthusiastic to embrace a more cooperative lifestyle.

Almost four years to the day of that first meeting, a group of 50 people stood in a large circle holding candles, to welcome, celebrate, and honor their achievement: a brand-new 30-unit cohousing neighborhood with a large central common house, garden, and playground. Only two of the original founding members from that first meeting at the library were still involved. These were the “burning souls” who at times had felt as if they carried this whole project on their backs. They refused to give up in the face of daunting hurdles such as unpleasant rezoning hearings, uncooperative bankers, and skeptical city planners. They had summoned strengths and resilience they hadn’t known they had to carry into reality the vision they saw at the first meeting at the library.

While these folks had used the Total Build Out model, where all the homes are newly built at the same time, other options exist: the Retrofit model, where the group buys and renovates property with existing buildings, or slowly buys up houses on an existing street or block; and the Lot Development model, where individual homes are sold to members and built over time as each future resident is able. McCamant and Durrett’s 1988 *Cohousing* book clearly inspired the first wave of all three models of cohousing in North America, including Muir Commons in California, Pioneer Valley and Pine Street in Massachusetts, Winslow in Washington, and Nyland in Colorado (Total Build Out model); Doyle Street and N Street in California and Monterey in Minnesota (Retrofit model); and Sharingwood and Talking Circle in Washington (Lot Development model). These early 1991–93 communities pioneered the cohousing development process in North America and created examples for others to follow.



*Cohousing offers plenty of privacy in the midst of community. Pioneer Valley.*

ALMOST ANY DAY OF ANY WEEK, A COHOUSING MEETING is happening somewhere on the continent. Each cohousing community has its own story to share, each community a unique response to the challenges of collaborative living inside the boundaries of local development ordinances, but each neighborhood sharing some elements that define it as cohousing. Most cohousing communities are new construction, with the privately owned homes and shared community amenities such as the common house. The housing is usually clustered, both to encourage social interaction and also to preserve land. A pedestrian-centered, socially oriented design defines the cohousing architectural style, which mainstream developers are beginning to copy. Community dinners are a part of weekly life. Meetings and informal sharing of childcare are easy and natural extensions of the community intent.

The attraction of cohousing to the mainstream is obvious, and the real desire for closer ties to one’s neighbors is clearly reflected in the missions and value statements of almost every cohousing group. But the notions of community and cooperation have not been an easy sell. Cohousing advocates have strained and battled against the “hippie commune” stereotype in order to secure the regulatory approvals and multimillion dollar financing packages that the 30- to 45-unit projects require. In many cases, and especially for the first wave of cohousing projects, cohousing pioneers found reluctance and resistance entrenched in building department officials, loan officers, and city bureaucrats, who found it difficult to accept that people can and do want to work and live together cooperatively. As increasing numbers of cohousing projects are built the barriers are slowly dropping.

The “We ain’t no hippie commune” message that



**The "We  
ain't no  
hippie  
commune"  
message has  
rubbed some  
longtime  
communi-  
tarians the  
wrong way.**

cohousing have put forth to appease suspicious bureaucrats has rubbed some longtime communitarians the wrong way, some of whom sneer at cohousing as "communities for denists." As one participant in a recent communities gathering in the Northwest put it: "There is a class issue here, cohousing is for people with lots of money. And those of us not rich, well, we don't fit the cohousing scheme." This economic class distinction comes with home ownership, a central tenet of cohousing. Since residents are often the early developers, large outlays of money up front are needed that require economic resources that are often only available to upper-middle-class incomes. But about a sixth of the 40+ existing North American

cohousing neighborhoods have succeeded in making cohousing available to lower incomes.

The majority of cohousing units are market-rate housing, which require income and employment credentials in order to secure a mortgage for a home that in many cases costs more than those in the surrounding area. Many of these new cohousing communities use the condominium-development model (a common way to own property that provides for both private and common ownership) in order to make partnerships possible with mainstream bureaucracies. Bankers, planners, and real estate brokers can comprehend that this cohousing thing is a good risk: it has prequalified buyers and all the trappings of a regular condo development, with just a few minor differences. Although some of the early communities struggled for financing, almost none of them failed. They eventually won over a lender. This is perhaps one of the most remarkable aspects of cohousing as a community form: very few fail and disband once they acquire land.

Some view cohousing as a way the middle class can experience cooperative living. Cohousing, with its private ownership, individual homes to ensure privacy, and the benefits of sharing, is luring a new group of people into community, people who would not describe themselves as communitarians at all, but who, once they experience community living, find out, much to their surprise, that they have more in common with "hippie communes" than with their suburban peers. The issues that come up in community, such as parenting in a group, cooking dinner for 40, and consensus decision making, are everyday occurrences for people living in community.

As the managerial and professional workers who make up a large percentage of cohousing members began apply-

ing their skills and techniques to promote their developing communities, their upscale marketing campaigns and media-savvy representatives pushed the concept of cohousing to the mainstream press with great success. The major daily papers, national TV news, National Public Radio, cable news, and other media conglomerates were quick to pick up this new trend, and by their coverage, created a promotional bandwagon. These stories were headlined as the "New Communities" or the "Communes of the '90s" and were almost uniformly favorable towards the concept. The first wave of finished cohousing communities were inundated by the press, local cohousing activists, and planners. Marketing the concept of cooperative housing to a wide audience is clearly a genius of cohousing.

About 50 new cohousing groups form in North America each year. More than half of these newly formed groups will disband before they ever get organized enough to buy a site. However, new forming groups are finding they have a lot of help. Some of the veterans of cohousing life have become "evangelists," consultants, and helpers for newly forming groups. Elders from the communities movement as well have provided consultation on how to make this community stuff work. For several years cohousers have corresponded with each other around the world via an email network, sharing experiences and information about all aspects of developing and living together. Every other year a national cohousing conference attracts many professionals and experienced cohousers. There are a quarterly magazine, two books on cohousing, and numerous resources on the World Wide Web. A national cohousing organization, The Cohousing Network ([www.cohousing.org](http://www.cohousing.org)), has brought together a great deal of talent, experience, and commitment to make cohousing a national movement.

A recent first cohousing meeting held in a local library here in the Pacific Northwest exceeded the capacity of the room to the point where people were standing outside on the sidewalk.

Clearly something is happening here. Ω



*Rob Sandelin, who with Michael McIntyre is Co-Guest Editor of this issue, is a longtime intentional community activist and consensus facilitator and teacher. He is a founder of the Northwest Intentional Communities Association (NICA), and author of the Intentional Community Resource Pages, a Web site on forming new communities and process*

*issues: [www.infoteam.com/nonprofit/nical/resource.html](http://www.infoteam.com/nonprofit/nical/resource.html). A frequent contributor to Communities and Cohousing magazines, he is author of "A Facilitators Guide to Making Consensus Work," soon to be published on the Internet. Rob lives at Sharingwood Cohousing in Snohomish, Washington.*





DUMAWISH COHOUSING.

*"Cohousing is now both my religion and my politics."  
Dumawish Cohousing members at their groundbreaking ceremony, 1999.*

# SUNDAY AT DUWAMISH

BY VIRGINIA LORE

**I**T IS SUNDAY, WHICH MEANS THAT WE WILL SPEND three to four hours today with our cohousing partners, talking about pavers and concrete mosaics, our new waiting list policy and how to save the birch trees on the west end of the property. About 40 of us will crowd into Kurt and Kara's living room, and, using colored cards, will make decisions in nine minutes that would have taken Kevin and me two days to debate. Small children will wander up from the childcare area downstairs for whispered consultations with their parents. They will be sent back down when the conversation gets too intense. Sometimes I'll go down with them. The intensity almost always gives me a headache.

There is plenty to be intense about. We're six months away from move-in, and the walls are being framed. We're one





Duwamish members look forward to the days when they'll just enjoy community living. Here, a scene from Trudeslund, a Danish cohousing community.

## ***I sense we are creating something larger than mere housing here.***

Karen are enjoying the group. I look forward to Ethel's earthy laugh, Kurt's jokes, and to watching Meg put a quilt together from across the room.

Mostly, however, I will go out of faith. Cohousing is now both my religion and my politics. I continue to ask myself "Is this best for the group?" before putting up my green "Yes" card in response to a proposal, because I sense we are creating something larger than mere housing here.

If there is a cathedral for this new church of ours, it is the land. We have watched as the land was cleared and the grading completed. We have seen the retaining wall built—the earth pinned into place by grouting and rebar, held by shotcrete. We have watched from the street above the site, the installation of the footings, the

pouring of foundations. We have watched the units at the far end go up first—we've witnessed the snaky white neoprene tubing laid for the radiant floor heating, and come back to the meetings to tell each other, "They've started framing!"

This is what keeps me going to the meetings: In six months we will be neighbors, part of something we've all built together. If our process makes us more loving, unselfish, and useful to each other, that is only to be expected. In this community, we will not only have potlucks and hold babies, but we will practice gentleness, honesty, love, and compassion in a tribal setting. We'll have a place to eat, work, and make music among folks we have learned to trust, and it is this we will offer to the world around us.

It is as if we are both watching a miracle happen and creating it at the same time. Could there be any better way to spend a Sunday? Ω

*Virginia Love grew up in a faith-based intentional community in the greater Kansas City area. She is delighted to find a similar level of community in Duwamish Cohousing.*

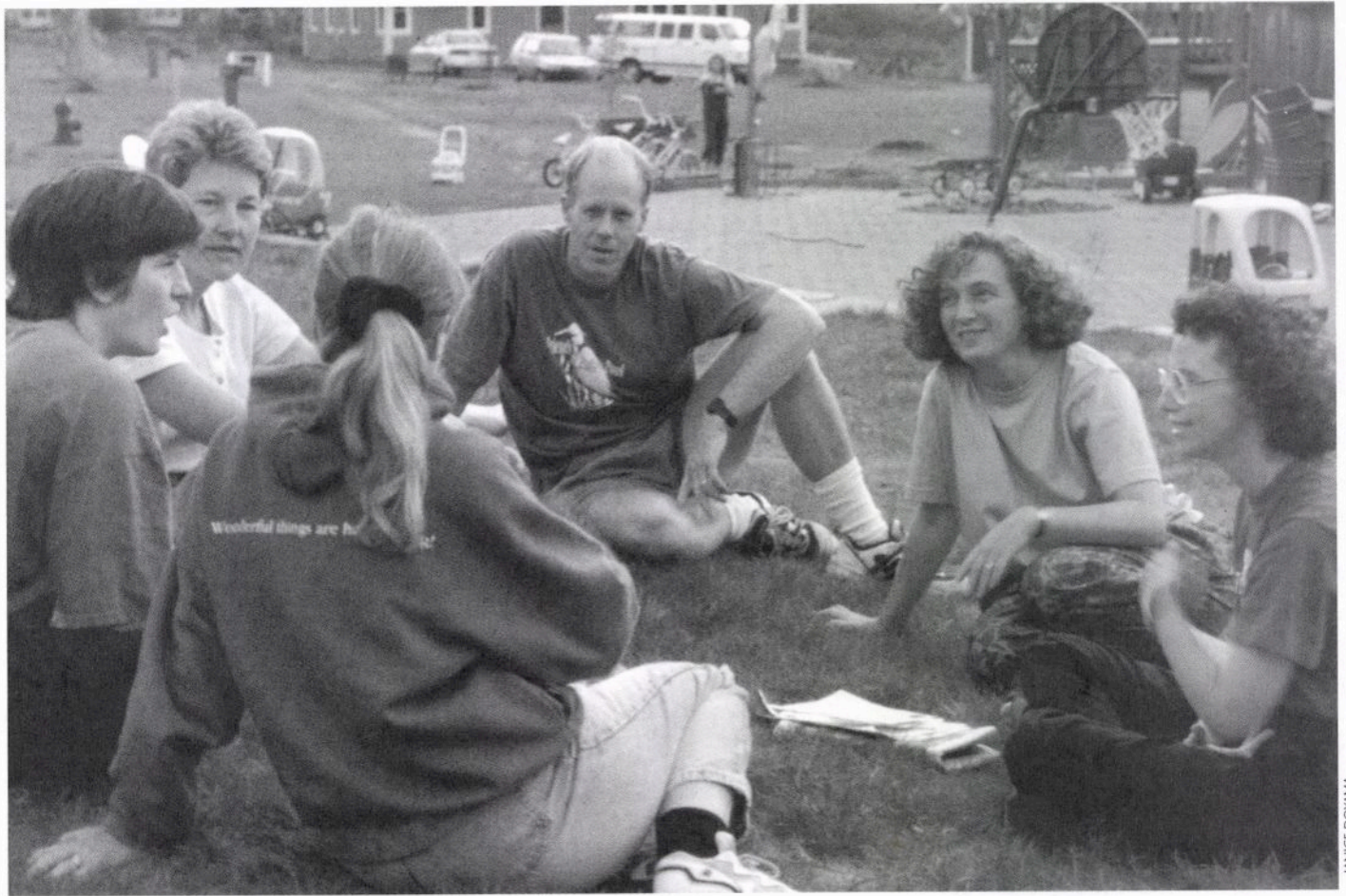
household away from full membership. Since Kevin and I joined this summer, we've seen five households join and one household withdraw. Our affiliate membership process is rigorous and unit selection is based on the date of affiliate membership. These decisions have not been made without introspection, earnest discussion (mediation in two cases), and tears.

There are times when I would rather be anywhere than in another cohousing meeting. Today, for example. If I were less committed, I'd be home on the couch, eating popcorn and watching *The Big Chill*. So why will I go to the meeting instead?

I will go partly because I've skipped the last two weeks. Most of us have to take an occasional break from the fervor of the construction process. I have no qualms about trusting the community to make decisions, which will ultimately be best for the sum of us.

I will go partly because I want to see people. I miss the folks I don't see on the development committee. I want to see how much Eleanor has grown in the last two weeks, to hug Mem, and to find out how Bruce and





*How does your group define what's meant by "community," and does everyone know what's expected of membership? Pioneer Valley members, Amherst, Massachusetts.*

# WHAT DO YOU MEAN, 'COMMUNITY'?

BY LAIRD SCHAUB

**C**HOUSING GROUPS ARE a lot like other kinds of intentional community—while people agree on the value of building community, there tends to be confusion about exactly what that means and how to go about it. Sometimes the extent of the confusion is not apparent until after the foundations are poured, when it's harder to change your mind about whether you're in the right group.

How much community do you want? Don't assume that everyone understands the same thing by the paragraphs you put together for your promotional literature. It is not enough to have a vision statement. You have to spell out what it means. For example:

- In what ways and how often are members expected to participate in group decision making, and when can



the group go ahead without them?

- What are the labor expectations from members, including what is required and what is voluntary? What are the consequences of a member not doing their share, and by what process will perceived non-performance be reviewed?

- What are the financial obligations of membership? What are the consequences of noncompliance, and by what process will this be monitored and reviewed?

- Is there an explicit commitment to make a good faith effort to work out interpersonal differences between members? By what process, if any, do you expect members to address unresolved interpersonal tensions if it's affecting the group?

- Do you expect members to provide an avenue of feedback to each other about their behavior as a member of the group? If so, what avenues are acceptable?

- Is there an explicit agreement about extending an attitude of helping or support to other members in time of need? If so, how is it determined that there is a need, and how does word get out?

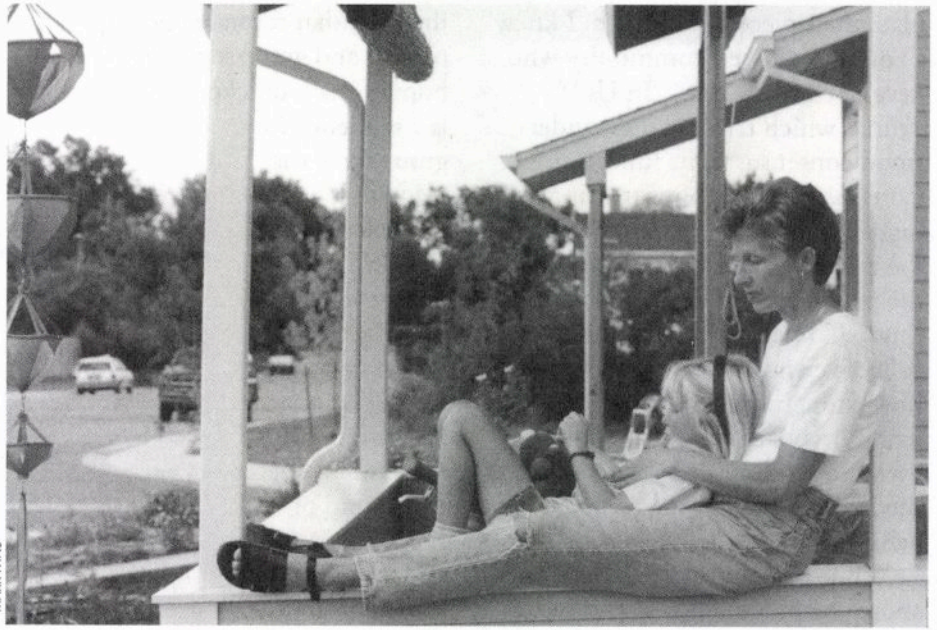
- By what process does your group bring prospective members into awareness of the expectations of membership? How do you train new members in understanding and using your group's process agreements?

While answering these questions may not be easy, my point is that groups will necessarily develop implicit answers in the absence of explicit ones. In the end you only have two choices: Take the time to get clear, or deal with the tension arising from the confusion.

My emphasis here is not which answers you have but that you have answers, and that everyone in the group or considering joining knows what's expected.

As an example of how ambiguity can drain energy, let me offer the humbling story of how my community belatedly addressed the issue of

## ***How much community do you want? Don't assume that everyone understands the same thing by the paragraphs you put together for your promotional literature.***



*Community needs to flow from the members. Greyrock Commons, Colorado.*

cleanliness. After more than 10 years of hardly giving it a thought, it finally rose to our consciousness that we had constant background tension about how clean things were and who was doing the work. Occasionally this would erupt into outright anger, yet we didn't make any substantive headway on this issue until we sat down and defined cleanliness room by room, and figured out how to divvy up the work so that everyone did a fair share.

Today at my community, "clean" means vacuuming the living room twice a week, mopping the kitchen floor once a week, and so on. We got two valuable byproducts from this experiment in explicitness: a drastic reduction in tension around who was taking advantage of whom, and a much cleaner house.

### **Should your group use consensus?**

Like many communities, cohousing groups tend to adopt consensus as their decision-making model. And, like most other communities, cohousing groups tend to use this cooperative model without bothering to read the owner's manual—and then get frustrated that "it doesn't work right." In general, few groups using consensus devote significant time to training in the process or evaluating the group's progress in learning it. This despite the fact that cooperation is not easy to practice. With some exceptions, nearly everyone in our culture is deeply conditioned to be competitive, not cooperative. Unlocking the potential of consensus involves undoing that deep conditioning, yet it's rare to find a group that has thought this



through before choosing consensus over Robert's Rules.

It is a radical thing to believe that each individual has the wisdom, and therefore the responsibility, to stop the group from proceeding in the face of a principled objection, and that it is the group's responsibility to help the individual access and articulate their piece of the truth. I knew a consensus-based community who developed the motto, "In Us We Trust," which tells me they understood consensus in its fuller sense. Consensus is not about trusting higher authorities, or empowering the majority (believing that most of the people will be right most of the time). Consensus is believing in the collective and the wisdom of going slow enough to make sure that everyone is on board before the train leaves the station. It is understanding the high cost of leaving some people behind.

While I'm personally excited about the potential of consensus to build a cooperative future, my advice to groups about using it is that they get as clear as possible about what they are getting into and consider training with flotation devices before swimming in the deep end. In fact, after being called in to apply mouth-to-mouth to some groups who got in over their heads, I think it may be better to stick with voting ("the devil you know ...") than to use consensus naively.

### **When money talks, time walks**

While the above comments apply to all communities, I've noticed two kinds of challenges that seem more common among cohousing projects. The first has to do with the dynamic tension between time and money in large-budget developments. With total costs in the millions, making interest payments on large loans exert considerable pressure to make decisions quickly and keep design and construction on schedule—even

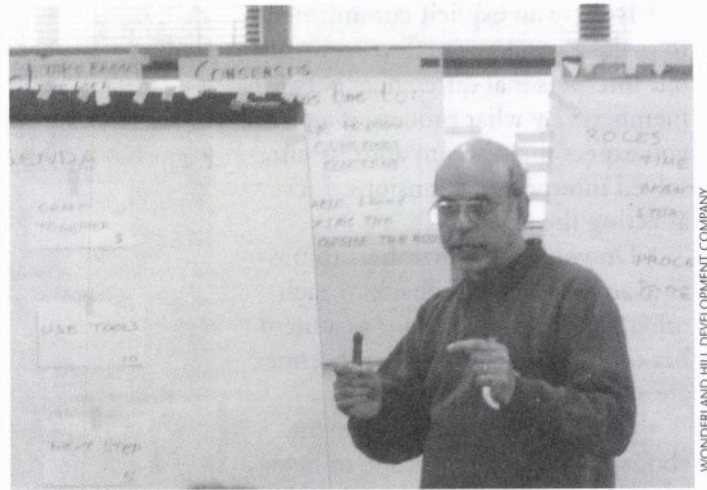
at the cost of the sense of community that everyone said they were joining the project for!

On top of that, there is an initiative today among cohousing developers to pioneer a streamlined model whereby the entire design and construction phases can be telescoped into two years. This greatly reduces the time that capital is tied up in a project and gets people into their homes much quicker. The downside is a tendency for groups to struggle with a sequence of decisions that come faster than they can digest. It can get in the way of the group bonding interpersonally and taking ownership of their community. Community starts to happen *to* them rather than *from* them.

At the same time, good process does not have to mean slow decisions. It is my experience that groups which communicate well tend to act decisively, though it takes time to get to that level of trust and cohesion. As a group is learning effective communication and inclusive decision making, skilled facilitation is often critical—having meetings run by people who hold a clear understanding of the group's process agreements, and who can gently, yet firmly keep the group on the path they've agreed to follow. There is probably no better reinforcement for making the switch to a more inclusive process such as consensus than getting consistently good results. In the beginning, good facilitation is often crucial to having that experience.

Let's assume you have good facilitation. Given all the benefits claimed

**Few groups using consensus devote significant time to training.**



*Arun Hejmadi offers a consensus and facilitation training workshop for the Colorado Springs Cohousing group.*

for building strong community, why not emphasize it right from the start? Subtle dynamics here can get in the way. In their eagerness to "fill"—sell all the housing units—cohousing groups tend to soft-pedal defining "community" in the early stages for fear that prospective members may be put off (believing the widest net captures the most fish), and for fear that strong bonding among the early joiners will create a barrier that later folks will have to overcome (believing that it's better to delay community-building until everyone is on board).

More, there is often worry that getting clearer about who the community is may risk losing some folks already in the group. This is compounded by the possibility that some members may not yet be clear about what they want and are reluctant to enter a group clarifying process



# Pioneer Valley: Members Leaving, New Members Joining

BY PETER JESSOP

SINCE OUR MOVE-IN IN 1995, FIVE HOUSEHOLDS (OUT OF 32) have moved out of the community, including two who swapped houses. We emphasize celebrating transitions for those departing and arriving!

We planned from the beginning a system aimed to simplify and assist membership transitions and protect the community from speculation in resale prices, unpleasant bidding wars, gentrification, and the unpredictability of using real estate agents.

Those interested in joining Pioneer Valley write a letter of intent, come to dinner, speak of their interest at a business meeting, and can then join our waiting list (currently 18 households) with a \$20 annual fee.

If someone decides to sell their home, we follow a four-step process:

- 1) The departing member notifies the Membership Committee in writing.
- 2) The Membership Committee notifies other community members, who have one week to express an intent to buy the departing member's house. A house must

come up for sale for members to be able to make an internal change.

- 3) The Membership Committee notifies the first people on the waiting list about the opportunity to buy a house in Pioneer Valley. They have a three-week window to respond. Members may still respond during this time.

- 4) The Membership Committee then notifies the seller if there is an internal candidate or "external" candidate, and then we loosely monitor the process until the people close the sale. A member who is an attorney handles the sale, so it is generally a friendly transaction.

The selling price of the home is *predetermined* by our resale restriction requirement in our Master Deed: price equals current appraisal multiplied by the original sales price divided by the amount of the original appraisal. ☺

*Excerpted from a talk by Pioneer Valley member Peter Jessop at the 1999 North American Cohousing Conference in Amherst, Massachusetts. Pioneer Valley Cohousing: [www.cohousing.com](http://www.cohousing.com).*

without knowing their own minds first—especially when their own position in the group may be at stake! Also, there may be hesitation about taking a lead in focusing the group on this topic for fear that it will be perceived as a power play. And sometimes the group does not address its ambiguities because they lack confidence in doing it well. Still, I think that any delay in knowing “who we are and what we're here for” is a poor bargain.

First of all, prospective members tend to be pretty savvy. Underlying tensions and ambiguity about who the group is will not be that difficult to pick up by people who pay attention. By delaying the work of defining your community you will effectively be screening prospective members for their tolerance to ambiguity—or worse, for their insensitivity to underlying tensions or for a lack of commitment to community. Can you afford that?

Second, the issues don't go away because you don't address them, and it is that much more daunting to face them further along, when the greater investment of time and money means there are that many more chips on the table.

Third, the delay strategy overlooks the advantage of having a clearly defined vision to draw people who share that vision. If the community definition is fuzzy, community recruitment will be fuzzy, too.

The interest pressure on some cohousing groups can be great enough that they commit to construction before they fill, figuring that the last people needed will be attracted to the fact that the project is underway (proving that the group does more than just hold meetings), and there will be that much less wait before moving in. Unfortunately, interest charges can start mounting up as fast as the dirt once the bulldozers start rolling. It's a game of

high-stakes poker knowing when you have enough lots sold to start building, and there is terrific pressure to find those last members. It takes considerable discipline to not short-circuit the membership-selection process at this stage and say “yes” to anyone with the down payment. And it's a heck of a time to discover that you have different meanings for the term “community.”

If the community gets sloppy at this stage and accepts new people without making clear the expectations of membership, it sows the whirlwind. It may solve the short-term problem of attracting enough members and spreading the financial load, but the group risks reaping a harvest of future frustrations about what kind of community they have built and whether they all belong in the same one. Think carefully about which costs more.

Taken all together, I think it's a mistake to delay the work of



# CELEBRATE MILESTONES!

BY SHARI LEACH

It is easy during the design and construction phase to focus on only those details right in front of you (viability of composting toilets, asphalt or grasscrete sidewalks, and so forth). It's also important to celebrate how much you have accomplished—even before your project is completed. By keeping an eye on the bigger picture and by celebrating milestones, you can help your community stay focused on its goal of building a community rather than simply building buildings. You might celebrate a "ground blessing" when construction begins (also known as "ground breaking" by builders), when people select their housing units, the common house opening, and when the first household and when the last household moves in respectively. Celebrate the anniversary of your community forming, and other holidays, with your whole group, as well as individual triumphs such as birthdays, high school graduations, and so on. Why have a meeting when you can have a party? Use celebrations to refocus yourselves on why you



*Dedication ceremony, 1997, Harmony Village, Colorado.*

are doing all of this hard work—to live in a fun, wonderful, congenial community. Ω

*Shari Leach works with group process, decision making, and facilitation at Wonderland Hill Development Company: 303-449-3232 x 107; sharileach@hotmail.com.*

*Wonderland Hill is currently working with cohousing communities in Arizona, California, and Colorado. 303-449-3232; www.whdc.com.*

building and maintaining group cohesion. It doesn't get easier, and delaying means a group may find itself in an interest-generated pressure cooker without the group glue to withstand the heat.

## **Controlling who becomes a member**

Another challenge particular to cohousing is control over who buys the houses. While there are no laws preventing cohousing developments from being privately financed, in practice that seldom happens. And there are laws against discriminating about whom you sell property to if its development was financed through federally insured institutions. In the beginning, this is seldom an issue. In fact, it's a sales advantage to guarantee owners that they have free reign over whom they re-sell to (in the unhopd for event that the community doesn't work out for them). The problem comes down

the line, after the community is full.

It is natural for a group to want control of its membership, to be in the collective position of assessing potential members for a good fit, and holding authority over who may join and who may not. Unfortunately, bank-financed cohousing communities lose this authority.

When filling, cohousing projects tend to be protected by the fact that units typically cost a premium over similar housing in the general market. You literally have to pay for the intangible of community and that tends to be an effective filter for community-oriented members. Matters get more complicated, however, when you consider turnover. Because each owner has the legal right to sell to anyone, the community must depend on the good will of the leaving member to participate in the selection process for their replacement. When leave-taking is cordial, this does not tend to be an issue.

However, not all separations are easy, and if someone leaves the group as a result of conflict, there may be considerable breath-holding about who the new members will be and how well they'll fit in. And I'm not talking about maliciousness, just the potential awkwardness of things not working well with whoever turns out to be the highest bidder for the home. Another way this comes into play is "inheritance roulette," where a deceased member's property passes to an heir who has no prior involvement with the community.

Legally, the community only has informal methods available for screening new members—such as developing a waiting list of qualified people with whom they've already established a cooperative relationship. But the leaving member may not be obliged to draw on that list. Reflecting on this, there is an obvious incentive for the community to do a crackerjack job of dealing





ELEANOR CONAWAY

*Sunward Cohousing, Ann Arbor, Michigan.*

## ***If the community definition is fuzzy, community recruitment will be fuzzy, too.***

### **What we can do**

OK, suppose you were not clear at the start about the specifics of community membership and how to handle conflict, yet you've already moved in? First of all, you're in good company. Most groups are not careful about these questions at the outset, relying instead on the substantial good will of coming together to carry them through the hard times. Luckily, sometimes this works (otherwise there probably wouldn't be much of a growing communities movement). But what are the options when the houses manifest before the clarity? What if the only thing you're clear about is the extent of the differences?

There's hope.

First you need to find out what "community" means to each member. What was it you thought you were joining? And also ask the reverse: What are your reservations about community, or what requests from others do you have resistance to? If your group feels stuck, it's quite possible that there are imbedded hard feelings or fears that are getting in their way of hearing each other and building trust. If so, getting this on the table may be a precondition of building anything. If the tension is great enough, it may be advisable to bring in an outside facilitator to shepherd this process.

Next I'd examine what people want, being careful to look beneath positions to the underlying interests. It's been my experience that people often get blocked when trying to negotiate "positions" ("We want to paint it green" vs. "We want to paint it red") while there's a great deal more to work with when discussing

"interests" ("We value a serene, earthy feeling" and "We value a bright, stimulating environment").

There is a common dynamic tension between those who say, "I don't want any action taken until we've heard each other out and can come to agreement" (the "processors") and those who say, "I want more action and fewer meetings!" (the "doers"). While these positions are on a collision course, it is probable that the baseline interests are not, offering room to navigate a course of action that might work for all.

However, even with a greater understanding of everyone's interests, you may still disagree about level of engagement. What then? I suggest exploring what is possible with those wanting more involvement getting it from each other and those wanting less allowing this to go forward without them.

While this may sound obvious, there are two traps here. The first is to not pigeonhole people as "processors" or "doers" and to keep the door open for changing positions on the engagement continuum. The second is to have a process by which everyone has a chance to be involved in the issues they care about, and for the non-participants to trust that those who care about it will make good decisions. The key here is to be clear about authority and the process by which subgroups can or cannot make decisions that are binding for the whole. It will not work for nonparticipants to complain about or undermine decisions made in their absence if they were duly informed about the chance to participate but opted out. It is perfectly fine to delegate

thoroughly and constructively with conflict. In the end, the community's ability to retain control over its membership will depend solely on its degree of cohesion and the willingness of leaving members to work with the group to find suitable replacements.

In places where experiments in planned community developments are in the second and third generation of owners (such as the town of Columbia, Maryland) it appears that commitment to building and maintaining the neighborhood (and pedestrian orientation) has weakened considerably. The point here is that the enduring strength of the community will be a social test more than a design feature.



decisions to subgroups, so long as the limits of authority are clearly defined by the group as a whole.

In the end, the best way to narrow the gap is to have consistently dynamic and productive meetings. Who would want to miss those? After all, the house of community is built with the mortar of interactions, and the building falls if the mortar is

not regularly renewed. You can do it slower or faster, but you still have to have the interactions. Community is not something done to you or for you; it is something we do together, one brick at a time. Ω

*Laird Schaub has worked as a group process consultant for the past 12 years, and with half a dozen cohousing groups*

*since 1998, specializing in whole-person consensus, dynamic facilitation, and conflict utilization. A community networker for two decades, he is currently Executive Secretary of the Fellowship for Intentional Community. He lives at Sandhill Farm in Missouri, which he helped found in 1974. Contact: laird@ic.org.*

## Sample Integrated Design/Construction & Process Timeline

It is important to go into designing and building with a strong idea of what your vision is. Anticipate the need to revisit your vision statement, and **build meetings or retreats focusing on your vision into your construction schedule**. In order to build the community of your dreams, rather than just a bunch of nice buildings, you need to be intentional about keeping a part of your focus on the bigger picture of community throughout the design-build process. The very abbreviated sample below suggests a few key process events to schedule in and around the major design and building activities and is based loosely on Wonderland Hill Development Co.'s experience developing cohousing communities. This includes revisiting your vision statement at a "Pre Design Session," around the time of "Common Facilities Design" (or anytime you experience a sudden change in membership), and shortly before the first families move in, as your community is beginning to create policies for everyday life in community. Plan discussions on stress and burnout into your calendar. Set specific times for new member "orientation sessions" to bring prospective/new members up to speed. —*Shari Leach, Wonderland Hill Development Company*

### Construction-Related Events

Find and study land

#### Site Programming Workshop

Community design, where buildings will go, how overall space is utilized

#### Common Facilities Design Workshop

Design programming with architect of common house, workshop, etc.

#### Unit Design Workshop

Programming with architect of general design considerations and specific unit design issues

Unit Selection

Ground Breaking

Construction

Last household moves in

### Process-Related Events

Establish core values and group vision

Standardize meeting procedures (minutes, decision log, agendas...)

#### Consensus and Facilitation Workshop

Pre-Design Session: clarify goals, review vision and values

Post-Design Evaluation:

What did we decide, how did it go? Update decision log.  
What should we do differently at the next design?

Discuss effective use of committee time/energy versus community time/energy

Consensus II workshop (review, plus more advanced)

Pre- & Post-Unit-Design Sessions

New Member Orientations: What do new members need in order to become part of the community?

**Conflict Resolution Workshop.** Plan a workshop, use plans/design for real discussion issues

Unit Selection Celebration

Ground Blessing Celebration ... the official start of construction

Look at ways to integrate new members more effectively

Create a move-in manual/community manual based on your community's vision and values

"Everyone is here" celebration





*Winslow members have gained some proficiency and confidence in community living after the first years of feeling overwhelmed.*

# WINSLOW COHOUSING

## *The First 10 Years*

BY ROBERTA WILSON

**B**ACK IN 1988, WHEN *CoHOUSING* AUTHORS KATHRYN McCamant and Chuck Durrett were first explaining the Danish housing model on a speaking tour, one of their first stops was Seattle. Out of the audience stepped a small group of folks interested in developing cohousing on Bainbridge Island, a small town just a 35-minute ferry ride away from downtown.

As fate has it, we ended up being the first owner-developed cohousing community in the United States. We certainly didn't have much experience to go on. Only one of us had lived in an intentional community, and only a few had even visited any intentional communities. None of us had seen cohousing in Denmark, and of course there were no models of it close to home. What we had was the *CoHousing* book and an incredible amount of energy.

As with all communities, we made some wise choices and some poor ones. We met every weekend for over two years, with many of us meeting



## ***We set out to change our world; now community is changing us.***

in committees during the week. This vigorous schedule allowed us to buy land, get through the construction process, and move into our 30 duplexes and flats by Spring 1992, but it cost us potential members who couldn't devote such time to development. Finding loans for what looked to financial institutions like some kind of middle-income commune was difficult and may have cost one credit union representative his job. The stress resulting from engaging some of our own members to work for us hurt the group and hurt some of these members as well. Our original group was deeply bonded by the sheer effort of the project. Yet, after move-in we retreated to our individual homes to recuperate. While our idealism had carried us through the forming stages, we weren't quite prepared for the reality of living cooperatively—so many of us were used to having our own way in the world.

We also had the inevitable turnover. We had problems with new residents who either had their own heroic notions, or who soared and then dove as the honeymoon phase ended. We had kids who couldn't get along, a dog that bit, divorces and deaths, births and celebrations. For the most part, our surrounding neighbors were friendly. We figured out a work system, each serving on clusters—Administration, Process and Communication, Grounds, and Common Facilities. We figured out a meal system, with dinners five nights a week. We figured out how to work with consensus. We learned to keep good track of our finances, and we continued to work towards emotional literacy. We still struggle with issues such as member participation and how to make capital improvements, yet our meetings are now civil, efficient, and more emotionally honest. Folks have found their own level after the first years of feeling overwhelmed. Some have been disappointed with the lack of emotional intimacy, while others, especially teens, have felt uncomfortable living in a fishbowl.

At times, most of us have probably asked ourselves, "What am I *doing* here?"—a question, I believe, that arises from a complex calculation of time and energy spent and



*An outdoor dinner at the end of the path, 1995.*

one's tolerance for conflict. Sometimes I've asked myself, after a difficult confrontation, why I should put so much of my life energy into something that seems, at the time, to give back little. Yet I'm sure that at other times each of us has surely declared: "I can't *imagine* living anywhere else!"—a response to the very personal exchanges that make living in community so rewarding. I can call my neighbor and ask her to turn off the coffee pot that I forgot. Children come to visit and

play with my dog. A neighbor pauses from her chores a moment and tells me about her life. In the forest, we scatter the ashes of a member who died; in our orchard, we bury the family dog. A neighbor's sister comes to stay and offers massages. The children are delivered to school by adults who share the duty. Our community feels safe. Some members who've become more involved in the larger community around us are making suggestions gleaned from our consensus process that might benefit more people. My favorite story involves a lost family parakeet, retrieved from the ferry by a neighbor who recognized the bird and called home on a cell phone to let the family know.

The idealism, dreams, and devotion, while still here, have given ground to the practical and the real experience of living in community—the good, the bad, and the ugly. Community is seeping into our cells, I believe, so that even the challenges become just part of who we each are. Cooperative culture is gaining ground over our individual upbringing in competition; slowly, we are giving up the need for absolute control. We set out to change our world, and now community is changing us. Ω

*Roberta Wilson is a founding member of Winslow Cohousing. Along with walking across the United States for nuclear disarmament and helping to delay the World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle, cohousing is the effort of which she is most proud.*





Westwood planning session of buyer group, 1995.

WESTWOOD COHOUSING

# Community Process & Community Development: Incompatible Worlds?

BY ELANA KANN, WITH BILL FLEMING

**I** KNOW IT'S EXTRA work for you, Doug," I asked our general contractor, "but would you please dig the patio footings to a full 12 inches instead of the seven inches your workers already dug? I want to prevent frost heave, and the building code says they should be 12 inches. Also the architect's specs spell it out. I know the concrete pour is tomorrow, but this is really important—"

"You don't have to explain!" he broke in. "Just tell me you want me to dig the footings five more inches right away, before the pour. I'll do it!" We grinned at each other and shook hands.

Thus started another day for me as developer and project manager on the construction site at Westwood CoHousing Community in Asheville, North Carolina. Our general contractor was direct, concise, and



knowledgeable. Doug would keep words to a minimum so he could focus on the work. He didn't mind taking orders from me. All day long, he gave orders to his workers, and required immediate compliance. He taught me to be authoritative and to the point with him, with no need for explanation.

On the other hand, I had recently sent every member of our cohousing buyers' group a memo of the builders' and development company's policies for construction site visits, such as "No entry onto the construction site except during planned tours." I had asked each buyer to check each item with "Got it!" or "Need more explanation." I was deliberately signaling a change from the intense participation of the group of potential buyers in the early planning and design phases to the new construction phase. At this point our development company, which owned and managed the site, was responsible for building the project from plans the buyer group had approved. The builders and we could not risk any construction slowdowns or injuries to visitors clambering around half-built buildings.

"So, anyone have any questions about the memo?" I asked the cohousing buyer group at its business meeting that night. One member exploded with anger. "The development company should have presented this to us as a proposal for discussion with all the members!" She fumed. "What we can or cannot do at the construction site affects us all and shouldn't be up to you alone. I have some changes to recommend, for everyone's decision."

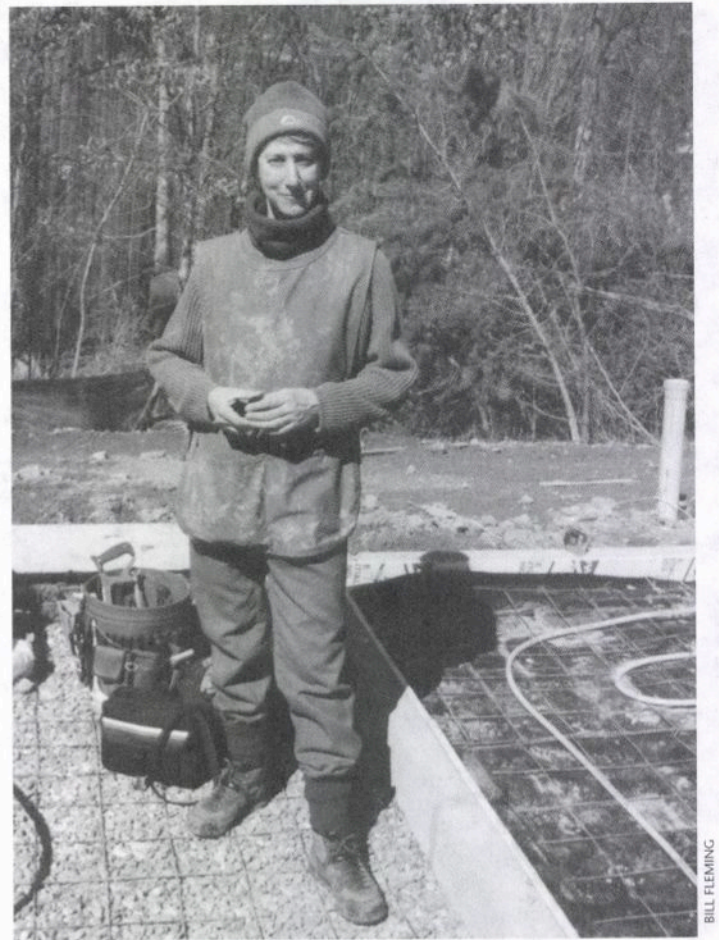
In this typical day, I experienced the clash of two worlds: the technical and business world of development and construction, and the world of a consensus decision-making cohousing buyer group. The inability of some group members to adapt to the realities of the development world eventually taxed my relations with

them. Trying to maintain clear communication with the group strained me to the point where I sometimes doubted my ability to keep doing my job.

Adding to the situation's complexity was the fact that I had two roles: developer/project-manager and member of the buyer group.

My parents and I owned a four-acre property in Asheville. When we discovered the cohousing concept, we wanted our property to become a cohousing community we would also live in.

In Westwood's first life, between 1992 and 1994, the group interested in forming a cohousing community on that site attempted to develop the project, following the Danish model Kathryn McCamant and Charles Durrett describe in their book *CoHousing*. The developer, as you may know, is the entity that acquires or controls the raw land, secures loans, hires professionals such as the architect and general contractor, and oversees the construction of roads, sewers, utilities, and buildings. The developer also takes on most or all of the financial risk, is responsible to keep the project within budget, and at the end sells completed houses and shared property to buyers. In *CoHousing*, McCamant and Durrett describe a process in which the cohousing buyer group is in charge



*As project manager, Elana Kann oversaw all aspects of construction. She sometimes also helped with the work; here, laying radiant heat tubing in floors.*

of all the details through all phases of development and construction. Even if a developer is involved, the group as employer hires the developer as its employee; the group asks the developer's advice so the group can make the best decisions, and the group delegates certain pieces of the work to the developer.

Westwood's first interest group tried for two years to follow this model without success—unable to muster the necessary discipline, business skills, or financial resources to develop the property. And we could not find an experienced developer who would accept the buyer group's input into the design. This first group disbanded.

Faced with a choice between no cohousing community on our property or handling the development



side of it ourselves, my parents and I chose the latter. So in 1994 we formed a separate development company to drive the project, with ongoing mentoring help from manager/engineer Bill Fleming, and financed the early development phase. In Westwood's second life, from 1994 through 1998 when construction was completed, the four of us plus a growing number of others were members of a new cohousing interest group. Our structure was different from that described in the *CoHousing* book. The new group was the development company's "client," which had significant influence as buyers on project design and marketing. Once construction began, the buyer group did not have decision-making power, unless the development company consulted them about a change that affected them.

Everyone in the buyer group read and signed documents that delineated the different roles, and the development company frequently reviewed these materials with them. However, some members appeared not to understand the differences between the way Westwood was proceeding and the development model described in the *CoHousing* book.

I began the job of project manager of our development company with years of experience in woodworking and construction and as a member of small cooperative groups with common goals. I'd been a feminist and anti-Vietnam war activist, had helped form and run a woodworking cooperative, and had been involved for years in the Reevaluation Counseling peer-counseling network. I expected to be most comfortable in my role as member of the group of future residents, once again bucking the powers that be to bring about change.

And that was part of the experience. What I had not expected, however, was the perspective I gained of the buyer group from the vantage point of the developer/project manager. In order to do this job I had to

quickly climb a steep learning curve, with the help of several developers, project managers, realtors, attorneys, accountants, builders, engineers, appraisers, and bankers. Several of them became my friends. The strength of these relationships took me by surprise; I hadn't expected to like these folks! As I spent more time with these building and finance professionals, my understanding grew of their roles, their stakes, their interests and skills, the basis of their sense of integrity. The better I grasped and appreciated the worlds of business and construction, the more clearly I saw how to be most effective on behalf of Westwood, and how to

limits. An individual's influence in his or her company or profession derives from proven competence and access to key resources. Intense training is a prerequisite to filling certain roles and performing certain functions. These people are accountable for themselves and to each other, and if a work relationship is not effective on behalf of mutual goals it usually changes or ends. They generally treat time as an important resource, to spend carefully. They consider decisiveness a key quality for success, and when decisiveness is coupled with knowledge and wisdom it receives the highest respect. If a company is not effective it does not survive.

### ***These professionals valued previous agreements, decisiveness, direct experience, technical know-how, and proven facts.***

overcome roadblocks due to the unfamiliarity of these business professionals with the cohousing concept and with our project's unique physical infrastructure. At the same time, I also realized that some of the buyer group's behaviors became additional roadblocks to the project's progress. I was trying to function in two incompatible worlds, and bridging them became increasingly difficult.

Broadly, the world of development and construction is characterized by explicit and binding legal contracts, great financial risk, intense time pressures, and an understood and respected chain of command. The people in this world are mostly experienced at what they do, skillful, efficient, and used to working alone or in highly effective honed teams. Their language is based on practical, hands-on, direct experience and technical know-how, with rigorous reference to proven facts and previous agreements. They accept limits and their need to work within those

A consensus-based group such as the Westwood buyer group, on the other hand, values the process of decision-making more than timeliness or efficiency. Because members give higher priority to listening to everyone and considering all objections than to a quick resolution of differences, controversy or disagreement takes time to resolve satisfactorily. Everyone's commitment to a course of action, which is one great result of a successful consensus process, often takes time for the group to achieve. Until then, unilateral action by any one member without group sanction erodes the group's trust.

Further, some of the people attracted to Westwood seemed to distrust hierarchy, authority, and "expertise," believing that their personal opinions and preferences mattered more than facts and information from an outside source. Explaining the limits we had to work within, relative to the development and construction process, might have



seemed to these folks like an arbitrarily imposed “power play.” And an individual’s influence in our group did not necessarily have a direct connection to training or experience. In fact, some seemed to view the idea of valuing demonstrated competence as an “elitist” notion.

In addition to these difficult dynamics, the nature of the relationship between the development company and the buyer group appeared to be unclear in some members’ minds. Because those of us involved in the development company were also all members of the buyer group, and the original (first) group had tried to be the developer, some members seemed to confuse the development company’s and buyer group’s roles. In fact, the development company was an entity completely separate from the buyer group. It owned the property and was driving the project to produce housing to sell to our customers—members of the buyer group. When I thought I was clear that I was taking a particular action as developer/project manager, some buyers at times reacted as if I had taken that step as a group member and was therefore out of line.

Given the realities of the Westwood project, it would have been totally impossible for me to do my development company work within a group consensus framework.

Obviously at Westwood we had trouble bridging the differences between the values, knowledge, and communication styles of these two worlds. Here’s more of how I see some of these differences.

**Expectations.** At the start of the second group’s life, the development company worked closely and congenially with the buyers group on setting goals and criteria, programming (telling the architects what we wanted), and marketing. Once construction began, the work of the group was to build the social and self-governing community. Yet when the highly participatory early phase

ended and construction began, some members of the group found it difficult to let go of knowing about construction details and influencing the decisions. Despite the separate roles we had all agreed to, and the enormous amount of non-construction-related work the group still had to do, some members continued to unrealistically expect they would participate in the developer role as much as they wanted to.

**“Magical Thinking.”** The relationship between our member group and the development company often suffered from misunderstandings and communication breakdown. A few members seemed to project their negative ideas about hierarchy, leadership, and authority onto the four of us involved in the development company. These frequent verbal challenges had the words, tone of voice, and body language of personal attacks. I believe some of these members saw themselves as victims, as if all developers were, by definition, “oppressors.” This attitude seemed separate from what our actual contractual relationship was.

The development company, coming from the business world view, was operating from the original agreements, contracts, and understandings of our respective roles, and we developers were repeatedly surprised when some of our members didn’t seem to remember these agreements. Some had difficulty accepting that there in fact were prior agreements, or that we had limits on finances, time, energy, and resources. Bill calls this belief—that a wish for a certain desirable outcome can override the need to understand certain realities—“magical thinking.” I spent much of my time reminding and explaining and repeating the original basis for our working relationship and the limits within which the project and I as project manager were operating. This dynamic took an unexpectedly huge amount of energy away from my development work,

which of course was on behalf of the group. In fact, the continued demands threatened to derail the development goals altogether.

**Limits.** I had not anticipated this kind of pressure, and had not budgeted for the staff or time to deal with it well. As the other stresses of my work accumulated, especially once construction started, I had less time and energy to respond to the members. I became impatient at what felt like repetitive and unreasonable demands by some members. I found myself being short with early residents who wanted to socialize with me as I sped across the site,



Central heating, cooling, power, and communication systems were designed by Bill Fleming, here installing the solar heat collection tank in common house basement.

clipboard in hand, to halt an imminent construction snafu. I stopped participating in most buyer group meetings in order to attend to my other more pressing tasks. The lines between the buyer group and development company hardened.

**Rumors.** Worse, much of my time went into rumor control. For example, someone had a fear that we would not be able to get mortgages because of Westwood’s innovative centralized heating system and, rather than asking me about it, spread the upset and panic to others. Again, countering these rumors with facts and calming people down took time and energy from other communication challenges—with utility companies, city and state regulatory agencies, architects, banks, appraisers,



***Some members, however, seemed to distrust facts and expertise, dismissing competence as an "elitist" notion.***



Erecting the pedestrian bridge between the two housing clusters. June, 1998.

builders, and so on—just to get the project approved and built.

**Conflict Resolution.** Because the buyer group had not developed an effective conflict-resolution process, mutual listening and understanding were increasingly hard to come by. “Process” meetings turned into gripe-at-the-development-company sessions, again with no reference to any contract or prior agreement. The majority of the buyer group members, however, seemed to understand our different roles; they could let go of decisions that were in the company’s hands, and seemed to appreciate my reports and explanations. In fact, many buyers told us they were attracted to Westwood largely because there was an independent developer. But because they were inexperienced at group conflict and because many lived too far away to attend meetings, they did not know how to

move the group dynamics back to a cooperative working relationship with the development company.

**Priorities.** Meanwhile, the group resisted its work of improving group process and learning the skills of living together and running a Homeowners Association. Perhaps some members’ anger at being shut out of the construction process, and the stress of selling their houses and moving, were all they could handle at the time. Now, over a year after the last members have moved into their new homes, the group is beginning to recognize its need to improve key skills in consensus decision making, conflict resolution, and fulfilling board of directors functions.

**Postmodernism.** As if all this weren’t difficult enough, a wave of social thought had apparently deeply affected some of our members. Postmodernism began as a critique of sci-

entists’ attempts to organize what is known into neat, orderly categories. “Anybody who claims to have objective knowledge about anything is trying to control and dominate the rest of us,” writes anthropologist Matt Cartmill in his description of postmodernism in “Oppressed by Evolution” (*Discover* magazine, March 1998). “There are no objective facts. All supposed ‘facts’ are contaminated with theories, and all theories are infested with moral and political doctrines.”

Because successful project development requires constant quick decisive actions based on the best information available at the time, a major part of my job was to dig up information. As I understood the various choices and realities facing us all, I explained what I knew about the issues that involved the members’ input. I considered this a service and a gift, necessary for our buyer group to make informed decisions. Increasingly, some people in the group discounted my and other members’ attempts to evaluate the information we had available, saying that all opinions are equal, and that there is no external reality anyway. “There are other opinions,” became the reply when someone didn’t like the information I’d researched, or its implications for our next steps. When the group was influenced by this postmodernist view, it was paralyzed in its efforts to make decisions or take action. My experience convinced me that the postmodern approach simply doesn’t work with the tough legal, financial, and physical realities with which we had to grapple, and the rapid-fire deadlines for decisions. This quandary became one of the primary distinctions between the buyer group and the construction/development world in which I had to function.

**Memory and Continuity.** I hadn’t bargained on the frequency with which new members joined and old members left. The turnover was high



enough that very few members of this second buyer group who participated in the programming/design phase actually moved into the new homes. (I later learned this is fairly common with cohousing projects during the forming and development phases.) Despite the requirement that new members first read our documents and agreements, many people in the evolving group seemed to have little understanding of the role that we as developers took or why, or why the early members had made certain design and other decisions. Some of these early group decisions had not been fully recorded by the buyer group. There was surprisingly little continuity of historical memory, knowledge, or basic agreed-upon concepts. Thus, we from the development company, involved in the project all the way through it, held the memory of the buyer group's history. At times when the history became important to a then-current matter, we again became the authorities. As "authorities" we sometimes were

***I believe some of these members saw themselves as victims, as if all developers were, by definition, "oppressors."***

resented—not a healthy dynamic.

Some aspects of our community-forming process worked quite well.

**Goals & Criteria.** The group programming input at the early workshops was effective and productive. I have the highest regard for the group's design priorities, which our current unique physical community reflects.

**Outreach.** The partnership between the buyer group and the development company to do out-

reach and marketing was largely successful. Many early members stretched beyond their preference for privacy in order to talk to strangers, give hundreds of site tours, publish a newsletter, and write ads and articles with almost missionary zeal. These members sold our project as much as, if not more than, our architectural renderings.

**Funding.** Westwood buyers really came through financially. In one funding crisis after another, buyers offered what they had and maybe more. When banks required that our common house be redesigned to be easily turned into a duplex, everyone came forward with an almost 20 percent earnest-money deposit, enough to cover each household's share of the common house in cash in addition to the standard house deposit. When, despite that and other miracles we achieved, the development company could not find a bank construction loan, several buyers joined with outside allies to privately fund the construction loan pool we established.

## Site Evaluation Checklist

BY ROB SANDELIN

The critical milestone that cements a cohousing group's (or any forming community's) commitment is acquiring land—often a scary financial and legal commitment. Clearly finding a good site must be near enough to jobs, services, and schools. From a development perspective, however, here are a few additional items to add to your site evaluation checklist if you'll be building new on land rather than retrofitting existing housing.

**Drainage.** Does water collect on the site from other areas? Where does water from the site go? Where will it go when the site is filled with homes?

**Wetlands.** This may require some hired expertise to evaluate, as not all land classified as wetland looks like a swamp.

**Zoning Requirements.** Can you do multifamily in this location? What does a rezone take?

**Setback Requirements.** How much land has to be set aside next to roads and houses?

**Parking Requirements.** Can you use the street or do you have to provide on-site parking?

**Utilities.** Are utilities such as water, electrical, sewer, and telephone available? Will adding one or more of these utilities to the land be abnormally expensive?

**Road Access.** What's the access both for cars and emergency vehicles? Fire trucks have special requirements.

**Off-site Mitigation Requirements.** Will you have to pay developer fees for road, school, or other impacts? What about sewer lines or upgrades?

**Solar Access.** Where does the sun fall on the site? Will the neighbors' trees or future buildings block the sun?

**Neighbors' Attitudes.** Do the neighbors want the site to be a park instead of developed for housing?

**Winter Travel Access.** Will a rise on the road or driveway become a steep, ice-covered hill you'll have to negotiate in the winter? Ω

*Rob Sandelin of Sharingwood Cohousing in Snohomish, Washington is Co-Guest Editor of this issue.*





Westwood interiors are centrally heated by a combination of active solar and natural gas. The last solar panels are installed on common house roof, 1998.

And buyers performed hundreds of hours of sweat equity that helped keep the budget within bounds.

**Community Spirit.** The group demonstrated a powerful loyalty and commitment to the project's success. I am sure that over time it will overcome difficulties it faces now as a resident community. Most of my relationships with current residents have survived intact, and have been deepened and enriched in the process of confronting such difficulties. The opportunity to see how people faced their choices and challenges endlessly fascinated me. The work of building community, and the move to a new home—sometimes across the country and even around the world—stirs the strongest life juices for most people. We all saw each other under extreme stress, all doing our best, all putting everything we had into making this

work. Despite being at loggerheads some of the time, we also all deeply appreciate the commitment and enormous energy we all have put into this, in various ways, both known and unknown. We still remember to celebrate what we have with each other, and what we have achieved. I have experienced the treat of consensus decision making at its finest, and the generosity and sweetness of cohousing neighbors.

I believe that buyer groups and developers *can* bridge the gaps

between their worlds with carefully crafted understandings and skillful help with translation along the way. Because many group-as-developer projects in the cohousing movement have run into serious problems, it is more common now than in the early 1990s for groups to turn to developers to drive the projects, with significant group input in the early stages. Since Westwood has been completed, many people have asked Bill and me to take the developer role for other cohousing projects in western North Carolina. We are now planning a fast-track development program, which will from the start include boosting the buyer group members' skills for cooperation. We think this approach will reduce everyone's risk and stress, prepare the buyers for self-management, and result in a better relationship between the buyer group and developer.

Here are some reminders to myself about what I'll do differently:

- Remember the differences between these worlds, and the potential clash points.

- Beware of postmodernist thinking popping up where it is not a good fit. Discuss this early in the process.

- Discuss the phenomenon of "magical thinking." As Bill says, "Magical thinking stops when measurement begins." When questions and concerns arise, repeat the phrase "Let's find out." Insist on some basic facts and agreements that we record and can all refer to. Refresh everyone's memory about them as often as necessary.

- Provide resources for the buyer group to learn and hone the skills of consensus decision making, meeting facilitation, and conflict resolution early in the group's life. Find the best trainers available; the cost of training is an investment on which no group can afford to scrimp. Provide a structure for the group to relearn and practice these skills at every step and to help new members catch up to what the group knows, so that all are on the same page.

- Address the reality of limits and the art of creative expression within the limits. Discuss this balance early and repeatedly, as needed.

- Before we start, carefully sort out where buyer group participation makes sense and where it doesn't. Find a way to continually remind everyone of the choices, the reasons for them, and their consequences. Insist on healthy boundaries between the roles of buyer group and developer.

- Keep careful public records of all decisions.

- Do not take the developer role again for a buyer group of which I am also a member.

- Choose a liaison person or ombudsman to help communication between buyer group and developer: someone steady, knowledgeable, and patient. Ideally, the



liaison person would not be engulfed in the pressures and stresses of either the development work or the group process, and would be detached enough from both worlds to explain and translate from one to the other.

- Concentrate on what is most critical to my role, and don't spread myself too thin. Become more patient in my responses.

- Ask buyers who are discontented to write down concrete requests for changes. Respond thoughtfully in writing. Do not fear people leaving if their expectations are very different than what is possible and resolution is not forthcoming.

- Do not expect to always be liked. Ω

*Elana Kann, a member of Westwood CoHousing, served as project manager for Westwood CoHousing Development Company. She has also worked in building design and construction, carpentry, cabinetry, and sculpture.*

*Bill Fleming, also a member of the community, served as consultant to the development company. He developed its financial model and was electrical-mechanical engineer for the project, designing and installing its heating, water, and communication systems.*

*Westwood CoHousing—24 townhouse units and a 3,800 sq. ft. common house on a hilly wooded site—was built with unique design features, including high-performance building envelopes, a central water-heating and space-heating system*

*using large-scale solar collectors with natural gas back-up, radiant floor heating, rainwater storage and reuse in gardens, high-bandwidth network telephone and cable systems, and permaculture site design*

*Elana and Bill's new company, Neighborhood Design/Build, helps other cohousing groups with a fast-track development process, using high-quality design and construction that supports health, sustainability, and flexible use, as well as resources to boost group members' skills in communication, cooperation, and self-management. Neighborhood Design/Build, PO Box 16116, Asheville, NC 28816; 828-250-9339; elanakann@mindspring.com; <http://Shelbertech.com>.*

## Ten Principles of Cohousing Construction Management

BY J.D. LINDEBERG

This list is based on my experience developing and managing construction for a variety of \$1 million to \$15 million projects, including Sunward Cohousing in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

1. A new-construction cohousing development of more than 30 households is a complex, multimillion dollar undertaking. A project this size requires professional management and needs to be treated like a business.
2. The bottom-line nature of managing a construction project means that consensus approaches can't always be followed. The decision-making boundaries need to be clear for all involved.
3. There is a direct and proportional relationship between involvement of many people directly in the construction process and ultimate project cost. Create an intermediary between the group and the contractor.
4. Large, multifamily developments require commercial contractors—not custom home builders. The distinction is important because the former make their money on volume and the latter on perfection.
5. Quality of workmanship should be goal #1, but it will need to be constantly traded off against time, money, and other important commodities.
6. Development of a cooperative relationship with a contractor is essential. Adversarial relationships almost without exception end in litigation—a no-win outcome for everyone.
7. The architects that work with cohousing groups

need to be able to produce drawings quickly enough to meet aggressive project deadlines. There needs to be an understanding by all parties of the need for timely work, especially when working with smaller and more innovative firms.

8. Green building/site design approaches and use of environmentally friendly construction materials, if desired, should be incorporated *from the very beginning* of the project, including community decisions about how to address the needs of environmentally sensitive people.

9. Creating a financeable entity in the eyes of a bank is critical. A key component to obtaining financing is convincing lenders that a cohousing development is less risky than a more familiar developer who is building on spec.

10. To keep project costs low, limit the number of options for different kinds of housing units as well as how much individual customization people can have. Too much customization creates schedule and billing costs that simply cannot be accurately passed through to individual buyers. The final result is higher prices for everyone. Ω

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*Sunward Cohousing is a self-developed, \$7.5 million cohousing project in which the community members were also partners in an L.L.C. development company. J.D. served as volunteer project manager. Contact: [www.sunward.org](http://www.sunward.org).*





DEBBIE BEHRENS

Cohousers find innovative ways to get the word out. Takoma Village members at a parade in Washington, D.C.

# FINDING THE PEOPLE, FINDING THE MONEY

BY ZEV PAISS

ON A WARM SUMMER AFTERNOON A GROUP IS gathered in a circle on a shady patio. Some are young parents, some are elders, some are in middle years. Munching ginger snaps and drinking lemonade, with all eyes focused on budget sheets and a pile of architectural renderings in the center of the circle.

"We've got 50 percent of our houses filled," says an earnest young woman. "The bank says they'll give us our construction loan as soon as we've got 70 percent presold. So," she looks around slowly, "how are we going to attract six more households with down payment money—fast!"

This is a typical scene near the midpoint of the cohousing development process. Throughout the entire process, but especially at this point, a cohousing group needs to have a critical mass of people, and more significantly, people who can raise enough money.

How do cohousing communities attract people and money?

## Marketing strategies

In pockets of intensive cohousing development (for example, Northern California, Washington's Puget Sound, Colorado's Front Range, Massachusetts, and North Carolina), marketing a new cohousing community is often a matter of just getting the word out. In most other regions, however, a new cohousing group must first educate people about what cohousing is and how it can benefit them.

The early stages of marketing a cohousing community typically start with discussions among friends. As in most forming communities, the initial small group needs to agree on their collective vision for their future community and put it down on paper. This vision document will enable them to show newcomers what they are planning to do. It will explain more clearly what cohousing is about and help curious newcomers decide if it's right for them.

At this early stage it's important to create a membership/marketing plan and a committee to implement it. The plan should identify those groups of people most likely to be interested, along with a strategy to reach them.

Marketing cohousing is not like selling a traditional home because a future cohousing resident first needs to make six fundamental decisions:

1. Do I like the cohousing concept?
2. Do I like the area or location of the future community?
3. Do I like the people in this group?
4. Do I like the homes (and the site plan and the common house)?
5. Is the price right?
6. Can I wait until it will be completed?

These six factors don't carry the same importance for every future resident. For some, the mere fact that it's a cohousing project is the overriding factor; for others the location and price determines everything.

In the very early stages of marketing a cohousing



community, all you can offer potential members is the group's vision and the positive aspects of the cohousing concept. For some that's enough to get them excited and involved. Others need to know much more, such as location, final purchase price and floor plan, to remain involved over time. During the duration of the development stage of the project, some people will join and some will leave.

For potential members with past experience living in community, the important deciding factors may go much deeper, such as, for example, the group's commitment to the consensus decision-making process, or whether the group shares a common environmental ethic. And for new people without any previous community experience,

## ***This is playing in the big leagues.***

the deciding factors might include the group's agreements: Are they compatible with their own values and lifestyle? As the questions get answered, the confidence of potential members grows.

As the group of future neighbors builds stronger social bonds with one another—building the social community—they can address other issues that arise more easily because of the underlying connection formed with one another.

Most cohousing groups put together an information packet that typically explains the cohousing concept, the group's current stage of development, how new people can participate, and who to contact for additional information. As the community gets closer to completion, the information packet will become more complete. I have seen hefty final packets which included member bios, site plans and building designs, meeting and decision-making information, lists of committees or work groups, unit pricing, and option lists.

Groups often use advertising to help get the word out. According to Chris Hanson in *The Cohousing Handbook* (Hartley Marks, 1996), cohousers typically are "proactive" people with "a higher than average level of education" and are "interested in improving their quality of life." Another observer states they are often "driven by a very specific set of principles and values." Thus a group's advertising campaign needs to pass on a significant amount of information without feeling too disorganized or too slick. It should be straightforward and personal. Cohousers tend to appreciate and expect honesty, integrity, and a supportive community culture.

So where exactly can these people be found? Good marketing strategies include posting fliers at recreational centers, health food stores, bookstores, and churches (especially Unitarian churches and Quaker meeting centers); taking out classified and small display ads in local

papers and magazines; making presentations to local social, environmental, and religious groups; publishing articles in the local papers and specialty magazines and newsletters; getting interviewed on local radio and, when the group has something visual to show, local television stations; setting up booths at crafts fairs, Earth Day celebrations, and other "home grown" events; creating a Web page and linking it to the Cohousing Network's and the FIC's web pages; and advertising in the *Cohousing Journal* and *Communities* magazine.

The role of national advertising is growing as the cohousing concept becomes more widely known. Also growing numbers of people wanting to relocate are looking for cities with forming cohousing communities as an important relocation criterion.

Over the years that I've assisted cohousing communities market their projects, I've noticed that very rarely do just one or two advertising methods fill a community. More typically, later arrivals learn about the project from several sources in a short period of time.

In the total build-out model of cohousing development, construction can rarely begin until at least 70 percent of the future residents have signed a sales contract with the builder and have prequalified with a lending institution. Because of this, as a project nears the time of construction, the marketing effort sometimes needs to be increased so the project won't be held up due to a lack of members. At this point, some groups feel the need to bring in a marketing professional. It is crucial that any marketing person the group brings in really understands the spirit of cohousing and the specific vision of this particular group. If not, the professional may attract a higher percentage of new residents who are not as committed to the project.

Because of the need for a diversified marketing strategy, a potentially long marketing period, and the possibility of needing to hire traditional real estate professionals at the end, it is suggested that a cohousing group allocate about three to five percent of their project budget for marketing. If it turns out that they don't need to spend that much, the remainder can be redistributed to the residents as discounts. This can be a strong motivation to find new members on their own.

## **Getting Financed**

Even though a few cohousing projects require little or no assistance from a bank, the vast majority end up needing a significant construction loan in addition to the traditional permanent financing of each resident's mortgage.

From the eyes of a lending institution, a cohousing project is just another multimillion dollar residential real estate development. (Not that there is anything little about it. This is playing in the big leagues by people who probably never imagined doing this in their wildest fantasies.) In order for a bank to take a cohousing group seriously, the





*LEFT: Banks view a cohousing project as just another multimillion dollar residential real estate development. Members of Pleasant Hill Cohousing work on their site plan.*

*BELOW: Usually 70% of the housing units must be presold before construction can begin. Author Zev Paiss at Nomad Cohousing groundbreaking, 1996.*



group needs to look organized and professional. The bank's loan committee will want to see professionally completed construction drawings, contracts with future buyers, comprehensive legal documents, and extensive budgets for the project and for the Homeowners Association.

When a project is underway—with secure land, at least 50 percent of their members prequalified for a loan, and at least preliminary designs on paper—it is time to begin the process of finding a lending institution to assist with the development and construction financing. If the group is working with a professional developer, that person might take responsibility for this. If not, the group should select the one or two members who feel comfortable explaining the project to a banker—people who can help to lend credibility to the project. This will probably mean putting on a suit and being prepared to talk in the language of finance.

Even when a bank does agree to provide a loan for a project, it will rarely provide more than 80 percent of what's needed. The residents themselves must provide the remaining 20 percent (which can range from a few hundred thousand dollars to over a million dollars), unless they have a development professional helping them, in which case they can share the risk between them. The money is often raised through "membership" fees, as well as through down payments, which can range from a few percent to over 20 percent of the purchase price of the home.

Group members who are able to make this kind of financial investment typically become very committed to the project—since they now have a significant amount of money at risk. If additional challenges arise later in the development process, this additional commitment is often what helps hold the group together.

Since most cohousing groups are striving to make at least some of their homes "affordable," they can use a number of strategies, such as seeking grants from local, state, and feder-

al governments. More often, affordability is achieved by building smaller homes with more standard designs.

After the members have contributed what money they are able, it is often necessary to search out some additional money. Sometimes members of the community, friends, or relatives are able to loan the project money in exchange for a below-market interest rate. Since cohousing tends to attract socially conscious people, there does exist a growing pool of investors who are interested in supporting cohousing even at a lower rate of return.

Because financing a cohousing community follows fairly traditional methods, the development will not be allowed to stray too far from a typical planned community in terms of design and construction. The more atypical the project, the harder it will be to obtain financing from a bank. Depending on what is normal in any given region, such features as parking placed at the edge of the site, attached dwellings, clustered homes, and a large common building might make local lenders wary. I often advise groups to avoid more than three "unusual" features such as these in their project.

Since building a multimillion dollar real estate project is usually not high on the skills list of cohousing participants, it is essential to create a strong group of future residents who can both market and help fund their community. As anyone involved in cohousing can attest, this involves a tremendous amount of work, but the community's resulting high quality of life and sense of connection are well worth it. Ω

*Zev Paiss is the Executive Director of the Cohousing Network ([www.cohousing.org](http://www.cohousing.org)) and the Director of Project Development for Support Financial Services, a cohousing consulting and financial services company. He lives with his wife and two daughters in Nomad Cohousing in Boulder, Colorado. Contact: [zpaiss@earthlink.net](mailto:zpaiss@earthlink.net); 303-413-9227.*



# CRANBERRY COMMONS

## *Merging to Make It Happen*

BY STEVE WALMSLEY



*Discussing the seemingly endless details of site planning and building design will pay off at move-in, set for early 2001.*

**T**HERE IS NO SUCH THING AS “INSTANT gratification” when it comes to building a cohousing community, I muse at my second community meeting of the week. My mind drifts to memories of walking through model suites of homes for sale, and how easy it would have been to jump into the conventional housing market.

“If we decide not to put laundry hookups in any of the units, we could save \$500 times 25 units. That’s over twelve thousand bucks we could spend elsewhere, and besides, we’ll have a laundry room in the common house.”

“Do we really need laundry in every home?” someone across the table interjects, and my mind races back to the present. This is cohousing in one of its less than glamorous stages, a group of future residents discussing laundry and bathroom design details—and using consensus to do it. A few years ago, I would never have dreamed I’d be participating in such a process. But despite the time-consuming chore of nailing down seemingly trivial details, I have become very close to a group of people who will eventually be my neighbours. This is Cranberry Commons, to be located in north Burnaby, a multicultural urban neighbourhood with a picturesque view of the north shore mountains, and a 10-minute drive from downtown Vancouver. We’ll move in by early 2001.

I first heard about cohousing in early 1997 at an information meeting for “Knox Village,” a proposed community in the city of New Westminster, southeast of Vancouver. The concept appealed to me almost instantly. I had recently bought my first home after living in a housing cooperative for a number of years, and was surprised how much I missed the feeling of community that was present within the co-op. I moved out of the co-op because

I wanted to own my own home, and I hadn’t expected to feel so “homesick” for the people I had lived with. With cohousing, the prospect of designing and owning my own home, having my own space and privacy, *and* living in a committed community nicely fit my goals. I became an associate member of Knox Village and bought in financially several months later.

But the development timeline for Knox Village did not move forward as planned. We had actively promoted ourselves for over a year and succeeded in attracting five members willing to buy into the project, but needed at least seven more to reach “critical mass,” the stage of economic viability required before we could actively begin development. Public awareness was not working with us; not enough people yet knew about cohousing or understood the benefits. In August 1998, a critical milestone for buying land passed and we reluctantly gave up the option to purchase our site. We still continued to meet, but realized that a significant shift was needed to make Knox Village successful—we just didn’t know what that shift would be. It was a stressful and discouraging time for us all, but there was faith that something would emerge.

Across town, the Cranberry Commons cohousing group was facing similar struggles. They had five equity members and had purchased part of their land, but needed more members before they could proceed much further with their project. Were Knox Village and Cranberry Commons receptive to the idea of merging? We met in December 1998 to find out. The two groups had a number of similarities and a few clear differences, and it became obvious that combining energies would generate a lot of strength. Equally, there was the awareness that in order to achieve this merger, members of both groups would need to make





*Cranberry Commons members became advocates for community living and shared resources in the greater Vancouver area.*

*It became clear  
that we had a  
deeply shared  
intention.*

shifts and concessions. The most significant differences were the choice of location, issues of affordability, and the subtle yet distinct character of each group. We explored issues, and stated, and in many cases revised, positions, until it became clear that we had a deeply shared intention. Through some tears, the Knox Village group let go of the dream of creating a community in the neighbourhood of their choice. Members of Cranberry Commons agreed, among other things, to absorb the expenses incurred by the Knox Village group and to include those expenses as development costs in the project. Three of the five members of Knox Village joined Cranberry Commons.

Bringing cohousing to Vancouver has not been without challenges. Even with a growing and positive public response to the concept, it has been surprisingly difficult to attract people willing to take some risk and devote time and money to participate in spearheading new communities. Paradoxically, today's hectic urban lifestyles contribute to the problem. The inability to free up time to create community keeps people from creating the leisure time we all strive for to spend with families and friends. Vancouver's real estate market is one of the most expensive in North America, limiting affordability for many who could benefit from buying into cohousing. And because of an economic downturn in British Columbia, residential real estate activity in general has been slow for the last two to three years. Even the name "cohousing" itself is an issue; it is commonly confused with the term "cooperative housing," which in Canada is normally government-funded low-cost or subsidized rental housing.

Despite the challenges, the Cranberry Commons project is on track—construction is scheduled to begin this spring. We are making inroads attracting new members and edu-

cating the public about cohousing. We have organized information meetings, potlucks, and walking tours of the neighbourhood, and the response has been rewarding. When completed we'll have 25 apartment and multilevel townhouse units ranging from 450 to 1,200 square feet, all facing into a landscaped common courtyard. Our 2,000-square-foot common house will include a lounge, kitchen, and dining area, as well as a guest room, library, shared office space, children's playroom, and meeting room. We'll have vegetable and herb gardens, patios, children's play areas, and facilities for recycling and composting.

Here in the Vancouver area, with two other cohousing communities up and running (Windsong in suburban Langley, and Quayside Village in North Vancouver), and Cranberry Commons to be the third, cohousing has emerged from the personal dreams and pioneering spirit of a small number of local visionaries who have spent much of their own time, money, and energy to promote the concept while building communities for themselves and their families. An underlying expectation is that our grassroots education efforts will pay off, and the choice of living in intentional community will soon become a more visible option for the home-buying public.

Not a bad social goal to ultimately result from long meetings like this, just now poring over laundry and bathroom details! Ω

*Steve Walmsley, an electrical engineer in the wireless telecommunications industry, is a director of the Canadian Cohousing Network and also acts as their webmaster. Cranberry Commons: 604-878-3311; [www.cohousing.ca/cohsng4/cranberry/index.html](http://www.cohousing.ca/cohsng4/cranberry/index.html).*





Reviewing plans for the second cohousing neighborhood.

# BUILDING GREEN COMMUNITY ON A BUDGET

BY LIZ WALKER

*Cohousing groups  
are an ideal place  
to test sustainable  
living skills*

“HI, WELCOME TO ECO-Village at Ithaca,” I say, enjoying the opportunity to show off our project to a group of architecture students.

“Is that a solar panel on the roof?” asks one. “I assume you’re off the grid.”

“No,” I admit.

“Well do you have composting toilets?”

“No, we’re required by the town of Ithaca to put in city sewer and water.”

“Well,” comes the challenge I’ve gotten used to, “What makes you so ecological anyway?”

The answer is multifaceted and has to do with setting priorities as a village which has plans for several cohousing neighborhoods and ongoing educational and farming activities, as well as ongoing lifestyle changes. Our first cohousing neighborhood (called “FRoG”—first resident group) has had to make hard choices, in terms of location; on-site employment; conservation of land, water and energy; food; transportation; permaculture; scale; and outreach. Rather than opting for the latest, sexiest (and often expensive) appropriate technologies we have chosen to take a more grounded, holistic approach. In each of these areas we have taken major steps in an ecological direction. We’ve chosen to actively engage in building a green community and culture, rather than go for individual state-of-the-art green buildings. By example, we are creating a small ripple of influence in our wider culture. Sometimes it takes a village to raise consciousness about use of resources.

Our largest energy-saving choice was our location. We chose a beautiful 176-acre site just 2.5 miles from downtown Ithaca, rather than a free site offered to us 10 miles from downtown. While this may seem trivial, Greg Thomas, an energy consultant who lives in our FRoG neighborhood, points out that over three



decades the 30-household neighborhood will save about \$358,000 in gasoline costs, based on a conservative one round trip-per-household-per-day. Of course, a downtown location would have saved even more, although it would not have allowed us to integrate organic farming on site, which is an important part of our overall demonstration model. Other transportation-saving features include extensive carpooling and both formal and informal car-sharing. A number of families have been able to cut down to one vehicle, partly because one family has made their second vehicle available to other members who sign up to use it at 30¢ a mile. The political clout of 30 families has enabled us to successfully lobby the local bus company to extend their service to include a stop at our entry road. Once our second neighborhood is built, there is a good chance the bus will come up to the common house itself. And perhaps most significantly, our eight offices in the common house plus home offices have enabled almost half of our wage-earning adults to work at least part-time at home. This of course has many social benefits in addition to saving energy—working at home creates a stronger sense of community, allows for sharing certain resources such as copy machines and high-speed internet access. Plus, it feels more congenial.

Because we wanted an alternative to suburban sprawl, we are conserving about 90% of our 176 acres as open space for organic agriculture, woods, meadows, and wetlands. Homes are densely clustered. Each of the several planned cohousing neighborhoods will use only 3.5 acres. Due to a generous financial gift, we were able to set aside 50 acres as a permanent conservation easement, administered by the Finger Lakes Land Trust. As we pay off the mortgage on the rest of the land, we hope to expand this land trust.

All homes in the FRoG face due

## ***“What makes you so ecological anyway?”***



ECOVILLAGE AT ITHACA

*The annual “Guys Baking Pies” celebration—with blackberries from the land. August, 1999.*

south for passive solar gain. Fourteen-foot-high triple-glazed window walls allow abundant light, even on overcast winter days. Roof angles and east-west shared duplex walls reduce solar gain in the summer. Super-insulation keeps the heat out in summer and warmth in during winter. Homes also share common energy systems. Each set of six or eight homes is linked through underground pipes to an “energy center” which houses two natural-gas-fired boilers that supply district heating and domestic hot water to each home. This system has numerous advantages: it cuts down on utility metering costs (residents sub-meter heat and hot water use); it allows for remarkably easy future retrofitting to solar hot-water heating; and it keeps combustion out of the homes, thus creating excellent indoor air quality. While many of us in the first neighborhood would have preferred to be off the grid and using renewable fuel sources, we instead chose more affordable methods which suit our

northeast, cloudy climate and can be retrofitted in the future when solar and other technologies become less expensive. Jay Jacobson, a retired resident scientist, collected data which show that FRoG homes use only 39 percent of electricity and 41 percent of natural gas compared to an average household in the northeast United States.

Water conservation doesn't usually seem important in our lush green region, but last summer's drought made us acutely conscious of water use. Even our one-acre swimming pond dropped about three vertical feet. Fortunately through judicious use of water, 1.5 gallon flush toilets, and low-flow faucets, Jay Jacobson's study found that we use only 22 percent of typical household water use. Gentle cohousing peer pressure encourages people to only water their gardens during the cool part of the day, and to plant landscaping that is heavily mulched and which requires little water. The recreational pond also waters our community garden



## SOCIAL DESIGN ELEMENTS

BY ROB SANDELIN

Creating a new community offers great opportunities to design the site and buildings to encourage spontaneous social interactions. Cohousing communities use a variety of site design concepts to encourage social activity:

**Pedestrian pathways.** Cohousing communities typically leave cars parked at the perimeter of the site and connect front doors with pathways instead of driveways and roads. This creates safe play and walking areas that encourage people to interact as they walk from car to home.

**Gathering areas in view of several homes.** A picnic table, a children's play set, or just a welcoming grassy spot within view of the front windows of several homes allows people indoors to see others outside whom they can join if they wish.

**Centrally located community center.** The common house provides a community focal point. The better

members can see this building from their homes, and see into it from the outside, the more likely spontaneous gatherings will occur. Locating mail delivery and laundry service there also brings people to the building.

**Community scale.** If the pathways are too far from the homes or the homes are too far apart, people will not be as likely to stop and chat. If the common house is too far from homes, people will not be as likely to spontaneously gather there. Clustering the homes close together conserves open space and allows people to easily mingle.

**Inside/outside views.** From the front windows home members have a clear view into the community "action"; from outside the home, passersby can see and wave at people at their kitchen windows. Creating homes with a public front area and private space in the back meets the needs for both community and privacy. A transition place between private and public space, such as a front porch, lets people stay within the boundary of home while encouraging others to come visit. Ω

and is used as water for the goats and sheep and chickens. Some households plan to retrofit using gutters and rain barrels to better distribute natural precipitation.

Having a nine-acre organic farm on site is a tremendous asset. The resident farmers, Jen and John Bokaer-Smith, have a ready supply of customers for their community-supported-agriculture (CSA) farm between our neighborhood and their many off-site customers. FRoG Common House meals are often planned around seasonal harvest items. Last summer we canned 500 pounds of organic tomatoes. Edible landscaping around homes further builds the habitat-food connection with small gardens and south-facing trellises used to grow grapes, edible kiwi, and in some cases beans, peas, and other climbing vines. Bulk food items are mostly purchased through Northeast Organics Food Cooperative, which offers very inexpensive organic items for common house meals.

Permaculture design, a multi-

dimensional philosophy of applying nature's principles to the human habitat, involves looking closely at the entire site and utilizing resources wisely. We have sponsored two permaculture courses, and plan more in the future. The second neighborhood group (SoNG) hired permaculture specialist Dave Jacke to help the group create a site design.

The site plan for EcoVillage at Ithaca shows an entire village, with several cohousing neighborhoods, an education center, a village center, and an expansion of our farm. This larger scale will allow us to create a diversity of models, learning as we go. SoNG hopes to break ground this year and create a mixed-income neighborhood of 30 homes, some of them subsidized and some market rate. SoNG learned from FRoG on many levels. FRoG broke the ground on introducing cohousing to New York state as well as to local officials and banks. It also went through many growing pains, including cost overruns and internal conflicts. While keeping the best of FRoG's

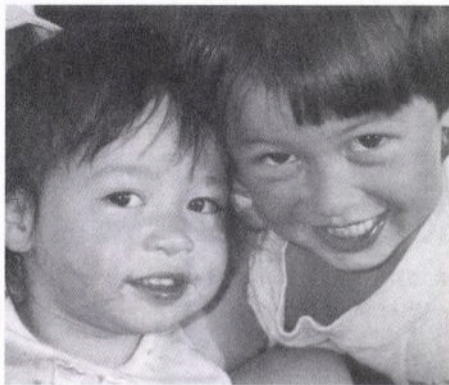
methods, SoNG will also incorporate permaculture design principles from the beginning, address conflict resolution early, and keep affordability as a top priority. By the time the third neighborhood rolls around, we'll know much more.

Perhaps the most important aspect of creating a green community is to create a green culture—one that shares values of sustainability on all levels. I believe cohousing groups form an ideal place to test sustainable living skills, where it's possible to strongly encourage living simply, using fewer resources, exchanging children's outgrown clothing or toys, and sharing tools and appliances. There is also a never-ending pull to join in community activities such as work parties, meetings, and celebrations. Adults and children alike are more likely to forsake TV or video games in favor of enjoying each other's company. We enjoy a monthly crafts night and frequent multicultural holiday celebrations. Two Saturday evenings a month we gather with the wider Ithaca community for



*BELOW: Community children will inherit the green strategies put in place today.*

*RIGHT: The first neighborhood at EcoVillage at Ithaca paved the way for cohousing in New York state.*



ECOVILLAGE AT ITHACA



evenings of a potluck supper followed by storytelling, live music, or games. Half of our adults participate in biweekly support groups which deepen our relationships with each other. In addition to strictly environmental measures such as recycling or composting, activities like these are the hallmarks of building a long-term sustainable community.

In the United States our typical land-use development patterns lead to a host of problems—urban sprawl, long commutes, heavy pollution, paved-over farmland, destruction of habitat, and isolation from each other, among other ills—which unfortunately are copied all over the world. As one small example of a way of life that respects the land and builds a sense of community, we have garnered national and even international attention. EcoVillage at Ithaca was one of a handful of finalists in the 1998 World Habitat Awards, and our project has been covered by major media from CNN to the *New York Times*. In a society hungry for better ways to live, our

EcoVillage project represents one small step in that direction.

We have had visitors of all kinds, from planning, design, and development professionals to people seeking community. After years of working informally with students, we are beginning to create more formalized relationships with both Cornell University and Ithaca College. Beginning this summer we hope to offer accredited courses which will include our own EcoVillage instructors.

My advice then, for building a green community on a budget, is to forget the latest solar gizmos and instead to take a giant step back to look at the whole picture. Where will you locate to minimize travel distances? How much land will be used for housing vs. open space? What energy-saving concepts can be designed into your buildings from the start (e.g., south-facing, super-insulation, and so on)? How can you best integrate food production? How will you conserve water? What lessons can you learn from nature's designs? Perhaps most importantly,

how will you nurture a green culture in your community—one that supports people to share resources and knowledge and laughter and tears? How will you share what you learn with the broader public? In answering these questions, a group is on its way to building a green community.  $\Omega$

*Liz Walker, co-founder and director of EcoVillage at Ithaca, lives in the FRoG and serves as a development consultant to the SoNG.*

*EcoVillage at Ithaca, Anabel Taylor Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853; 607-255-8276; EcoVillage@cornell.edu; www.EcoVillage.ithaca.ny.us.*



# BOFÆLLESKABER TO COHOUSING

BY KATHRYN McCAMANT & CHARLES  
DURRETT, WITH DANETTE MILMAN

**“W**E DON’T HAVE TO LIVE THE SAME WAY our parents did,” declared the earnest young architect. “We can do better!”

On a snowy winter eve in 1964 a group of 20 young Danes gathered in a cozy meeting room just outside Copenhagen to hear Jan Gudmand-Høyer, 24, recently returned from graduate school in the United States. He told this group of intent young professionals—the “cultural creatives” of their day—about his studies at Harvard, his tour of American “utopias” from former Shaker colonies to Colorado’s then-happening Drop City, and his vision of a kind of living arrangement that would fall somewhere between “utopia” and the single-family house.

Over several months, the group discussed possibilities for a more supportive living environment, reviewing the long history of communities and community ideas in Denmark and internationally. By the end of the year, they had bought land on the outskirts of Copenhagen with plans to build terraced houses around a central common house. Unfortunately, even though city officials supported their planned community, their neighbors did not, and the group eventually sold the site. In 1968 Gudmand-Høyer published a description of their vision, “The Missing Link between Utopia and the Dated One-Family House,” in a national newspaper, eliciting responses from over a hundred families interested in living in a similar community. The year before Bodil Graae, a social worker/anthropologist, had published a similar article, “Children Should Have One Hundred Parents,”



*The Thorsens have lived at Skråplanet, Denmark’s first cohousing community, the whole 27 years of its existence.*

which led to a group of 50 families interested in creating a similar project.

In 1968 the two groups joined forces and five years later, by the end of 1973, the combined group had built two communities, Sættedammen and Skråplanet. A third, Nonbo Hede, was completed in 1976. These early “pre-cohousing” communities were first steps toward the vision described by Gudmand-Høyer and Bodil Graae, but they never considered them the embodiment of their ideals. Although they had sought a diverse mix of ages and incomes for these three communities, social and financial realities called for compromise if they were to be built at all. From the perspective of these young idealists the new communities were nothing more than nice suburban developments for people who could afford to buy their own homes.

However, back in 1968 Gudmand-Høyer had also been working with another group to develop a more community-minded, economically diverse housing project. The Farum Project’s design called for dwellings for families and singles clustered around an indoor common area including a school, all connected by a glass-covered pedestrian street. At a housing exhibition in 1970 the Farum Project proposal attracted the interest of several nonprofit housing developers. In 1971, the Danish Building Research Institute sponsored a national design competition for low-rise, clustered housing. All of the winning proposals emphasized common facilities and resident participation in the design process—exactly what we have in cohousing today. The competition was well





Danish cohousers pioneered row houses with small front gardens lining pedestrian streets. Trundeslund, Denmark.

**Today there  
are over 300  
cohousing  
communities in  
Denmark.**

publicized and had a tremendous impact on the Danish housing debate. Five years later, in 1976, the first affordable rental cohousing community, Tinggården, was completed, sponsored by the Building Research Institute, designed by the winning architectural firm of its 1971 competition, and built by a nonprofit housing developer. By 1982, Denmark had 22 more owner-occupied, owner-developed cohousing communities, called *bofælleskaber*. (We coined the English translation “cohousing” in 1984.)

The cohousing concept eventually won the support of Danish banks and the government, but not without overcoming tremendous difficulties, particularly in terms of financing. In 1978 Gudmand-Høyer and others formed a support association to assist cohousing groups through the planning stages. Additional support followed with the 1981 passage of Denmark’s Cooperative Housing Association Law, which made it easier and less expensive to finance cohousing. Since then, most Danish cohousing communities have been structured as limited-equity cooperatives financed with government-sponsored loans.

Now there are over 300 completed cohousing communities in Denmark, including 10 for renters. Not only do new communities continue to be built, but the concept has been incorporated into master plans for large areas of new development. Ideas from cohousing have filtered into Danish society; for example, speculative cohousing developers have integrated the cohousing design concept, and many older neighborhoods have organized dinner clubs. Nearly every nonprofit social housing project in

Denmark includes some form of common house. However, in contrast to North America, Danish cohousers haven’t seen themselves as a movement and there is little communication between communities.

Danish cohousing has also changed over the years. The average size of individual residences in new communities is almost half of what it was in the original projects. Dwellings are clustered closer together, a tendency especially evident in the new communities that connect ground-level dwellings and common facilities under one roof, typically a glass-covered street. Preserving open space continues to be important. The range of unit mixes and the mixture of residents and household types has greatly diversified. Previous criticisms of cohousing as a high-priced option out of reach of common people are no longer true.

Other European countries—most notably the Netherlands—are now exploring similar community concepts. Sweden, Norway, Germany, and France have all developed slightly different models of cohousing communities. More recently cohousing communities have been built in Australia, New Zealand, Britain, and Japan.

In 1983 we traveled to Denmark to study these communities; our book about them, *CoHousing: A New Approach to Housing Ourselves*, was published in 1988. It sold almost 3,000 copies in just over a month.

One of our early public presentations, a slide show in Davis, California, just happened to include a group of people intrigued by this kind of community, an interested land developer, and a county planning commissioner



**The county planning commissioner declared that the next large-scale development should include a cohousing community.**



Unlike Denmark, in North America cohousers are part of a larger movement. At the National Cohousing Conference, 1999, Pioneer Valley.

who at the end of the evening stood up and declared that the next large-scale development proposed for Davis should include a cohousing community. The interested people formed a cohousing core group. The land developer soon began a new 425-unit subdivision of both single and multifamily housing. She attended the cohousing group's next meeting and offered them a site in her new subdivision. They said yes, and that initiated the first US cohousing community, 26-unit Muir Commons, completed in 1991.

Since then, about 50 cohousing communities have been completed in North America. The second project was 30-unit Winslow Cohousing on Bainbridge Island, near Seattle; the third was 12-unit Doyle Street

Cohousing in Emeryville, California. Perhaps because we have a more dynamic, open, and pioneering society on this side of the Atlantic, cohousing has become more affordable, more diverse, and more sustainable even faster than in Denmark.

Today cohousing projects in the United States and Canada are built as new developments, renovations of existing buildings, or a hybrid of the two. And once a project is built, a second often follows in the same area. For example, in Davis, there are now two cohousing communities in a town of 25,000. We have been fortunate to be involved in the designs of about 30 cohousing communities, and in that time have seen a growing trend towards sustainable design and construction practices. It's not just that people interested in living more sustainably are doing so, but that many who choose cohousing because they're seeking community also end up using less than a third of the energy they did in their previous houses.

We believe that by 2005 there will probably be a cohousing community in every major metropolitan area in the United States and in many smaller towns as well. And, as in Europe, cohousing communities will continue to serve as "building blocks" for ecovillages—village-scale settlements made up of several cohousing communities—with even more intent to live lightly on the planet. Ω

*Parts of this article are excerpted with permission from CoHousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves (Ten Speed Press, 1988, 1994) by architects Kathryn McCamant and Charles Durrett. Updated by Danette Milman, a housing and transportation planner working at their architectural firm, the CoHousing Company. Contact: 510-549-9980; chuck@cohousingco.com.*

## With a Little Help from Our Friends

BY LOIS ARKIN

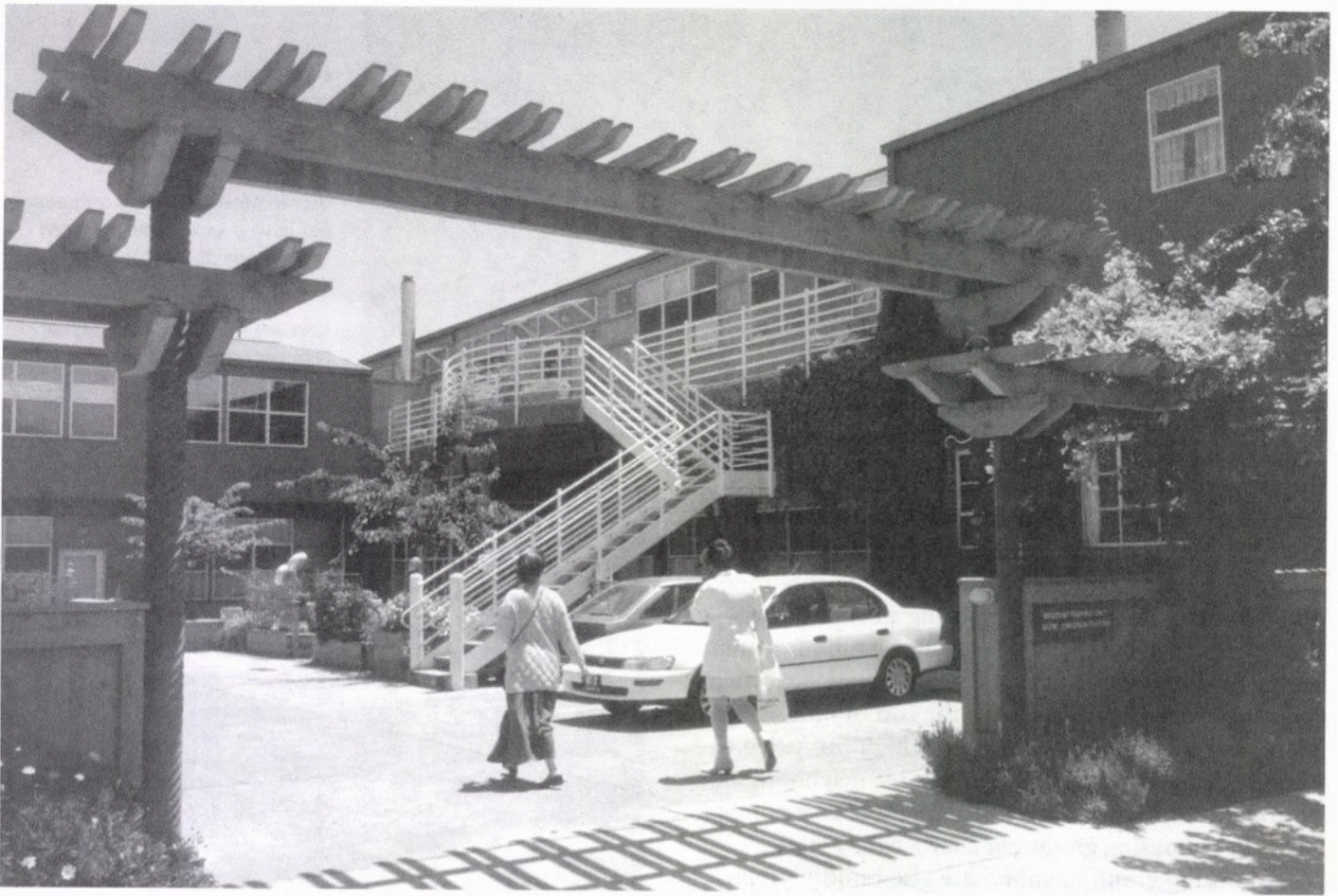
The year was 1988. The book *CoHousing* had just been published. Katie McCamant and Chuck Durrett were eager to share their research. No cohousing communities were even on the drawing boards in the US yet. Our nonprofit Cooperative Resources & Services Project (CRSP) in Los Angeles had been following Katie and Chuck's work closely, envisioning their ideas as part of an urban ecovillage somewhere in Los

Angeles. We invited them to L.A. to promote their new book and present a slide show to people interested in intentional communities. We also invited a friend from the *Los Angeles Times*, Connie Koenenn, to come and interview the authors. The resulting front-page feature in the "View" section of the *Times* (Dec. 7, 1988) was picked up for national publication by Associated Press, and the rest is history.

But that's not all. The photo for

the initial *Times* article was taken in front of the 40-unit apartment building across from our CRSP office. Eight years later CRSP purchased that building. The neighborhood has become the Los Angeles Eco-Village. The Eco-Village intentional neighbors who live in the building are in now the process of retrofitting it as a cohousing community. We could not have dreamed of this outcome in 1988, and the same probably goes for the many people living happily in cohousing across North America today. Ω





JOHN FABEL

*Even a former factory can be turned into a comfortable, attractive neighborhood home. Doyle Street, Emeryville, California.*

# REINVIGORATING URBAN NEIGHBORHOODS

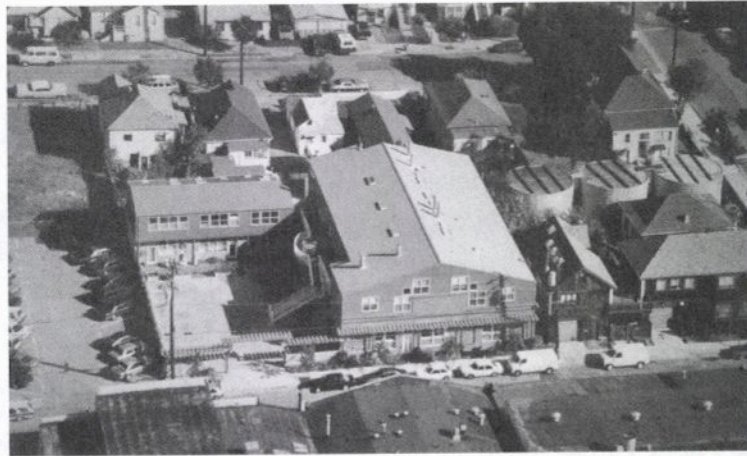
BY KATHRYN MCCAMANT  
& DANETTE MILMAN

**I**T'S LATE AFTERNOON, AND THE SMELL OF barbecued chicken and roasting vegetables drifts out into the former industrial neighborhood in Emeryville, California. In the sunny corner of their L-shaped building, a group of neighbors chat in lawn chairs, framed by nearby climbing roses, trumpet vines, and flowering cherry trees. Others tend the barbecue. Small children wheel in circles on their tricycles; older kids play ball in the parking lot. Welcome to Doyle Street Cohousing—and neighborhood life deep in an inner city.

Cohousing communities offer a new model for reinvigorating urban neighborhoods like this one in Emeryville. They can help stabilize inner city neighborhoods by attracting mixed-income residents with an interest in cooperation and a long-term commitment to the area. The experiences of Doyle Street Cohousing, Southside Park Cohousing in Sacramento, and Berkeley Cohousing in Berkeley, California, illustrate how cohousing projects can transform derelict urban properties into vital residential communities as well as influence the future of the surrounding neighborhood. The increasing number of urban cohousing communities, planned or under construction, show that these communities can offer a model applicable in diverse regions.



The future residents of a cohousing community, the driving force in the design and development process, are incredibly persistent and dedicated to creating good places to live, raise their children, and grow old. Their persistence pays off, assisting the project



*LEFT: Doyle Street is just one of a growing trend to retrofitting cohousing communities in existing inner city neighborhoods.*

*BELOW: Most cohousing communities have a large common green like this one at Southside Park, Sacramento.*

*OPPOSITE PAGE: Neighbors stop to chat with each other on the generous front porches, Berkeley Cohousing.*

PHOTOS: THE COHOUSING COMPANY

through the potentially arduous government approval process and in securing financing, a particularly difficult problem for any developer attempting to build in run-down or otherwise “questionable” urban neighborhoods.

One of the difficulties in financing a cohousing project in an inner city is that frequently banks find no “comparables” or similar “product” on which to base their financial analysis of the project. Thus the cost of units in the cohousing community often appears high compared to other housing in these older low-income neighborhoods. Fortunately the level of social and financial commitment from the cohousing group can allay a bank’s fears.

Cohousing group members are also building their communities long before construction starts. Their commitment is to their vision of a cooperative neighborhood, not just a private house at a certain price. Time and again, these groups overcome seemingly insurmountable hurdles and create communities that specifically meet their goals.

In the Doyle Street and Southside Park developments the cohousing concept helped people overcome fears of neighborhoods in which they would not have otherwise chosen to buy. The prospect of knowing their neighbors on a first-name basis allows their more vulnerable members—seniors, children, and women—to feel safe in an urban setting. This sense of security is strengthened by design considerations that encourage social interaction, such as clustered units around a central open space, or kitchen windows with views to the central area where children play.

Cohousing communities usually strive to accommodate a diversity of incomes, as well as ages, household types, and racial backgrounds. This diversity complements urban neighborhoods whose residents often do not want more low-income housing than they have already, yet fear gentrification. Contradicting conventional real estate wisdom that affordable housing will lower the appeal of adjacent market-rate homes, cohousing communities seek out such diversity and can be disappointed when financing options limit their income diversity.



Cohousing communities also tend to attract people who want to live less car-dependent lifestyles. They walk to local stores, patronize public transit, and generally contribute to creating vibrant pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods. All of these aspects make cohousing an ideal model for urban revitalization.

### **Doyle Street Cohousing, Emeryville**

Completed in 1992, Doyle Street Cohousing was created by converting an existing warehouse to a 12-unit community with 2,100 sq. ft. of common facilities. The quarter-acre site is in a neighborhood struggling with drugs and violence and filled with small industry and older homes, many in a deteriorated condition. When the cohousing development team first sought people interested in being part of this community, they found an empty warehouse in a dilapidated neighborhood. As a private development with no outside subsidies, the sales prices for homes in the community were market rate, and seemed high in comparison to the neighborhood. Nevertheless, the idea of an urban community attracted a mix of household types who helped develop the design, champion the project through a tough planning approval process, and raise predevelopment funding.

Like most cohousing communities, this group of residents had not known each other previously and came



together specifically to create a residential community based on cooperation. It is unlikely any of them would have considered buying into this neighborhood on their own. Our architectural firm designed the Doyle Street community so that all private entries and most kitchens look onto a shared courtyard, with the common house at the central corner visible to all who enter the site. Together with the residents we created a place that feels safe and comfortable for single women, seniors, and families with small children. A strong community, not a gated entry, provides safety.

During Doyle Street's seven years of occupancy, its residents have played an active role in the surrounding neighborhood, including organizing community meetings, sitting on local city committees, working on graffiti clean-up at the neighborhood park, and supporting a member's campaign for Emeryville City Council. The community hosts numerous neighborhood meetings in its common house, providing one of the few comfortable and convenient locations for such events. The natural exchange of information that takes place in the community keeps most members better informed on local issues than in their previous homes. While local politicians think of the community as a voting block, in fact, residents represent many sides of the issues.

The Doyle Street community also helped to catalyze additional revitalization of the neighborhood. Since the



completion of the project, a bilingual Montessori School, several live-work projects, and new office space have been built in the immediate area.

### **Southside Park Cohousing, Sacramento**

Southside Park Cohousing, completed in 1993, in a redevelopment area in downtown Sacramento, provided 25 homes clustered on 1.3 acres on a traditional neighborhood block. The porches and street facades fit into the surrounding older neighborhood while the backyards open onto a common green.

The community was initiated by a group of residents

committed to creating a mixed-income community in the downtown area where they would be less dependent on cars. The cohousing group had been meeting for several years when they heard the Sacramento Redevelopment Agency was preparing to issue a "Request for Proposals" for this site. Pooling resources, the group hired several consultants, including ourselves, to assist in preparing a submittal. During the design process, the group worked with the surrounding neighbors to gain their support.

"The neighbors were wary initially," recalls one Southside Park resident. "They had seen developers come in trying to make a quick buck with some new development. They didn't want more short-term rental housing that would attract people who weren't interested in the neighborhood. Or they assumed we'd come in and gentrify the area in an elite way. Slowly they began to see that we were a group of owners who wanted to be part of the neighborhood over the long term."

The eventual support of the wider neighborhood proved critical, giving the cohousing proposal a chance against competing proposals submitted by established developers. The Redevelopment Agency was initially skeptical that cohousing could succeed, since no one was building market-rate townhomes for families in the downtown area at the time. But the member group's persistence and the support of future neighbors paid off and the Agency gave them the opportunity to develop the site.

One of the initial goals of the group was to develop a mixed-income community. Again through creative persistence, they put together special financing (the Redevelopment Agency holds part of land value as second mortgages) allowing 11 of the 25 homes to be offered to low- and moderate-income households.

Today Sacramento Street Cohousing is a success. The community has clearly helped to stabilize and rejuvenate the larger neighborhood, gaining the accolades of the Redevelopment Agency. It has also won several design awards. More home buyers have moved into the neighborhood and are fixing up the older houses. The few resales have found ready buyers and the community maintains its commitment to including low-income home buyers.

Looking back, it is hard to believe the hurdles this community overcame to gain city approval. Even upon completion, when 100% of the homes had purchase commitments, Southside Park failed to get appraisals supporting its sales prices, forcing residents to raise more money for higher down payments. The framework of cohousing built a community of committed residents, even before buildings were completed, who supported each other emotionally and financially to get their community built.



## Berkeley Cohousing

The members of Berkeley Cohousing transformed a poorly maintained and largely vacant neighborhood eyesore into a model development. Located in central Berkeley on a busy street, the three-quarters-of-an-acre site had a number of derelict buildings on it when the cohousing group first considered the site in 1992. Over the next four years, a dedicated group of resident owners worked with our design firm to convert the property to a community of 14 condominiums with 1,600 square feet of common facilities.

The first hurdle was working out a way for the city to allow a rental property to be converted to home ownership, as Berkeley has very strict laws protecting rental units. Although the property had been vacant for years and its buildings used for drug trafficking, to get the property converted from rental use to homeowner units required the Berkeley City Council to create a special ordinance specifically for the project. In return for the conversion, residents offered to maintain the community's long-term affordability through resale restrictions that cap future sales prices in relation to cost of living, not real estate, increases. This is very unusual since the project was completely privately financed with no outside subsidies. Half the units were sold at prices affordable to households making less than 80 percent of median income in the area. These arrangements were made possible by the resident participation that cohousing allows.

Berkeley Cohousing residents acted as their own developer, contributing the risky predevelopment funds themselves with support from family and friends. For a group of people with no previous real estate development experience, many of them first-time home buyers, it was an enormous commitment of time and financial resources to make their dream a reality. This has created a significant neighborhood impact; for example, they've hosted numerous neighborhood events and organized earthquake preparedness and neighborhood safety programs. Residents of the adjacent apartment complex are considering how they can incorporate more cohousing principles in their building, and the owner of an adjacent property hopes to join the community.

Community members sought to make their buildings a model of sustainable redevelopment, as energy-efficient and environmentally friendly as possible within a tight construction budget. To start, they sought to reuse as much of the existing buildings as possible. The design called for the complete rehabilitation of four existing buildings and the addition of four new dwellings. The units range in size from small cottages of 570 square feet to a 1118-sq.-ft. flat. Careful attention to design convinced residents to reduce the size of their homes so that they could afford extensive community facilities. The homes, built with environmentally sustainable and

healthy materials, reduce energy use through passive solar design, compact fluorescent lighting, and efficient heating systems. Car use has been reduced by encouraging car-pooling, on-site childcare, sharing resources, and home offices.

The community won several awards, including a Housing and Urban Development Agency's "Award for Building Innovation for Homeownership." Still, its multiple levels of complexity make Berkeley Cohousing the type of project that a conventional developer would not take on without a large profit margin. Berkeley Cohousing does not fit any of the standard ideas of what the market wants. It took a group of people with a long-term commitment to creating a great place to live to make the time and financial investments that made this project possible.

THESE SUCCESSES AREN'T ISOLATED EXAMPLES. IN each of these cohousing communities, and others (such as the recently completed Cambridge Cohousing; now-under-construction Old Oakland Cohousing in Oakland, California, and Sonora Community in Tucson), cohousing groups have created successful intergenerational communities on previously derelict, under-utilized urban sites. In doing so, they provide a catalyst for stability and stronger neighborhood ties. For these cohousing residents, sharing resources and working together have become a way of life, helping develop a sense of responsibility and accountability to each other and their surroundings. On a day-to-day basis they show that neighbors can work together and live without fear. The long-term effects of these communities will likely prove even more beneficial to their larger neighborhoods. Ω

*Excerpted with permission from New Village Journal, Issue #1, 1999. Published semi-annually by Architects/Designers/Planners for Social Responsibility. New Village Journal, 510-845-0685; editor@newvillage.net; www.newvillage.net.*

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*Danette Milman is a housing and transportation planner working at the CoHousing Company. Her previous research with the Joyce Foundation focused on the impacts of urban sprawl.*





ROB SANDELIN

Children at Sharingwood Cohousing.

## *'I Want to Live Here Forever, Dad'*

BY ROB SANDELIN

**T**HEY COME OVER THE HILL IN a swarm—five, six, seven of them, moving fast and in random directions. Another squadron moves in and circles behind me. One by one my comrades are captured and I alone survive. What is this: a war correspondent in Bosnia? Nope, just another game of hide'n'seek at Sharingwood Cohousing.

Without any doubt, kids and kids' stuff are the most visible icons of our community. The circular roadway is littered with trikes, bikes, helmets, coats, ridey toys, and skates. And kids. A whole herd of them, some from the community and some from up the road, playing tag or basketball, racing bikes, baking mud pies, swinging, sliding, and transforming into pirates or elves at the blink of an eye.

At the edge of the playground an intense negotiation takes place. Twelve-year-old Michael is working out a complex deal involving swapping five-year-old Kara's basketball for

a delayed story and a pull around the circle in a wagon.

Cookies! The word spreads like wildfire and a line of kids heads for Heidi's house where freshly baked cookies just came out of the oven. How did they know? A kind of genetic code that enables kids to sense cookies? The toddlers seem indifferent to the cookie radar and continue their trip in the playground boat.

"Where are you going?"

"Africa! We're going to see lions," replies two-year-old Sam. All three growl menacingly and I back away. This triggers a chase and attack instinct and I barely make it to the top of the commons before I'm swarmed by tiny roaring lions.

But Heidi distracts them long enough with a basket of cookies so I can escape. Meanwhile a rousing game of basketball is underway, complete with radio commentary by nine-year-old Ben, who graphically describes in his best announcer voice each amazing move to the hoop.

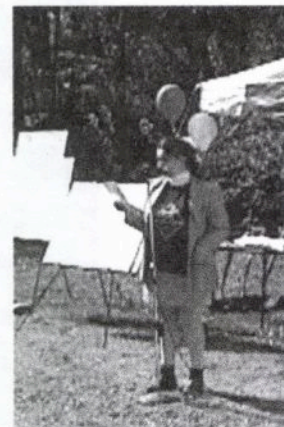
What's this? The sound of crying brings eight adults to a halt and the closest one attends to the "owee." A new bandage and a cup of juice and the five-year-old injury victim is back in the fray. The fact that the ministering adult was not the child's parent is barely noticed. A group of kids converges at one house for a painting session and the three two-year-olds end up at another house to "make dinner" out of clay. The children's access to the toys and resources from half a dozen houses, pretty much any time during the day, is just the way the neighborhood works. An endless summer camp, with each new day bringing fun and surprises, friendship, and opportunity.

Later that night, we tell stories around the campfire in the Sharingwood campground. "Dad," says my sleepy five-year-old daughter, "I want to live here forever." Ω

*Rob Sandelin lives at Sharingwood Cohousing in Snohomish, Washington.*



Until this day, the Community of Takoma Village was made up of the intentions, dreams, plans and designs that flowed from the hearts and minds of 40 people (give or take a few) who have a somewhat rosy view of what a community could be, and architects and a developer who thought this was the right time and place to build a neighborhood, rather than just another set of buildings. It was made up of relationships, mostly among people who didn't know each other at first, and who have since come to trust and care about each other.



From this day on, Takoma Village Cohousing will be a place of dirt and brick and mortar and wood and cementitious hardy plank siding and geothermal pumps and pipes, located on a very specific piece of land bounded by Blair Road, Butternut, Aspen, and 4<sup>th</sup> Streets in the City of Washington, D.C.

When it is finished, the end product will be greater than the sum of its physical structures and its human relationships. It will be a caring neighborhood and community.

*From Anna Amato's speech at Takoma Village Cohousing Groundbreaking Ceremony, 10/22/99.*

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# What We Can Learn from the Shakers

*The rolling deep may overturn,  
The valleys sink, the mountains burn,  
But thou my soul shall firmly stand,  
Supported by God's righteous hand.  
To Thee O Lord my thanks I give,  
'Tis by Thy holy faith I live.  
My life I freely have laid down,  
To bear the cross and wear the crown.*

— "The Rolling Deep," a Shaker hymn of 1826

**L**IKE A FRAIL BUT determined nightingale, the voice of Sister Mildred Barker—a cool soprano shiver—unwinds like a lifeline the solemn words of "The Rolling Deep," a Shaker plaint that sums up for many the struggle and reward of living in community.

For the Shakers, community is a mystical, immeasurable quantity of their Christian faith—a faith once elucidated through the mouth and miraculous ecstasies of their 18th century founder, Ann Lee.

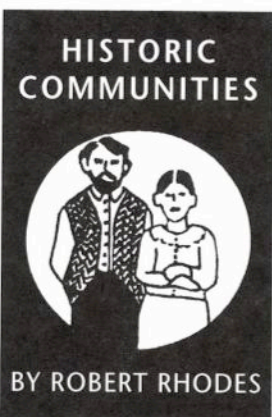
Mother Ann brought her "shaking Quakers" to the American colonies amid the fury of the revolution that wrenched this country, and by default Lee and her twirling Christian anarchists, from the muffling domination of Great Britain. In England, Lee and her strange gaggle of millenarian ecstasies found only the promise of outright persecution. To the Shakers, Lee was the personification of

the second coming of Christ, a shocking belief that stunned an England that had already shunned the Puritans into American exile. Things were not much better on this continent at first, but the Shakers' seeds of growth and faith were ultimately sown in the tough but receptive soil of the new land, and their life of quiet, hard-working community took root and attracted wide interest.

When Lee died in 1784, there was not yet a single Shaker commune established. But within the next half-century, more than 6,000 Shakers—all converts, for the sect is strictly celibate—would inhabit 24 communities in a band from the northeast to Kentucky to Georgia and Florida, where a few short-lived communities were founded and later

closed. At their peak in 1845, there were 4,000 Shakers in about 20 settlements. These communities would embark on the broad variety of enterprises and crafts that have since distinguished the Shakers as much for the exacting work of their hands as for their theology.

Indeed, most expect it will be the Shakers' handiwork—more than their theology or their life in community—that will survive to define them. In the case of the Shakers, a chair may prove to be sturdier than belief, or a delicate faith-filled hymn.



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*Robert Rhodes, a former journalist, was an editor at the Northwest Arkansas Times for 11 years. He and his family live at Starland Colony, a community of Hutterian Brethren in Minnesota.*



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Mildred Barker, along with a few other Shaker sisters, recorded "The Rolling Deep" and several other Shaker hymns for a grateful and perhaps overanxious posterity starting in 1963. It was an age that had more Shakers than today, but when the Shakers still knew their numbers were going to dwindle if not evaporate altogether. Urgency informs these gentle recordings, as if time were not only of the essence, but rationed for the sake of these songs.

In these quavering, holy melodies—which sound vaguely Appalachian or like Hebridean airs—we hear what historians fully expected to be the last authentic voices coming from the United Society of Believers, as the Shaker sect is formally known. This fear turns out to have been premature. Indeed, nearly 40 years later, the Shakers have not evaporated at all, though their ranks have shrunk to a single commune in Maine—Sabbathday Lake—where an industrious half-dozen or so operate a mail-order herb business, host a Shaker archive, and run a printing interest that keeps valuable Shaker writings and studies before the public. They live peaceably amid what must be (to them) an annoying deathwatch that started more than a century ago. In fact, it seems the Shakers have been about to die off since before the Civil War. They have not only survived, but even recently admitted a new member, giving hope that somehow, the gentle gifts of Shakerism might survive a bit longer, even if in a form the plain and straitlaced forebears of long ago might not recognize.

As a Hutterite, as a member of another Christian communal movement, it is interesting, even necessary, to look at the Believers in the hesitant shades of the present age. It is a time when most still expect the Shakers to vanish, leaving only their trademark chairs and other collector-friendly relics as a testament to what once was. To these people, impatient messengers of a rude and tentative doom, Shaker life has been reduced to little more than furniture and clothespins, without a moment's bother for the people who struggle to carry on the faith that helped produce these earthly things. But life is

not so easy to predict, as the Shakers can attest. Who would have imagined Ann Lee's prophetic influence would have lasted this long, or that people all over the world would busy themselves writing about the end of the Shakers even before it happened?

In all propriety, we cannot reduce the life of the Shakers to the advent of a single dying moment, any more than we can reduce it to a chair. That would be a rude demise indeed, one the Shakers do not deserve.

Perhaps, like a lot of people who long for the vague likeness of utopia, I am an armchair Shaker, or maybe only a devotee of Shakerism's fine and sensible metaphors. As a communalist, and more directly as a Christian, I know we should make neither requiems nor parthenons for a people who haven't died yet, and who show every sign of vigor and true life. Otherwise, we can fall prey to the stale and consuming air of museums, such as we find sometimes in the Shaker villages preserved here and there, in all their uncanny emptiness. Indeed, to look upon the Shakers merely as a

preserved, stuffed, or pickled people is to adopt entirely the colorless, stereopticon view of what once was: broad and dimensionless as a postcard, and strangely unpeopled—an abandoned faith.

Though many think the death knell has already sounded for the Shakers, theirs is hardly an abandoned faith. Not yet anyway; and perhaps never.

Theirs was a brief but evocative heyday. Scholars say after the peak of 1845, the decline in Shaker numbers began in earnest. By the early 1900s, the communities already were dwindling quite noticeably, the rolls shortened not so much by celibacy as by other factors, notably a very low retention rate. Most communities took in orphan children, hoping some would choose to remain for life; few did. Others left after becoming committed Shakers, having grown dissatisfied with the disciplined, some say authoritarian, lifestyle. Gradually communities began to close or were absorbed by other Shaker settlements until now, there is only

**Shakers were activists for women's suffrage, gender equality, pacifism, and the abolition of slavery.**



Sabbathday Lake with its company of hardy survivors. Though the Shakers were once the most industrious communal movement in the country, if not in the world (they even attracted the attention of Tolstoy, with whom a few letters were exchanged), their gentle subtraction seemed inevitable and happened very quietly. There was no fury, no implosion of leadership—only a gradual diminishing by the hand of death and departures.

No one can say what will become of the Shaker tradition now, or whether the commune in Maine will spark enough new life to carry Ann Lee's vision very far into the new millennium. This we do know, however: Amid the Shakers there is and always has been a very active and liv-

ing vision, a sense of being truly called to live in community and to share all with one another. Even if the call seemed to some stern and hoarse, and Ann Lee's vision hard or even heretical, both were and still are genuine, and to the people who follow the Shaker way, as real and authentic as any God ever instituted.

Reading the Shakers' history (the Believers produced quite a number of devoted diarists and kept communal journals), one gets a sense of how they achieved their faltering longevity. Though they stood apart from the society of the "world" and its influences, the Shakers at the height of their maturity and zeal still responded to every curve the "world" threw them, and did so with a finesse and

## Shaker-Related Literature and Music

Following is a brief listing of books, pamphlets, and other material about the history, beliefs, and lifestyle of the United Society of Believers, commonly known as the Shakers. This list is by no means authoritative; there are many other fine works and studies still extant in this broad and well-plowed field. Most of these books are long out of print, but many have been preserved by the printery at Sabbathday Lake Shaker Village in Maine, the lone active outpost of Shaker community today. Other books listed, because of enduring interest in the Shakers and the high quality of the research and writing done about them, have never gone out of print.

For volumes reprinted by the Shakers themselves, contact the *United Society of Shakers, Sabbathday Lake Shaker Village, 707 Shaker Road, New Gloucester, ME 04260*. Other books are available through local bookstores.

### Books and Pamphlets:

*Service Is Our Life: Excerpts from the Diaries of Sister Jennie Mathers, Shaker School Teacher 1920–1928*, George Lorenz. (1998, The Carol Press.) 99 pp.

*Shakerism: Its Meaning and Message*, Anna White and Leila S. Taylor. (1905, reprinted by the United Society of Shakers, Sabbathday Lake, Maine.) 417 pp.

*The Sabbathday Lake Shakers: An Introduction to the Shaker Heritage*, Sister R. Mildred Barker. (1985, The Shaker Press, Sabbathday Lake, Maine.) 32 pp.

*Growing Up Shaker*, Sister Frances A. Carr. (1995, United Society of Shakers, Sabbathday Lake, Maine.) 133 pp.

*The People Called Shakers*, Edward Deming Andrews. (1953, Oxford University Press; reprinted 1963 by Dover Publications.) 351 pp.

### Recordings:

*Simple Gifts: Shaker Chants and Spirituals*. The Boston Camerata: Joel Cohen, director; with the Schola Cantorum of Boston: Frederick Jodry, director; and the Shaker Community of Sabbathday Lake, Maine. (1995, Erato Disques.)

*Early Shaker Spirituals*. Sung by Sister R. Mildred Barker, with Sister Ethel Peacock, Elsie McCool, Della Haskell, Marie Burgess, Frances Carr, and other members of the United Society of Shakers, Sabbathday Lake, Maine. (1996, Rounder Records.)

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Blacksmithing	November 17-19
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unified effort most churches could never muster. Though they saddled themselves with a heaping array of rules and regulations, the Shaker communities were still surprisingly responsive when the moment arose. They were often in the thick of ten<sup>+</sup>pests surrounding pacifism, women's suffrage, abolition of slavery (the Shakers admitted several black members, including liberated slaves), equal standing between men and women, and other matters of concern. Their devotion to simplicity and excellence combined to create a Shaker mystique in every enterprise they embarked upon—from furniture making to garden seeds to the hundred and one gadgets and notions (thimbles, oval boxes, hats, brooms) credited to Shaker ingenuity. In the Shaker credo, work was akin to and inseparable from worship, and excellence and economy of form were expected to follow, and did.

At the heart of this was a distinct equality—of work and praise, of men and women in leadership roles, of the feminine and masculine aspects of God and Christ. The Shaker faith is an integration of this equality, in outlook if not always in practice.

And above all, there was always the call—the one Ann Lee heard, and all the Shakers ever since, the call that drew them mysteriously together.

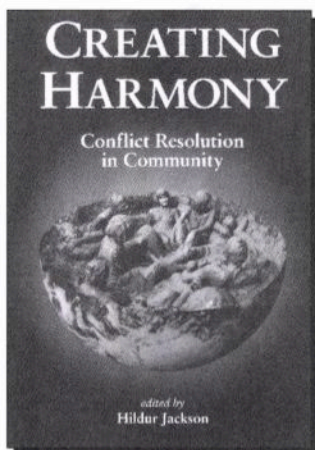
In a slim book she wrote about Sabbathday Lake and the Shaker tradition, Mildred Barker summed up her view of the Shaker life, and the spiritual verities that lay behind it. As one who also lives in Christian community, these ideals seem very familiar to me, and their motivation and sense still quite valid, perhaps more so, in today's world. They sum up the spirit that draws us together, not only to seek community but to seek God in community. Sister Mildred wrote:

*Basically, the Shaker is as other men: he feels the same hurts, joys, longings and temptations. There is one great difference, however. The Shaker has, as have some others, heard the call of God and joyfully decided to accept what God wills for him. In an age which so largely forgets God, the Shaker considers it a special privilege to have been allowed to share in a steady round of praise and of loving service to the Almighty.*

That call is still being heard, if faintly, even if the rolling deep may overturn and hide the Shakers for awhile. Ω



# REVIEWS



## *Creating Harmony: Conflict Resolution in Community*

Hildur Jackson, editor

Gaia Trust/Permanent Publications, 1999  
Pb., 269 pp., approximately \$22 (US)  
plus shipping

Available from:

Permanent Publications  
Hayden House Ltd.  
The Sustainability Centre  
East Meon, Hampshire GU32 1HR  
England  
Fax: +44-0-1730-823-322  
hello@permaculture.co.uk

*Reviewed by Tree Bressen*

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR AN IN-DEPTH, practical book with nuts-and-bolts information on how to resolve community conflicts, this book is probably not it. However, *Creating Harmony* may be just right if you'd enjoy a sampling of approaches that takes a broad view of conflict and focuses a lot on prevention.

The first section, "Learning to Live in Harmony with All Creation," points our attention toward listening to the needs of the land as the starting point for peaceful living. From natural law and perennial

wisdom to attunement and permaculture, a variety of methods for finding ecological harmony are explored. Short selections cover topics such as sacred architecture, evolutionary circles, and David Bohm dialogues.

The second section, "Conflict Solving: Lessons from Communities All Over the World" includes pieces on the cooperative culture of Ladakh; the Sarvodaya movement of Sri Lanka; the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother at Auroville (India); heart-sharing circles at Tui (Aotearoa/New Zealand); combining social, spiritual and ecological aspirations at Lebensgarten (Germany); ethics committees at Sunrise Ranch community (United States); and economic development at Maleny (Australia). The authors share highlights and insights, tips and experiences.

The third section, "Conflict Resolution Techniques," describes specific methods more directly, with contributors familiar to American communitarians such as Patch Adams on humor, Diana Christian on "ingredients" for forming communities, and Betty Didcoct on consensus. It includes chapters on voice toning, community visioning and planning, analyzing problems, "insight facilitation," personality types, and my favorite piece of the book, a chapter on betrayal by Ben Fuchs of Findhorn.

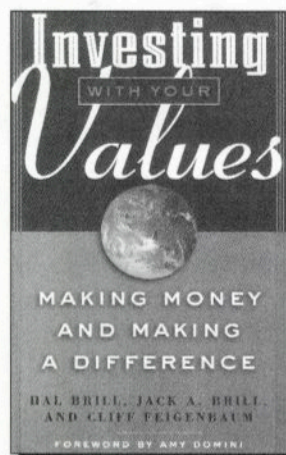
Fuchs frames responses to betrayal as attempts to overcome the sense of powerlessness or meaninglessness engendered by feeling victimized. He explains how people may strive for revenge not only by seeking "an eye for an eye," but also through denial, cynicism, paranoia, self-betrayal, withholding, blaming, moral superiority, or even success ("I'll show them, I'll be more successful, gain more power, and then I won't be vulnerable").

At their root, all of these strategies are attempts to avoid pain, says Fuchs. He counsels readers to go through the process of accepting painful feelings, followed by genuine letting go. He goes further to suggest there are valuable lessons to be learned through experiences of betrayal; it is a form of initiation in mythical archetype as well as in our lived experiences.

For me these insights were a gem. While as a whole this anthology is not well edited in my opinion (including spelling, grammar, and punctuation

errors), if you take the time to sift through you will likely discover your own gems—moments, stories, and processes that shine out. You may also sight twinkles: glimpses of techniques that may not be explained enough for your community to start using them right away, but will point out to you where to look for further information. In addition, this book's usefulness is enhanced by an annotated table of contents and a global resource section.

*Tree Bressen is a consensus facilitator and teacher living in Eugene, Oregon.*



## *Investing with Your Values: Making Money and Making a Difference*

by Hal Brill, Jack A. Brill, and Cliff Feigenbaum

Bloomberg Press, 1999  
Hb., 364 pp., \$23.95  
Booksellers, or 888-417-9597

*Reviewed by Bill Becker*

SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE INVESTING (SRI) is coming of age! For many years, SRI was viewed as a "good idea" but required accepting lower rates of return on your investment. Not any more. The Domini 400 (the main SRI index) has exceeded the return on the S&P 500 Index for some years now. "Don't be standard and poor" was the advice of the authors, who have many years of combined SRI investment background and experience. They show how individual investors with conscience can participate effectively and profitably in equity markets.



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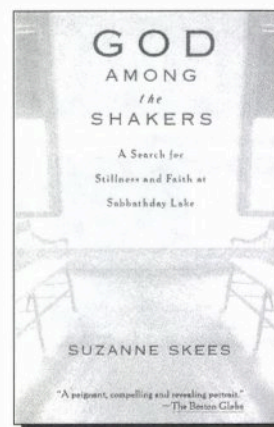
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Natural Investors, as they are referred to, desire to make a difference. And talking with your checkbook (or these days with your electronic transfers) is showing itself to be of substantial impact to many companies' activity. One of the most vivid examples of SRI influence was the impact on the South African apartheid regime. When investors either chose or were compelled to reduce their investment options in South Africa, a pressure was brought to bear that contributed significantly to the dissolution of the apartheid government.

I found *Investing with Your Values* to be a very readable guide, understandable to the investment layperson. The authors educate at basic levels by providing references and resources that can help the individual make decisions in specific economic sectors where they wish the impact of their values to be present. There is no need to be embarrassed if you don't understand some of the investment terminology. The authors wisely include nuts-and-bolts definitions. There are listings of fund performance, its management and, by reason of portfolio turnover, its tax implications. This book is comprehensive and informative.

If you are values driven, wishing to invest in social change through economic impact, this book will help you make sound choices. Any investment requires research. There will be homework to do. But with the tables, surveys, and models available in this book, the conscience-minded investor can see hope and possibility in the often complex world of financial investing.

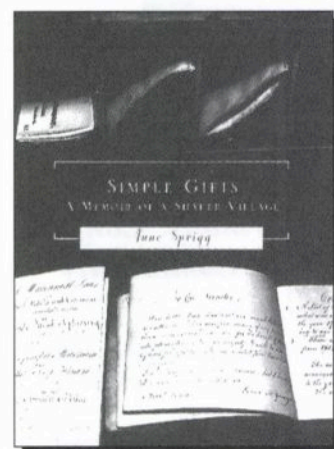
*Bill Becker, who has lived in community for nearly 30 years, lives at Sunrise Ranch, a 54-year-old community in Loveland, Colorado. He is currently CEO of Sunrise Credit Union, a values-based full service financial institution. Sunrise Credit Union: [www.sunrisecreditunion.org](http://www.sunrisecreditunion.org).*



## ***God Among the Shakers: A Search for Stillness and Faith at Sabbathday Lake***

by Suzanne Skees

Hyperion, 1998, 304 pp.  
Hb., \$29.95, Pb. \$12.95



## ***Simple Gifts: A Memoir of a Shaker Village***

by June Sprigg

Random House, 1998  
Pb., 240 pp., \$12

*Reviewed by Robert Rhodes*

"THEY NEVER TOOK UP WITH BIG Brother—Big Mother was about as far as they went." So wrote Margaret Atwood in the *New York Times*, declaring the peaceful, eccentric communalists known as the Shakers to be her favorite utopians of the past thousand years—a soon-to-pass millenium that has seen more than its share of utopias (and dystopias) come and go and, sometimes, explode amid scandal and mutual disgust.

Not the Shakers, though. Their

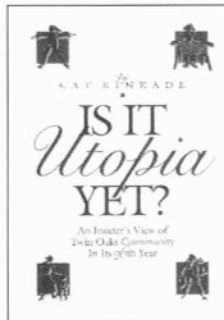


congenial demise, like their heyday, seems to be a much quieter, calmer, more civilized affair, even if the few remaining Shakers carry on as if there will not only be a tomorrow, but the potential for a real future. And maybe so, our God—and the Shakers' God—being a God of miracles.

Still, our inner voice tells us otherwise, hinting at a future certainly, but a brief and tentative one. Someday, and everyone knows it, the Shakers will simply cease to be, like a lot of us, and that will be that. No need to be sad, either, though we will be: the Shakers have known it wouldn't last ever since it began. God's greater plan, the Shakers seemed to say again and again, is so much larger than our human ambitions to live without sinning, or to love our neighbor as ourselves—much less to live with him as a brother. The Shakers have walked their appointed path, and soon the journey will be done, and the dust broomed neatly into the fireplace of memory.

As this day of destiny draws near if not nigh, two recent books have taken a considered, sensitive, and yet incisive look at the waning, momentary days of Shakerdom. Once America's most vivid, industrious, and thriving communal movement, now reduced to a handful of devoted survivors by the attritions of age, celibacy, and lack of interest, the United Society of Believers remains active in only one place in the world—the Sabbathday Lake commune in rural Maine. Here, the world's only Shakers operate an herb business and a few other enterprises and, like their whirling, persecuted forebears did, wait for what could be their extinction.

While other Shaker villages have become whitewashed museums, or even Sufi retreat centers, Sabbathday Lake stubbornly refuses to die, and with it survives, at least for a little while, the millenarian dreams of 18th century founder Ann Lee, who brought her "Shaking Quakers" to America. Like so many who sought American refuge, Mother Ann and her followers were a combination of mystic and anarchist, fleeing a Puritan-tired England that would not accommodate Lee's vision. What they found here was not always genial, but it was a fertile ground for the idealistic seeds the Believers brought with them and cultivated wherever the climate seemed right, from Maine to Kentucky to Florida.



## An Insider's View of Twin Oaks Community In Its 26th Year by Kat Kinkade

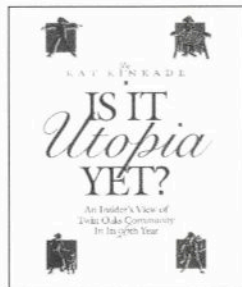
*Is it Utopia Yet?* is a lively, first-hand account of the unique struggles and triumphs of the first 25 years of Twin Oaks Community, one of America's most prominent and successful communes. This thoughtful and entertaining 320 page book, from the author of *A Walden Two Experiment*, is illustrated with 16 photographs and 60 cartoons.

### Twin Oaks Publishing

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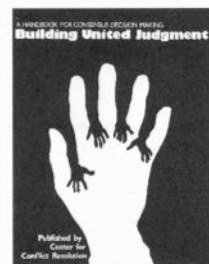
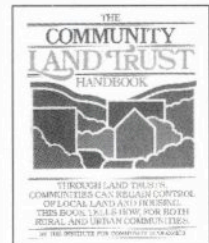


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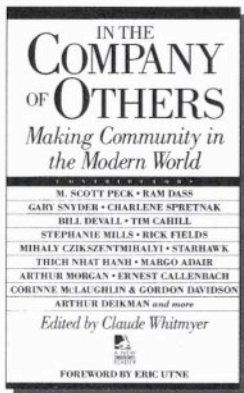
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Suzanne Skees, a graduate of the Harvard Divinity School, documents an inquiring but also very personal month spent at the last Shaker commune in *God Among the Shakers: A Search for Stillness and Faith at Sabbathday Lake*. The search is not just that of the few remaining Shakers, but of Skees herself, who came to the community looking for a story, but left with new revelations about herself and about God.

Meanwhile, June Sprigg has commemorated a long-ago summer that she spent as a tour guide at the penultimate Shaker settlement—at Canterbury, New Hampshire—seeking sisterhood and shelter amid the hissing, Nixonian glare of 1972. Sprigg, who has written widely about the Shakers before, perhaps tells her most personal story in *Simple Gifts: A Memoir of a Shaker Village*. Sprigg's account of her 19th summer, spent amid the last Shaker sisters at Canterbury, is a portrait of calm gray surrender, lived out by an aging yet faithful generation of Christian utopians.

Certainly there is much idealism in these books; one can excuse this, however, because the Shakers, aside from a few shuddering interior conflicts, have remained seemingly guileless even as their heavenly foyer shrinks around them. As astonished by the attention paid their decline as they are by the exorbitant sums paid for an original Shaker chair, these last children of Ann Lee are thoroughly human, deeply seeking people who wanted not to hide from the world but to embrace it by embracing God.

As Skees discovers, and as Sprigg knew from her summer with the elderly doyennes of Canterbury, it will someday be God who embraces the Shakers, and then we will see them no more.

Let us learn what we can from the Shakers now, these two books advise. Let us learn and appreciate and know, before the dream becomes invisible, along with what could be the last generation of true dreamers.

*Robert Rhodes, a former newspaper editor, lives at Starland Hutterite Colony in Minnesota. Ω*

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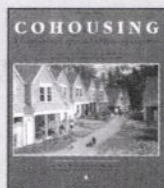
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## BRIEFLY NOTED



**CoHousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves**

by Kathryn McCamant & Charles Durrett, with Ellen Hertzman

Ten Speed Press, 1988; Second Edition, 1994  
Pb., 288 pp., \$29.95

The "bible" of the cohousing movement—the book that brought cohousing to North America in 1988. Chapters on cohousing and how it works, profiles of eight Danish and six American cohousing communities, and how to do it, including site plan and building design for strong community connection and "glue." (Originally reviewed in Winter '94 issue.)



**The Cohousing Handbook: Building a Place for Community**

by Chris Hanson

Hartley & Marks, 1996  
Pb., 364 pp., \$24.95, US; \$29.95, Canada

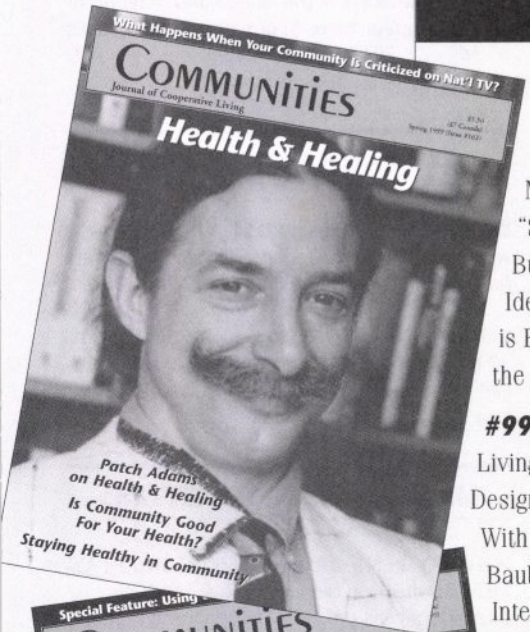
A fine "how-to" guide by an experienced cohousing community founder and developer. Chapters on group process, marketing and membership, finances and budgets, land acquisition, permits and approvals, working with design and development professionals, design considerations, and construction. (Originally reviewed in Spring '97 issue.)

—D.L.C.



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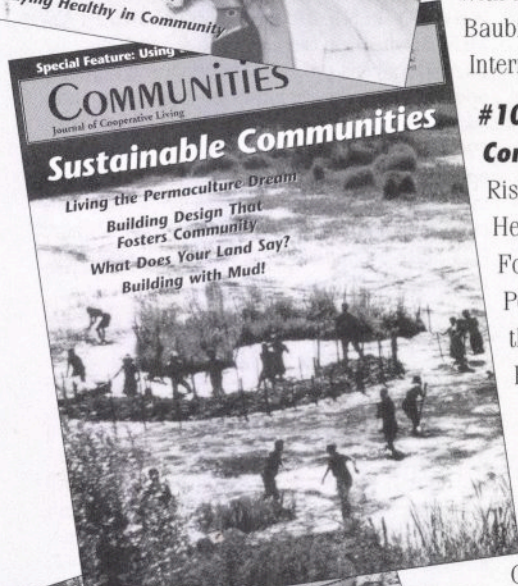


## #98 Values, Vision, and Money

Manifesting Our Dreams; Money as "Shadow" Issue at Findhorn; Mega-Bucks Money Pressures in Community; Identity & Money at Shenoa; How Much is Enough? Special Feature: Confronting the Petty Tyrant (Spr '98)

## #99 Sustainable Communities

Living the Permaculture Dream; Building Design That Fosters Community; Building With Mud!; Salvaging Building Materials; Baubiologie; Special Feature: Using the Internet to Find Your Community (Sum '98)

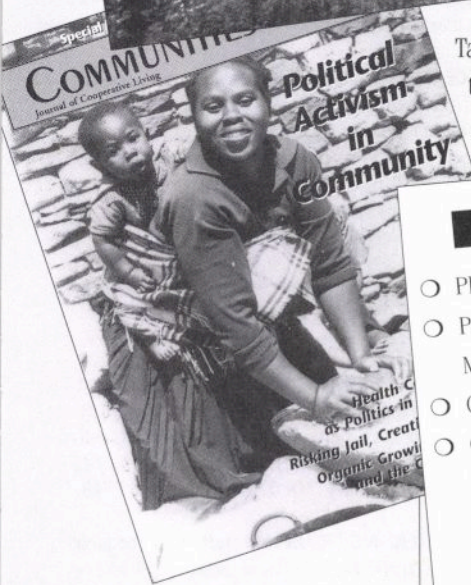


## #100 Political Activism in Community

Risking Jail, Creating Community; Health Care as Politics in Ecuador; Following the Lord ... Into Chicago Politics; Organic Growing, Activism, & the Good Life; "Meta-Politics" at Bright Morning Star (Fall '98)

## #101 Communities, the Millennium, and Y2K

Patch Adams on the Movie "Patch Adams"; The Year 2000: Social Chaos or Social Transformation; Taking Y2K Siriously; Where Were You When the Grid Went Down?; Covenant for the New Millennium (Win '98)



## #102 Health and Healing in Community

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## #103 Walden Two Communities: Where Are They Now?

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## #104 Conflict and Connection

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#106



# CLASSIFIEDS



Communities classified ads reach almost 5,000 people who are seriously interested in community. They include:

- any service, product, workshop or publication that is useful to people living in, or interested in living in, communities,
- products produced by people living in community,
- land for sale which may be of interest to people forming communities,
- personal ads.

Please note that the **CLASSIFIED DEADLINE FOR THE SUMMER 2000 ISSUE (OUT IN JUNE) IS APRIL 10.**

The Classified rate is \$.50 per word. We now have a discounted rate of \$.40/wd. for a four time insertion and if you are an FIC member, you may take off an additional five percent. We appreciate your payment on ordering. Make check or money order out to Communities and send it, your typed or clearly

printed copy with specified word count, how many times you wish the ad to appear and under which category (you may suggest a new category) to Patricia Greene c/o Communities Reach Dept., 290 McEntire Rd., Tryon, NC 28782; phone or fax: 413-625-0077; email: peagreen@javanet.com. If you are emailing me an ad, please include the copy within the body of the letter, rather than as an attachment and be sure to send the check snail mail at the same time.

An additional benefit of advertising in Communities classifieds is that you get a half price listing on our Marketplace Web page if you like. To place your Web ad, visit: [www.ic.org](http://www.ic.org).

All other listings can be found in the Reach and Calendar columns.

## BOOKS, VIDEOS, AUDIOTAPES

"LOOKING FOR IT" is a two-hour video diary/documentary on communities and the community movement. Patch Adams says, "I was glued for two hours. This tape deserves a wide viewership." Copyright 1995. Send check or money order for \$24.95 to: Sally Mendzela, 36 North Center St., Bellingham, MA 02019. Questions? 508-883-8424; [salgal@quik.com](mailto:salgal@quik.com).

## CLASSES, WORKSHOPS, CONFERENCES

COMMUNITY DIALOGS across North America, sponsored by the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC), publisher of this magazine. What does "community" mean to you? What would help you create more community in your life? And how can the FIC help? Community Dialogs are happening in many towns and cities across the continent; your area could be next. Seeking local hosts to bring people together for a discussion exploring these and other topics. For more information, contact the FIC's project coordinator Tree Bressen, 2244 Alder St., Eugene, OR 97405; 541-343-5023; [tree@ic.org](mailto:tree@ic.org).

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## LAND FOR SALE

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## MAGAZINES, NEWSLETTERS

WHY PAY RENT OR MAKE MORTGAGE PAYMENTS, when you can live rent free? *The Caretaker Gazette* contains property caretaking/housesitting openings, advice and information for property caretakers, housesitters and landowners. Published since 1983. Subscribers receive 700+ property caretaking opportunities each year, worldwide. Some estate management positions start at \$50,000/yr. plus benefits. Subscriptions: \$27/yr. *The Caretaker Gazette*, POB 5887-1, Carefree, AZ 85377; 480-488-1970; [www.angelfire.com/wa/caretaker](http://www.angelfire.com/wa/caretaker).

## PERSONALS

GREEN SINGLES NEWSLETTER. Connecting singles in the environmental, vegetarian, and animal rights communities for friendship, dating, and romance. Membership around the world and around the corner. Since 1985. Free information: Box 69-CM, Pickerington, OH 43147; [www.greensingles.com](http://www.greensingles.com).

CONCERNED SINGLES links compatible, socially conscious singles who care about peace, social justice, racism, gender equality, the environment, personal growth. Nationwide/international. All ages. Since 1984. Free sample: Box 444-CO, Lenoxdale, MA 01242; 413-445-6309; [www.concernedsingles.com](http://www.concernedsingles.com).

## SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTS

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# REACH



Reach is a regular feature intended to help match people looking for communities with communities looking for people. As the most up-to-date and widely read clearinghouse available to you, Reach reaches those who are seriously interested in community.

You may use the form on the last page of Reach to place an ad. Note: **THE REACH DEADLINE FOR THE SUMMER 2000 ISSUE (OUT IN JUNE) IS APRIL 10!**

The special Reach rate is only \$.25 per word (up to 100 words, \$.50 per word thereafter) so why not use this opportunity to network with others interested in community? We offer discounts for multiple insertions as well: \$.23 per word for two times and \$.20 per word for four times. If you are an FIC member, you can take off an additional five percent.

Please make check or money order payable to Communities, and send it, plus your ad copy, word count, number of insertions, and category to: Patricia Greene c/o Communities Reach Dept., 290 McEntire Rd., Tryon, NC 28782; email: [peagreen@javanet.com](mailto:peagreen@javanet.com). (If you email an ad, please include it in the body of your letter, rather than as an attachment, and be sure to send the check snail mail at the same time and note that you've done so.)

You can list your Reach ad for free on our Communities REACHBOOK Web site at [www.ic.org](http://www.ic.org).

Suggestions to advertisers: Get a larger response by including both address and phone/fax, plus e-mail, if you have it. If you require a financial investment, target your ad to people with financial resources by letting readers know what's required. Caveat to readers: never, but never, drop in on any community unannounced!

Listings for workshops, land, books, products, etc. including personals, belong in the Classified Dept. and are charged at a \$.50/wd. rate. Please see that column for instructions.

## COMMUNITIES WITH OPENINGS

**ABUNDANT DAWN COMMUNITY, Floyd, Virginia.** Experienced community founders seek pioneers. We are committed to dealing openly with conflict and to considering carefully the impacts of our actions on the planet. Our 90 acres of beautiful southern Appalachian land has building sites for four or five small sub-communities ("pods"). So far we are two pods: Tekiah (an income sharing group) and Dayspring Circle (an independent income group). We want to grow, both by taking on new members in existing pods, and by taking on new groups. Business opportunities include organic gardening, portable sawmill operation, and a hemp hammock business. Some members work in nearby cities. We include a diversity of spiritual and sexual orientations. Families welcome. POB 433, Floyd, VA 24091; [abundantdawn@ic.org](mailto:abundantdawn@ic.org); [www.abundantdawn.org](http://www.abundantdawn.org).

**ACORN, Mineral, Virginia.** We are a young consensus community creating an egalitarian culture that values fun, children, relationships and varied, fulfilling work. We share income from selling crafts, organic farming and occasional outside jobs and work together to build and maintain our home on 72 acres. Acorn, 1259-CM11 Indian Creek Rd., Mineral, VA 23117; 540-894-0595; [acorn@ic.org](mailto:acorn@ic.org).

**AQUARIAN CONCEPTS, Sedona, Arizona.** Founded by Gabriel of Sedona and Niann Emerson Chase in 1989. Currently 100 members full-time. We love children. International flavor. Global change work for Destiny Reservists in Divine Administration. God-centered community based on teachings of *The URANTIA Book* and *Continuing Fifth Epochal Revelation—The Cosmic Family Volumes* as received by Gabriel of Sedona. Clean air, pure water, organic gardens. Starseed Schools of Melchizedek (all ages) and healing environment which includes morontian counseling and other alternative practices. Global Change Music with Gabriel of Sedona and the Bright and Morning Star Band with the vocal CDs "Holy City" and "Cosmic Brides," and Future Studios with CosmoArt, CosmoTheater and video productions.

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**AQUARIUS, Vail, Arizona.** Visit unspoiled mountain wilderness with great views, weather, safety. Self-sufficient. Ideal for homesteader. Idyllic cooperative, textile-free setting. Weddings, workshops, quests. SASE. POB 69, Vail, AZ 85641.

**DANCING RABBIT, Rutledge, Missouri.** Highly motivated, community and ecologically minded, and experienced group is looking for individuals, families, and communities to help create the ideal rural ecovillage. Fourteen of us are constructing off-the-grid straw-bale and cob homes on our 280 beautiful, rolling acres in northeast Missouri. Dancing Rabbit will be a large community with many different subcommunities that interact socially and economically. Our goal is to build a small town that is truly sustainable and socially responsible. Potential living options include DR's first subcommunity, Skyhouse (an FEC community of five adults) and private individual or family homes. We have a close working relationship with Sandhill Farm, a 23-year-old egalitarian community nearby, and are especially interested in other existing community groups joining us. We've got the ideas, the energy and the land, all we need is you! Contact us now to arrange a visit. 1 Dancing Rabbit Lane, Rutledge, MO 63563; 660-883-5511; [dancingrabbit@ic.org](mailto:dancingrabbit@ic.org); [www.dancingrabbit.org](http://www.dancingrabbit.org).

**EAST WIND, Tecumseh, Missouri.** A 75-member Federation of Egalitarian (FEC) community, est. 1973. Located on 1,045 acres of land in the Ozark foothills of southern Missouri. The topography is heavily forested and scenic. Like other FEC communities, East Wind members value ecological awareness, equality, cooperation, and nonviolence. Personal freedom is important to us. We enjoy flexible work schedules, incorporating choices from our successful businesses and domestic labors. Write or call and please contact us before visiting. East Wind Community, Box CM-R,

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Tecumseh, MO 65760; 417-679-4682; visit@eastwind.org.

**ECOVILLAGE COHOUSING, Ithaca, New York.** A great place to live! We are creating an environmental village that will be composed of several cohousing communities integrated with a working farm and education center. As an experiment in sustainable living, we already inspire visitors from around the world. We are seeking new members to join our second neighborhood group (SoNG), which plans to begin building in 1999. Come see our beautiful 176 acre site near a vibrant college town. Stay overnight in our first neighborhood, a lively community of 30 families, share a meal in the common house

or visit our 9.5 acre organic farm. EcoVillage welcomes you! Check out our Web site at [www.cfe.cornell.edu/ecovillage](http://www.cfe.cornell.edu/ecovillage) and contact: Liz Walker, 607-255-8276; [ecovillage@cornell.edu](mailto:ecovillage@cornell.edu); EcoVillage, Anabelle Taylor Hall, Cornell Univ., Ithaca, NY 14853.

**THE FELLOWSHIP COMMUNITY, Spring Valley, New York.** Located 30 minutes north of NYC, we are an intergenerational community founded in 1966 centered around the care of the elderly. Now numbering about 150, we grow most of our vegetable needs biodynamically, enjoy a variety of animals, an apple orchard as well as practical work activities such as a candle shop, metal shop, wood shop,

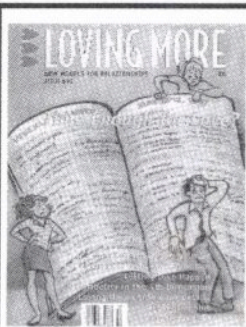
weavery/handwork, greenhouse, publication press, bakery, outlet store, medical practice. Children, co-workers and the elderly all may work together in these activities. The spiritual science (anthroposophy) of Rudolf Steiner is the basis for our work. There is a Waldorf School and several other anthroposophical initiatives in the neighborhood. Our lifestyle is an intense social/cultural commitment to the future of mankind. Check out our Web site at [www.FellowshipCommunity.org](http://www.FellowshipCommunity.org). Write to Ann Scharff, c/o The Executive Circle at 241 Hungry Hollow Rd., Spring Valley, NY 10977, or call 914-356-8494.

**FEMINIST EDUCATION CENTER, Athens, Ohio.** 151 acres only 20 minutes from Ohio University, Hocking College, and other intentional communities. SASE. Susan B. Anthony Women's Land Trust, POB 5853, Athens, OH 45701; [ad965@seorf.ohiou.edu](mailto:ad965@seorf.ohiou.edu).

**GANAS, Staten Island, New York.** Ganas moved to NYC in 1979 with six people (all still here.) Now we're about 75 adults of many ages, ethnicities and life views. Conflicts that arise usually get resolved quickly because we discuss them before they get hot. Every day half of us talk together about work, community and personal issues. Our purpose is to learn to exchange truth with love, intelligence, and pleasure. Some live here and choose not to participate in Ganas process, work, or goals. But almost everyone has become part of a caring extended family. Personal feedback is important to us, but it happens only with consent. We live in nine well-maintained buildings with lovely gardens, good living space, and excellent food. Our four stores repair and resell furniture, clothing, artwork, and much more. People who qualify to work here receive all expenses plus up to \$300 a month and a share of our profits. Others pay all their expenses with \$500-\$650 per month. Long or short term visitors are welcome. Ganas, 135 Corson Ave., Staten Island, NY 10301-2933; 718-720-5378; fax 718-448-6842; [ganas@well.com](mailto:ganas@well.com); [www.well.com/~ganas](http://www.well.com/~ganas).

**GARDENSPIRIT, Asheville, North Carolina.** Creating small (eventually 8-10 people), sustainable, self-reliant community on 11 acres with two houses, large organic garden, and off-grid solar system in rural, rolling hills an hour south of Asheville. Individual dwellings and shared households planned. Seeking open-hearted, responsible, spiritually oriented people to join us. For more info: [www.ic.org/gardenspirit/](http://www.ic.org/gardenspirit/) or contact: GardenSpirit, 290 McEntire Rd., Tryon, NC 28782; [diana@ic.org](mailto:diana@ic.org).

**G.R.O.W.II, Parkville, New York.** G.R.O.W. II is a 55-room country hotel, conference center, workshop facility, campground and concert area on 70 beautiful acres in the Catskill Mountains, 100 miles from NYC. We are looking for people interested in starting a new community in these facilities. There is land to garden or farm (if you like.) We will support whatever industry you develop if we can. You might partner in our conference center work. If you want to start your own



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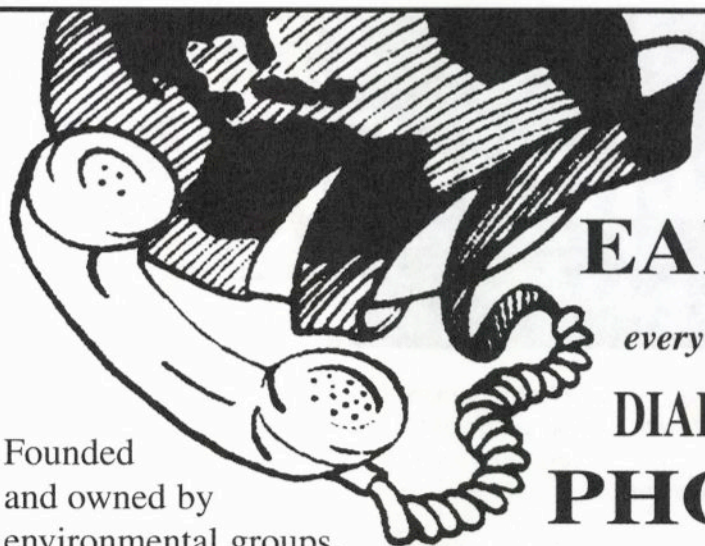
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**TERRA NOVA, Columbia, Missouri.** Looking for a community in the Midwest? Columbia is a university town, large enough to offer a wide range of opportunities, small enough to eliminate the commute. Write for more information. 1404 Gary, Columbia, MO 65203; 573-443-5253; [terranovacommunity@juno.com](mailto:terranovacommunity@juno.com).

**TWIN OAKS, Louisa, Virginia.** Twin Oaks has been a model of sustainable community living for over 30 years. We are currently looking for new members, and would love to have you visit. We can offer you: a flexible work schedule in our community businesses, an abundance of homegrown organic food, a thriving social scene, and an established culture of nonviolence and egalitarianism. You can offer us: your talents and skills (or your unskilled enthusiasm) and your desire to live lightly on the land and share income. For information: *Twin Oaks, 138-R Twin Oaks Rd., Louisa, VA 23093; 540-894-5126; [twinosaks@ic.org](mailto:twinosaks@ic.org); [www.twinosaks.org](http://www.twinosaks.org).*

**WINTER CREEK COMMUNITY, Santa Cruz Mountains, California.** Three 2.5 acre lots available in mountains between Santa Cruz and Saratoga. We are seeking like-minded spirits to continue the vision of a healing, environmentally friendly space. Sun, redwoods, wildlife, trails, streams, electric, and structures. Hot tub, sauna, and massage practitioner in the community. Some financing may be available. Contact Mark Levy, 888-505-8953; [mitzvahmus@aol.com](mailto:mitzvahmus@aol.com).

## COMMUNITY HOUSES FOR SALE

**COMMON PLACE LAND COOPERATIVE, Truxton, New York.** Small rustic home for sale: outhouse, propane, running water, no electricity, wood heat, four wheel drive needed for winter vehicle access (snowmobile helpful). In cluster of four hilltop homes, swimming pond nearby. Rent during six-month membership process, purchase when member. \$7,000. CPLC, 4211 Route 13, Truxton, NY 13158; 607-842-6799 or 607-842-6849.

**INTENTIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD, Eugene, Oregon.** Home for sale. Be part of a dynamic and supportive living environment by purchasing this beautiful, finely crafted home with exquisite details and finishes. Highly energy efficient, it utilizes straw-bale construction with passive solar and radiant floor heating. Low toxic materials, hand troweled plaster and stucco. Three bedrooms, two baths, carport, atrium, balcony, plus detached studio. The neighborhood consists of 12 families in single-family dwellings. \$239,000. 985 Tiara, Eugene, OR 97405; 541-302-3397; [jackandmae@earthlink.net](mailto:jackandmae@earthlink.net).

**MICCOSUKEE LAND CO-OP, Tallahassee, Florida.** Two acres of peace and quiet. Owner built. Interior like a wooden jewelry box. 2347 square feet, three bedroom, two and one half bath. \$160,000. See [www.unr.net/~rchase/house.html](http://www.unr.net/~rchase/house.html).

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**ROSEY BRANCH FARM INTENTIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD, Black Mountain, North Carolina.** 2,250 sq. ft. home with wrap-around, southern decking overlooking large stream and community trout pond, three quarter acres, one and one half stories, two to three bedrooms, two baths, open floor plan, cathedral ceiling, beautiful craftsmanship in wood and built-in cabinetry throughout, wood floors, natural cherry kitchen, solar hot water, greenhouse, detached 600 sq. ft. shop building, partnership in 50 acre, seven family intentional neighborhood that has contiguous borders with Earthaven Ecovillage. \$199,000. *RBF House, 711 Stone Mountain Rd., Black Mountain, NC 28711; 828-255-2607; 828-669-8964; carlosfunk@yahoo.com.*

**WESTWOOD COHOUSING COMMUNITY, Asheville, North Carolina.** 1,700 sq. ft. townhouse for sale. Built in 1998 on three levels with four bedrooms, three full baths, family room, front porch, deck, and patio. Woods in back. Also interest in common grounds and 3,500 sq. ft. common house. Asking \$199,000. *828-252-4163.*

## COMMUNITIES FORMING

**COHOUSING GROUP, Chattanooga, Tennessee.** A group of fairly normal folks are forming a cohousing community in Chattanooga. *Roy at 423-622-0604; Bill at 423-624-6821; royhm@att.net.*

**COLUMBIA COHOUSING, Columbia, Missouri.** We will cluster about 20 private homes around a common house to facilitate sharing and social interaction. In such a community, we feel more connected to other people and more committed to things beyond ourselves. We believe Columbia, a progressive university town, is an ideal location. We hope to build next summer. *5316 Godas Circle, Columbia, MO 65202; 573-814-3632; http://cohousing.missouri.org.*

**CO-OP HOUSE, Boston, Massachusetts area.** We are a small group looking to expand and collectively own a large house. We have communal vegetarian meals daily and weekly housemeetings based on consensus process. Our core values include environmental sustainability and vegetarianism, social justice, creativity, and open communication. Call *617-718-9373; adam@igc.org.*

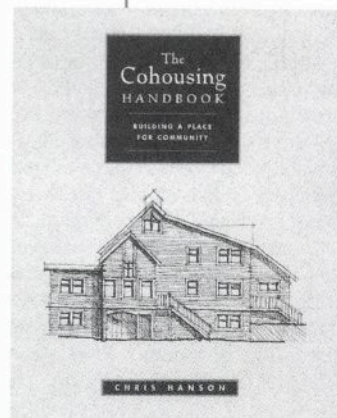
**DHARMA FARMS, Kea'an, Hawaii.** Looking for workers to practice Bhakti Yoga, love for God, mantra meditation, kirtans, japa yoga and study

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Now building four new homes (\$175,000-\$195,000) from certified sustainably harvested wood from surrounding forests and recycled furnishings where possible. Our multi-level design allows abundant views and natural light. Internet provider in commercial side of common house will be installing a community-wide intranet.

**Peter Starr, 707-822-9178, <startrak@northcoast.com>**  
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**EDEN RANCH, Paonia, Colorado.** Seeking members desiring rural, spiritual environment. Sharing labor and resources on planned biodynamic, permaculture 65 acre farm. Ultimate self-sustainability is our goal. Western Colorado mesa, outstanding views and clean air. Local homeschooling co-op available. Future community businesses planned, your ideas welcome. Diversity in thought and age; consensus decision-making results from mutual respect and trust. Approximately \$15,000 landshare (flexible terms available) plus cost of your sustainable home. Visits and tours by reservation, camping and guest accommodations available. \$2 for Information Packet. Visit our Web site at [www.edenranch.com](http://www.edenranch.com) *Eden Ranch Community, POB 520, Paonia, CO 81428; 970-835-8905; woodwetz@aol.com.*

**EDEN VALLEY ECOVILLAGE, Willits, California.** 1,600 acres. Farmland, woodland, forest, lakes, mountains. Three acre home sites, passive solar homes, two acre farm sites, sustainable micro-economy, personal freedom, right livelihood, permaculture, new job creation, voluntary cooperation, egalitarian living, natural learning/healing environment. *Eden Journal, 20 pages, quarterly, \$7, payable: T. McClure, POB 571, Kenwood, CA 95452.*

**MANZANITA VILLAGE, Prescott, Arizona.** Arizona's premier cohousing community is under construction with several home designs to choose from. Enjoy sunshine, clean mountain air and four seasons in a small town atmosphere. We are persons creating our own richly diverse community, balancing group harmony with individual growth and following the principles of ecological soundness, social awareness and economic viability. We seek to live in an environment which is mutually supportive, fosters neighborliness while allowing for privacy and encourages the interaction of people of all ages, beliefs and backgrounds. For information: *Shea Richland at 1-800-555-3810, or visit our Web site at www.mwaz.com/cohousing.*

**MEADOWDANCE, Plainfield, Vermont.** We are a forming community and will move onto 165 acres of rolling meadows, hills and woods in April of 2000. We emphasize mutual support, community involvement, environmental responsibility, sustainable living, flexible housing and lifestyles, careful planning, work opportunities, creativity, appropriate technology, cooperation, and fun. We have started our first community business, a software testing company, and are in the midst of permitting, planning and design in preparation for April. Persons of all ages, races, creeds, orientations welcome. Rural location, but not isolated. We are building a community where we can work and live together in a fulfilling and sane manner. Write, email, or call: c/o

*Luc Reid, 100 Park Blvd. #72-D, Cherry Hill, NJ 08034; 609-616-8340; info@meadowdance.org; www.meadowdance.org.* ~~(802)~~

**NOAH'S ARK 2, Texas.** One hour east of Austin. Establishing open-hearted, earth-sheltered, "survival/escape" center for friendly, progressive folks since 1995. *4001 Oakridge, Houston, TX 77009; 713-863-0433; Quddusc@aol.com.*

**ORGANIC ORTS FARM, Plainview, Texas.** Working partner wanted for 320 acre organic native grass farm in Texas. Four miles from local farmers' market. Must love animals. Prefer peace/justice/environmental activist. Can bring in portable housing or fix existing structures. Would like to reinvest farm profits in co-purchase of another farm, but that is negotiable. Part-time, off-farm job okay. Please write to: *Rusty Donelson, Organic Orts Farm, HCR 01, Box 245A, Plainview, TX 79072.*

**PLEASANT HILL COHOUSING, San Francisco Bay Area, California.** Cohousing group seeks members, especially families with young children. Our vision is to create and live in a diverse community which fosters harmony with each other, the larger community, and nature. We are currently 15 committed households planning to build 32 units on our 2.2 acre site 20 miles east of San Francisco. The site is adjacent to a walking/biking trail and an elementary school and park. It has a wonderful old oak tree, a beautiful view of Mt. Diablo, and easy access via freeway or public transit to Walnut Creek, Berkeley/Oakland, and San Francisco. Pleasant Hill (pop. 31,000) is primarily a residential community with scattered retail/commercial areas. Diablo Valley College and Briones Regional Park are nearby. Plans include common areas for shared dining, children's playground, sitting area, workshop, guestroom, laundry, organic garden, and a pool (we're in a Bay Area location that has a real summer!). Private homes are one, two,

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three, and four bedroom flats and townhouses. The site is under contract and we've recently submitted our plans to the City for approval. We are working with the CoHousing Company and Wonderland Development. For more info, contact *Barbara* at 925-256-1085; *dancerBarb@aol.com*; *members.aol.com/dancerBarb/*.

**QUERENCIA, Silver City, New Mexico.** Join an intentional community that provides opportunity for individuals to deepen and enrich their spiritual lives by residing in community and supporting each other through the aging process. Just 14 miles from Silver City, our beautiful, off-grid, tranquil setting has soaring views and total privacy. Also in the vicinity are several Buddhist Centers and a Sufi Community. We invite 40 individuals to participate in the purchase of 200 undivided acres. \$13,500. 505-536-2917; *hardenbrook@gilanet.com*; *www.gilanet.com/querencia*.

**ROLLING MEADOWS FARM SPIRIT COMMUNITY, Van Etten, New York.** Cabins and gardening space available near Ithaca, New York on 85 acres. Write and say something about yourself. *Rolling Meadows Farm Spirit Community, 467 Langford Creek Rd., Van Etten, NY 14889.*

## PEOPLE LOOKING

**THREE PERSON FAMILY** including a four-year-old boy, moving to Kauai, Hawaii about May 2000. We are seeking an existing intentional community, or to co-create one. We want to join with others who strive to live from their hearts and souls, live their truth and from a place of love as much as possible, and who live a simple, Earth-connected village life. We are musicians, energy/sound healers and sustainability consultants, and feel we have a lot to offer community. Please call *Panther or Rhiana* at 800-443-0096, or email at *wildehome@earthlink.net*.

**ADULT MALE, 59 YEARS OLD.** While I'm disabled-Cerebral Palsy and use an attendant, I am mentally alert and very independent. I want to live in a community. I have personal focuses of spirituality and growth. The gifts that I offer to others are healing, writing, sharing, and listening. Other interests I have are reading, music and continuing education. I'd be interested in hearing from you. *J. Carey, 1717 S. Douglas, Springfield, IL 62704; jbc1717@eosinc.com.*

## INTERNS AND WORK OPPORTUNITIES

**ANANDA VILLAGE, Nevada City, California.** Internships in Spiritual Community. Now in its 32nd year of existence, Ananda Village has successfully applied the principles of spiritual cooperative living to every aspect of life. Join in this unique opportunity to experience life at Ananda with a two-week internship program offered June 18 to July 2. Participants receive instruction in yoga and meditation, partake in nature outings, service projects, community celebrations, and attend enrichment classes on health, healing, diet, cooking and more. For more information, call *Patricia at Ananda Village, 530-478-7500; mdevidas@ananda.org.* Visit our Web site at *ananda.org/AnandaVillage*.

**AQUARIAN CONCEPTS, Sedona, Arizona.** Lead guitarist wanted for Gabriel of Sedona's Bright and Morning Star Band. Male or Female. Send demo. See our community listing under "Communities With Openings" above. Also, Choir Director wanted. Young, vivacious female wanted for 40 voice choir and eight piece orchestra, Gabriel of Sedona's Bright and Morning Star Choir. All original CosmoWorship compositions. Must be willing to become a committed community member. Send picture and resume. See listing above for address.

**EARTHLANDS, Petersham, Massachusetts.** Rural environmental program center with off-grid

lodge, cabins, campground, 55 acres seeks three to five people to care take land and buildings, plan, market and sometimes lead programs, fundraise and coordinate permaculture gardens. Focus on simple, ecological living, Deep Ecology and intentional community. Room and board. Seeking committed, responsible people. Intern positions also available. *Larry Buell, Earthlands, 39 Glasheen Rd., Petersham, MA 01366; 978-724-3208; buell@gcc.mass.edu.*

**SANDHILL FARM, Rutledge, Missouri.** Internships in Sustainable Living. April to November. Gain experience in organic farming, construction, communication, rural and community living. Learning is informal and hands-on. Come for six weeks or longer. See community description under "Communities with Openings" above. *Sandhill Farm, RR1, Box 155-C, Rutledge, MO 63563; 660-883-5543; sandhill@ic.org.*

**WOMEN'S GUEST HOUSE, Sydney, Australia.** Seeking woman to manage/work exchange women's guest house with intercultural focus. Short/long-term accommodation, smoke/drug free. Email: *sjnrsyd@hotmail.com.*

## RESOURCES

**ALTERNATIVE EGALITARIAN COMMUNITIES. NO MONEY DOWN!** We invite you to join our existing businesses and housing—all we ask for is a cooperative attitude and willingness to work hard. Live with others who value equality, ecology and pacifism. For our booklet, send \$3 to: *Federation of Egalitarian Communities, HC-3, Box 3370-CM98, Tecumseh, MO 65760; 417-679-4682; fec@ic.org.*

**INTERESTED IN JOINING A BRUDERHOF COMMUNITY?** We'll put you in touch with former members of the Hutterian Brethren/Bruderhof. *Peregrine Foundation, PO Box 460141, San Francisco, CA 94146; 415-821-2090.*

# COMMUNITIES MAGAZINE REACH ADVERTISING ORDER FORM

Please specify which section you wish your ad to appear under:

- Communities with Openings  
 Communities Forming  People Looking  
 Internships  Resources

Cost: 25¢/wd. to 100 words, 50¢/wd. thereafter.  
 23¢/wd.-2 inserts, 20¢/wd.-4 inserts. FIC members get  
 5% discount. Please include payment with submission.  
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**Please type or print text of ad on a separate sheet of paper. Make check out to Communities magazine.**

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Mail this form with payment (by April 10 for Summer issue) to:  
**Patricia Greene c/o Communities Reach Dept.,  
 290 McEntire Rd., Tryon, NC 28782**



# FIC MEMBERSHIP, COMMUNITIES MAGAZINE, & DIRECTORY ORDER

## Communities Magazine— Subscribe Today!

Your source for the latest information, issues, and ideas about intentional communities and cooperative living!

Supplements the *Communities Directory* (see *Directory* ad on inside front cover) with update listings about communities in North America—including those now forming.

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The FIC is a network of communitarians promoting communication and understanding about and among intentional communities across North America. The Fellowship:

- publishes *Communities* magazine and the best-selling *Communities Directory*.
- built and maintains the Intentional Communities site on the World Wide Web

<www.ic.org>

- hosts gatherings and events about community.
- builds bridges between communities and the wider culture.
- serves as an information clearinghouse for all aspects of community—for individuals, groups, and the media.

FIC membership supports these efforts and offers the following benefits:

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- discounts on selected products and services.
- advertising discounts in our publications.
- invitations to board meetings and other activities.
- first notice on whatever we're doing, and the opportunity to get in early!

### FIC MEMBERSHIP, COMMUNITIES MAGAZINE, & DIRECTORY ORDER

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GROUP NAME OR AFFILIATION (IF APPROPRIATE) \_\_\_\_\_

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Photocopy and mail to: **FIC, 138-CM Twin Oaks Rd, Louisa VA 23093. Ph 800-462-8240**

Join the Fellowship team today!



## PERIPATETIC COMMUNITARIAN

(continued from p. 88)

volunteers or working for peanuts, and they have full lives outside the organization. It's a sign of the times: Most people with vision and ambition are already overextended with meaningful and important commitments. If I can hang onto that perspective, then, when I notice a teammate is not following through on a task, it's usually a straightforward step to make a personal connection (even by email, if necessary) and find out what's going on in his or her life. Then instead of criticism, I can offer enough encouragement and support to help that person get back on track.

Unfortunately, it often seems easier to go ahead and do a job rather than delegating the task and following up later. Rather than checking in to offer support and encouragement, we tend to rescue, to try to wrap up the loose ends ourselves, to save the day. Often our intervention provides a short-term solution, but in the long run it undermines the organization—our peers will miss golden opportunities to learn organizational and motivational skills, and we rescuers will grow ever more overcommitted and overworked, and, ultimately, we'll burn ourselves out.

Reprogramming this habit is really not all that complicated and difficult, if you're clear on your intention. If you see someone falling behind on a job, instead of complaining or judging, try reaching out. Ask: "Hey, amigo, it looks like this task might need more attention. Is there anything I can do to help? What do you need to move ahead?" If you discover that the person isn't able to pick up the loose ends, encourage them to make an effort to hand off the task to someone else—hopefully someone other than you. If delegation is not that person's forte, brainstorm with them about how to make that happen.

If you find yourself feeling critical and impatient, it's often best to sound out before sounding off. Consider seeking out a third party to air your frustrations, and to ask for advice on how to approach the situation constructively. In an ideal world we could always go right to the source, express our frustrations, and have a positive outcome. However, given the multiple layers of defenses and offenses we've grown up with, each situation deserves careful evaluation about which approach, direct or with counsel, will likely be more effective.

How can we do better at creating a

shared vision, spreading the workload, developing new skills, dealing with our shortcomings and frustrations, and maintaining a sense of community? In the FIC, as in many activist groups, we have a pretty solid base to build on, but we need to learn a lot more about delegating responsibility and learning supportive follow-up skills. Until we get better at that, we're doomed to keep facing the frustration and fallout of undone tasks and dropped balls. To sustain us in the meantime, we can rely on the basics—reaching out, listening carefully, seeking to understand, offering our support, and communicating our appreciation—to carry us through the hard times and inspire us to persist in our quest for community. Ω

*Geoph Kozeny has lived in various kinds of communities for 27 years, and has been on the road for 12 years visiting communities: asking about their visions and realities, taking photos, and giving slide shows about the diversity and vitality of the communities movement. Presently, he is producing a full-length video documentary on intentional communities, and it will include a look at how each group gets its work done.*



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Enjoy stimulating keynote speakers, joyous full-conference gatherings, dancing, a community & organization expo, community store, & lots of opportunities for meeting community veterans, visionaries, seekers, & other fascinating people.

Don't miss out! Our last California event near Willits in 1998 sold-out.

*For more information visit our website at [www.ic.org](http://www.ic.org), or call 660-883-5545.*



# Working Together Apart

**W**ORKING IN THE FELLOWSHIP FOR INTENTIONAL Community (FIC) for more than a decade has been a pleasure and an inspiration for me, although it's also brought its share of tough challenges. Welcome to community, right?

One interesting aspect of our work to promote and sustain community is that we are a thoroughly decentralized operation. Except for our semi-annual meetings, very few of our interactions are face to face. Between meetings we rely heavily on phone calls, faxes, email, conference calls, and an occasional posted letter for circulating information, organizing our work, supplying follow-up and technical support, and doing the interpersonal stuff like checking in, providing personal support, and processing any criticisms or hard feelings that may arise.

Although we accomplish a lot of really wonderful things while working at a distance—publishing this magazine and the *Communities Directory*, producing Art of Community gatherings, maintaining our Web site—without regular smiles and hugs from our coworkers it's all too easy to start feeling alone and isolated in our work. So far none of our electronic interactions has proved to be an adequate substitute for getting together physically. Seldom does a month go by without someone in our circle observing: "Email is so frustrating—there's no body language or inflections, no physical clues about how someone is feeling, no sense of whether they're focused or distracted, or whether they're open to changing their mind or their mood." Phone calls are usually better than faxes, letters, or email for communicating the nuances, though in most cases these are all inferior to talking in person. Due to the time lag involved in back-and-forth electronic dialogues, miscommunications are more frequent in that medium. Because clearing up a misunderstanding usually requires several rounds of talking, a glitch that might be straightened out in a 15-minute live conversation might require days or weeks to resolve if the dialogue is happening over email.

One of my own biggest frustrations comes when someone misinterprets what I write or say, then reacts in a strong negative way without first checking to be sure they understand what I mean. This comes up most often in personal correspondence, but occasionally rears its ugly head in business-related exchanges. It may also materialize in face-to-face situations, but not nearly as often, since in person it's easier to spot misunderstandings and head them off before they mutate into something big and messy.

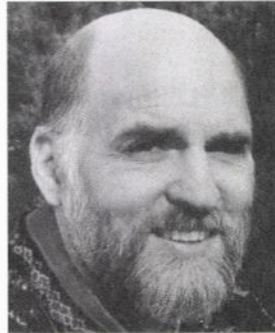
Granted, at times I could express myself more clearly, yet that foible shouldn't result in someone judging me "guilty until proven innocent." What will it take to change people's first reaction from "Alert! Alert! Defend, criticize, attack!" to something more like "I need to assume the best here and get more information"? I'm hopeful about the future—after all, bad habits can be changed with sufficient perspective and motivation. However, at times I'm impatient—I want to get on with the work rather than spending time clearing up old messes. Yet that clearing work is probably some of the most important work we can do. Without it, our sense of community is undermined, and without a sense of community, individual accomplishments lose much of their luster.

One powerful tool for maintaining an overall sense of unity is to find ways of connecting deeply when the group does, eventually, come together for a gathering.

We're rather fond of group processes such as in-depth check-ins and heart-sharing circles—techniques for understanding each other's histories, concerns, and passions, and for building mutual trust and compassion. That experience then becomes the foundation on which we build the long-distance relationships, and boost our motivation and commitment for working through the hard stuff.

What else can we do to foster connections across large expanses of space and time? I find it especially helpful to remember that most of my teammates are either

(continued on p. 87)



BY GEOPH KOZENY

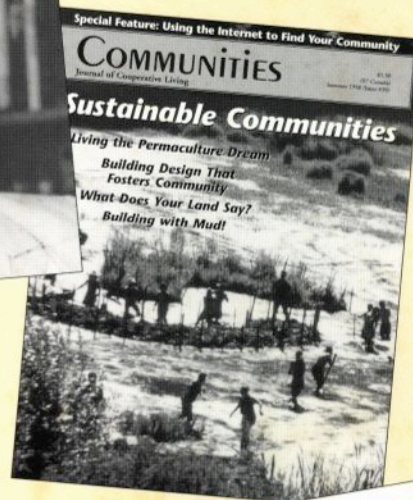
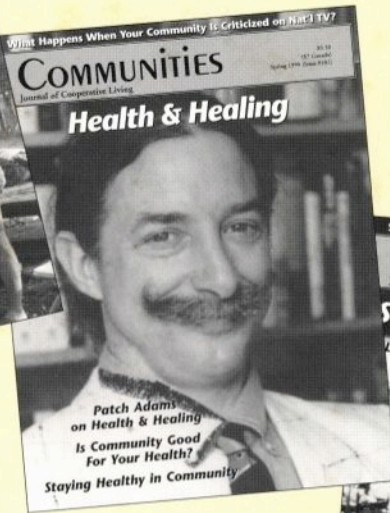
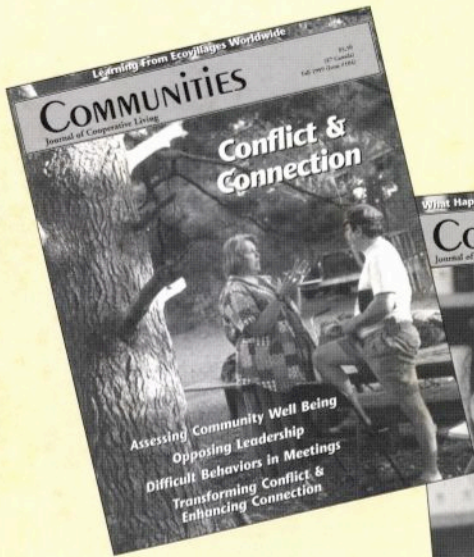
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