

Ask the Experts: Readers' Questions on Communication & Process

COMMUNITIES

JOURNAL of COOPERATIVE LIVING

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Winter 2005 (Issue #129)

Urban Community

**A Home-Grown Ecovillage
on Our Street**

Our Sustainable Urban Acre

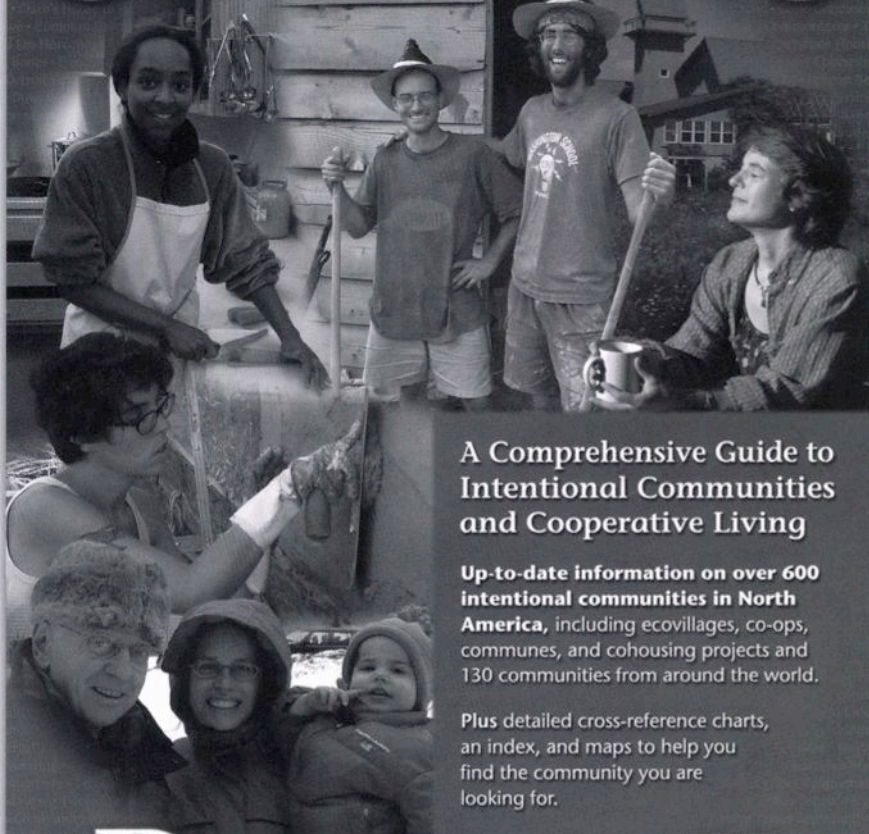
**The Village Can
Save the City**



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NEW EDITION – UPDATED FOR 2005

COMMUNITIES



A Comprehensive Guide to Intentional Communities and Cooperative Living

Up-to-date information on over 600 intentional communities in North America, including ecovillages, co-ops, communes, and cohousing projects and 130 communities from around the world.

Plus detailed cross-reference charts, an index, and maps to help you find the community you are looking for.

DIRECTORY

COMMUNITIES DIRECTORY

Over 600 North American communities, plus 130 from around the world, provide contact information and describe themselves—their structure, beliefs, mission, and visions of the future.

Includes articles on the basics of intentional communities and tips on finding the one that's right for you. You'll also find information on how to be a good community visitor.

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These charts allow you to quickly scan for the communities that fulfill your criteria, including size, location, spiritual beliefs, food choices, decision making, and more.

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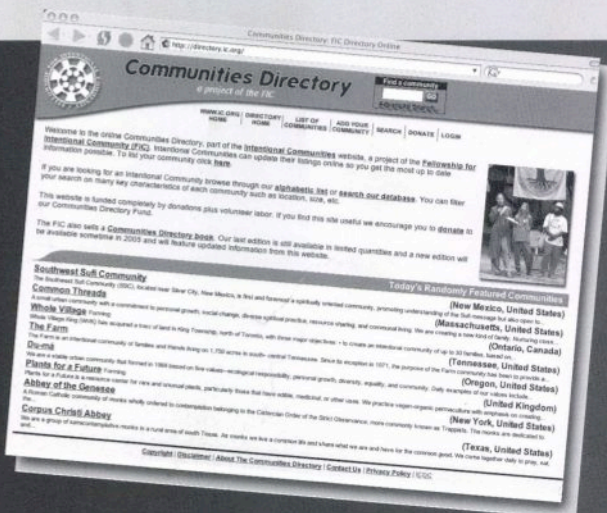
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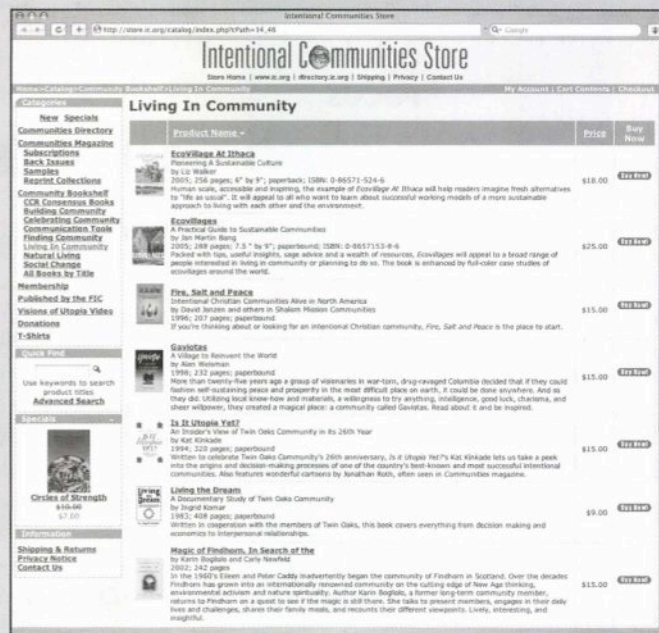


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- **group process** – how to run successful meetings, where everyone feels good about the decisions that were made
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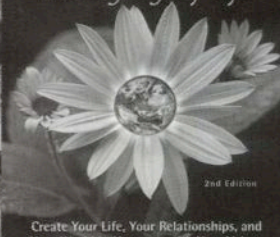


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IS IT Utopia YET?
An Insider's View of Twin Oaks Community

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COMMUNITIES

JOURNAL of COOPERATIVE LIVING

FRONT COVER

Los Angeles Eco-Village founder Lois Arkin on her way home from the neighborhood market.
Credit: Somerset Waters.

BACK COVER

A resident of Tryon Life Community Farm in Portland teaches young workshop participants about soil.
Credit: Bonsai Matt James.

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COMMUNITIES

Journal of Cooperative Living

EDITOR

Diana Leafe Christian (*Earthaven*)

LAYOUT

Wordsworth (*Meadowdance*)

ILLUSTRATIONS

Darren T. McManus
Billie Miracle (*WomanShare*)
Richard Register

PHOTOS

Lois Arkin (*Los Angeles Eco-Village*), Albert Bates (*Ecovillage Training Center at The Farm*), Jim Bosjolie (*EcoVillage at Ithaca*), Raines Cohen (*Berkeley Cohousing*), Bonsai Matt James (*Tryon Life Community Farm*), Tetsuro Kai (*Kyôdô No Mori Cohousing*), Marty Klafif (*Shannon Farm*), Graham Meltzer, Kirstin Miller, Melanie G. Rios (*Maitreya Ecovillage*), Jim Schenk (*Enright Ridge Eco-Village*), Ly-lan Schwartz (*Tryon Life Community Farm*), Somerset Waters (*Los Angeles Eco-Village*).

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Wordsworth (*Meadowdance*)

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Diana Leafe Christian (*Earthaven*)

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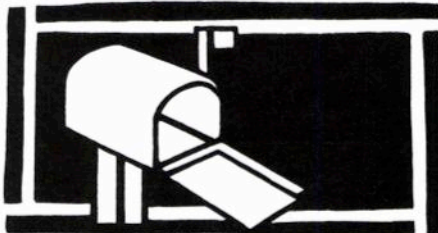
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LETTERS



Send your comments to communities@ic.org or *Communities*, 1025 Camp Elliott Rd., Black Mountain, NC 28711. Your letters may be edited or shortened. Thank you!



More on Conflict; Sociocratic Decision Making

Dear *Communities*,

I really appreciated your issue on conflict. We need as much information on this subject as we can get! People must honestly confront conflicts and resolve them if the community is to function. The old standbys of ignoring, isolating, dominating, fencing, zoning, shouting, undermining, crying, and buying your way out no longer work.

Most often, people equate conflict with anger, dislike, rejection, unreasonable demands, etc. This leads to magical thinking, such as "if we are just nice, all this will go away," "Just get along," "What we need is a good party." Of course this does work sometimes, but not on the big issues.

More on conflict, please. Make facing and dealing with conflict respectable.

Sharon Villines
Liberty Village Cohousing
Takoma Park, Maryland

What About Sociocracy for "Ask the Experts"?

Dear *Communities*,

The questions in your "Ask the Experts" article are about a consensus decision-making process. I wonder whether among your experts, you have individuals who are using the Sociocratic Method, which would directly address these problems, or only those who can make suggestions within the consensus decision-making framework?

Thanks for the opportunity to jump in.

Tena Meadows O'Rear
EcoVillage at Loudon County
Loudon County, Virginia

We don't yet have an expert in the Sociocratic decision-making method, but we'd like to find one. Can you help us? —Editor

Emphasize Sustainability First, Cooperation Second

Dear *Communities*,

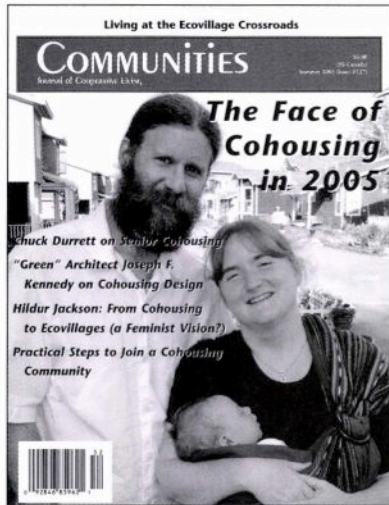
Love your magazine and am a happy subscriber and an ongoing regular advertiser. But I think it's time now to shift the emphasis to reflect the growing interest in sustainability, which shows up in your ads. The communities movement is becoming greener all the time.

Nowadays people are responding more to the ecological message than the cooperative one. Sustainability is much more important now; it has to start coming first. Cooperation will increasingly be seen as a means to an end and not an end in itself. And it no longer sells magazines. Community is about relationships. We all know we have to cooperate in relationships. Cooperation is still important because it may help us to live more sustainably, but it needs to be the secondary emphasis—sustainability should be number one; in fact, it must become the identifying characteristic of the communities movement. *Communities* magazine should have a new subtitle, for example: "Towards a Sustainable Way of Life" or "A Journal for Sustainable Living."

I also suggest an annual fall issue on the challenges of forming new communities, which I suspect has a lot to do with the kinds of leadership and control issues Laird Schaub points out in his columns. Who are the stakeholders of a newly forming community, and why; who has what rights and why?

T McClure
Northern California
www.SustComm.com

Thank you very much for these suggestions. We are currently in the process of choosing a new subtitle for the magazine, and we are certainly considering emphasizing sustainability more, for all the reasons you state. —Editor



Creating More Community Where You Live Now

Dear *Communities*,

Do you have any idea what percent of your readership doesn't presently live in intentional communities? What do you think of featuring articles for those people who feel a strong sense of connection and community but don't want to move someplace else to get it? Could *Communities* magazine help readers interested in having more community in their lives learn how to more effectively develop the communities where they live now? Could the "skill set" of people living in intentional communities be used by those who don't live that way, but who nevertheless could use such skills to create closer,

OUR APOLOGIES!

We apologize to New Society Publishers and authors Dan Chiras and Dave Wann that our attribution line and their bio information did not appear with the article, "From Eco-Home to Sustainable Neighborhood," in our Fall '05 issue. The article was excerpted with permission from *Superbia! 31 Ways to Create Sustainable Neighborhoods* (New Society Publishers, 2003). It is available at bookstores, at store.ic.org, or from New Society Publishers: 800-567-6772; www.newsociety.com. —Editor

more meaningful community in their neighborhoods? This could include articles on projects individuals can start in their own neighborhoods, such as block parties, or personal stories about people who create more community where they live. Or how-to information and reviews of resources available to people doing local community organizing. What if the FIC (*Fellowship for Intentional Community*, publishers of this magazine —Editor) sponsored salons on creating community locally, like *Utne Reader* did with their Salon series, including putting subscribers in touch with one another?

Alan Pakaln

Hastings-on-Hudson, New York
apakaln@concernedconnections.org

Thanks very much for your comments—this is exactly what we'd like to do. See "From Eco-Home to Sustainable Neighborhood" by Dan Chiras and Dave Wann (excerpted from their book, *Superbia!*) in our Fall '05 issue, and in this issue, "A Home-Grown Ecovillage on Our Street," pg. 52, and "Our Sustainable Acre in the City," pg. 36. —Editor

Seeking . . .

Dear *Communities*,

We're willing to train work exchangers in sustainable living skills, developing various projects here at our homesite, which may include creating an organic C.S.A. farm. A strong back and a real smile are the most important criteria we seek.

Boyd Nelson

Shady Grove Community Co-op/
 Stone Ages Farm
 876 Trace Ridge Rd.
 Leslie, AR 72645
 870-447-2669
slett mala@yahoo.com

Dear *Communities*,

In 1959, when our family built our large home at Bryn Gweled Homesteads near Southampton in Bucks County, Pennsylvania with seven bedrooms and four and a half bathrooms, we knew we were taking a risk in selling it one day. In 2003, we put it on the market. For more than two years we've listed our home with three different realtors, received approximately 7,000 hits on the website, and shown it to probably 300 homebuyers, without success. We're told the house isn't desirable because of its unconventional features, and also because Bryn

Gweled is an intentional community with unusual economic diversity.

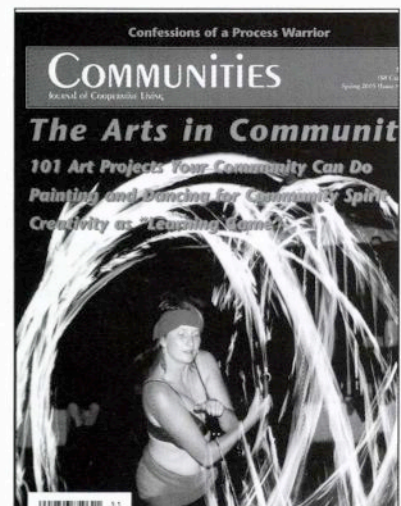
Bryn Gweled's founders were apparently ahead of their time when they bought this 240 acres in 1940. They not only preserved 80 acres to remain as forest forever, but also sought diversity of race, religion, politics, ethnicity—and income level. While many neighborhoods in Bucks County today are diverse in many ways, Bryn Gweled is unique in its diversity of wealth. So our large house, with an asking price of \$300,000, is more expensive than others in the same community. (Based upon replacement value, etc. a home comparable to ours elsewhere in Southampton might sell for \$500,000. Initially our asking price was \$360,000, but a realtor persuaded us to reduce it.) People apparently want "mono-wealth" in their neighborhoods: they don't want to live next door to people with smaller houses or presumably more modest means. One of the founding values of our community—economic diversity—is apparently repellent to contemporary homebuyers.

Most realtors are accustomed to "membership association" subdivisions and so accept Bryn Gweled's community membership procedures and \$75 monthly resident association dues. Five other homes in Bryn Gweled have sold in recent years, but none were as large as ours or would have merited an asking price of \$300,000 if located elsewhere in Southampton.

At ages 91 and 89, my wife and I continue to hope to find a buyer.

John R. Ewbank

Bryn Gweled Homesteads
 Southampton, Pennsylvania
www.bryngweled.com
www.owners.com, item 2071



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 interfere 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 the Writer's Guidelines: *Communities*, 1025 Camp Elliott Rd., Black Mountain, NC 28711, 828-669-9702; 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 nonviolently, and to sharing their experiences with others.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE



Finding Community in Co-op Housing and Getting Schooled in Diversity

*I got to Kansas City on a Friday, By Saturday I learned a thing or two
Up til then I didn't have an idy, Of what the modren world was comin' to!*

Unlike Curly from the 1943 hit musical *Oklahoma*, I got to Kansas City on a Wednesday, which afforded me a couple extra days to learn a thing or two—in my case, by participating in the 46th annual conference of the National Association of Housing Cooperatives (NAHC), held September 14–17.

I was there to find out what was happening in the world of cooperative housing and how much the experience of intentional community living was of interest to an organization whose slogan is “sharing solutions; strengthening communities.”

This issue of *Communities* is focused on urban community and it seems apropos to share what I found out about this important cooperative option in city life. How much did I really know about the largest chunk of people who are living cooperatively in this country?

Though it's not ordinarily the lens we look through in this magazine, intentional communities are a form of housing cooperative. (I could as easily have made the case that housing cooperatives are also a form of intentional community, but I was going to their party and wanted to see it through their eyes.) One of the hot topics at the conference, for example, was the question of market rate co-ops versus limited equity co-ops, which keep prices down and attempt to secure affordability by placing a cap on how much co-op units can be sold for. Intentional communities face the same choices.

Here's what I learned about housing cooperatives.

- **They're big.** They drew about 500 people to this year's conference (a typical number for them) and there are perhaps 3–4 million people living in cooperative housing in the US, compared with an optimistic estimate of 100,000 who self iden-

COMING IN FUTURE ISSUES

"Sustainability and Peak Oil" Spring 2006

How prepared are we for the expected limitations of Peak Oil, in terms of "Power Down," "Soft Landing," or "Mad Max" scenarios? What cultural, appropriate technology, and sustainability practices can benefit us in hard times? Which urban and rural intentional communities and organized neighborhoods have these practices in place now?

Communities; communities@ic.org; 828-669-9702.

tify as living in some form of intentional community. More, the population of a housing cooperative is typically an order of magnitude larger than the size of an intentional community (where a large intentional community has over 100 members; a large housing co-op may be comprised of thousands of housing units).

- **They're urban.** Just like student co-ops (which might be the best example of an entity that straddles the world between intentional community and housing cooperatives), housing co-ops overwhelmingly tend to be in cities and they tend to be clumped. That is, there are usually many or none in any given place, which tends to reflect the dynamism of a few dedicated individuals who have successfully pioneered and promoted the co-op model and/or favorable local ordinances that make buying and maintaining co-ops attractive.

For example, DC has a city ordinance that requires owners of rental property to give the existing tenants the right of first refusal whenever the property goes on the market. Because there are local lending institutions willing to fund these opportunities, many apartment buildings in that city have been converted to co-ops in the last two decades.

- **They're racially mixed.** I'd estimate that 60 percent of the conference participants—and perhaps 30 percent of the presenters and organizers—were people of color. Some of this high percentage is accounted for by the fact that the conference draws a disproportionate number of people from limited equity co-ops, which comprise only 35 percent of the cooperative units in the US yet are the segment where people of color will show up more strongly. However, that's quibbling. The essential point is that housing cooperatives are attracting a racial mix that is far more diverse than what you'll find in all but a handful of intentional communities.

For all the value placed on diversity in the Communities Movement, it is rare for a community event to attract even five percent people of color. NAHC is reaching a different audience than we are, and that's exciting.

Housing co-ops overwhelmingly tend to be urban and they tend to be clumped: there are usually many or none in any given city.

- **They're democratic.** While clearly committed to the cooperative ideal of everyone having a voice in how things are run, the co-ops I heard about were largely unsophisticated about group dynamics. (To be fair, so are a lot of intentional communities, though it's getting better.) It's been a long time since I worked with groups still trying to get it done solely with Roberts Rules of Order and majority rule, yet there wasn't a single person among the 75–80 who attended my workshops who reported using any other method of decision making in their cooperative boards and committees.

After my workshop on the Manager's Role in Conflict, one man came up to me privately and asked my advice about how—as the new board president—he could work constructively with the disgruntled ex-board members who were ousted in the reform election that brought him into power. They all seemed bitter about losing and were now busy sabotaging his efforts. He was looking for help with bridge-building.

One woman admitted she'd never been part of a group that had discussed how to handle emotions in a meeting. Her experience had always been that groups just coped as best they could when things got hot or teary, hoping to avoid a major meltdown or raw aggression. It was eye-opening for her to realize that groups could talk about how they wanted to handle that moment.

When I polled people in my workshop on meeting facilitation, only three of 30 reported having any agreements about the authority given to facilitators to run meet-



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- Cedar-shake exterior, massive exposed log beams, lots of natural wood throughout • Custom-crafted windows, cabinets, & exterior doors • Earthen floor in southwestern adobe tradition • Superinsulated, wood-burning stoves, heat-recovery ventilators.
- Two units approx. 1000 sq. ft • One approx. 1200 sq. ft. • Combined rental income \$2500/month • \$500,000
- Nine housing units on adjacent lots • Easygoing landlord & tenant situation • Residents value sustainable community lifestyle: organic garden, potlucks, work parties, group meditations • Restrictions on deed to preserve community/ecovillage charm.

Seeking community-minded buyer to help Maitreya EcoVillage become a model of sustainable living for the 21st century.

Robert Bolman: 541-344-7196, robtb@efn.org
Melanie Rios: mrios@juno.com

ings. Lacking clarity about what's wanted, it's no wonder they're getting indifferent results.

Taken all together, here was a pool of millions who share a basic commitment to cooperative principles yet are relying on 19th Century tools (which is when General Roberts first proposed his Rules of Order) to address 21st Century dynamics. When given a taste of how things could be improved, there was palpable eagerness for the information.

The co-ops I heard about were largely unsophisticated about group dynamics.

Now I was really excited. Despite considerable common interests, housing cooperatives and intentional communities have largely existed in parallel universes, with little traffic between the two movements. Maybe it's time for that to change.

Borrowing from the Institute for Cultural Affairs (which coined the term "technology of participation") I'd call what the Communities Movement has to offer the "technology of cooperation." Perhaps we can offer it in exchange for the housing co-ops' "technology of diversity." In addition to learning from each other's strengths, we'd be demonstrating cooperation between movements dedicated to cooperation. Seems like a good idea to me.

Laird Schaub

Laird Schaub is Executive Secretary of the Fellowship for Intentional Community (publisher of this magazine), and a cofounder of Sandhill Farm community in Missouri.

Conversations at ZEGG

I returned to the ZEGG community in Germany in 2005 to meet old friends and catch up with this fascinating project. I have been visiting ZEGG since 1998 and have a deep appreciation of its culture and social system. I have also written about ZEGG in *Communities* magazine (Winter, 1998), *The Encyclopedia of Community: From the Village to the Virtual World*, and in my latest book, *The Findhorn Book of Community Living* (2004).

ZEGG is the acronym for "Zentrum für Experimentelle Gesellschaftsgestaltung," which roughly translates as "The Centre for Experimental Cultural Design." The community was founded 28 years ago in southeast Germany, and has been on the present site in the town of Belzig, an hour southwest of Berlin, for 14 years. About 90 men, women, and children live together—sharing most meals, a thriving economy, and a common cultural scene. They follow an ideology of what they call "love without limits" and "open sexuality," sometimes incorrectly translated as "free love." Sociologically speaking, they are polyamorous (willing to be lovers with any others) rather than polyfidelitous (being lovers only within a defined group)

because there is no sexual barrier between members and nonmembers.

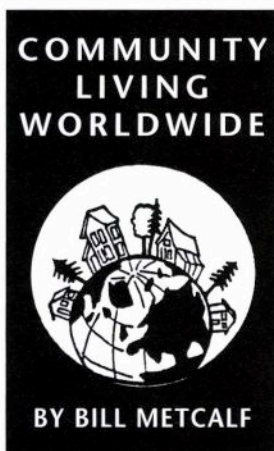
What can I say to help *Communities* readers understand and appreciate ZEGG, one of the more interesting intentional communities in the world today? Perhaps conversations I had with ZEGG members will give some flavour of the community.

My overall impression today is of a very mature intentional community with a core group of members who are here for life: people who carry the administrative load and responsibilities, and who embody the spirit and culture of ZEGG. The average

member is in their mid-forties, with many years of communal experience. At the dinner table one day I was jokingly told, "We have 120 years combined communal experience at this table, so perhaps we can now work out our cooking shifts for the week?"

As is usual in intentional communities, the ZEGG children present many challenges. One 17-year-old girl who has been attending their

local school now finds that she will have to work extra hard if she wishes to gain entrance to a university. The eight-year-old son of a member finds that he is much happier in the regular State School because there is



Our international correspondent, Dr. Bill Metcalf of Griffith University, Australia, has studied contemporary and historic communal groups worldwide since the 1970s. Past president of the International Communal Studies Association, a Fellow of the Findhorn Foundation, and author of From Utopian Dreaming to Communal Reality (University of New South Wales, 1993), his newest book is The Findhorn Book of Community Living (Findhorn Press, 2004).



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more structure and order, and less noise, than in the on-site community school. The 18-year-old son of another member does not want to continue his formal education but only wants to work with computers, to the disappointment of his father.

During my stay, the ZEGG teenagers organized a "Forum" (special meeting) with their parents to negotiate some new ground rules based on mutual obligation. From all accounts, this was very successful. I find that most people who have grown up in communal societies demonstrate great maturity and social skills—and the same applies at ZEGG. However, there is little evidence that this generation who are growing up at ZEGG want to stay there—but then that is the pattern in most intentional communities around the globe.

ZEGG's village pub, *Dorfeneipe*, continues to be the centre of social life. Each evening, I sipped a few beers and chatted with ZEGG members. English is widely spoken here—very fortunate because my German is limited. My old friend and colleague, Christa, who worked with me on managing the International Communal Studies Association conference in 2001, has moved out of administration and now works part time in their pub—a not-unusual career change here.

ZEGG's hybrid economic system continues to function well. Each member contributes 480 Euro (\$US580) per month for room and board. About a third of the members work for ZEGG in administrative, outreach, or community support work. The jobs range from cook, maintenance manager, and gardener to Guest House manager and financial director. The other members either work outside of ZEGG or have their own businesses which they operate using ZEGG facilities.

Members used to hold two Forums every week but they now hold a Forum every afternoon for one week each month. They

find that this is easier for them to plan around—particularly for those members who work in their own businesses, either on or off site. Most major decisions, after community discussion, are made by ZEGG's "Council of 13" or a subgroup of "financial planners," then announced and, if no one objects, implemented. Day-to-day decisions are made by work teams.

One ZEGG member has recently been elected to their local town Council, which helps their acceptance in this rural region. The ZEGG choir recently sang at the 60-year celebrations of the end of WWII and the liberation of a nearby concentration camp. ZEGG members are becoming ever more accepted into the wider community.

A 30-year old ZEGG member tells me that she has been hoping to get pregnant for a year—but with no luck. She finds

They follow an ideology of what they call "love without limits" and "open sexuality," sometimes incorrectly translated as "free love."

that open relationships can be a challenge because old thought patterns and behaviours return. She would like more younger members here—although also stresses how much she admires the wisdom of her communal elders. She loves ZEGG but finds that it can all be a bit stressful at times.

Findhorn Foundation in Scotland, and ZEGG might not appear on the surface to share much, but over the past decade they have been moving closer together. They now operate a member exchange program, and ZEGG members regularly conduct workshops at Findhorn. Findhorn has influenced ZEGG as well, as it's members now have regular meditations and a much more obvious Earth-spirit direction.

One woman who is a long-term, key member of ZEGG's core told me that her workshops and other involvements with Findhorn Foundation are changing her orientation to life and community, and that she is becoming more spiritual, changing in ways that she never would have predicted a decade ago.

ZEGG and Findhorn Foundation also share the European Office for the Global Ecovillage Network, with offices and staff at both communities. This means that ZEGG receives visitors from a wide range of intentional communities throughout Europe and Russia, and is in regular international contact with other intentional communities through this global network.

The complex sexual relationships at ZEGG continue to fascinate me. In the

This was a hard decision for the community because each new child requires a great deal of community energy and money.

Dorfkneipe pub one evening, I sat and chatted with a friend of mine and the three men with whom she maintains long-term relationships, including her husband. They appear to manage their relationships with a minimum of jealousy and strife, through open communication and a commitment to “love without limits.”

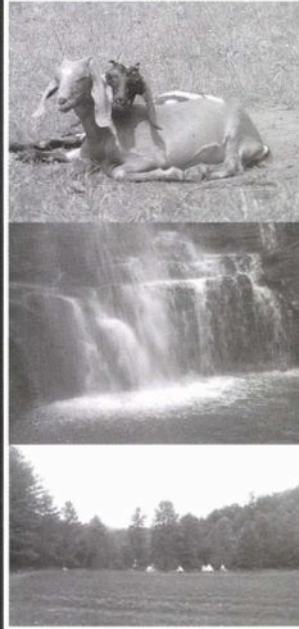
A university postgraduate student at ZEGG who has been doing participant-observation research for several months, found that open relationships were great—until his girlfriend arrived and took other lovers.

When I was at ZEGG in 2001, one of the teenage girls was pregnant without a partner. She wanted to keep the child even though most ZEGG members felt she was not mature enough to do so. The community finally decided to trust fate and they supported her. Now she has three-year-old twins, and when she works in their communal kitchen her children are looked after by ZEGG members in their kindergarten. This was a hard decision for the community because each new child requires a great deal of community energy and money.

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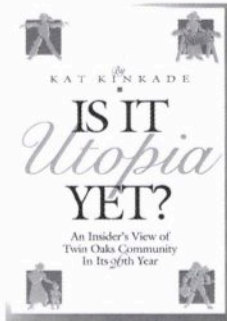
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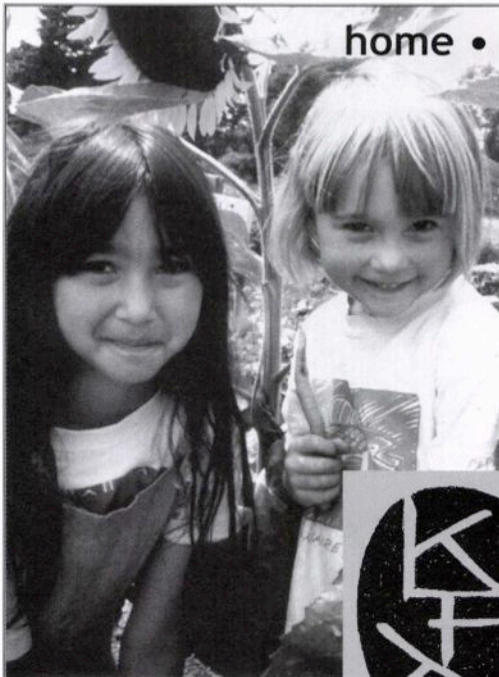
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A young member in his late 20s worries that ZEGG is getting too old and conventional—too comfortable through success. He longs for more young members, more radical ideas, and a return to the more free-wheeling open sexuality of previous years.

Two middle-aged male members who call themselves “The Anarchists” try to challenge the core group and the comfortable ways into which ZEGG has developed. It is obvious, however, that they have little audience amongst the membership. They seem to be more tolerated than listened to.

A group of 15 people are undertaking an intensive three-month member internship program at ZEGG, exploring all aspects of communal living, with “limitless love” as a core concept. Of these 15, it is unclear how many will want to remain at ZEGG—or how many would even be accepted if they wanted to remain. ZEGG has space to grow but has stayed at the present size of 90 people for some years. and I doubt that they want to grow. There is a low turnover of members although the very close connections between ZEGG and the German-speaking Tamera community in Portugal means that many ZEGG members spend part of the year there, and vice-versa.

I thoroughly enjoyed my recent sojourn at ZEGG. The community now seems to be solidly established, with good social, cultural, and political processes in place, even as their membership is aging and their orientation is changing. For example, several members told me of their concerns for aged parents and of other traditional worries of middle-aged people everywhere. ZEGG continues to be a truly extraordinary intentional community. I am proud of my personal connections with this remarkable group of people. Ω



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Appreciating Merlin

I'd like to share the testimonial I read at the memorial service of Merlin Porter-Borden (1939–2004), a founding member of Liberty Village Cohousing who died on Sept. 16, 2004. Merlin had poured his heart and soul into Liberty Village, our 18-unit cohousing community in the countryside near Frederick, Maryland. The way our community dealt with the death of our friend, coach, and mentor is the best testimonial to what Merlin gave us—a close-knit community of family who cried, hugged, and laughed together in the days and months after his death. For me, this is the best description of cohousing—what it takes to create it and what we residents get from it.

Merlin first learned about cohousing in 1989. He told me later that what interested him was that he wouldn't have to drive his children to their friends' homes. He wanted his family to live in a community where his children knew everyone, where they could play freely with their friends, and where his neighbors worked together to make the community work.

But he wasn't one to sit by and wait for someone else to make this kind of community happen. From that beginning idea in December of 1989, Merlin threw himself heart and soul into making the dream of cohousing become real.

He, Tom Lofft, and John Beutler started the daunting task of building a group and looking for land. It is amazing that in this day of large developers building cities out of large tracts of land, Merlin and his team kept following their dream, spending their Sundays looking at different parcels of land and having meeting after meeting.

As this anonymous quote about commitment says:

"It is making the time when there is none. Coming

through, time after time after time, year after year after year. Commitment is the stuff character is made of; the power to change the face of things. It is the daily triumph of integrity over skepticism."

That was Merlin. The owners of the first property wouldn't sell, so find another. The zoning for the Pride of Joy farm wasn't right, so work with the county to write cohousing into the zoning. When



Martie Weatherly is a founding member of Liberty Village Cohousing near Frederick, Maryland.

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we were digging wells, the first five wells didn't have enough water, so try the sixth. When the sixth well didn't work, design the water system another way.

He never gave up. He was never discouraged. He rarely complained. He never even seemed impatient. He just kept encouraging us to keep going, to work with the county, and to create our dream community.

**He never gave up.
 He was never discouraged. He rarely complained.**

So all of us who live in Liberty Village now have Merlin to thank. We wouldn't be here except for him. We wouldn't all have homes we love and a community that is family, not just neighbors. Liberty Village is just the best.

There's more. Merlin was one of the first people in this area to build cohousing. We now have six cohousing communities in the DC area, and he was the prime reason for three of them. He supported cohousing on a national level, by going to conferences and putting forth ideas on the Cohousing-L listserv. He was always forwarding articles to the group about ideas from ground-source heating to consensus.

Years ago when a woman with a disability wrote on the Cohousing-L listserv, concerned that she wouldn't be able to help her community enough, he answered:

People put into cohousing what they are willing, able and inspired to give. Of our 21 families, the amount of effort ranged from huge to small, but we accept, gratefully, every small bit of help. We give without expectations for the level of effort of others. The desire to help is nurtured in an environment of acceptance of whatever people are willing to contribute.

Merlin put in huge amounts of time. As a member of the three-person devel-

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opment team he reviewed the installation of all our infrastructure. When they planted the trees along the berm before we lived here, the trees had to be watered. Merlin actually got people up to come out at 4:30 am to water them before it got too hot! He designed and installed a drip system for watering our trees (maybe to keep from having to get up at 4:30 so much). He designed our parking lot lights and did a large part of their installation. He was on most of our major teams, came to meetings, took minutes, and was an administrative partner.

Recently he spent hours reading about the problems with the sewage treatment system, talking to county staff and commissioners and then explaining to us what it all meant.

There are so many little things to thank Merlin for: the system of moving our cars to clear the parking lots of snow ("first on the east side, then move to the west side") and our task list where we pin everyone down "By when will you have that done?"

In fact, one problem that we have to face now is that we really don't know all Merlin did. We will just have to see what breaks and then figure out how to fix it.

So Merlin, even though you never wanted to be called "The Leader" in a community based on consensus decision-making, you led us to our community where our neighbors are family. We take up the baton from you now, dear friend, and move on to build 20 more homes and, most importantly, our common house. We will not waiver from your dream, as we fulfill our mission statement, the last lines of which are: "To have a common house filled with the sights and sounds of an active caring community, and to celebrate life!" Ω



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Needs and Wants

One of the seven characteristics that defines a community within the Federation of Egalitarian Communities (FEC) is that the community will take care of you—for life. Specifically, the second principle of the FEC states, “Each of the Federation communities assumes responsibility for the needs of its members, receiving the products of their labor and distributing these and all other goods equally, or according to need.”

Those familiar with the Marxian formula, “from each according to ability, to each according to need,” will recognize the language and intent of this principle. In practice, each Federation community has its own way of parsing the notion. Children and the elderly generally work less than adults in their prime. At some communities—I know this is true at Twin Oaks and East Wind—labor quota gradually decreases after adult members reach a certain age, according to an established schedule. Special arrangements are made if an adult member becomes disabled. No one is expected to work more than they are able.

But labor quotas throughout FEC communities tend to be high, demanding

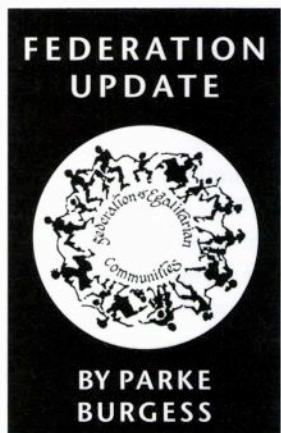
enormous energy and commitment from community members. Twin Oaks ranges roughly from 40–50 hours per week for adults in their prime, depending on the time of year. And the work is oftentimes physically intense and exhausting. Even at the Emma Goldman Finishing School, where I live—though quotas are closer to 25–30 hours per week—we find that our quota system demands more than other urban communities we know.

In return, however, all our needs will be met for as long as we remain in the community, possibly ‘til death. Thus, in

addition to providing food and shelter, FEC communities provide for old age, illness, and disability. Basic daily needs are also met: everything from transportation (cars, train or bus fare, community bikes), clothing and bathroom articles, to telephone and computer access—all within the economic system of each community.

Defining what counts as a *need*, and should therefore

be included in the community “contract”—as opposed to a mere *want*—proves the devil in the FEC’s details. There is both a practical and an ideological compunction



Parke Burgess lives at the Emma Goldman Finishing School in Seattle (www.egfs.org), and is Secretary of the FEC (www.thefec.org).

This is the second of seven principles guiding the Federation of Egalitarian Communities (FEC), a network of communal groups in North America valuing nonviolence, egalitarianism, and participatory decision-making. FEC communities include East Wind, Sandhill Farm, Twin Oaks, Skyhouse, Acorn, and the Emma Goldman Finishing School. For a complete list of FEC principles see <http://thefec.org/about/>.

here: because each community must subsist on limited budgets, it is impossible for any of them to guarantee much more than the basics; and because FEC communities explicitly value ecological sustainability and the ideal of egalitarianism, it becomes a matter of principle to avoid the trap of excessive consumption.

Defining what counts as a need proves the devil in the details.

But it's nearly impossible to draw a definitive line between needs and wants, so each case that comes anywhere close to the line needs to be freshly negotiated. This becomes especially sensitive when we are talking about huge life issues, such as what gets covered by the community's healthcare policy, or how much money a community will allot for educating its children. Is that massage a need or a want? Do you really need that professional development workshop? Or that experimental surgical procedure that may (or may not) extend your life at some future time?

These decisions always strain the community in a variety of ways, but especially by raising the all-important issue of trust. No community will thrive without enormous reserves of trust—both the trust of individuals that they will be supported by the community when they really need it, and the trust by the community that individuals won't abuse the collective largesse. In my experience, this trust is being challenged all the time, and both individuals and communities regularly fail to one degree or another.

It seems to me that the effort of developing a deep sense of trust, even as it is regularly betrayed, by continually re-experiencing the restoration of trust out of the jaws of collapse, is a deep part of the work of radically revising a better world. The sweat, blood, and tears of this effort represents the body of labor, one might say, working to manifest the ideals dreamed by the utopian mind. Ω



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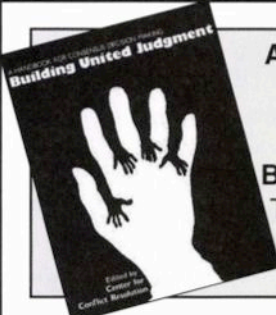
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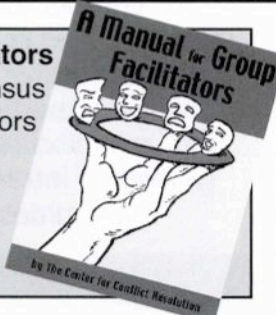


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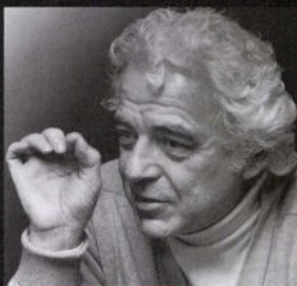
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Looking Back: 25 Years at Sandhill Farm

I am celebrating being at Sandhill Farm Community 25 years today.

I first came to visit Sandhill for a 10-day visit in June 1979. I then visited Twin Oaks and applied for membership. At that time there was a waiting list for men to join Twin Oaks (to address gender balance) and since I loved both communities, I spent the summer at Sandhill, along with Grady and three Sandhill members: Ann, Laird, and Tim. In September I joined Twin Oaks. However left five months later in March. I arrived at Sandhill April 11, 1980. When I was negotiating my stay at Sandhill, I said I'd like to spend the summer (I'd previously moved to Guatemala and then Twin Oaks "for the rest of my life," and was now chastened and being more modest). I often joke: "This is being a long summer."

So what comes up for me regarding the last 25 years in community?

- Farming. I've become a farmer; it grounds me. I grew up on a farm and enjoyed it, but I had no reservations about leaving it after high school. (I aspired to teach at the college level.) When I came to Sandhill, I immediately felt I'd come home. It was a blending of the best aspects of my past—living and working on the land and feeling a part of family and commu-

nity—and alternative-culture stuff—learning how to till the soil lovingly, feeling it nurturing me. I fancied myself an artist who painted the landscape by farming...

- Silliness. I have less of it now. Where did it go, and why? Is it because the world is a grimmer place? I am older? I used it up?
- Community. Sandhill is at five adult members now. We've been five to ten most of the time I've been here. When I got here, Sandhill had just applied to become a member of the Federation of Egalitarian Communities.

The feeling I had was that during 1974–79, a major focus was homesteading. And it was kinda expected that community would just happen. When it didn't, it became more of a priority. Now, it is definitely a priority. The homestead is established: we can always improve, but what we *really* are concerned about now is having more members, community process, the feeling of sharing life together.



- Sense of Place. When I first read about Sandhill in *Communities* magazine when I lived in Guatemala, I wondered: why Missouri? I'd never been there and couldn't think of any reason to go there—except to visit Sandhill. Now I've lived here longer than any other place. I've become familiar with the

Stan Hildebrand grew up in a Mennonite community in Manitoba, Canada. He has taught history and agriculture in college. Currently, he is an organic inspector and farmer who "still believes in the revolution!"

trees, plants, birds, the weather, soils, and the people. I've become part of the larger community. When I came to community, I was looking for a home. I feel at home now.

- Music. I still love to sing, but do not play an instrument. Still in my future...

- Parenting. When I came, I'd kinda hoped that sometime I would be part of a group parenting experience. I'd had a vasectomy and knew I did not want to do the nuclear family trip, but I had only a vague notion of what I wanted ... and then it manifested. I was in a relationship with Ann when she and Laird had Ceilee. I was at his birth and felt welcomed by Ann and Laird to be a parent. Conscious parenting is full of wonders—rediscovering the world thru virgin eyes. Being here now. Making sense of it all. Since Ceilee, there have been other children: Jo, Emma, and Renay are still in my life. When Skylar was born here in 2002, I felt like grampa. I joined the next generation.

- Drugs. I continue to enjoy coffee. I finally kicked tobacco for good in 1986! For the attitude adjustment, I've switched to alcohol—I still make beer and wine.

- Cussing. When farm equipment expresses itself in ways I do not appreciate, I still cuss in Low German. I feel like I channel my father there—similar word choices and vehemence in tone. Every so often I laugh at myself after one of these outbursts.

- Livestock. I used to put a lot of energy into domestic animals—mostly cows, chickens, goats. We no longer have cows or goats. I don't take care of the chickens. I don't make hay. I feel the lack in our overall sustainable agricultural trip, and it has freed up a lot of my personal time/energy.

- Same Old, Same Old. Twenty-five years ago I was fixing things like rain gutters, paths, buildings, cleaning out barns etc. I still do that. I'm still planting sorghum, pruning fruit trees, tending the bees, etc. The "What's new" is helpful in that it encourages attention to detail—nuances in how a plant is different, or the bees are behaving, etc., but

on a deeper level it feels to me that it comes from the paradigm of viewing life/history from a linear perspective, rather than cyclical.

- Expressions of awe. "Far out," "trippy," "cool," "awesome," and back again to "kooel."

- Yoga. I do yoga/stretching several times a week, about the same as 25 years ago.

- Intimate relationship. I've had close relationships since I've been here. I'd begun to wonder if I'd ever have a long term partner ... Ann & I grew into being partners ... It was so organic that it's somewhat arbitrary to assign a beginning and end, but I think of us as being primary partners for about 18 years That was a wondrous surprise! I feel quite lacking in grace as to how it ended.... I'd gotten used to the feeling that it would last forever. I am grateful and awed by how easily, how much and for long we shared and feel humbled by my actions that led to it ending. I'm still wondering about it, but

we have both moved on and are still in contact. And I have a wondrous relationship with Gigi. And I still see Everett in Kansas City. And in the middle of a sleepless night I can still feel incredibly alone in the multiverse.

- Hormones. I used to equate hormones with sex. I now acknowledge other hormones. Somewhere in my early 50s I noticed that I had considerable mood swings. What happened to ole steady even-tempered Stan? (Or was that just an illusion that I could no longer sustain?) The glass switches from half full to half empty and then back again. And then I had/have night sweats; in short, I'm not as in control of my moods as I used to believe I was. I'm getting used to riding them...now I switch on the light and read in the middle of the night, get up at 4 am, whatever.

- Spirituality. From born-again Christian in my teen years to now a born-again Pagan. I'd left Christianity during my college days...and was in a nonspiritual headspace. Then I read *The Magic of Findhorn* and realized that the multiverse is full of energy/spirit—including

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nonhuman. Now what? Then I started an intense journaling trip and was amazed that I had an inner life/spirit that was affected by everything surrounding me and I in turn affected it: vibes. Wow! A whole new view of spirituality: from being embarrassed about it, I embraced it and wanted to explore all kinds of New-Age stuff: pendulums, auras, plant devas, telepathy, and drugs to help in the exploration. But it was in the company of the Radical Faeries that it came together for me: Celebrating the spirit in everything. (OK, OK, I still kill mosquitoes and ticks.) And experiencing rituals as a way for a group of humans to interact with the nonhuman (mysterious ones?) in a respectful/celebratory manner. In fact, I long for more ritual and celebration in my life.

I still cuss in Low German.

- I still wear plaids on plaids. If there is an issue here, it must be in the eye of the beholder.

- Personal Growth. OK, so what's my paradigm here? Linear or cyclical? At various times I feel I've grown a lot: whether it's in terms of a liberated male, environmentalism, spirituality, self-awareness, yadda yadda yadda, and then I read my journal of 25 years ago and it's *deja vu*. I'm dealing with similar issues NOW. Are there differences? Sure, like this spring is different from last year. Or this peach blossom is different from that one. But I'm humbled: I'm not sure there is progress Ah, so the paradigm is faulty, eh? Throw it out and adopt the cyclical one: what made me think I should be making progress anyway? And why? And toward what? Is not the ultimate goal to make as light an ecological print as possible? So how does growth fit in here?

- I still flinch when conflict arises in group or personal interactions, though I feel I shut down less when confronted with tension.

- I haven't painted my nails in a long time...

Ω

What are you planning to do with your one wild and precious life?



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Giving Velma a Bow ... as She Bows Out

Velma Kahn stepped down this summer as manager of the FIC administrative database, creator/manager of store.ic.org (the Fellowship's web-based point of sales), and member of the Fellowship's Webweaver's Committee. She was with us for 10 years and will be missed.

When Velma first put her toes in FIC's water it was the early days of web development and we were still feeling our way with electronic recordkeeping. Our database was being held together heroically with the electronic equivalent of baling wire and duct tape. Velma wrote custom software to create a database program that would fit our needs as a growing yet decentralized organization heavily dependent on volunteer staff—all the while making sure we had an accurate set of subscriber labels for the quarterly mailings of *Communities* magazine.

After slaying most of the dragons plaguing our database (keep in mind that new ones are always hatching), Velma turned her attention to creating a unified shopping cart system for purchasing the many products on our website. This was launched successfully New Year's Day 2002, and has now become the FIC's most important conduit for sales.

Following up on that success, Velma launched an ancillary business of her own—*communitymade.com*—featuring a variety

of products produced by US intentional communities.

She did most of her work as a volunteer, earning wages only in the latter years, and at a rate that was only a fraction of what her skills were worth in the open market.

In addition to all her behind-the-scenes electronic work, Velma was a member of the Restructuring Committee, a special ad hoc group which met in 1996–97 to overhaul the Fellowship's internal organization, crafting the structure still in use today. Throughout her tenure she served as a core member of the administrative

staff, where she helped write protocols and job descriptions, developed accounting systems, was active in search committees evaluating candidates for office positions, and kept team morale high with incomparable shipments of holiday cookies in the dark of winter.

Velma is employed full time as a computer programmer for a company in Roanoke, Virginia offering

software for the medical field, and is a founding member of Abundant Dawn, a community in Floyd County, Virginia. She has more than enough to keep her busy even without FIC tasks, and we take this opportunity to appreciate in print her decade of unstinting service to the Fellowship.

Thanks, Velma.



Laird Schaub is Executive Secretary of the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC, publisher of this magazine), and a founding member of Sandhill Farm community in Missouri.

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Yearning for Spring

Monday, March 14. I look out my window longingly. Longing for warm weather, crocus buds, red and yellow tulips. Even green grass would be a joyous sight. But what I still see is white snow and more



white snow. Some of it is beginning to show signs of age, dirt. It is March 14 and the longing is powerful. Three weeks ago, we did have a brief warm spell, and my neighbors and I at New View Cohousing here in Acton, Massachusetts, spoke of spring just around the corner. Kate remarked to me on a forty-degree day, "My head's in landscaping tasks today. I can feel spring."

Saturday, after the previous night's snow storm, a crew of us took a wonderful walk in the now glistening white woods: Franny on her red skis; Bill keeping an eye on their dog, Toby; Me with my purple boots and jacket; and my husband Jim with his bright orange parka and hi-tech snowshoes. We were off through the woods to our local market to shop for that night's common house meal: pasta with olives, tomatoes, and artichoke hearts. But I don't want to write about snow and winter meals. I want to write about anticipating spring. It's been a very long winter.

Soon, I will see those yellow and purple crocus buds as they ache to burst in front of Nola's house. Planted in the sunniest spot on our land, they are the first to flaunt their colors. Soon, our kids will truly frolic on the community lawn, playing the ball game they call the "Onion Game" late into the night. It looks like rugby to me, but what do I know? Simultaneously, adults will linger over supper in the common house. The days will be long. But right now, we cohousers are bound together in aching and striving for spring.

March is the season of ice. Today, it is our family's turn to sand the walkways. Jim has filled our household's bucket with sand and I go out in the middle of the afternoon to sprinkle some on the ice patches. The front of our home and those of our immediate neighbors are in the shade for much of the day and ice threatens.

Jim has nicknamed our community North Wind Cohousing. Located on a hill, we imagine the winds bring more snow here than to West Acton village just a half a mile down the block. In March, warm days make the snow melt; the wet runs down the hill, puddling randomly on our paved walkways. At night, the wet ices over. We've formed a rotation amongst the households to sand when needed on these days.

Soon, neighbors will plant the common house garden. I will dig in the dirt, re-acustom myself to wriggling worms, and place my flats of pansies into the ground to create my simple flower garden. Carol will stroll by and pinch off the stems after the flowers fall, as is her wont; new flowers will then appear. I will smile at our shared paradise.

Tuesday, March 15. Real talk in the common house tonight. I've just finished a book, *Perfect Madness: Motherhood in the Age of Anxiety*, and I want to connect with others about the ways in which contemporary culture pressures us to perfection. Sue, who has cooked this meal, asks me to join her at a small table and I gladly oblige. Marcia, her co-cook joins us.

Marcia and Sue are tuckered out. I stand up and ask for cleaners for the meal. "First, let's thank our cooks for a delicious meal," I invite my neighbors. A round of cheers and claps results. "We also need some cleaners," I continue. Two or three hands

go up and I breathe a sigh of relief. We've had some tension about making these requests right at dinner, rather than before. But society's perfect madness has kept too many from considering tonight's clean-up before now.

Our monthly group meeting follows the meal. There is little on the agenda, so the steering committee suggests a lengthy check-out after our business is done. I am pleased to hear people speak from their hearts: Jim shares his excitement about a search for a life coach to help him organize his priorities more effectively. Carol is pleased with her Passover holiday plans and visits to children. Becky cautiously tells us about her interpersonal challenges at work. I follow their lead and speak honestly about my recent awareness about my anxieties and insecurities. Sue also shares a recent understanding about her sensitivity to sound and color. We learn about this concept of synesthesia. We feel connected, many remarking on the disconnection they have felt with winter isolation. "I've been so disappointed that we've had fewer meals, just when we've needed more," someone says.

Real talk in the common house tonight.



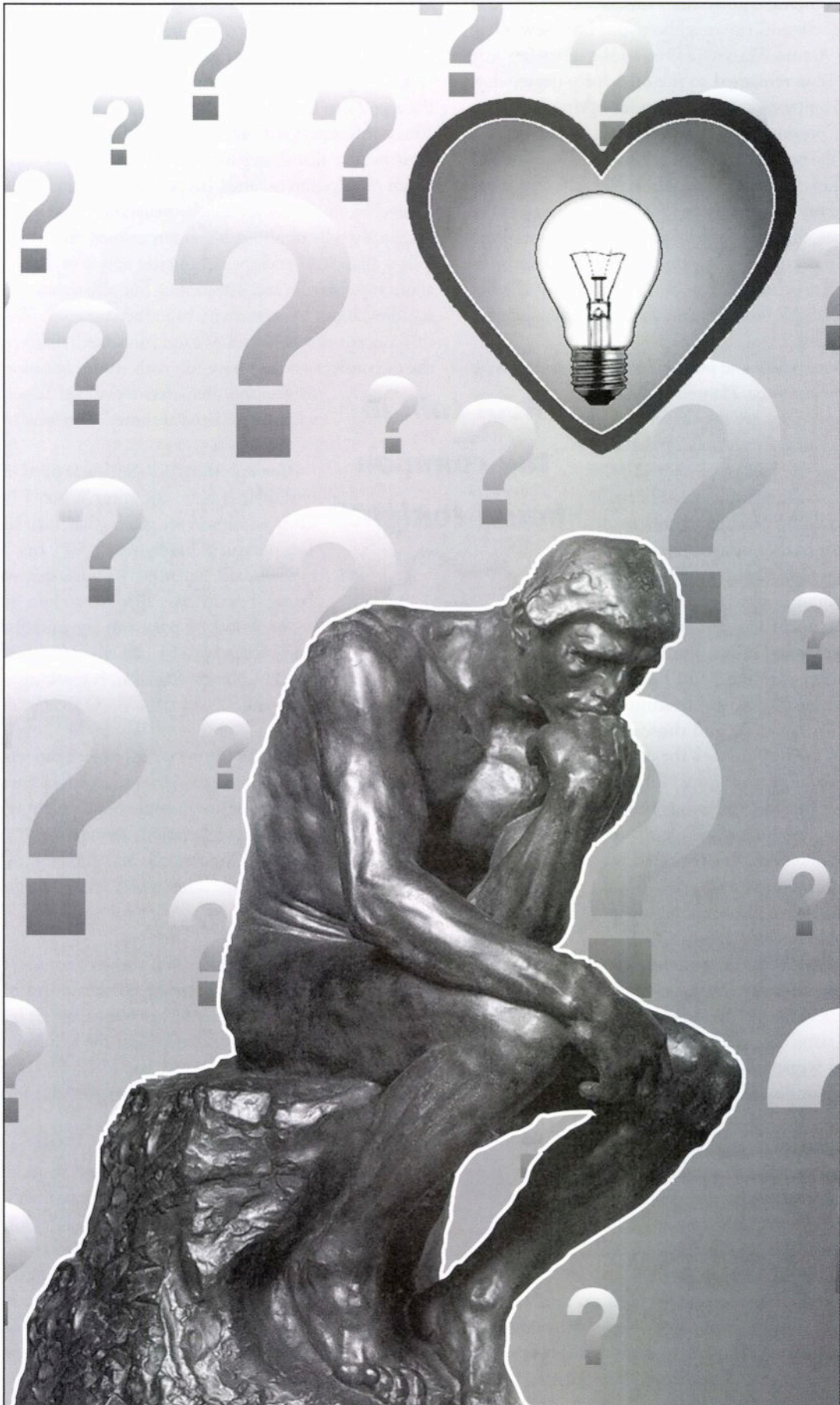
Monday, March 21. Spring arrived officially yesterday. It is here, for sure. When I look out my study window, I see green grass, hear birds singing. Temperatures barely reach 50°, but I only wear my baseball hat now. I figure this will usher in spring. Franny has called me to join her for a walk in the woods. I pass, but by midafternoon, I'm ready for a walk. I call my neighbor and other walking buddy, Nancy. She, too, is working at home and eager for a break.

Tuesday, March 22. In one week's time, I can see the grass. It puts the snow to shame. Not that our turf is in great shape, but like New Viewers, it begs us to come out and play. Easter comes early this year and email conversations abound about an Easter egg hunt this Sunday. Email that connects and disconnects. I remember our close connections of the other night. Snow is again forecast for tonight.

Wednesday, March 23. I'm the community's contact to Carl, our snow-plowing contractor. I awake to the sound of the snow-plow like a mother awakens to her baby's cry. It is 4 a.m. In a few hours, I am dressed and staring out the window at the heavy wet snow which we know won't last long. Later in the day, I return from work at 3 p.m. and ask Jim who shoveled the walkways. "I don't know," he says.

On email, I read that Franny and Steve, whose turn it was for snow removal, had rejected the tractor and shoveled the walks manually. I imagine the new tractor was more than they wanted to handle. The plowing rotation has worked again. Our community has just about made it through another season. I thank my lucky stars, knowingly.

Dana Snyder-Grant is a social worker and a freelance writer who lives at New View Cohousing in Acton, Massachusetts. www.snyder-grant.org/dana; danasg@newview.org



DARREN MCMAULUS/JOHN MORRIS

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN ...?

What burning questions about conflict in community would you ask an experienced process and communications consultant?

Below, three well-known consensus trainers and community process consultants answer our readers' questions.

Question: For some years now at Cornerstone Village Cohousing in Cambridge we've dealt with the "progress/process" issue.

It's phrased various ways:

"How do we deal with those who want to endlessly process questions while others of us want to get something done?"

"Why do some people insist on ignoring process and common courtesy in the name of taking action?"

"We still need to address the alternative push and pull between everybody being heard and moving along to resolution of issues."

"I'm tired of talking about this. Can't we just decide?"

"Why do we need a policy on this at all? Can't we reply on courtesy and common sense?" (which can generate the reply, "Your common sense may not be the same as my common sense.")

We have people who are frustrated with how long decisions take, and have been having discussions about modifying our consensus process by allowing us to go to a voting-fallback process much sooner. Some have advocated for being able to vote as soon as the first meeting where an item is discussed, if consensus cannot be reached. Our task force on this issue has put forth a proposal that on nonmajor, noncontroversial issues, voting could happen as soon as the second meeting in which we discuss the proposal, if a majority of those present at the first meeting decide that we are ready to go to a vote.

How do you suggest we resolve this?

—Mabel Liang, Cornerstone Village Cohousing, Cambridge, Massachusetts



Beatrice Briggs responds:

From what you have said, my guess is that the problem is not consensus vs. voting, or process vs., action, but rather the way that proposals are presented and discussed. It sounds as if anyone can bring any item, large or small, simple or complex, to the whole community for a decision. It is not clear whether or not the proposals are submitted in writing in advance, but I am guessing that often they are not. Finally, "open discussion" is a notoriously inefficient (if very common) way of trying to reach a decision. Here are some ideas for reducing the quantity and

improving the quality of proposals that reach the whole group for decision:

1. **Delegate.** Not everyone has to decide everything. Whenever possible, establish a clear policy or guidelines and then leave the nonmajor, noncontroversial decisions to the relevant committee or work group.

2. **Require committee review.** In order to get on the agenda of a full community meeting, all items must be reviewed by the relevant committee (maintenance, finance, special events, etc). The committee's job is to work with the item's sponsors, helping them to frame their ideas in the larger context of the community's priorities, suggest modifications and, if possible, add its support for the proposal. If the committee does not support the proposal or is divided on the issue, they should explain why. This report should be made available to the membership before the meeting at which the item is to be discussed.

Consider the issue from five different perspectives: factual information, pros, cons, new ideas and emotional reactions—keeping each category separate from the others.

3. **Standard format.** All items that require a decision by the whole membership must be presented in a standard format, in writing. The proposal should include (1) an explanation of why this issue is important, timely, etc.; (2) what it hopes to accomplish; (3) the specific action to be taken, including time frame, budget, and other relevant information; (4) at least 3 possible positive benefits and 3 possible difficulties that might occur if the action is taken; and (5) at least two alternatives to the proposal. The very process of preparing this document will help the sponsors refine their ideas and will make it easier for everyone else to give the proposal a fair hearing.

4. **Structure the discussion.** Edward De Bono's slim volume, *Six Thinking Hats*, presents a brilliantly simple way to structure a group discussion. The fundamental concept is to ask the whole group to consider the issue at hand from five different perspectives: factual information, pros, cons, new ideas and emotional reactions – keeping each category separate from the others. (The sixth "hat" is facilitation.) This method eliminates the push and

pull of traditional debate, transforming it into a collective search for understanding. This approach has worked for all kinds of groups, from kindergarteners to corporate executives, so it might even be useful for Cornerstone Village Cohousing!

Beatrice Briggs is the director of the International Institute for Facilitation and Consensus, a professional team of consultants and trainers with affiliates in 12 countries, and author of Introduction to Consensus. Beatrice lives in Eco-village Huehucocoyotl, near Tepoztlán, Mexico and travels extensively giving workshops and facilitating participatory processes in English and Spanish. bbriggs@iifac.org; www.iifac.org.



Tree Bressen responds:

Having come from the intentional communities movement that predates cohousing, I have been really impressed with how cohousing communities have taken on the consensus process. Among organizations that don't develop good skills for consensus, it is common for members to

get frustrated with the process and end up changing over to voting—this has happened in many a political activist group. While I would never presume to prescribe consensus or any other decision-making method for every community or every issue, I do think that there are enough good reasons to use consensus that a group should work on improving its process before dropping it in favor of majority voting.

In a well-functioning group, good process supports good product—these become a natural pair instead of at odds.

Reading your question makes me wonder about the quality of the facilitation in your group. Usually an active facilitation model—where the facilitator summarizes frequently, reflects back unity and disagreements in the group, and supports the group in looking at the needs, feelings, and reasons that are giving rise to the disagreements—results in a sense of productivity during meetings. Novice facilitators often only summarize once or twice during an agenda topic, whereas experienced facilitators typically summarize every few minutes (unless the group is really hearing each other well and moving forward together without that assistance). With practice, these summaries become concise; sometimes a mere phrase suffices.

Skilled facilitators continually analyze the content to separate it into threads, then help the group find convergence on each thread, then bring the threads together into a full weave.

Then there are the participants. How well do they understand the consensus process? How good are they at putting the interests of the group at the center of the exploration?

There are various specific dynamics that can contribute to the problem you are describing (e.g. if someone skips earlier meetings and then at a later meeting raises a concern the group has already dealt with), and if something like that is happening you will probably need to craft a solution to address that particular cause.

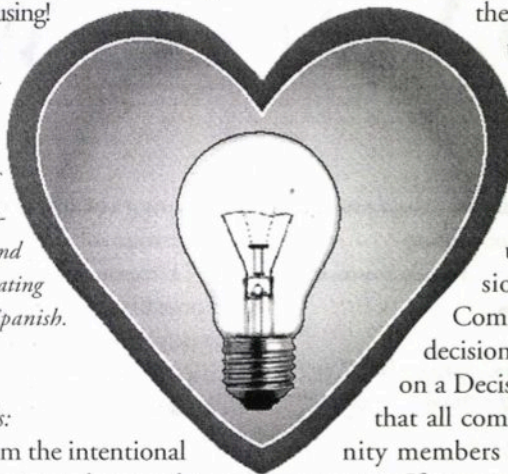
Are you making decisions in full group meetings that could be handled more appropriately by committees? How about using a Decision Board, so that minor decisions can be handled outside of meetings? Committees at some communities post pending decisions that they believe are within their purview on a Decision Board (or send them out via email) so that all community members can see them. Community members have a certain number of weeks to raise concerns. If concerns are raised, then the matter is referred back to committee or to community meeting for further work; if no concerns are raised by the end of the review period, then the decision becomes policy.

Welcoming all voices and getting things done are both important. Even though it doesn't always feel like it to the people caught in these roles at either end of the spectrum, they need each other. Can they find a way to honor each other's contribution? How about at the next meeting where this kind of grumbling starts to happen, ask a few people to get up out of their chairs and switch positions in a bit of role play, having the slow processor advocate for moving things along and having the "let's get it done already" person speak to the importance of inclusion?

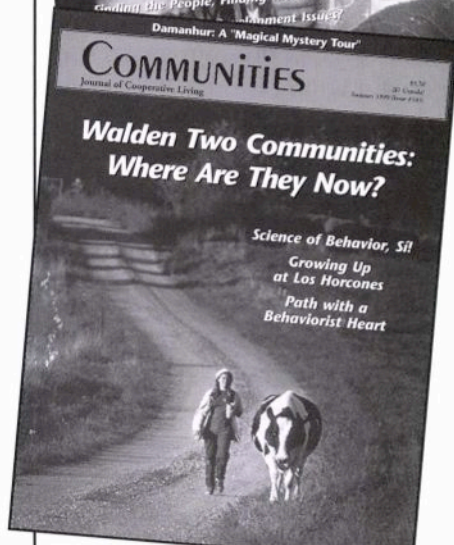
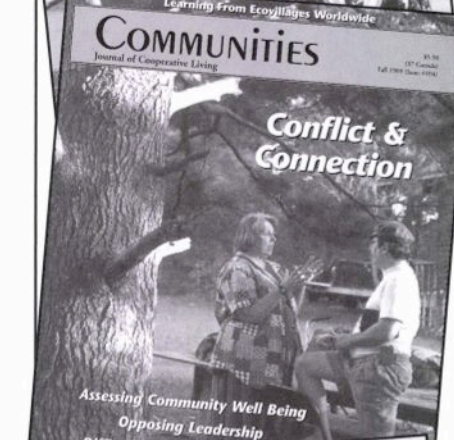
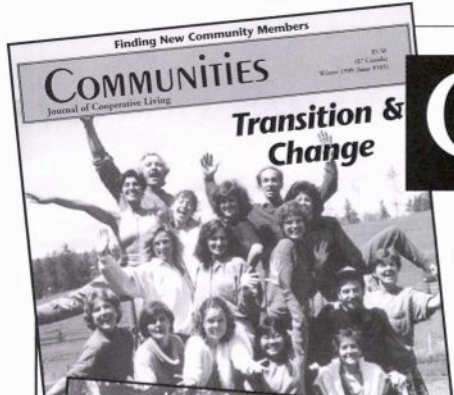
Reaching a consensus decision does typically take longer than a majority vote. However, there is a payback in that the time gap between decision and successful implementation is likely to be much shorter when everyone is on board with the decision than when 1 to 49 percent disagree. In particular, for decisions that can only succeed when people lend active support (such as anything requiring a change in people's behavior), it doesn't seem realistic to think that voting would be effective. Other benefits of consensus are higher quality decisions due to drawing out the full wisdom of the community, and an enhanced sense of connectedness among members as a result of finding unity rather than creating winners and losers. My experience has been that when meetings work well, people are willing to spend the time.

Tree Bressen is a group process consultant who works with intentional communities and other nonprofits on how to have meetings that are lively, productive, and connecting. She is a founding member of Walnut St. Co-op in Eugene, Oregon, which celebrates its fifth anniversary this fall. Her website, www.treegroup.info, offers free tools and resources. tree@ic.org.

(continued on p. 60)



Are you making decisions in full group meetings that could be handled more appropriately by committees?



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#129



L.A. Eco-Village cofounder Lois Arkin (right) and neighbors.

Conservers, not Consumers

“I could live here,” I thought, as I strolled down the charming, narrow street in Cincinatti. I passed small, wooden-frame houses with clapboard exteriors and wide front porches not far from the sidewalk, reminding me of an earlier age. “Good evening,” and “hello” greeted me as I passed people walking in the opposite direction; one couple even said hello from their porch. I passed teenagers leaping in the street playing basketball. The neighbors were multiracial and apparently friendly to strangers; the small houses ranged from cottage-like or remodeled to funky; flowers and vegetable gardens filled many front yards. As far as I could tell, every backyard on both sides of the street was adjacent to what looked like forest. It took me awhile to realize the street was primarily a pedestrian play and interaction zone, because while cars were parked along the curbs, I saw few cars actually driving down the street, and those that did so drove slowly.

Not too surprising, since this was Enright Ridge Eco-Village, a group of dedicated neighbors living on a half-mile dead-end street in an urban neighborhood a few minutes from downtown Cincinatti. Jim and Eileen Shenk, who operate Imago Earth Institute, a children’s nature center here, and

their neighbors have been consciously creating community on their street for years. They had set about to meet everyone in every house, hold social events and meetings, and “green” as much of their neighborhood as possible. (See “*A Home-Grown Ecovillage on Our Street*,” pg. 52.) Enright Ridge Eco-Village illustrates a significant point—urban community can happen more easily where human vision and motivation meet an ideal physical layout: (1) a dead-end street, which results in relatively little traffic and forces everyone to pass their neighbors’ houses on the way in or out; (2) houses and front porches close to the sidewalk, which make for easy social interaction; (3) no cross-streets that cut across the focused-in sense of place; and (4) easy connection to the natural world. Sounds like the site plan for a cohousing community, doesn’t it? And it’s no wonder: the architects who originated cohousing in Denmark in the 1960s based their vision on traditionally built environments which foster, rather than impede, the innate human tendency to connect with others and create community. To use a socioarchitectural concept, the Enright Avenue cul de sac fosters social capital through centripetal energy and forced proximity. To use a Chinese concept, it has great *fung shui*.

This past year, as I traveled to do workshops and speaking engagements, I kept ending up in one wonderful urban community after another.

- **Maitreya EcoVillage.** In nine houses and apartments on five adjacent lots in Eugene, Oregon, landlords and tenants share potlucks with food from their large organic garden, bicycle to work, park in the community bike shed, and meditate together in their cob community building. (See *“Our Sustainable Acre in the City,”* pg. 36.)
- **Los Angeles Eco-Village.** Multicultural intentional residents from Iran to Israel to Guatemala rent apartments in two adjacent apartment buildings and share courtyard garden space, composting, recycling, potlucks, meetings, and bicycle activism. (See *“An Urban Ecovillage of the Near Future,”* by L.A. Eco-Village cofounder Lois Arkin, pg. 44.)
- **Swan’s Market Cohousing.** Residents share a Mediterranean-style terrace above a busy courtyard, just a stairway up from specialty food markets, art galleries, and shops—all packed in a renovated ’20s-era art deco building in downtown Oakland. (See *“Living the Good Life Downtown,”* pg. 40.) (In truth, I actually visited Swan’s Market two years ago, in 2003.)

This September I returned to Yellow Springs, Ohio, an enclave of eco-activists in an otherwise conservative area of the state. This beautiful small town of tree-lined streets, picket fences, and wide verandas was home to the renowned engineer/social innovator Arthur Morgan. In 1940 he founded Community Service, Inc. (CSI), a nonprofit educational organization supporting small sustainable communities and urban neighborhoods. I reconnected with his granddaughter Faith Morgan and her husband Pat Murphy, current Executive Director of Community Service, Inc., at CSI’s second annual “Peak Oil and Community Solutions” conference September 23–25

In his address to conference participants Pat Murphy urged people living in cities and small towns to “become conservers, not consumers.” A conserver, he told us, is socially cooperative and agrarian—not necessarily a farmer, but one who has an attitude of supporting those who do grow food. A conserver consciously uses fewer and fewer material goods,

and invests in the future, not in present-day luxuries. A conserver views consuming not as a reasonable activity but as a problem to be solved. A conserver wants community relationships that are direct, rather than simulated, vicarious, or distanced from the source. And conservers invest locally, supporting local retailers and suppliers.

“Well,” I thought, “that sounds like almost everyone I know in the communities movement.”

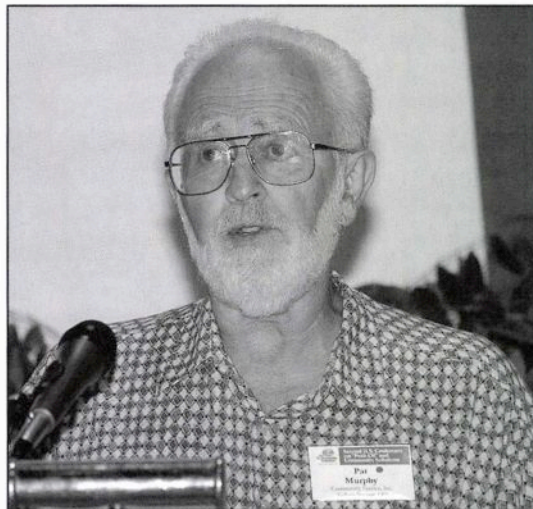
Other speakers advocated similar ideas: “We need to shift from an oil-based culture to a sustainable culture” (Richard Heinberg, author of *Power Down* and *The Party’s Over*); “We need to value human relationships and the Earth over financial gain” (agricultural economist John Ikerd); and “We need to spend, save, and invest locally” (Michael Shuman, author of *Going Local*.) In my presentation on ecovillages I said, more or less, “Hey folks, here are people doing these things already.”

For me, the highlight of the Peak Oil conference was CSI’s video documentary, “Peak, Oil, Cuba, and Community,” which essentially brought down the house with tears, cheers, and a standing ovation. This moving account showed how Cuba fared after the country lost access to petroleum for fuel, energy, and fertilizer in 1993. To save themselves and their children from near-starvation, the Cuban people used a combination of organic farming, natural fertilizers, plowing by oxen, permaculture design, bicycle carts, donkey carts, sometimes photovoltaic panels, and other pre- and postindustrial appropriate technologies. In the populous city of Havana people taught themselves to grow local indigenous fruits and vegetables and raise chickens, doves, guinea pigs, and rabbits in hundreds of tiny city garden plots and in courtyard, rooftop, and balcony gardens.

If Cubans in Havana and many of us are doing these things now—living as conservers, not consumers—many more can learn. I think the stories in this issue will inspire you.

Diana Leafe Christian is editor of Communities magazine, and author of Creating a Life Together: Practical Tools to Grow Ecovillages and Intentional Communities. She lives at Earthaven Ecovillage in North Carolina.

The Cuban people used organic farming, plowing by oxen, community gardens, bicycle carts, donkey carts, and photovoltaic panels.

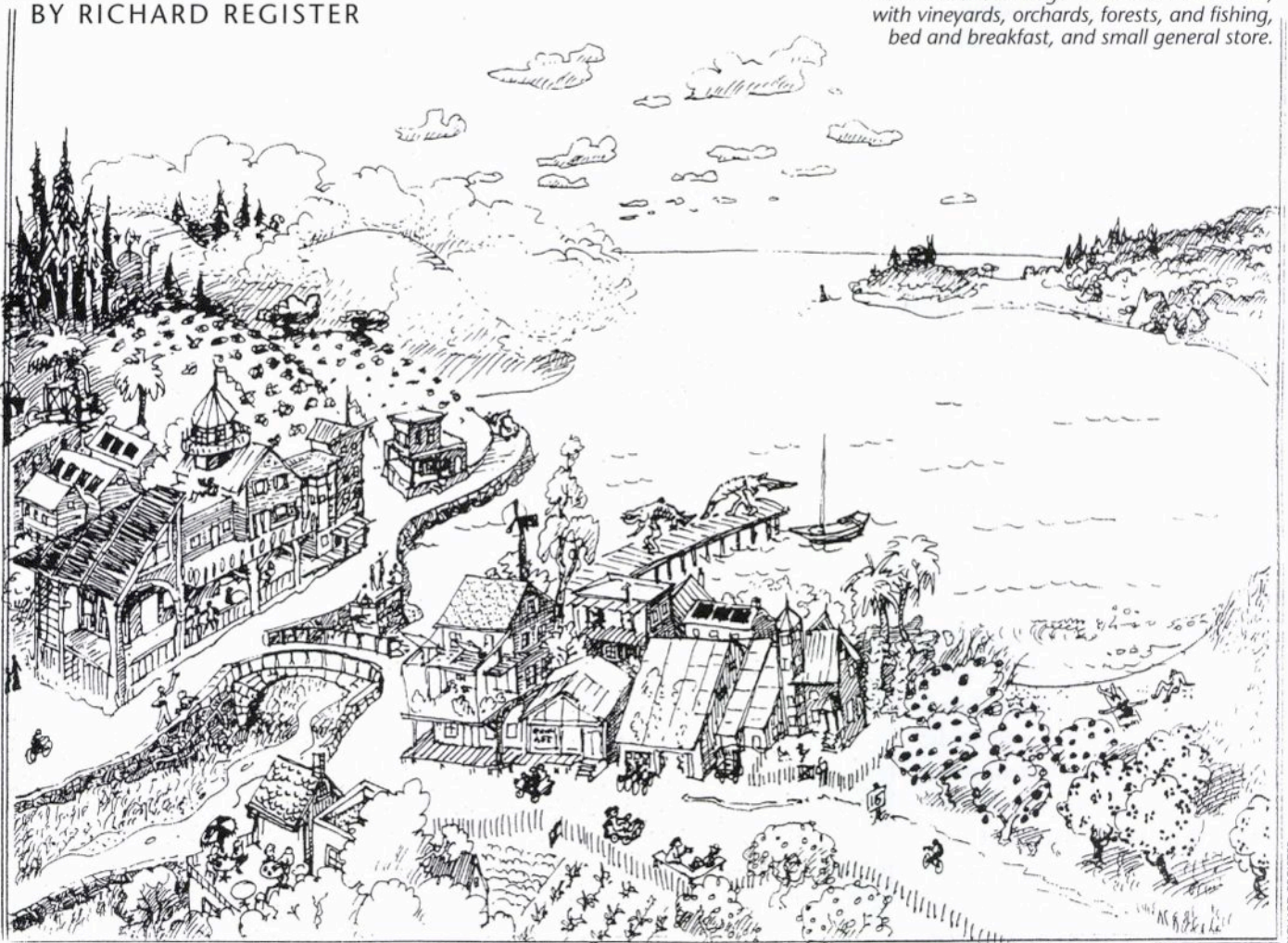


CSI’s Pat Murphy

The Village Can Save the City

BY RICHARD REGISTER

Author Richard Register's conception of an 80-120 member ecovillage in Northern California, with vineyards, orchards, forests, and fishing, bed and breakfast, and small general store.



In a meadow at the northern edge of Scotland in October, 1995, as huge, rolling vanes of a giant wind generator slowly turned cartwheels against the sky, and barely a thin row of pines separated us from the moody North Sea, 400 of us from 40 countries gathered in a green meadow for the First International EcoVillage Conference at Findhorn. Co-sponsored by the Findhorn Foundation, Gaia

Trust, *In Context* magazine, and the newly formed Global Ecovillage Network (GEN), it proved to be one of the most positive and inspired events I've ever attended.

Findhorn had recently acquired a new piece of land, and had posted a sort of first-draft site plan of the property with a scattering of generalized house outlines, and a note seeking design suggestions from conference participants.

Torri Superiore: An Ecovillage on the Traditional Village Model



An ecovillage on the traditional village model—with solar panels.

ALBERT BATES

At least one ecovillage, Torri Superiore in Italy, *is* built on the traditional village model—with added solar panels and permaculture design—advocated in this article. That's because Torri Superiore is literally a medieval stone village, built sometime in the 14th century and abandoned and fallen into ruin since World War II, being restored since 1989 by a dedicated group of Italian ecovillage activists.

Torri Superiore is located on a steeply terraced hillside above the Bevara River

in Liguria, northeast of Monaco in the foothills of the Italian Maritime Alps. To defend the settlement from enemy attack, its medieval founders built it as one large architectural labyrinth, with all homes and shops connected by narrow stairs and arches. After WWII its residents moved away to cities to seek work. Since 1989, the village's new community inhabitants have restored most of its 166 rooms. International intentional community expert Bill Metcalf calls Torri Superiore



Founders Lucilla Borio and Massimo Candela

ALBERT BATES

“one of Europe's most beautiful ecovillages.”

In 2001 Torri Superiore became an ecotourism project under GEN-Europe, offering guest house facilities, a restaurant serving fresh local foods and wines, and courses in permaculture design, ecovillage design, meeting facilitation and consensus, and Italian cooking.

—Diana Leafé Christian



ALBERT BATES

"This looks like it's modeled on Los Angeles," I thought. "Every house stands alone." That day I had also visited the nearby town of Forres. It was arranged in a traditional village layout: its multistory common-wall buildings joined edge-to-edge, with shops on the ground floor and residences above. The buildings defined a streetscape and public plaza, and served to keep the whole settlement to a very small footprint. I had seen essentially the same village design in my trips to Europe, China, India, Nepal, Turkey, Africa, and even in the steep hillside *favelas* of Rio.

This traditional village pattern offers quick, easy pedestrian access to shops and residences, and therefore saves considerable energy that might otherwise be expended as transportation fuel. Since ecovillage activists seek energy conservation, one would think traditional village design would be a natural pattern for ecovillage founders. If one were to build on that ancient and well-nigh universal pattern, and then incorporate solar and wind-generating technology, organic gardens, democratic decision-making, and spiritual values, then perhaps something new, powerful, and inspiring would happen. But, to my surprise, conference participants weren't very interested in this time-tested pattern of human settlement.

One would think traditional village design would be a natural pattern for ecovillagers.

At Findhorn, using this traditional village pattern would mean "infilling" (building new buildings in between existing separate structures) to create a streetscape and pedestrian plaza. A small plaza or park could be created as a kind of "view plaza" and a social gathering place, with one side open to views of the wide meadow and wind generator, which was much celebrated at Findhorn as part of their largely renewable energy system. Many ecovillage

participants at the conference were among the early innovators in passive solar design—so why not make their greenhouses not just one or two but three or four stories high? Why not design stepped-up slopes on the south faces of buildings similar to the terraced Indian Pueblos of the American Southwest? Why not build taller

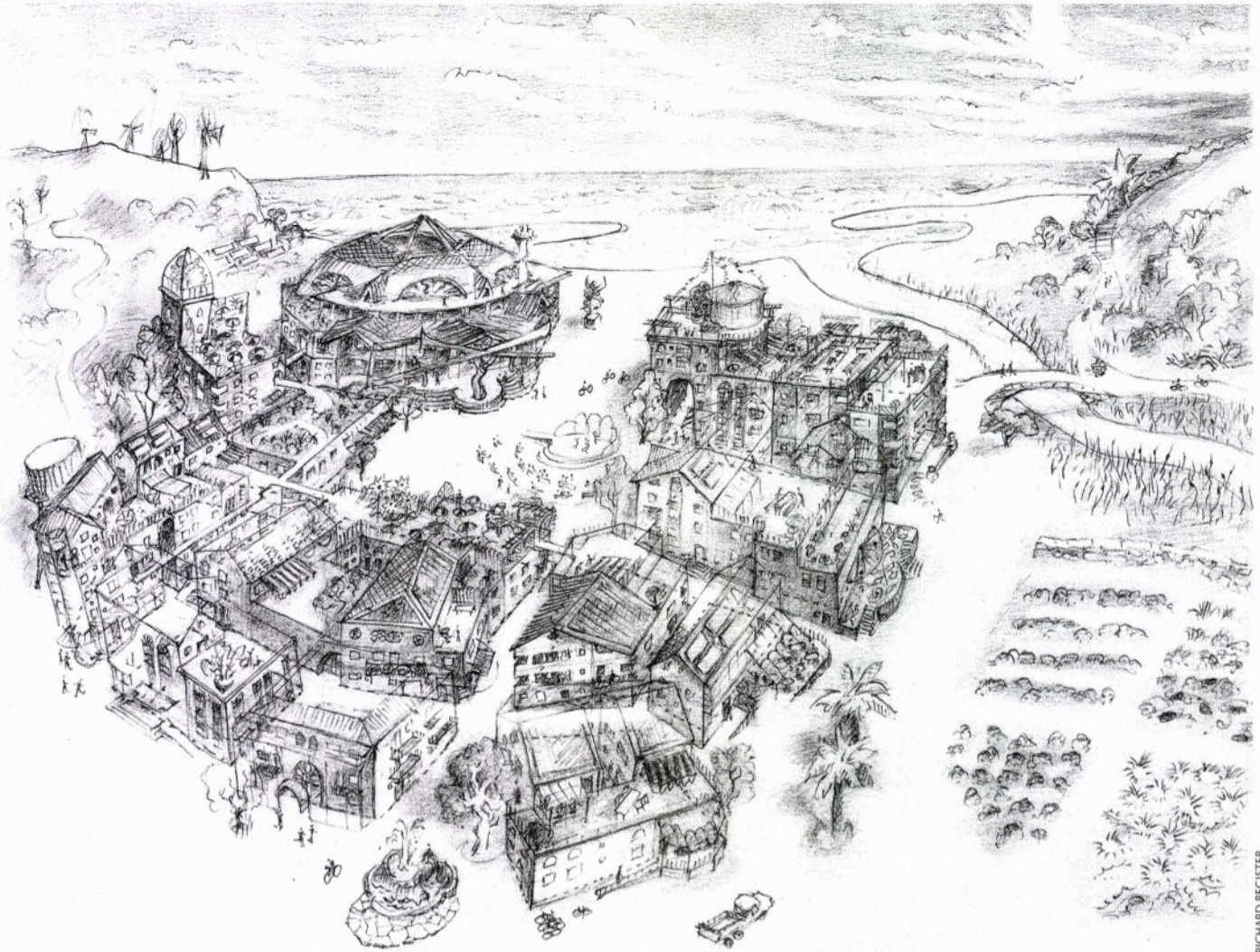
buildings than are common in today's ecovillages, thereby vertically clustering housing and allowing more room for home gardens, pastures, and agriculture? Why not make ecovillages a powerful model for how we can transform and "green" our cities?

The buildings around such a "view plaza" at Findhorn could be designed to frame the perspective, with terraces facing the south and east for sun and view. Buildings could have connecting bridges over the streets that converge in the plaza, uniting rooftop gardens, restaurants, and guesthouse patios, thus creating a very



Early stage of an ecovillage, with 150 members. Includes small hotel and general store for the region. The dots show possible future development, shown in illustration on pg. 33.

RICHARD REGISTER



RICHARD REGISTER

Later stage of the same ecovillage as on pg. 32, now with about 500 members, with capacity for housing about 50 visitors. Includes large community building, upper left, as well as general store, post office, meeting spaces, and offices. Entering the plaza one has a view of the lagoon framed by larger buildings—many of which are connected by bridges for pedestrian access.

pedestrian-friendly environment. Instead of just one- or two-story buildings, why not built up to five stories, with a few higher towers for roof access and design flourish? Such high places were also traditional in the compact pedestrian towns of the past, as seen in castles, manor houses, and churches. In Findhorn's case such multileveled dwellings could be solar- and wind-powered, and comfortably sheltered with glass windscreens where needed. Gardens could be celebrated on roofs and terraces to attract and feed native birds, as well as on the ground to feed people. We need such models of full-on, multi-story, compact ecological design for cities as well as villages.

Why not build taller, "vertically clustered" housing and allow more room for home gardens, pastures, and agriculture?

This kind of village—and ecovillage design—is where my vision begins to connect with the design of cities.

Like so many aspects of modern life, cities ain't what they used to be. They started as compact pedestrian structures, like villages, but spread out to cover more land as they grew. For a time,

much of the growth was up a few stories as well as out a few more blocks. But when cheap energy from oil became available, and vehicles such as cars were invented to quickly consume this energy, the city began to lose its compact and walkable structure. Most of the ancient city had been available to the person on foot. Not so in the 20th century. Over the last 100 years cities have continued to build outward, melting across the landscape as if infused by some kind of solvent. Big single-use central business districts popped up in city centers as tall, massive buildings. We had energy to burn, North Americans readily believed, and soon it would be too cheap to meter. Life came to mean daily driving

to and from a central business district, or driving through all-around sprawl to commute to work, shopping, and socializing.

The solvent that melted city structure was gasoline, backed up by factories of the polluting kind, motivated by people moving farther from the city center (for access to clean air, lawns, and robins),

and as a cover for racism and classism (fleeing the poor). For a long time, gas was cheap. In the early days of oil, the ratio was about 1 barrel's worth of oil "in" (fueling the energy to discover, refine, and distribute) oil to about 20 or 30 barrels worth of oil "out" (creating gasoline, electricity from power plants, plastics, and fertilizer). Rather quietly that ratio has declined steadily from 1:20/30 to about 1:2, but we have continued to act as if oil-based fuel and energy are still extraordinarily cheap. Gasoline might sound affordable at \$3.00 a gallon—it's a deal for those who think they can't do without it—but if subsidies were accounted for, including the not-so-free "freeways" and wars for oil, the cost of gasoline would go up several times over. In other words, cheap energy is already a thing of the past, though few really grasp this yet, and fewer still appreciate how much more expensive and rare gasoline is going to get in the near future.

Meantime cities of vast energy-consuming distances are still being built, as if oil and energy reserves would always be as cheap and abundant as they were until recently. Rather than confront the disasters of sprawl and the fact that we are now radically dependent on massive flows of energy to unite the scattered city, we buy new improved agents of sprawl and energy dependence such as Priuses and hybrid cars to preserve and rationalize the present city structure, because, as a recent American president said, "Our way of life is not negotiable." Millions buy into this nonsense and are, so long as the city remains in its present form, addicted to massive flows of energy. The "more energy-efficient" car simply means people can drive farther per dollar—creating more sprawl while postponing dealing with their addictive overmobility. I call car-dependence a "structural addiction" because it is based on the structure of the built community, and if that structure is not changed, we will remain addicts and continue finding ourselves in bizarre situations because of it, such as the all-day, 100-mile-plus traffic jams out of Houston, Texas as Hurricane Rita approached.

The intensity of hurricanes has actually been increasing, say many scientists, as a function of increasing sea temperature. Spread-out cities, towns, and even villages, are based on the

"needs" of cars. Living in the suburbs, which forces people to burn copious amounts of fuel just to get to work and have access to one another, constitutes an enormous part of the problem. The walkable, compact village that looks and functions very clearly as a physical structure for radically-reduced energy demand is precisely what can show us the alternative. Building this kind of village is a way to help roll back sprawl and save the city, giving us a chance to achieve climate stability and end increasing species extinctions. For those who go back to the land in any kind of village or ecovillage, concern for changing the city should be high, because if the city does not reverse its literally flat-out trajectory, if it doesn't roll back sprawl development, the climate change (to which cities are the largest contributor) will profoundly wound village and ecovillage life as well. But if

cities can be reshaped to be more compact and serve all needs at close, mainly pedestrian proximity, millions of acres now covered in sprawl and paving can be depaved and returned to agriculture and natural open space.

When I talked about the idea of traditional village design for ecovillages at the Findhorn Conference in 1995, I got puzzled looks or comments such as, "Well that's interesting... It's something to think about anyway."

After the conference I corresponded with some of my new Findhorn acquaintances. Then there were longer time gaps between shorter letters. Finally I just got the word: "This just doesn't work for

us." Now it's a decade later, and the times they are a'changing. The pressure on cities is not only mounting (and the pressure of cities on the natural world), but cities are starting to look more like surrealistic war zones (witness New Orleans) than anyone would



A small ecovillage or "country house" for 12 to 20 people, with garden and orchard and treehouse rooms for teenagers.

If cities can be reshaped to be more compact and serve all needs at close, mainly pedestrian proximity, millions of acres of sprawl and paving can be returned to agriculture and open space.

have guessed even a few months ago. A pedestrian environment holds many of the answers. The village, if designed as the most lively pedestrian environment we could imagine, and with the ecological features typical in the ecovillage movement, would be crucial in a much-needed cultural awakening.

Such villages would be what architect Paul Downton, cofounder of Urban Ecology Australia, calls an “urban fractal”—that is, a whole system which functions with all the basic parts of a city or town, and is organized in the same basic pattern on a smaller scale. Such urban fractals could include not just ecovillages, if they were built in the compact, pedestrian-friendly traditional village form, but also “integral neighborhoods” in cities that could provide jobs, housing, shopping, small-scale manufacturing, food-growing, and rooftop gardens, or neighborhood restoration projects, in which, for example, paved-over creeks were dug up and brought back to life. These projects and their downtown cousins, which I call “heart of the city projects” or “ecological demonstration projects,” are three kinds of urban fractals that could be inspiring and clearly lead in a direction to put society and its built habitat back in balance with nature.

I’ve asked my ecovillager friends, “Why not build this way? Why is it you’re not embracing this sort of traditional village design?” Their answers have ranged from, “Local zoning won’t let us,” to the question, “Why should we have to model a way of living to influence cities, since cities are unredeemable, after all? Besides, we don’t have much to do with cities anyway, since we live in the country.” Those issues can be addressed—change the zoning, which developers, activists, preservationists and politicians do all the time anyway. Or refuted—after oil production starts plummeting and the price of everything skyrockets, especially food, hungry people in sprawl cities will use the last of their gas, not to mention bullets, to drive out to rural areas to take farmers’ crops rather than let their children starve. To change our cities into healthy settlements that will thrive in a new form instead of collapsing is our first line of defense.

But simple unwillingness to “go there,” to consider these ideas in any depth, may result from another problem—cash flow. Few of us in either the environmental or intentional communities movements, especially ecovillage pioneers, have large financial resources. Perhaps the silence I hear from most ecovillagers is no different from my own silence when friends suggest I buy something I simply can’t afford. That is, building ecovillages on the traditional village model is expensive!

I’m sure this is not the entire reason few city dwellers or ecovillagers respond to these suggestions, but it’s a part and often a make-or-break reason. To build taller, more complex ecologically informed ecovillages on a traditional village layout is just plain beyond our budgets. It could save money in the long run but it would take a lot of up-front cash to get such models up and running. Further, the time

and cooperation required for planning larger shared structures is challenging, and related to not having enough money to finance the long process of accomplishing new and ambitious goals like these. The time and money required to change zoning and convince neighbors, even in low-density rural neighborhoods, can be daunting. Unless many people are strongly convicted about the value of such projects, and have the time and financial resources to pursue them, projects like these will likely be impossible.

On another level of state and federal policy, it is hard to compete with freeways and car infrastructure constantly funded by tax expenditures in the tens of billions of dollars annually. Meantime

politicians groan about every cent spent on public transit and perjoratively call these contracts and grants, “subsidies.” Far more than just investing in public transit over car infrastructure, we should be spending tens of billions of dollars annually on ecological cities and ecological villages. Ecovillage activists have embraced this legislative challenge less enthusiastically than have union organizers, environmental lobbyists, and political party activists. So far ecovillage

founders have mostly been motivated to just go out and do it—an admirable practice, but perhaps not enough.

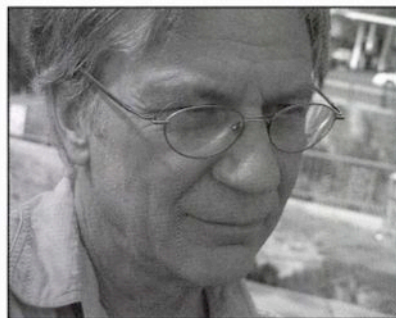
Part of the solution is more awareness that we’re subsidizing the car-based city and even the destruction of traditional village structure in dozens of ways in our current society. Our over-mobility has turned not only cities into structures designed for cars, but also spawned strip malls and freeway exit franchise facilities. Another part of the solution is simply to consider the ideas presented here—that building ecovillages in the traditional village form and keeping in mind their links to cities, hold profound positive possibilities.

This “big picture” view of ecovillage and city fractal design seems beyond the reach of most of us planning our homes and lives. Maybe we need to study how to save and shift our own investments

to literally, physically create ecovillages based on traditional compact village design. If ecovillages can save the city by reshaping it, and prevent the likely collapse of whatever civility we still have in this world, it could hardly be a higher priority. This is obviously a gigantic challenge, and I don’t have easy answers. There’s a need for a whole paradigm shift here, from a pattern of investing in cars in so many ways to just steadily shifting that kind of investment over to an ecologically healthy built environment.

My hope and vision is that in just one or two generations we’d be living in the most gorgeous ecovillages and ecocities you could imagine.

The solvent that melted city structure was gasoline.



Author Richard Register

Richard Register, author of Ecocities and Building Cities in Balance with Nature, is president of Ecocity Builders, an educational/research non-profit in Oakland, California, and founder of the International Ecocity Conference series held in Berkeley, California, 1990; Adelaide, Australia, 1992; Youff/Dakar, Senegal, 1996; Curitiba, Brazil, 2000; Shenzhen, China, 2002; and coming next, Bangalore, India, 2006. www.ecocitybuilders.org

Our Sustainable Acre in the City

BY MELANIE G. RIOS



Residents Blanche and Finn at Maitreya Ecovillage.

“If we don’t change how money works, then nothing’s going to change,” says Mike Ruppert, one of many voices warning about the effects of Peak Oil, impending economic collapse, and global warming. They argue that there is no source of energy on the horizon that will keep our growth-addicted economy afloat, nor would we even wish another inexpensive source of energy to appear given the destructive effects of material consumption on our planet. Urban communities have an opportunity to become “lifeboats” as petroleum-based agriculture declines, jobs dependent on oil are lost, and people around us become frightened and hungry. We can be inventors and stewards of information, systems, and tools to share with others who come flocking for help if we begin preparing ourselves now for this effort.

Here at Maitreya EcoVillage, 25 of us live in several houses, apartments, and a few smaller dwellings on an acre about

five minutes by bicycle from downtown Eugene, Oregon. Some of us are tenants and a few are landlords, and I’d say the common purpose of our 16-year-old community on five adjacent city lots is to live in a cooperative, sustainably-oriented setting with neighbors and friends. Our shared common facilities include large organic gardens, a small orchard, a cob guest cottage, a strawbale community center, beautiful residences made from recycled and sensitively harvested wood, some low-budget dome dwellings, and some renovated conventional housing. We hold optional meetings whenever someone calls one, and make decisions by consensus. Our two property owners, who live on site, have veto power over issues that significantly affect the land or their finances, but so far they’ve not exercised that veto. There is effectively a “waiting list” for each housing unit, such that when space becomes



With no fences between the lots, Maitreya residents share a community garden.

available, the other members in that housing unit select the new resident from amongst their friends.

I'd like to tell you what we're doing to support each other and our neighbors to live more sustainably and prepare to live in a world with less petroleum, and how we're encouraging our government to support us in this. The following six "economic principles for new villagers," could, if implemented at many levels, help steer us in a direction that would leave us happier, healthier, and more sustainable than our current economic practices.

Principle #1: "Don't Delay!"

We're headed towards a sustainable culture one way or another. Will a few survivors scratch a living from the dirt while living in unheated huts, or will more of us enjoy abundance and warmth? The latter vision is more likely if we use our remaining fossil fuels now to transition towards sustainable practices such as increased organic farming and renewable energy.

Two months ago I looked at a driveway alongside of one of our houses where cars were parked, and thought "What is a self-respecting ecovillage doing with cars on its property?" So I asked my fellow ecovillagers for ideas on converting that space to something more life-enriching. Now organic vegetables are growing there and the cars are banished to the street. Food not driveways! This project involved plenty of sweat, but was also made easier by renting a jackhammer for a couple of days to break through compacted gravel and cement. We envision creating more garden space on our yet unused nooks and crannies and rooftops as we attract more urban farmers to live here. And our

dreams don't stop at the boundaries of our property; we are ready to help others convert lawns, roads, roofs, and parking lots into gardens with bike paths and/or gathering spaces.

Better to do this now than wait a few years, when it may be much more expensive to get the fuel for the equipment and power tools that can help us.

Principle #2: "Total-Cost Accounting"

The total cost of a product, including environmental costs associated with its creation, use, and disposal, should be included in its price. In the same way that tobacco companies paid for damage caused by their product, I believe other industries should be required to pay for their true costs of doing business. If oil companies paid for the contribution gasoline make to increased lung cancer, traffic accidents, and global warming, then gas prices would increase, which would discourage folks from driving. Proceeds from a hefty tax on gasoline, in addition to

covering car-related medical costs, could be used to invest in public transit and medium-density, mixed-use urban redevelopment. This would further reduce traffic and contain urban sprawl, retaining valuable farmland for food production.

We support this principle at Maitreya EcoVillage by providing free bus

passes and the use of bike trailers to our residents, and ask them to park their cars on the street. We also ignore current prices when deciding what products to purchase. For example, vinyl windows are inexpensive to buy, but we didn't use them in our new buildings. Their low price doesn't account for the cancer-causing chemical compounds they outgas when they are produced or as they burn in land fills at the end of their life cycle. We

Urban communities have an opportunity to become "lifeboats" as petroleum-based agriculture declines.



make our own windows out of sensitively harvested or recycled wood, though it takes lots of time to craft them, and thus costs us more. It feels good to know that in this way we're not contributing as much to the accumulation of poisonous chemicals in the environment, which are so pervasive they're even found in the breast milk of the Inuit.

Principle #3: "Money Doesn't Buy Happiness"

In 2004 the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation did a study and found that children raised in working-class and middle-class homes were happier than children raised in wealthy homes, implying that something other than money contributes to happiness and well being. Paradoxically, when people don't make

larger community. Partly because we have less money to spend, we drive fewer miles in cars, and buy fewer things we might later throw away. All 25 of us fit our trash into one family-sized barrel each week.

Imagine if our government diverted the millions currently spent on wars for the purpose of controlling oil fields to instead create part-time government jobs geared towards transitioning to sustainable agriculture, homes and businesses, similar to Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s? Money would be better spent insulating homes and installing wind generators and water catchment systems than spending millions to kill people in other countries to get their last remaining petroleum reserves, just to continue an unsustainable oil-based way of life.

A Vision for Cascadia Bioregion

Please see our website: www.permatopia.org.

Vision: To foster the creation of ecologically sustainable communities which have thriving local economies, participatory decision-making, and peaceful means of resolving conflicts.

Goals:

- To increase awareness of global resource depletion and environmental degradation and to inspire people to view this as an opportunity to improve our lives through the creation of healthy, sustainable, local economies.
- To encourage friendship and cooperation amongst neighbors.
- To create environmentally sustainable jobs so that people can have their basic material needs met while making positive contributions to their communities.
- To create neighborhoods with interspersed homes, workplaces, shops, schools, churches, and parks so that basic goods and services are within walking distance of our homes.
- To encourage people to look for happiness in their lives through participating in relationships, art, music, spirituality, connection with nature, and meaningful work.
- To apply appropriate technology and permaculture principles to create sustainable systems of food production, shelter, energy, healthcare and other basic needs.
- To eliminate waste by using waste products from one production system as resource inputs for creating other products.
- To create decision-making councils which are democratic and participatory, where policy supports the common good.
- To create an economic system that motivates us to make healthy decisions in what we purchase and how we use our time.
- To establish effective means for conflict resolution.

—M.G.R.

Principle #4 : “Close Resource Loops”

In a sustainable economy everything would be recycled. Biological “wastes” from one process will be “food” for another process. Leftover by-products of industry such as chemicals and metals would be carefully separated and reused.

One way we do this at Maitreya is to compost our kitchen scraps to fertilize our organic garden, which not only feeds us but produces slugs, which are eaten by our ducks, which provide eggs for breakfast and manure for our compost—one large happy circle of resource sharing. This concept can be applied to every production process.

Principle #5 : “Support the Local Economy”

Ellen, who raises dairy goats at her farm outside of town, brings us homemade goat cheese and gives us gallons of raw goat milk once a week. We make the milk into kefir, add fruits and berries from gardens, and pour it over granola we make with ingredients from our local food co-op. Sometimes we go out to Ellen’s farm to get goat manure for our compost piles. Supporting local businesses strengthens the local economy, which is important as it becomes increasingly expensive to import food and other goods from far away.

If it becomes too costly for Ellen to drive to town each week due to rising gasoline costs, we envision starting a business called “Urban Shepherds” (which assumes the local government will rescind its laws against keeping goats in the city). We’ll raise goats here and not only use the milk ourselves and sell to our neighbors, but bike around town with goats in our custom-built bicycle trailer, letting them feed on blackberry vines to clear land for gardens.

Principle #6: “Participatory Democracy”

True participatory democracy extends to our daily lives at Maitreya EcoVillage and is grounded in shared access to education and resources. We make some decisions by consensus, such as when we decided to each contribute \$15 dollars per month to the upkeep and maintenance of our cob community center. Most decisions, though, are made by the individual Maitreya residents with initiative to carry out projects, advised by other people here with expertise in that area or who might be affected by those projects. For example, one highly skilled gardener here decides where and when to plant vegetables in our primary garden, but only after he consults with others who also use that space about what they like to eat.

Maitreya EcoVillage is not yet a truly democratic place because of its ownership structure, as several of us own the land and the rest of us rent. We hope to find compatible people to buy the parcel with our most beautiful and sustainable dwellings, including the passive-solar triplex and our cob community center. We

would use the proceeds of this sale to pay off the mortgages on the house where one landlord lives and one other house, and place all the land in these buildings as well as that of the new owners’ building in a land trust to ensure that Maitreya EcoVillage will be protected from future sale for real estate speculation, and forever be dedicated to exploring how we can live more sustainably upon our planet.

I’m currently involved in helping organize the upcoming regional permaculture gathering in Cascadia Bioregion (the area from British Columbia to Northern California). Our 2006 Bioregional Sustainability Convention will explore how we might organize ourselves if our federal government continues to find it difficult in these challenging times to promote democracy and sustainability. (See “Our Vision for Cascadia Bioregion,” pg. 38.)



Author Melanie Rios, right.

While plenty of other principles could be added to this list (please email me with your ideas), I believe these “Economic Principles for New Villagers” can help guide our thinking as we create a new culture in response to the challenges ahead.

Melanie Rios is a community activist, mother, urban farmer, violin teacher, and ecovillage steward in Eugene, Oregon. (Please see ad, pg. 8) maitreyaecovillage.org; melanie@rios.org.

Living the Good Life Downtown

BY STELLA TARNAY



In the Metropolis Cafe, downstairs from Swan's Market Cohousing.

On a mild October day, developer Joshua Simon and I are having an outdoor lunch at Metropolis Cafe, one of 12 businesses that have opened at Swan's Market, an historic, 80-year-old Art Deco market hall covering a whole city block in downtown Oakland, California. Swan's Market was renovated and adapted to house a neighborhood food market, galleries, a children's art museum, shops, a cafe, office space, affordable rental homes—and the 20-unit Swan's Market Cohousing.

Cohousing and an urban business and residential project? Well, yes. Nomad Cohousing in Boulder; Quayside Village in Vancouver; Marsh Commons in Eureka, California; Arcadia Cohousing in Carrboro, North Carolina; and Pioneer Valley Cohousing in Amherst all have adjacent business spaces—a corner store, professional office space, and even an historic theater. Swan's Market Cohousing is the first to be part of a mixed-use city project this large. It is a remarkable community in the midst

of an urban transformation, part of an ambitious plan to bring back Oakland's neglected downtown.

It is lively here during lunch hour, with area workers and shoppers hanging out on the extended sidewalk, and outdoor cafe tables full. Joshua Simon smiles at the scene. As senior project manager for the East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation (EBALDC), nonprofit developer of this \$20 million project, he coordinated the Swan's Market development process, including public approvals, financing, leasing, and construction.

Joshua Simon is no stranger to cohousing: in 1996, he and his wife Ruth moved into Doyle Street Cohousing in neighboring Emeryville, and he considers cohousing part of Swan's Market success story. "Before the cohousing residents came in, most policy makers were unsure that middle-class people would want to live in downtown Oakland," he tells me. "The cohousing residents helped prove to the city council and officials that bringing market-rate housing to downtown was a viable plan."

Swan's Market cohousers are enthusiastic about their downtown location. "There are many things we can walk to now that we live in Swan's Market that we couldn't walk to before—really good restaurants, the fresh-foods market right downstairs, good bread and cheese around the corner, an old-world deli, the best of Oakland coffee, and Chinatown," says resident Joani Blank. "It's not just a convenience to be downtown, it's a real pleasure."

Debby Kaplan is one of five cohousing residents who walk to work. In fact, Debby gets to her job as executive director of the World Institute on Disability, five blocks away, in her wheelchair. She also frequents local grocery stores, drug stores, flower shops, and restaurants. Two other residents of Swan's Market Cohousing who also have disabilities find the community and most of downtown Oakland very accessible.

The local subway system (BART, or Bay Area Rapid Transit District) and dozens of bus lines are two blocks away, and downtown San Francisco is just a 12-minute ride away. Joani Blank counts seven Swan's Market Cohousing residents who take the BART or local buses to work.

By the early 1990s, save for the Ninth Street Farmers' Market on Fridays, this historic downtown location was an abandoned neighborhood. (In 1999, the unemployment rate in Old Oakland and its surrounding neighborhoods was 25 percent and the median household income was \$7,620.) It is expected that the Swan's Market complex will bring 135 new jobs to the area.

On Friday mornings, Swan's Market hosts a small crafts market in Swan's Court, the central courtyard of the complex, and opens up onto the bustling farmers' market along Ninth Street. Recent Asian and Latin American immigrants mix with African-American

residents from surrounding neighborhoods and newly arrived White residents in the friendly jostle for the best, freshest produce and fruit, pastries, flowers, and knickknacks.

You reach the two-story townhouse-style housing units of Swan's Market Cohousing through a small gate off the central courtyard and up an outdoor staircase. The homes open directly onto the shared 18-foot-wide outdoor walkway adjacent to the courtyard below; bay windows and small balconies project from the upper story above. The walkway reminds me of an historic European street. In the center is the common house, a portion of the building with a kitchen, dining room, guest room, laundry

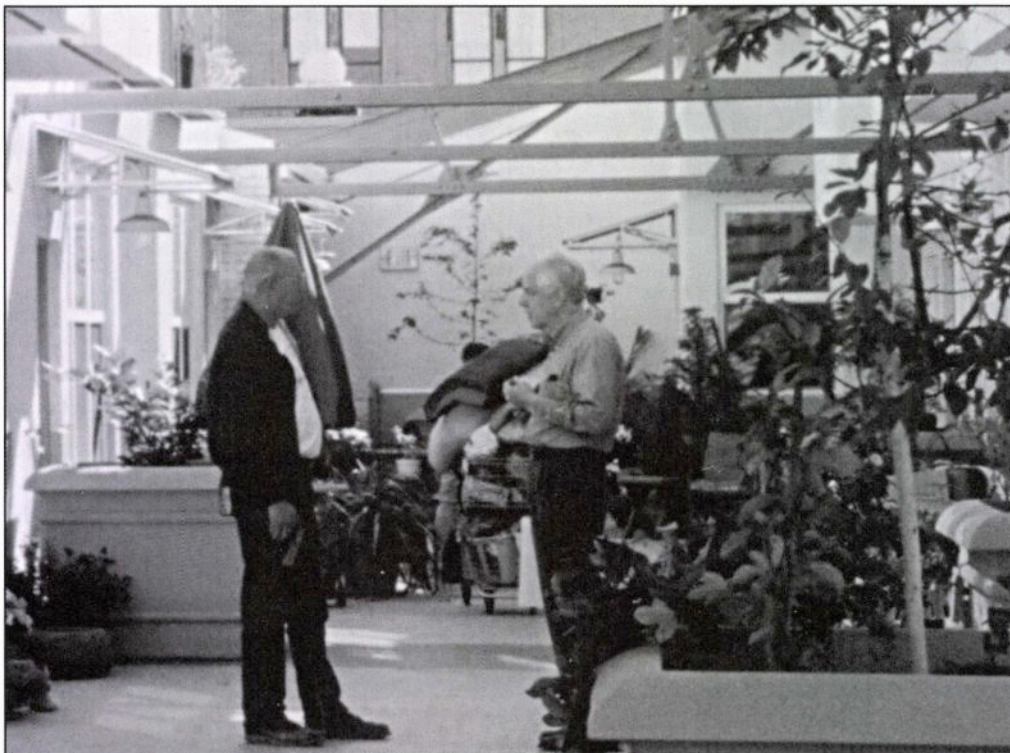
room, workshop, and exercise space. The walls along the outdoor walkway are pale stucco with exposed structural trusses which formerly held up the building's roof, forming a kind of geometric canopy over the space. The effect is of a Mediterranean village

with an urban edge. Container shrubs, small trees, and potted flowers overflow in front of residents' front doors. Residents' cats have their nap at strategic locations.

The homes also have an open, airy feeling. All are twenty feet wide and range in size from 675 to 1,500 square feet, with a mix of studios, one-, two-, and three-bedroom units.

Security was a serious topic during the planning stages of Swan's Market Cohousing. None of the group members wanted to live in a gated community, but they were aware that downtown Oakland was deserted after 6:00 pm and not considered a safe neighborhood. The group and their developer decided on a flexible gate system. Wrought-iron gates on Ninth Street at the courtyard entry are open during the daytime and closed at night. The Tenth Street cohousing units have an additional sep-

***It's not just a convenience
to live here, it's a real
pleasure.***



Swan's Market residents enjoy their second-story terrace.

arate gate that opens on an electronic key system. The rental-unit residents have an inner entry system with buzzers. “Individual members of the group had many different ideas about what it means to be safe in the city,” recalls Debby Kaplan. “We’re still dealing with some of these questions, like when do we leave the common house doors open and when are they locked.”

Joani Blank observes that just six months after moving in, the community feels safer than residents expected. Shops and offices continue to open in the neighborhood and 98 new condominiums across the street add more “eyes on the street.”

The following Monday after dinner I happen upon cohouser Harriet Chin outside her unit, and we sit down at a garden table to chat. Harriet, who is a nurse, talks about the transition from living alone in a conventional condo development to life in cohousing. “After an intense day’s work, I would take my newspaper out to the back and have some downtime,” she says. “But here on the terrace, when I pick up my newspaper and read it at the table, someone is bound to stop by and chat. I’ve discovered that when I want to be outside and just read, the best thing to do is to take my paper and go downstairs to Swan’s Court. I think we are all still learning how to mediate boundaries of community and self.”

The Swan’s Market core group of community members initially envisioned a diverse, mixed-income community of 20-plus market-



The original steel roof trusses were kept to conform to local regulations.

RAINIS COHEN

The core group’s plan to create a mixed-income community was thwarted by an archaic lending structure.

rate condominiums and 20 affordable rentals. Unfortunately, bank financing required physical separation of the market-rate and affordable housing units. Specifically, lenders require a certain percentage of condominiums to be owner-occupied before they make their best loan rates available. A physically integrated mixed-income community would have meant that a number of the cohousing group members would not have qualified to buy their homes.

The group explored many options to create connections with the affordable units through design, such as a bridge between the two communities and a shared mailbox area, none of which were incorporated in the final design. Some cohousing residents would like to see more interaction with people living in the adjoining affordable housing rental units, while other residents of the cohousing community are less inclined to reach out.

About 33 people live in Swan’s Market Cohousing, but only three are children. During the course of development the group had five more families with young or school-age children, but they dropped out. Joani Blank suggests

a number of reasons why families with children may choose not to live in core cities—safety, lack of green space, and schools. “We were able to create a sense of safety and attractive community space, but in the end they couldn’t make the school situation work,” she says. “The public schools in Oakland just don’t cut it and these families couldn’t afford to send their kids to private schools.”



Dinner in the second-floor common house.

RAINIS COHEN

Kathryn McCamant, who with her husband Chuck Durrett were architects for the cohousing portion of Swan's Market (and who brought cohousing to North America with their 1986 book, *Cohousing*), thinks it is inevitable for families with children to be slower in moving to urban cohousing. "We had the same problem at Doyle Street Cohousing in Emeryville, which is a semi-industrial urban area," she recalls. "At first, there were no kids. Now we have five, with another on the way. A healthy, functioning urban community eventually attracts families. Besides, many families discover that in a less toney town, such as Oakland or Emeryville, whatever they might spend on private schools they will save on property taxes."



members who talk about how to bring in more diversity of background and income. At the same time, I have sadly watched as talented participants have had to leave groups because they can't afford to buy a home. In the case of Swan's Market Cohousing, the core group's plan to create a mixed-income community was thwarted by an archaic lending structure. Mixed-use, mixed-income projects that include cohousing (with enabling lending structures) are a helpful model for building diverse neighborhoods and for making cohousing accessible to community-minded families of modest means.

If I were the planning director of an ailing urban area, I would be looking for incen-

A larger mixed-use project like this provides important infrastructure and the safety of ground-floor "eyes on the street."

In my opinion, Swan's Market project demonstrates how cohousing can be part of a successful strategy to bring middle-income families downtown. Cohousing groups build strong bonds and social support through their community process, making it possible for members to imagine living in "marginal" neighborhoods like this one. They can form the stable residential core of a healthy, diverse area. At the same time, a larger mixed-use project such as Swan's Market provides important infrastructure for people living there—shops, restaurants, and cafes—and the safety of ground-floor "eyes on the street."



View from Swan's Court.

tives to encourage the growth of cohousing groups as a redevelopment strategy. If I were the mayor of a city and looking for ways to integrate affordable and market-rate housing in such a project, making inclusive mixed-income financing possible would be one of the places I would start. For me, as an urban planner and a community organizer, the willingness and enthusiasm of cohousing groups to be part of diverse, lively neighborhoods is the most hopeful sign of all.

Stella Tarnay, an urban planner, community organizer, and former editor of Cohousing Magazine, lives in Washington, D.C.

Excerpted with permission from the new book, Reinventing Community: Stories from the Walkways of Cohousing, by Fulcrum Publishing, 2005. To order call 800-992-2908 or visit www.fulcrum-

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An Urban Ecovillage of the Near Future

BY LOIS ARKIN



MARTY KLAF

As you stroll down this former city street, now a long, narrow mini-park, you spot a small boy on a ladder harvesting guavas

from a guava tree. He carries the guavas a hundred feet away to a beautifully designed wooden kiosk that serves as a fruit stand. An elderly woman

in the kiosk enthusiastically greets him as she takes the basket and starts displaying the guavas. A young mother helps her sell these and other locally harvested fruit to the many people passing through the neighborhood, who often pay in a colorful local currency. Nearby you spot a long “grape-arbor/electric vehicle shed” with rooftop solar panels in the former parking lane outside a co-op apartment building. Tiny one-person and two-person electric vehicles belonging to co-op residents are plugged into batteries connected to the solar panels; grapevines laded with luscious purple grapes twine up trellises covering the back and sides of this open shed-roof structure. Beyond the arbor/shed, two retired gentlemen play chess on a handmade curved mosaic-encrusted cob bench in the minipark, while further on a group of teenage boys and girls shoot baskets on a basketball court. People pass through the park on all kinds of human-powered vehicles: bicycles, tandem bikes, unicycles, and lightweight scooters. Older people pedal slowly on three-wheeled bikes; the young whiz by on skateboards. The street life is rich and interactive with pedestrians too. Most people here seem to know each other. They offer a welcoming energy to newcomers passing through their homegrown eco-village.

“Aha!” you say as you observe people in relation to each other, to the landscape, and to the architecture. “So this is what it’s like to live in a healthy, sustainable neighborhood.”

Passing between two buildings, you find a long narrow greenhouse running down the center of the block. It’s

a biological “living machine,” containing a series of large, connected water tanks filled with aquatic plants and animals, surrounded by an exquisite array of hydroponic vegetables. Graywater from houses and apartments on the block is solar pumped into the tanks at one end,

and by the time it emerges from the other end, is clean and drinkable again, pumped to a bubbler at the end of the block and recycled to the houses and apartments it emerged from. Passersby can read a small plaque describing how this biological water-purification works. You look up and see an orchard and garden 1000 feet long by 10 feet wide, a former parking lane for cars. Children from the grammar school across the street are busy working in the garden to prepare for their organic farmers’ market this weekend.

You notice a tiny, elegant structure with an opaque window-wall on the south side and a rooftop turbine fan emerging from a vent stack—one of the neighborhood’s solar moldering composting toilets. A peek inside

reveals no odor at all and a pair of comfortable wooden toilet seats next to a stack of recent *Communities* magazines. There are no individual gas-powered cars in sight, but around the corner you’ll find stops for buses and the subway.

Everywhere you see small wooden plaques explaining various biological systems or appropriate technologies, and how each is connected to or supported by other systems

in the neighborhood—the biological graywater recycling plant; a particular species of native fruit tree; the small electric vehicles; an array of quiet wind generators on a nearby roof; green building materials, the garden mulch;



J. BRUSH

Aha! So this is what it’s like to live in a healthy, sustainable neighborhood.

how chickens, ducks, and rabbits are integrated into the nutrient cycle of the gardens; and the many ways the neighborhood recycles its wastes. You even find an information kiosk posted with the latest local ecovillage educational and meeting events, including the location of neighborhood meetings, how decisions are made, and items on the upcoming agenda. This complex set of interactive processes integrating social, economic, and ecological aspects of community life come alive as you walk and look and read and feel and talk to people in this ecovillage neighborhood.

Many of the people you see live right here in several apartment buildings on the block; others attend schools in the neighborhood or nearby; still others pass to and from markets and shops within or adjacent to the neighborhood. Some are tourists, in that this ecovillage project is listed in the local Convention Center's tourist guide and its primary visitors' magazine, and is now a registered tourist attraction with a variety of travel agencies. People can take guided tours that leave every two hours on Saturdays at the entrance of the neighborhood, or purchase maps to self-guided walking tours, or just stroll through on their own and read the



JIM BOSJOLIE

signs and observe. The ecotourism business has become a significant source of income to the small group of ecovillage residents who own and manage the tour business.

If you'd like to follow ongoing developments in this ecovillage or learn what steps you and your neighbors could take to retrofit your own urban neighborhood, tune in to the "Daily Ecovillage Hour" on the local listener-supported radio station.

Or take one of the many workshops held in the ecovillage and around the city on sustainable urban living, permaculture design, composting, solar and wind-power installation, organizing for permanently affordable housing or commercial spaces, local currencies, green business development, participatory decision-making processes, neighborhood conflict resolution, and much more. Many of these workshops are free, cosponsored by the city and many of the Neighborhood Councils throughout the city along with the many community organizations offering expertise in these topics. The Mayor and the City Council believe that the more

responsibility neighbors take for going sustainable in their own neighborhoods, the less strain there will be on the budget for city services. They also know that education for sustainably retrofitting urban neighborhoods

Urban Ecovillage Networks

- Urban ecovillage resources and discussion: www.urban.ecovillage.org/.
- Google "urban ecovillages" or "eco cities" to find thousands of initiatives worldwide.
- For a list of urban ecovillages, go to www.ic.org, select "Communities Directory," and search for "urban ecovillage."
- For tips on how to organize an ecovillage in your neighborhood, see *Superbia!* by Dan Chiras and Dave Wann (New Society Publishers, 2005).
- For a legislative or funding proposal you can adapt for your local needs, email author Lois Arkin at crsp@igc.org.
- If you live in a megacity (over five million people: e.g., New York, Los Angeles, Mexico City, London, Tokyo), and are part of an on-the-ground ecovillage core group, and you'd like to participate in an emerging self-help network of ecovillage retrofits in megacities, email a description of your project to crsp@igc.org.

—L.A.

is just common sense, and if the people don't do it on their own, the local government will be forced to require it. Supporting sustainable education is an investment in the health of the city and in getting themselves re-elected!

Ecovillage residents meet regularly with writers and directors in the film industry to help them research new storylines for commercial films with an ecovillage or urban sustainability theme. Several daily newspapers now include a syndicated weekly "Ecovillage Living" column, bursting with information and resources so readers can apply ideals and methods of sustainable living wherever they live.

Because cities are home to dozens of colleges and universities, our emerging networks of ecovillages get dozens of requests every week to host student research projects and offer hands-on work. Students organize on-campus classes on retrofitting neighborhoods for sustainable community living, based on their broad experience visiting ecovillages in various stages of development around the city.

This not-all-that-fanciful scenario is a composite of a variety of sustainable activities already taking place in various cities worldwide—just not all in the same place yet!

As I see it, the challenge of an urban ecovillage is to bring a broad range of interconnected eco-living processes together in the same place, which raises the quality of neighborhood life, significantly reduces its environmental impact or ecological footprint, and inspires visionary change in others. Yet the concept of creating our own ecovillages can be daunting. Robert Gilman, former *In Context* magazine publisher and co-

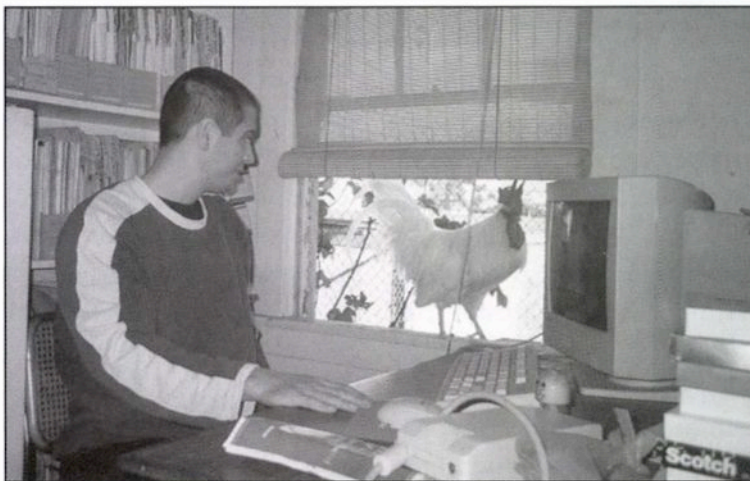
originator of a well-known definition of an ecovillage, says, "We need to broaden our scope without losing our focus. We need to let go of 'ecovillage' as a defining concept and replace it with the term 'sustainable living in community.'" I agree that we need to lower the thresholds for people to become involved. Retrofitting the neighborhoods where we live now makes it easier for more people to participate. When "regular" people are able to visit and interact with ecovillages

or "sustainable living in community" in dense, highly accessible urban neighborhoods like the one described above, far greater numbers of people can consider shifting to a more sustainable lifestyle. Rural ecovillages are certainly also needed, but mainstream city dwellers rarely see them. And even if they did, most need tangible urban examples to imagine how they, too, could live more sustainably, and without leaving home. This is reason enough to support urban ecovillages, but even more so if you are called to be an agent of social change and you love the vitality, diversity, and sensuality of cities.



LOIS ARKIN

Chickens, ducks, and rabbits are integrated into the nutrient cycle of the gardens.



LOIS ARKIN

Lois Arkin, cofounder of Los Angeles Eco-Village, is an Ecovillage Network of the Americas (ENA) representative for the Western U.S., a board member of Global Village Institute, and Executive Director of CRSP, the nonprofit sponsor of Los Angeles Eco-Village, where she lives and works. crsp@igc.org. L.A. Ecovillagers Lara Morrison and Esfandiar Abbasi also contributed to this article.

A Farm Grows

BY J. BRUSH



Creating the cob sauna at Tryon Life Community Farm.

The rains have come! I step from the rosy morning bustle of tea-kettles, oatmeal porridge, and murmuring voices to hear the wind rushing through the trees on our seven acres of sloping, wooded meadow. Swirling raindrops drench my face. My blood sings.

I escort our most escape-prone goat back to its pen. Jenny is walking up the curving path leading from the tall trees, as confident in the wet as a native North-wester, in love with the sky.

We live at Tryon Life Community Farm, home to both a nonprofit sustainability education center and intentional community surrounded by the 650-acre native forest of Tryon Creek State Park. With our goats, gardens, and two large farmhouses we look rural, but we're actually an urban community in southwestern Portland, a half-hour bike ride from downtown.

Smoke pours into the air by the sweat lodge. It's Saturday morning, and these last few weeks an organization called Fuego has been hosting ceremonies at the sweat lodge on weekends for at-risk youth of color; even when I'm working on the other side of the land, I occasionally hear echoes of the drum. Young people in Fuego's rites of passage program are slowly arriving this morning for the ceremony; I greet them with a smile as I walk back up the path.

These young visitors represent the sustainable education aspect of our unique land-use project. As a nonprofit 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization, we serve both as a venue for dozens of schools, colleges, and at-risk youth programs, and host our own classes in native habitat restoration, permaculture design, soil ecology, and natural building.

I check on the zone one gardens by the house and then head out to the larger plot past the cedar tree. Tomatoes were late this year and the rain will be end of them; I gather two dozen green. I check on my spot at the end, where with a class of fourth-graders we sheet-mulched and planted leeks, tomatoes, peppers, and basil together.

The rain is easing. I watch the sky to the west: streaks of blue! I head past the compost to the Village green, munching a yellow cucumber.

The 18 members of our intentional community include activists, artists, farmers, professionals, healers, construction workers, and three infants. We live together in the farmhouses, conduct weekly meetings, eat meals together once or twice a day, and share cooking, cleaning, and other chores. Each of us pays about \$300 rent, depending on sizes of our individual room and amenities. We work at least five hours a week for the intentional community and ten hours a week for the nonprofit educational center.

I climb up the ladder to the roof of the red-plastered earthen sauna, pull back the tarp, and sigh. The back of this small cob building is definitely getting wet; we didn't finish it before the rains came. I purse my lips: maybe we need just a bit more insulative pumice in the front wall? We push and push and push to finish our buildings and build our community, always knowing everything could be lost if we don't scrape together tens of thou-

sands of dollars by January. For a moment I'm lost in the weight of it all.

Then the world turns golden. I look up; the trees are underlit by slanted rays of sun fire, all sparkles and shadow. I look over the land, gently sloping from the west cliffs up above us past the houses curling wood smoke, down the gardens and groves and meadows to the forest all around us. Everything, is glowing, glistening, even wisps of mist in the low spots. Overwhelmed, I tilt back and yelp like a band of wounded coyotes. Silence. Then once, twice, a call in return from across the fields. In the distance, the drum.

***Overwhelmed,
I tilt back and
yelp like a
band of
wounded
coyotes.***

In 2004 this property was going to be sold to a developer of upscale homes. Now, through old-fashioned and new-fangled grassroots organizing, we're in the process of buying this property—on the cusp of changing what was going to be 23 minimansions into a full-fledged laboratory for creative, sustainable, Earth-centered urban ecology and community.

It's becoming increasingly clear that the existing world system is unhealthy, unstable, and unwise. We want to demonstrate functioning alternatives in which regular people live simply, lovingly, and well, in healthy relation with each other and the natural world. The challenge is to create something rooted in the Earth, in the wisdom we find when



A TLC resident teaches young workshop participants about soil.

BONSAI MATT JAMES

immersed in an ecosystem not of human design, which remains accessible and applicable to wide varieties of people.

Portland is a city pregnant with possibility. Innumerable communities of interest have developed experience in specific skills for transforming culture: bodywork and blockades, Nonviolent Communication and transcendent arts, gift economies and free schools, growing food and building with Earth. As the niches interweave and develop horizontal relations of mutual aid and support, we become an ecosystem of change, and thus a new political economy in embryo. Portland's City Repair Project (*see below*), calls this extended network of relations "the Village"—a distributed ecovillage or intentional community which is rooted in specific places but not geographically contiguous.

Tryon Life Community Farm is a place to ground the Village. We explore what urban life can look like when we mimic the density of ecosystems by weaving human life back into the natural world: outdoor classrooms with living walls double as native habitat corridors and medicinal

plant gardens; naturally built structures provide both a demonstration of new forms of cheap, community-building earthen construction and space for education, healing, and gathering; the pathways, groves, meadows, and gardens of this land provide food for the body and the soul, rest for residents and the public, gathering for humans and creatures of all species.

We're using this project as an opportunity to grow effectiveness at interorganizational collaboration, with various groups working together to satisfy separate aims: a sweat lodge built by one of the Umatilla commissioners of the Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission is used by his community as well as by Fuego; City Repair has moved its "T-Whale" whimsical teahouse and gathering space onto the land as an ongoing venture in Placemaking; and organizations from the graduate department in Counseling Psychology at Lewis & Clark College to NICA (Northwest Intentional Communities Association) use our Village Green for their gatherings.

In permaculture terms we're "stacking functions"—



Gardening with at-risk youth in front of one of the two farmhouses.

BONSAI MATT JAMES

Portland is a city pregnant with possibility ... an ecosystem of change.



Inside the T-Whale teahouse, now set up on TLC grounds. Author j. brush (second from right).

BONSAI MATT JAMES

designing systems in which each element serves multiple

The City Repair Project

For the last decade the nonprofit City Repair Project has helped transform abstract and alienating urban spaces in Portland into inviting and relationship-fostering places. City Repair's projects include the roving "T-Horse," a gaily painted portable teahouse with extendable wings on a refurbished pickup truck, creating instant community gathering spots wherever it parks and opens its wings; the annual Earth Day celebration; the annual week-long Village Building Convergence, in which hundreds of people learn natural building skills with renowned natural building, permaculture,

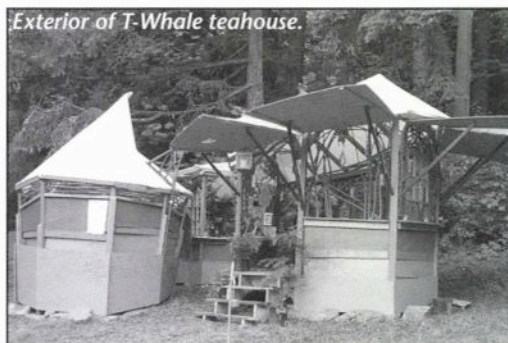
and community-building teachers from all over the continent; and Intersection Repairs, in which intersections in various neighborhoods become distinctive neighborhood-designed and created gathering places, with street murals, cob benches, neighborhood bulletin boards, and other functional, beautiful installations that foster interaction and inspire the spirit. With the right attitude, the city is a vast interwoven, overlapping sea of potential community, seeking the intentional places in which to emerge.

www.cityrepair.org; 503-235-8946.

—j. b.

purposes and supports other parts. In canvassing our wealthy neighbors for fundraising, we find active supporters and allies where we often least expect them. In organizing government and foundation support, we develop legal structures that pave the way for new forms of public/private partnership in sustainable land tenure. When we host neighborhood potlucks as well as avant garde arts immersion benefits, we build skills in creating a diversity of opportunities for communities to feel comfortable connecting with the Earth and each other.

This is the kind of success story the sustainability movement needs. As we experience the power of people working together with each other and the Earth, we build momentum, inspiration, and hope. In these times of chaotic danger and opportunity, everything is possible.



Exterior of T-Whale teahouse.

BONSAI MATT JAMES

j. brush is the point person for Tryon Life Community Farm's social ecology working group, and a resident of the intentional community. www.Tryonfarm.org; 503-245-3847.

How We're Acquiring Our Urban Farm

- **January 2004:** First call to organize alternative to high-impact development planned for this farm; 60 people show up.
- **March 2004:** Property's owners sign purchase agreement with developers.
- **April 2004:** Tryon Life Community Farm incorporated as nonprofit.
- **May 2004:** As part of annual Village Building Convergence, community sauna was begun on the property.
- **Summer 2004:** We build organizational capacity, planning. Developers have pre-application conference with City of Portland for 23-unit development.
- **October 2004:** Two babies born at the Farm; eviction notice received; second big call for accelerated organizing campaign.
- **November 2004:** We develop first business plan; propose mediation with owners.
- **December 2004:** Developers break off negotiations with Tryon Creek State Park on impact mitigation and prepare to file final application with City; we organize massive letter-writing campaign, neighborhood canvass, Solstice fundraiser.
- **January 2005:** The eviction process we're protesting goes to court; we initiate negotiations with developers; we write comprehensive strategic plan.
- **February 2005:** Judge orders us evicted; we post *supersedeas* bond pending appeal; nonprofit acquires developers' option to purchase the property for \$125,000; Judge grants stay of eviction pending appeal.
- **March 2005:** We finish raising money for acquiring option to purchase property by March 31.

- **May 2005:** As part of the Village Building Convergence sauna is plastered; we plant food forest; continue building organization, raising money.
- **Summer 2005:** Nonstop fundraising, organizing, grant-writing, communicating with potential allies.
- **October 2005:** Nonprofit receives 501(c)(3) status; we develop ground lease proposal; we get first commitment of \$100,000 towards financing from City; approximately \$900,000 nearly finalized, the rest in process.
- **January 2006:** Deadline to exercise developers' contract to purchase property.

Land acquisition campaign:

Sources		
Senior Loan	500,000	31.3%
Philanthropic Loans	200,000	12.5%
Government partners	300,000	18.8%
Acquisition Grants	200,000	12.5%
Capital campaign	400,000	25.0%
Total Sources	1,600,000	100.0%

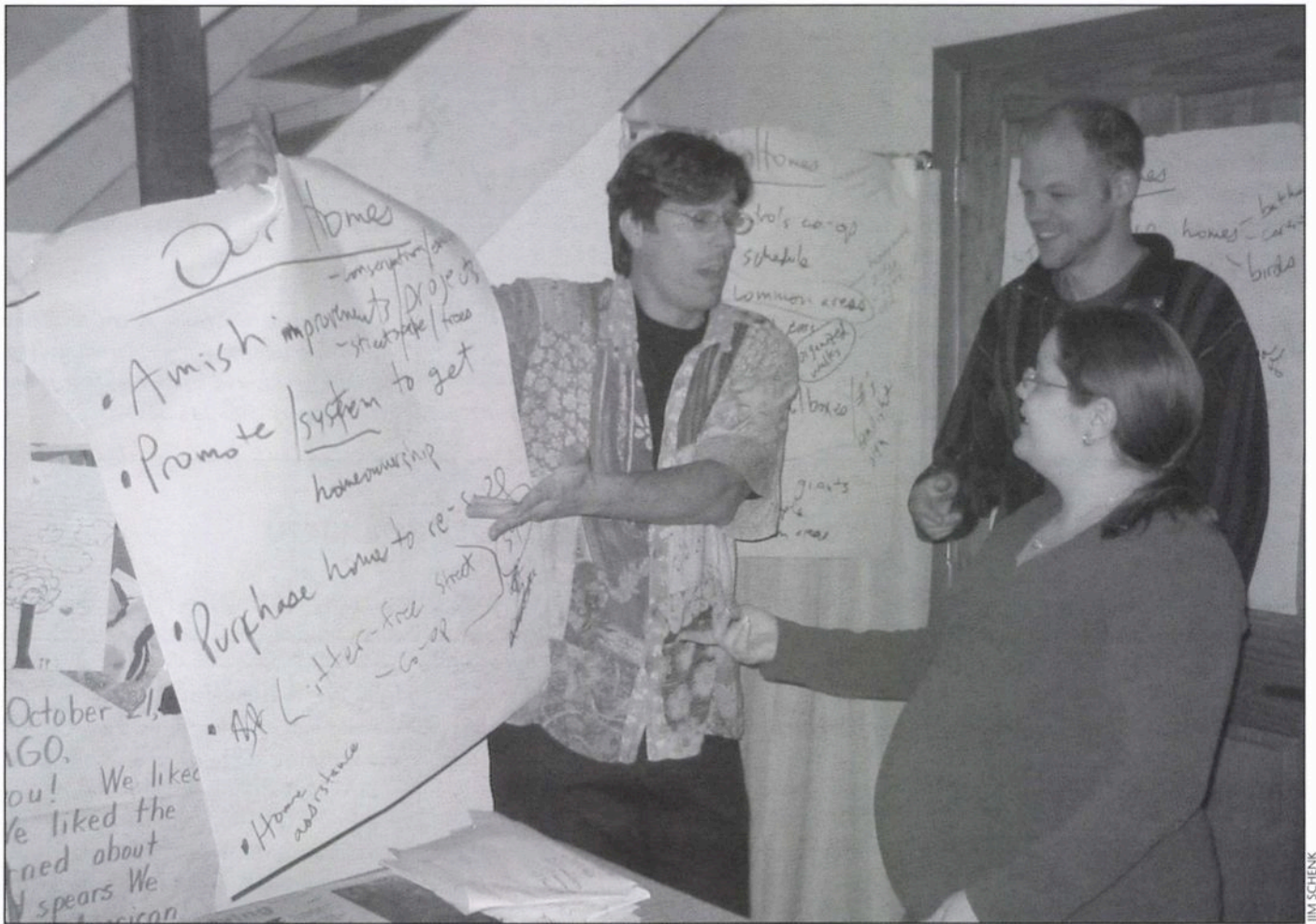
Uses	
Acquisition	1,425,000
Closing	82,000
Purchase Option	93,000
Reserves	--
Total Sources	1,600,000

Government and foundation funding are contingent on assurance that land-use and program activities can be enforced. Bank loans are contingent on most of the fee simple-interest value of the land remaining

as security for mortgage: this is the innovative value of the Ground Lease.

How we'll function legally:

- A well-established local land trust, Oregon Sustainable Agriculture Land Trust (OSALT), will hold title to land.
- A Limited Liability Company (LLC) will coordinate the beneficiaries of the land (i.e., nonprofit organization, intentional community, other future organizations). LLC pays all mortgage payments to OSALT.
- Government partners will own a conservation easement over a portion of the land; their easement will be equivalent in value to their contribution, therefore the easement will only cover a fraction of the property.
- A 99-year, renewable Ground Lease between OSALT and the LLC will include a Comprehensive Land Use Plan covering the whole property: improvements will be owned by the LLC.
- The Comprehensive Land Use Plan, negotiated among stakeholders, will require that the property be used for sustainability-oriented educational programs, intentional community, and public access, and will describe which activities and uses of the property can happen where. In case of default on mortgage payments, multiple aligned partners will have the opportunity to step in and take over. To provide funder security, secondary mortgage loans, to be called "grants," will have repayment indefinitely deferred contingent on satisfactory enforcement of the Ground Lease. —j.b.



Neighborhood residents plan their ecovillage retrofit.

JIM SCHENK

A Home-Grown Ecovillage on Our Street

BY JIM SCHENK

The seeds of Enright Ridge Eco-Village actually began 31 years ago as a compromise between my wife Eileen, who was city born, and myself, a native of a small rural town. We struggled to find a home that would nourish both of our souls. I wanted a neighborhood that valued green living, with protected land, organic food, resource conservation, alternative energy, and cooperative relationships with happy children and older people. Eileen supported these same values, but insisted that the urban neigh-

borhood she lived in was the perfect location. She pointed out an urban environment offered the best chance for creating a village-like community because of the numbers of people there with proximity to each other, public transportation and options for employment. So we moved to a dead-end street in Cincinnati's Price Hill neighborhood. While Enright Avenue is a half-mile street on a ridge surrounded by 200-plus acres of woods, it's only minutes from downtown Cincinnati and our places of work.

Price Hill, an inner-ring neighborhood in Cincinnati built in the early part of the 20th century, was one of the last areas of local farmland to be become urban, but once building began, soon reached a population of 40,000. Price Hill was the last of the neighborhoods in Cincinnati in which houses began to age and deteriorate, followed by speculators buying them up and renting them out. The real estate practices of predatory lending, lease-options to buy, and ramped property foreclosures further degraded the housing and quality of life in the neighborhood.

In 1978 Eileen and I founded Imago, a nonprofit educational organization in Price Hill. Our idea was to look at how we would live if we held the Earth and

its people as sacred, and offer workshops and conferences about sustainability. Imago eventually purchased eight acres of wooded area about a quarter mile down the street from our house on Enright Avenue, and began an outdoor Earth center which helps 10,000 school children annually connect with the natural world.

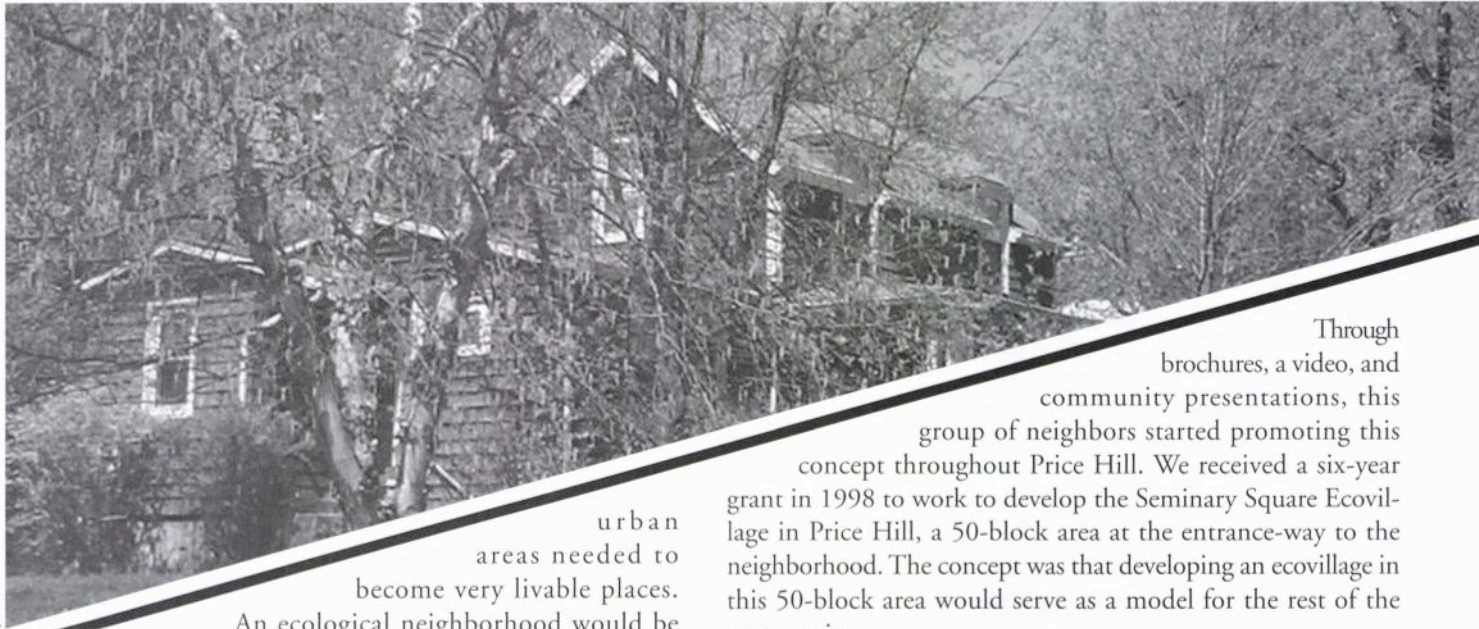
In 1993, 15 residents of Price Hill came together to look at how Imago might take a step toward actually walking its talk. We decided to develop a model for revitalizing a transitioning neighborhood into an ecological neighborhood. With suburban sprawl destroying huge tracts of land, we concluded that the human population would be more beneficially located in urban areas. For this to happen,

More than a fourth of the households on this street have ecological values.



Solar greenhouse at author Jim Schenk's home.

JIM SCHENK



JIM SCHENK

urban areas needed to become very livable places. An ecological neighborhood would be that type of place.

Through brochures, a video, and community presentations, this group of neighbors started promoting this concept throughout Price Hill. We received a six-year grant in 1998 to work to develop the Seminary Square Ecovillage in Price Hill, a 50-block area at the entrance-way to the neighborhood. The concept was that developing an ecovillage in this 50-block area would serve as a model for the rest of the community.

Over a six-year period much was accomplished in the Seminary Square project—block clubs were formed, street trees planted, parks improved, the facades of many businesses improved, and six houses and three office buildings eco-rehabilitated.

However, despite the many improvements, the ecovillage never came to fruition. A study of the project concluded that it didn't happen for four reasons:

- The project began in the most deteriorated area of Price Hill.
- There was a huge influx of relatively transient renters into the neighborhood during this time.
- The 50-block area was too large.
- The project began without a large group of residents in the area being committed to the ecovillage concept.

After reviewing these conclusions it became obvious that the ideal place to begin an urban Ecovillage project would be in the very area where Imago began and where its Earth Center was located. Along with the extensive woods, 25 of the 90 households on this street have ecological values. The housing is stable, moderately priced, with the majority of houses owned by their inhabitants. Through a program that Imago initiated in the early 1990s, two-thirds of the houses were insulated; many also with installation of energy-efficient, double-glazed windows, low-watt florescent light bulbs, and energy-efficient furnaces. Most households on our street recycle. Two bus lines run within a few minutes walk from the street. A solid business district is nearby and downtown Cincinnati



JIM SCHENK

is a seven-minute drive or fifteen-minute bus ride away.

In June of 2004, after Eileen and I had lived on the street for 30 years, we and 17 other residents met, and using a process called Appreciative Inquiry, began looking at what we liked about our street, and from this assessment, brainstormed what we would “like to see more of” in our lives on the street. After coming up with a list of 38 items, we prioritized them into four areas and set up working committees to accomplish these goals. The four areas were:

1. An improved image of the street both among residents and those off the street.
2. A walking trail through the woods around the street.
3. Shared meals with residents on the street.
4. A better relationship between children and adults.

A professional photographer and a graphic artist, both of whom are involved with the project, developed a brochure for our retrofit community, which we decided to call Enright Ridge Eco-Village. We wrote “Enright Ridge” on large street planters and placed them at the entrance to the street to slow traffic into this dead-end street and help define the area. We created a two-mile walking trail through the woods behind houses on both sides of the street and encircling the ridge. We began hosting monthly meals, inviting all residents on the street. The Imago Earth Center, with funds collected from residents on the street, provided a staff person to offer after-school and summer outdoor programs for children on the street. We wrote a mission statement: “Enright Ridge Eco-Village, a community inspiring Earth-friendly living, nurtures an intimate and prosperous neighborhood within its uniquely forested urban setting in Price Hill in Cincinnati, Ohio.”

Soon afterwards we decided we needed to bring together the other people in the Enright Ridge area to support the ecovillage concept. One of our members had been studying with Peter Block, a national organizational consultant located in Cincinnati. Peter Block’s underlying principle is “Contact comes before content.” In other words, people need to know each other before they can start working together. We began with a series of dialogues that brought an average of 15 people from the street together



Neighbors share meals at the Imago Earth Institute on Enright Avenue.

**People need to
know each other
before they can
start working
together.**

to get to know each other better, both as neighbors and in their relationship to the street neighborhood.

After four meetings with this group the content began to emerge. One of the difficulties with an urban ecovillage project with people who already live in an area is how to involve all residents in the process. We started to engage others by distributing four issues of an Enright Ridge Eco-village newsletter and the Eco-village brochure to all residents. People welcomed these efforts. People were open to this mainly because homeowners feared a major decline in housing values if our neighborhood didn’t do something to reverse the trend of decline. We decided to further involve the neighborhood through a process called Treasure Mapping, in which residents would reveal the treasures of our neighborhood by making a collage together. We built a box with four sides, each four feet by four feet. Each side had a focus: Our Homes, Our People Our Children, Greening Our Neighborhood, and Promoting Our Neighborhood. We divided our street into

Why Urban?

We're frequently asked why we're going to this effort to create an urban ecovillage on an existing street with existing neighbors, given the good reasons for creating a rural ecovillage as a whole new project. It's so much easier to develop sustainable homes, alternative energy systems, constructed wetlands, and so on from scratch on raw land. Rural areas often have fewer zoning regulations and building codes than urban areas where many alternative materials or waste-water systems are illegal or at least frowned upon. And the site plan of a new ecovillage can encourage and support human interaction and a sense of connection along paths and in common areas where people will naturally congregate. Ecovillage projects which develop from scratch and have shared property ownership and membership criteria can also make sure that residents are like-minded and committed to the community's common vision, purpose, values, and goals.

In an "urban retrofit" ecovillage with existing neighbors, however:

- Usually the houses were built many years previously with unsustainable materials and no awareness of energy or resource-conservation.
- Streets are laid out in such a way as to encourage car use and anonymity and reduces the likelihood of meeting or conversing with neighbors, so it's difficult to get to know everyone.
- Because any resident can sell or rent their house to any buyer or tenant of their choice, there is little to no control over who will live in the neighborhood.

On the positive side, however:

- It is not necessary to begin building on raw land using newly harvested or manufactured materials—the dwellings are already here.
- For that reason, no time is spent struggling to agree on a site plan, design and build buildings and alternative systems, etc. The focus is on improving the present situation.
- Retrofitting existing buildings costs far less than building from the ground up.
- The neighborhood is located minutes from a business district and close to job opportunities.



Possibly the most important reason for developing an urban retrofit-neighborhood ecovillage is that the majority of people in our country and in the world now live in urban areas. Urban sprawl and the destruction of habitat, excessive energy consumption, and loss of community can be reversed if we can make our urban neighborhoods life-sustaining. We can change the face of our cities and our countryside if we are successful. This is the dream of Enright Ridge Eco-Village. —J.S.

10 sections. We recruited two host families from each section to invite and draw people to participate in the collage. On a Saturday in September, 2005, starting at 10 am, the collage box, loaded on a truck, began its move through the neighborhood. At every section along the street we unloaded



Enright Ridge neighbors enjoy their collage box. Author Jim Schenk, second from left.

the collage box off the truck onto a table so people could reach all four sides. We laid out a stack of old magazines, markers, and scissors along with food and drinks. The host households drew people out of their homes and invited them to visually express their dreams for the neighborhood by cutting out images from the magazines to paste on the four sides of the collage or draw or write on it. As the collage evolved, moving along the street throughout the day, an incredible array of ideas and thoughts emerged on the four sides of the box.

We decided to develop a model for revitalizing a transitioning neighborhood into an ecological neighborhood.

We consider the collage the jumping-off point for the next level of involvement in further developing our street as a retrofit urban ecovillage.

Jim Schenk is an environmental educator, community organizer, and cofounder of Imago, Inc. He is organizer of five EarthSpirit Rising national conferences on Ecology and Spirituality, and a resident of the forming Enright Ridge Eco-village in Cincinnati. jschenk@imagoearth.org; www.imagoearth.org.



The common dining area is a traditional Japanese barbeque on the roof.

GRAHAM MELTZER

“Urban Biotope”— Japanese Style

BY GRAHAM MELTZER

Five-year old *Kyōdō No Mori* (“Forest of Kyōdō”) in Tokyo, the first cohousing development in Japan, consists of a three-story building with passive solar heating and cooling, a constructed wetlands for greywater recycling, solar-powered water pump, and rooftop gardens—all packed into a one-fifth-acre lot.

The small site had been an urban organic farm for all but the last two decades, and the most recent owner had let it revert to natural woodland. The north side of the site also had five enormous 120-year-old native *zelkova* trees, which now offer valuable shade to the building in summer and a windbreak in winter. A fine lattice of twine stretches upward over three floors of the southern façade, and permanent bamboo trellises are attached to

the eastern and western façades. Throughout summer, a vertical landscape of vines grow up the building. The huge trees to the north, vegetation on the roof, and vines to the south envelop the building in a canopy of green. Cool air is drawn into the building at or below ground level by a solar-chimney effect created by voids within. Passive solar design ensures year-round comfort despite the extremes of Tokyo’s climate. The building envelope is thoroughly insulated, with double-glazed windows and doors installed throughout; woodstoves provide supplementary heat in winter. A small constructed wetlands/greywater system filters and purifies wastewater and then circulates it throughout the building with pumps powered by photovoltaic panels.

Because exorbitant land prices severely limit the space available to new housing projects in Tokyo, Kyōdō No Mori is unusually small for a cohousing community—with only 12 housing units, no common house and minimal parking facilities. However, a ground-floor shared terrace serves as a common meeting space, and while there is no common kitchen/dining room, small-scale common dining facilities are available on the third-floor roof, where a traditional Japanese wood-fired barbecue sits in by an artfully landscaped conversation pit, surrounded by shared vegetable and flower gardens. Social and cultural occasions occur mostly within private dwellings as residents open their homes to the community for spontaneous events, including traditional tea ceremonies and dramatic performances. Private exterior space is only available in the form of sunken courtyards or balconies.

The unique design features of Kyōdō No Mori can be better understood by taking into account a ubiquitous cultural phenomenon of Tokyo: potted plants. Along the streets and narrow alleyways Tokyo, residents adorn the street façade of their dwellings with plants of all kinds: a kind of practical, productive, urban agriculture and a contribution to the public realm. But more fundamentally, it's an expression of a profound and ancient connection with nature borne of the Shinto religion.

This combination of Japanese culture, the need to pack many functions into an exceptionally small area, the organic history of the site, Tokyo residents' love of potted plants, and sustainable systems such as passive solar heating and cooling, solar water pumping, and a constructed wetland—gave rise to the architect's metaphorical design concept, best translated as “creating an urban biotope.” It has three basic tenets:

- Capturing and enhancing nature's offerings
- Imitating nature's laws in architecture
- Applying nature's lessons in life.

As in most cohousing projects, the architect employed a participatory design process with the future residents. This is especially

remarkable for a project in Japan, and so was without a wellspring of local experience from which to draw. Furthermore, the residents had no prior knowledge of cohousing. They came together to expedite the design and development of the project, not to build community, as is generally the case in cohousing. And yet, community was built in the process.



Kyōdō no Mori's steering committee members.

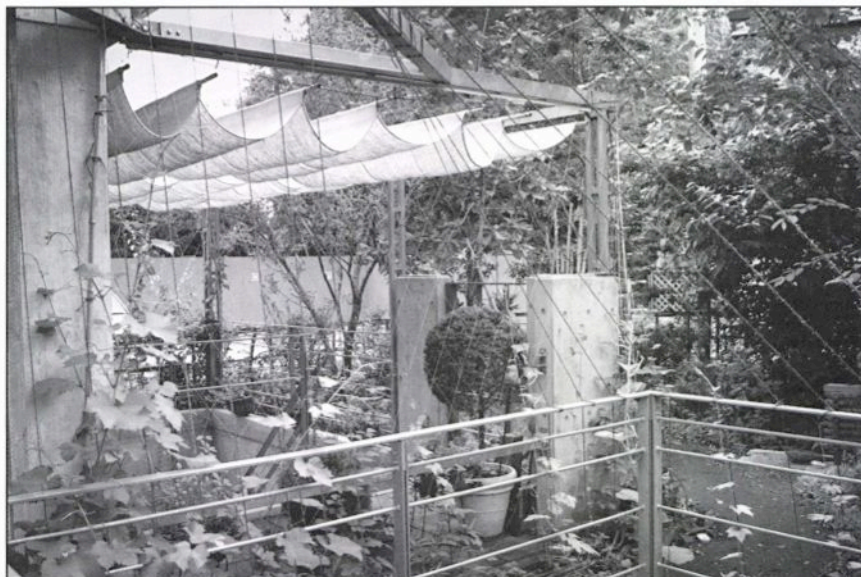
TETSURO KAI

Throughout summer, a vertical landscape of vines grow up the building.

The consultation process was instigated by the project developer and an intended resident, Tetsuro Kai. It involved meetings between him, the architect, and other future residents about the personal requirements of each household, building technologies, and other issues of importance.

These meetings were conducted according to a strict Japanese etiquette comprising four principles:

- A problem or concern for any one household is an issue for the whole community.
- Solutions to problems should be generic (i.e., generally applicable), not unique.
- No one person or household should be singled out for criticism or censure.
- Personal issues should not be brought to meetings.



A cooling micro-climate is produced with shade cloth and vines on twine trellises.

GRAHAM MELTZER

At first glance, these agreements might indicate high levels of cohesion and commitment. But perhaps they simply reflect Japanese corporate culture in which the aspirations of individuals are often forsaken for the good of the organisation.

Decisions in these meetings were made by consensus. However, when agreement could not be reached within a predetermined timeframe, the group used a secret ballot to break the deadlock. This is rare in cohousing and, again, could be interpreted as a characteristically Japanese contrivance to prevent personal embarrassment or “losing face.” In any case, the consultation process had to be efficient in order to deal with the complex implications of this project development model.

that residents gained commitment to the ongoing management of the project’s sustainable systems.

Kyōdō No Mori Cohousing demonstrates just how robust the cohousing model can be for urban areas anywhere. Because cohousing is founded on common human (indeed, tribal) needs such as sharing, collaboration, and social support, and is free of any ideological or political agenda, it has universal appeal. Further, its essential simplicity ensures it can be adapted to suit



The rooftop garden.

A small constructed wetlands/greywater system filters and purifies wastewater and then circulates it throughout the building with pumps powered by photovoltaic panels.



The constructed wetlands.

Residents were also thoroughly involved in the construction process. Some of the rich one-metre-deep topsoil excavated from the site was set aside for a roof garden and the remainder given to elderly neighbours and a local school. The future residents potted and later replanted site vegetation and were responsible for all the new landscaping. Significant trees were milled and recycled as bench tops, doors, and windows, whilst waste timber became firewood. Residents were even involved in the production of the infill panel, applying a natural, plankton-based render to wall panels. Participation in design and construction ensured

particular geographical, climatic and cultural conditions—literally, all over the world.

Graham Meltzer, an international expert on cohousing, is an architect, scholar, and commercial photographer who consults, researches, and lectures in environmental and social architecture, housing, and intentional communities. He lives in Brisbane, Australia.

Excerpted and adapted with permission from Sustainable Community: Learning from the Cohousing Model, by Graham Meltzer, Ph.D. (Trafford Media, 2005). See advertisement, page 61.

Tokyo’s Unique Cityscape

Tokyo is a rare city. It has no historical or business centre, is not zoned by socioeconomic function, and has no prevailing urban morphology. There is no discernable master plan or urban design intervention. High-rise towers, architectural follies, sinuous expressways, neon signage, billboards, power poles, and a lattice of overhead cables are superimposed on an historic (medieval) fabric of close-packed, ramshackle wooden dwellings, temples, and market buildings. The conjunction is utterly chaotic. As a city with no centre, no cohesion, and no order, Tokyo’s sole raison d’être appears to be unfettered growth and development.

Tokyo has been reconstructed three times in the last century: following the earthquake of 1923, the fire-bombing of World War II, and just prior to the 1964 Olympics. Several construction booms since have further transformed a city where the only constant seems to be change itself. Many buildings are demolished before their time. Some are designed for disassembly and let by landowners waiting for the already-high land values to rise even further. The high density wrought by inflated property values pushes buildings up against their neighbours and the street.

—G.M.

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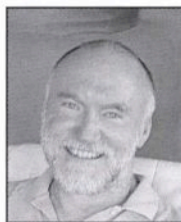
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ASK THE EXPERTS

(continued from p. 26)



Laird Schaub responds:

In my experience, the product vs. process dichotomy is a fairly common source of tension in groups, which makes it important to explore what it means and how you might work with it. I want to bring up three points:

1. In most groups there's a spectrum of what people want to get out of whole-group meetings (plenaries), and it's rare for a group to ever explore the different answers in the room. The "product" people will often say that the answer is, "To solve problems; to make decisions;" the "process" people will answer, "To build relationship; to make connections with other members so that we understand each other better and feel closer." Neither are wrong and neither answer should be interpreted as excluding the other (that is, the product people are not against relationship, and the process people are not antidecisions). It's a question of emphasis.

The rubber hits the road on this when discussion gets complicated, and someone proposes going deeper into the causes of the tension. For the product people, this is their nightmare. It can be highly subjective whether there is any value to be had in exploring those dark waters, and meanwhile the agenda is shot to hell. For the process people, this is the moment they've been waiting for—when they finally get to the good part.

If the group fails to appreciate that people are wanting different things from this moment, the problem will never go away. The answer is not adjustments to the rules for invoking back up voting; it's to discuss what is the appropriate mix of decision-making and relationship attending for the group in that moment.

2. OK, let's suppose you've successfully navigated the confusion in point 1. Another common issue is weak facilitation, where either it is confusing or not deemed safe

enough for people to add their input on topics in open discussion (hence the reliance on slower-moving formats that protect air time for the shy, confused, or battered), or people are allowed to repeat themselves. Good facilitation means topics are well defined, and off-topic or repetitious input is cordially, yet firmly interrupted. If you want meetings like that, you have to back up your facilitators when they attempt to rein folks in.

3. Finally, groups often get bogged down because of a poor understanding about how to effectively delegate. The most common problems are attempting committee work in plenary (forcing people to sit through a level of discussion for which they don't want to be present and which they trust the committee do handle on their behalf), or redoing the committee's work in plenary because the mandate wasn't clear enough. If the latter is occurring with regularity, it is often difficult to get people to serve on committees (why bother if the work will just be picked apart or overhauled in plenary?), which leads to more of the former (because there are no

functioning committees to hand work off to!). It can be a vicious cycle.

For my money, product and process are both important, and healthy groups need to be attending to the case-by-case balance of the two all the time. Hopefully, this gives you

an idea about important leverage points for moving the process vs. product boulders out of the road to better meetings.

Laird Schaub, a member of Sandhill Farm community in Missouri, has been doing consulting work on group process since 1987. A longtime activist in community networking, he has lived in community since 1974 and has been involved with the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC) since 1986; he is currently its Executive Secretary. laird@ic.org; 660-883-5545.

If you have questions for these process and facilitation experts, send them to communities@ic.org, c/o "Ask the Experts." (We won't print your name or community if you wish.) Thank you!

Good facilitation means topics are well defined, and off-topic or repetitious input is cordially, yet firmly interrupted.

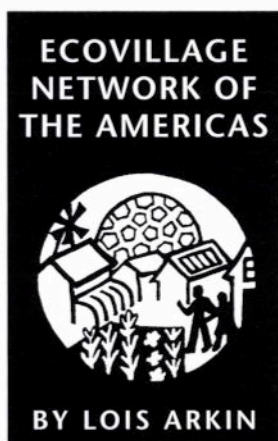
Megacities Ecovillage Network Launched at Ten-Year Ecovillage Anniversary Gathering

Nearly 200 people from 22 countries gathered at the Findhorn Foundation in northern Scotland October 1-7, 2005, to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Global Ecovillage Network (GEN). We celebrated not only our accomplishments since the first GEN gathering at Findhorn in 1995, but the launching of three exciting new projects.

One was the GEN Youth Council, facilitated by Marti Muller of Auroville community in south India. Twenty-five young people from countries around the world stood on the stage and recited their vision and purpose, giving us all a glimpse of our hoped-for future.

"We are the GEN Youth Council. We are a network of young people who have come together to support each other in reaching out to the youth of the world and to let our voice be heard. We've come

together to support each other as we initiate projects, find ourselves, and build the ecovillages of the future.



We are a place to share creative ideas and inspirations. We will realize the power we have within us. With the support and wisdom of the elders, we will indeed change this world.

We are succession species. We are the next generation. We are the next GEN!"

This was an occasion for happy tears among many of us older folks, and we gave them a standing ovation. Though we marveled all week at the progress we've made in this still-embryonic movement begun a short decade ago by a dozen folks, we older ecovillagers were inspired and relieved by this show of commitment by the younger participants.

Our seven-day celebration also included the official beginning of GEN's Gaia Education project. In this innovative program people worldwide will be able to take four-week courses on various aspects of sustainable living in hands-on interactive learning centers within ecovillages and other "green" education centers, as well as in mainstream academic institutions. Gaia Education was

Lois Arkin is cofounder of Los Angeles Eco-Village, a representative to Ecovillage Network of the Americas (ENA), and board member of Global Village Institute.

Summaries of plenaries and photos of the GEN Findhorn Gathering: www.findhorn.org.

Gaia Education: ecovillage.wikicities.com/wiki/Gaia_Education.

Gaia University: www.gaiauniversity.org.

Megacities Ecovillage Network (for people engaged in actual ecovillages or solid core group start-ups)

Lois Arkin: crsp@igc.org, or Marcelo Todescan: marcelotodescan@yahoo.com.br.

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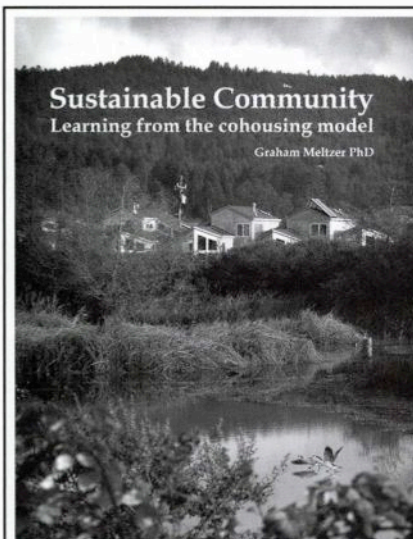
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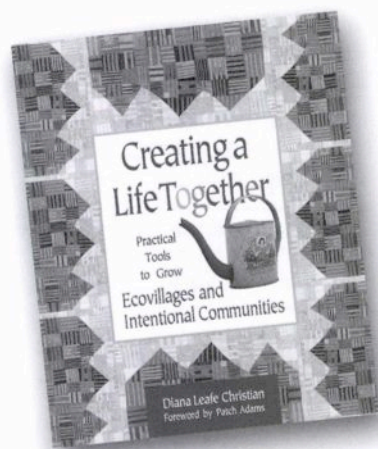
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Bill Metcalf, Communities magazine

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Practical Tools to Grow Ecovillages and Intentional Communities

By Diana Leafe Christian
Editor, *Communities Magazine*
Foreword by Patch Adams

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—Hildur Jackson, Co-founder,
Global Ecovillage Network

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originated by GEN and developed by 12 founding members of Global Ecovillage Educators for a Sustainable Earth (GEESE): Giovanni Ciarlo (Huehucocoyotl, Mexico); Jonathan Dawson (Findhorn Foundation, Scotland, and GEN Europe); May East (Findhorn, Scotland); Hildur and Ross Jackson (Gaia Trust, Denmark); Daniel Greenberg (Living Routes, USA); Kosha Joubert (Ökodorf Sieben Linden, Germany); Will Keepin (Satyana Institute, USA); Max Lindegger (Crystal Waters, Australia); Ina Meyer-Stoll (ZEGG, Germany); Marti Müller (Auroville, India); and Liz Walker (Ecovillage at Ithaca, USA). (*We'll cover Gaia Education in more detail in a future ENA column.*)

Gaia University is another sustainability education project with a similar name, but it's not to be confused with GEN's new Gaia Education project. Developed over the past year by GEN

International Advisory Board Member and Huehucocoyotl cofounder Liora Adler and GEN-Europe Council Member and British permaculture teacher and educator Andy Langford, Gaia University will offer bachelors and masters degrees in sustainable living, with courses also held in ecovillages and sustainability education centers worldwide. Gaia University is now accredited internationally through the British Council, and several ecovillages are in various stages of planning to become regional coordinating centers for its programs, including the Ecovillage Training Center at The Farm in Tennessee. (*We'll cover Gaia University more deeply in a future column as well.*)

The launching of Gaia University and GEN's Gaia Education project coincide with the U.N. Decade of Education for Sustainability (2005–2015). In fact Gaia Education is endorsed by UNITAR (United Nations Institute for Training and Research).

For me personally, perhaps the most exciting initiative born at the Findhorn conference was the **Megacities Ecovillage Network**. Twelve of us from cities of over five million—Sao Paulo, Tokyo, and Los Angeles—sat around a

large rectangular dinner table filled with laughter, conversation, and the excitement of sharing a meal with other ecovillage activists from halfway around the world. Though we were not very good at one another's languages, the communication flowed with a little help from wine, good food, and the joy of being together. Until very recently, creating ecovillages in intensely urban areas was a peculiar concept for many, even those within the ecovillage movement. But at this Findhorn gathering urban ecovillages were darn near trendy. Being a megacity ecovillage person myself, I was on a high.

At this Findhorn gathering urban ecovillages were darn near trendy.

At that dinner table, our mutual realization of the common issues and processes and successes we are engaged in within our megacities led us to a determined cry of "We can do it! We will do it! And we are doing it!" as hands came

together at the center of the table, stacking one upon the other, pancake-style. A dozen hands sealed the deal to an uproarious shout of, "We are the Megacities Ecovillage Network!" Suddenly the attention of a hundred other diners was upon us.

Discovering our passions, our mutual love of cities, and love for our own cities in particular led us to realize we could be one another's "secret weapon" in our struggles to reinvent the way people live in cities. Because we have greater mutual understanding of the unique set of issues and opportunities of megacities (e.g., the need to retrofit no-longer-used industrial buildings and reduce auto dependency; socio-economic class issues; and the challenges of homelessness, wasted resources, crime, and air/soil/water quality), and we are engaged in a variety of projects to address these issues, we can be more strategic about helping one another and influence millions of people toward change.

Our new Megacities Ecovillage Network was officially launched the next evening at the closing ceremonies when I was invited onstage to introduce the dozen of us present, especially the Brazilians from San Paulo led by Marcelo Todescan. Ω

Second Helpings: When to Talk and When to Walk

Have you ever been at a meeting where someone wanted to discuss a topic the group already had an agreement about—perhaps an agreement that took a long time to reach and left everyone feeling exhausted? You can hear the groans and see the eyeballs rolling. (No, no anything but that.)

I know groups that detest that moment so much they've developed rules to protect themselves from it, such as declaring a six-month moratorium on a topic once a decision has been made.

But what's going on?

First of all, decisions are always made with imperfect knowledge. Always. And even if you could know everything that was a factor in the decision (which you can't), the information seldom has the good grace to stay put. That is, it erodes or morphs into something else. You have to keep an eye on it.

So I have another idea about whether to open up a topic for reconsideration. Instead of asking, "How long has it been since we've talked about that?" consider a different standard: "What's changed?" By which I mean: What new information has turned up, or what old information no longer applies? If the group thinks the factors have shifted enough, then it should talk about whether that means the agreement should be modified (or dumped). If not, then sorry, we're not going to use valuable group time to restage your particular version of the Passion Play on that subject.

If it's a consensus group then everyone has to be on board in order put it on the agenda. I suggest that the bellwether question be whether there's enough new information to justify reexamination. In my experience, a well-functioning group can change a decision on a dime—if there's new data sufficient to justify a shift. The loyalty should be to quality not constancy.

Now let's reverse engines and look more closely at why groups are motivated to protect themselves from the horror of reconsideration. I think there are a host of reasons, none of which are well addressed by a temporary gag order.

In large groups it is often impossible (or a miracle) to get everyone to a meeting. Thus, there needs to be a mechanism for informing the missing what has happened, so they can

be brought up to speed and be given a chance to respond to points raised in the discussion. If the minutes (the usual way information is shared with the absent) are sketchy or incomplete, then members who missed the discussion may, in all innocence, want to replot old ground (not knowing that the mule has already been down that row).

And it's worse than that.

Groups change. New people join and there needs to be a way to bring them into awareness of what has gone before. Not just the decisions, but how the group got there, so they have a reasonable chance of understanding what factors were considered in reaching current policy; so they have a reasonable chance of not asking the group to have the same conversation if they have



Laird Schaub is Executive Secretary of the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC, publisher of this magazine), and a founding member of Sandhill Farm community in Missouri.



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questions about the decision. Yet minutes are seldom that good. It takes time to capture them and edit them and to make them accessible. And who knows which topics someone will ever question. The price for doing this poorly, however, is the same one paid by those who neglect history—they are condemned to repeat themselves.

There are other reasons why groups are leery of reconsideration. It can be soapbox time, where the garrulous run amok, squandering precious group time repeating what others (or worse, they, themselves) have already said. Groups who have trouble reining in the loquacious tend to rely on rules (like cloture or moratoria) or cumbersome processes (like Go Rounds, which limit air time per individual) instead of facing the music and insisting on better meeting behavior (or at least better facilitation). To be fair, big talkers can have a way of making this really difficult, through sulking, whining, or even pitching temper tantrums. However, waiting them out and hoping for a lightning bolt of self-realization to call them to their senses is seldom a winning strategy.

Decisions are always made with imperfect knowledge. Always.

When this gets out of hand, and the group acquiesces to the demand for reconsideration to appease the longwinded in the hopes of moving things along (since subtle hints about repetition are getting nowhere), then there's the further danger of reinforcing filibusters as an effective technique for getting one's way. This can get ugly.

So where does that leave us? It boils down to solutions that address root causes:

- If you're concerned about individuals talking too much (is the person off topic, repetitive, unfocused, intimidating?), talk about that.
- If people are repeating what others have already said in the same meeting, you need tighter facilitation.
- If people are repeating what was said in meetings the speaker missed, you need better minutes.
- If there's no important new information on a topic, decline the invitation to go there. Next topic, please. Ω

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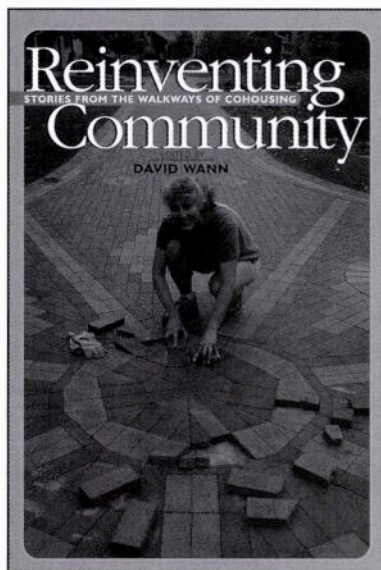
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REVIEWS



Reinventing Community: Stories from the Walkways of Cohousing

David Wann, Editor

Fulcrum Publishing, 2005

Pb. 277, pp. \$17.95

Reviewed by Diana Leafé Christian

Dave Wann's *Reinventing Community* is one of the best overall introductions to cohousing I've see yet (along with McCamant and Durrett's *Cohousing*, of course), showing what cohousing is about through 50 short, readable stories by 38 different cohousing residents in a wide variety of cohousing communities across the United States (and one in Canada).

This anthology is also one of the best overviews of *community* living I've seen yet—the small unexpected pleasures; the ongoing sense of connection; the steady support of neighbors and friends; the safety, especially for older people and children; children always having many near-siblings

at hand to play with; the potential clout with local officials—as well as inevitable conflicts, challenges, heartbreaks, and innovative community solutions. So I recommend *Reinventing Community* as the perfect gift for family or friends who wonder why you want to live so eccentrically.

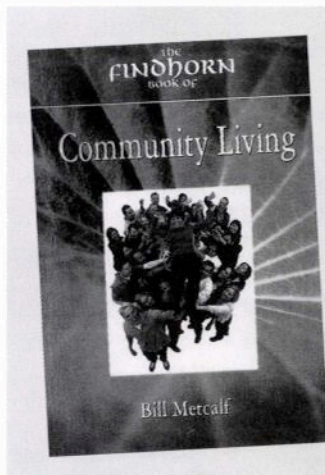
Of course all these observations are presented as experiences one has uniquely in cohousing. Although no one actually writes, “*Only in cohousing* do you find _____,” followed by a description of a typical heartwarming experience you'd find in *any* kind of intentional community, the implication is nevertheless there throughout: “Cohousing is wonderful, feeling connected to and supported by others is great; we invented community.” (I'm assuming the book's title, “*Reinventing Community*,” means cohousing is reinventing the generic “community” of typical neighborhoods and suburbs.) But to continue my rant here, despite my tilting-at-windmills to convince cohousers they didn't invent the warm-fuzzies of community living—that people living in communities from student housing co-ops to communes also experience the sense of support and connection daily—many

cohousers insist on believing these heartwarming new experiences exist within the boundaries of the cohousing movement alone. “Harrumph!”

Nevertheless, the book offers a rich smorgasbord of community tales to choose from. You can dip in sporadically or read sequentially through topics ranging from how cohousing fosters ecological sustainability to how it creates a unique neighborhood culture. One of my favorite tales is, “If Not Us, Who?” by Patty Mara Gourley, about how Tierra Nueva residents in Oceano, California, many of them ill from the effects of wind-borne pesticide spaying of the strawberry field next door, not only successfully stopped the toxic spraying but arranged that the field be farmed organically instead. Another favorite is Ellen Orlean's account of how future residents of Wild Sage in Boulder, Colorado, who ranged from high-salaried professionals to single moms with limited

***Tierra Nueva
residents
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toxic spraying
of the field
next door,
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incomes, grappled with their differing interests, value judgments, and projections in creating both market-rate and affordable housing units in the same project. (*Excerpted as “Do We Really Value Diversity?” in the Fall '04 issue.*)



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Other favorite tales editor Dave Wann kindly allowed us to include in *Communities* magazine “Sharing the Wealth of Community with Foster Children” by Laura Fitch of Pioneer Valley (Winter ’04 issue), and “Of Ravens and Rules,” by Lynn Nadeau of RoseWind Cohousing, about conflict and resolution over which resident-created art was acceptable for permanent public display in common areas (Spring ’05 “Arts in Community” issue).

We’ve excerpted from *Reinventing Community* again in this Urban Community issue—see “Living the Good Life Downtown,” about Swan’s Market Cohousing, pg. 40.

Editor Dave Wann is something of a hero of mine, as he’s the co-author with Dan Chiras of *Superbia! 31 Ways to Create Sustainable Neighborhoods*, and co-author of *Affluenza: The All-Consuming Epidemic*. He’s also a filmmaker who produced the award-winning *Smart Growth* and the recent program *Designing a Great Neighborhood*, aired on Free Speech TV, various PBS stations, and soon to be featured on Lime TV—AOL founder Steve

Case’s new network about alternative lifestyles.

Many of the book’s contributors will be familiar to *Communities* readers: Michael McIntyre (Sunward Cohousing) and Rob Sandelin (Sharingwood Cohousing), co-Guest Editors of our 2000 issue on cohousing; Raines Cohen (Berkeley Cohousing), co-Guest Editor with Betsy Morris of our Summer ’05 issue on cohousing; and article contributors Patty Mara Gourley (Tierra Nueva); Franny Osman (New View Cohousing); Sharon Villines (Takoma Village); and Dana Snyder-Grant (New View Cohousing). (See Dana’s “Waiting for Spring,” pg. 22.)


Luminaries in the cohousing movement contribute stories as well: Kathryn McCamant and Chuck Durrett, the cohousing architects who brought this form of community to North America with their 1986 book *Cohousing*; Jim Leach of Wonderland Hill Development Company; cohousing architects Mary Kraus and Laura Fitch; former *Cohousing* magazine editor Stella Tarnay; Rick Mockler, current president of Cohousing Associa-

tion of the U.S.; and Graham Meltzer, author of *Sustainable Community: Learning from the Cohousing Model*. (See Graham’s article, “Urban Biotope”—Japanese Style,” pg. 57.)

While I enjoyed *Reinventing Community* and highly recommend it, in addition to my issue with the occasional “We invented community” stance, I sometimes felt put off by a public relations “puff-piece” tone in a few of the stories. But that’s easily overlooked, since the overwhelming majority of the tales are quite engaging and credible, not to mention the potential widespread good this book will do the cohousing movement—and our intentional communities movement in general.

Diana Leaf Christian is editor of Communities magazine and author of Creating a Life Together: Practical Tools to Grow Ecovillages and Intentional Communities. She lives at Earthaven Ecovillage in North Carolina.

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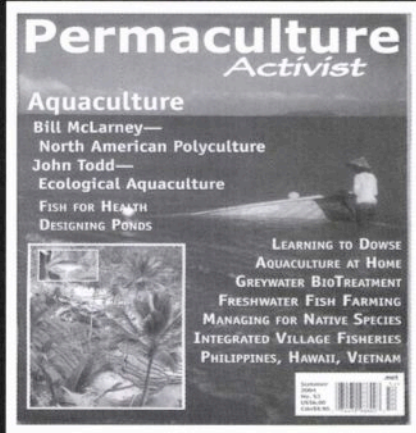
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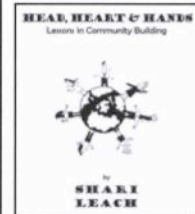
RURAL COOPERATIVE COMMUNITY, USA. My husband and I are currently in Hawthorne, Florida with assets to invest into community. We've identified the values: oppose the root causes of war; the major goal: personal freedom for the individual. Help us make it happen! *Phone 352-481-0275 or for complete details and pictures, see www.everything-is-related.info*

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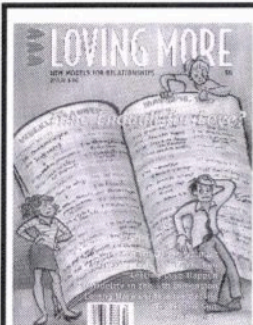
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A. Total No Copies (<i>Net Press Run</i>)	3733	3691
B. Paid &/or Requested Circulation		
(a) Sales through dealers & carriers, street vendors, & counter sales (<i>not mailed</i>)	2087	1906
(b) Paid or Requested Mail Subscriptions (Including advertisers' proof copies/ exchange copies)	1325	1282
C. Total Paid &/or Requested Circulation	3412	3188
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F. Total Free Distribution	50	200
G. Total Distribution	3462	3388
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<www.ic.org>.

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PERIPATETIC COMMUNITARIAN

(continued from p. 76)

lated from their nearest neighbors outside the community.

Similarly, the rural groups usually enjoy cleaner air, and less noise pollution (except when tractors or chainsaws are fired up, or when construction projects are underway). The deep country quiet is especially inspiring at night in the winter, and in the summer the nocturnal sounds of insects, coyotes, and hoot owls can keep a city visitor awake for many hours—while the city's background noise of passing trucks and car alarms often has a similar effect on visitors from the farm. And with low levels of light pollution, on a clear night the rural skies are amazing to behold.

Country kids typically can run around outside and far afield with very little adult supervision, while in the city a tighter rein is usually advisable. Country folks are far more likely to leave the doors unlocked (if they have locks at all) and the keys in the ignition. A fortunate recent trend is that many of the cohousing communities are contained enough that they can also enjoy some of this freedom from worry.

Being more spread out and farther from things in general, people living in rural communities tend to interact more with their fellow community members than do their urban counterparts. A couple of major exceptions to this are the smaller urban collectives where everyone lives under the same roof—sharing meals, bathrooms, and common spaces—and those communities such as Ganas, Goodenough, and Zendik which emphasize everyday interactions and conversations as a central part of their culture.

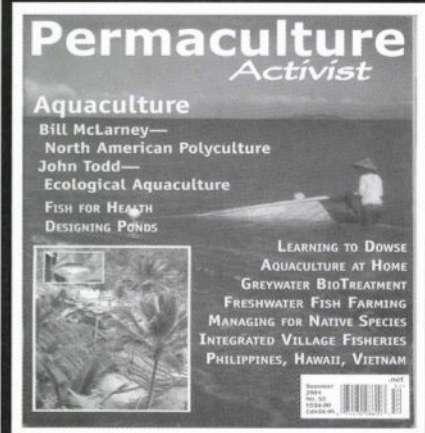
By now you've probably guessed that I have a preference for rural living, which is true; however I also enjoy visiting city groups because they, too, have a lot to offer. For example, the hardware store is only minutes away, instead of miles, and there are hundreds of amenities near at hand such as bookstores, jazz clubs, museums, and all-night cafés. Being in a population center means there are far more potential customers for a community-owned business. And I've know a lot of folks who moved back to the city from the country

because they just weren't meeting enough people of their age group or with shared interests.

Obviously, there are trade-offs to be made, and the criteria will vary from person to person, and even for the same person over time. The main thing to remember is that checklists, like those you'll find in the *Directory*, are only a first step in evaluating how well a community might match up with your needs and preferences. Behind each criterion is a wide world of possibilities, so be prepared to dig deeper once you find a group that sounds appealing. Happy *Directory* surfing! Ω

Geoph Kozeny has lived in various kinds of communities for 32 years, and has been on the road for 17 years visiting communities both urban and rural—asking about their visions and realities, taking photos, and in general exploring what makes them tick. Presently, he is editing part two of a video documentary on intentional communities, aspiring to convey the vision and passion that drives the movement, and tell stories about what works.

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The Urban/Rural Spectrum

I was wondering about how many intentional communities are urban, rural, or somewhere in between—my intuition said that it was about a 50/50 split between the city folks and the country folks—so I logged onto my now favorite web site directory.ic.org/records/?action=search to see what I could find.

Consistent with past directories, the current list of North American communities—804 at the instant I checked, but growing steadily since—includes about 40 percent that are urban, suburban, or in small towns. The comparable stats for the 216 communities from other continents were somewhat lower (25 percent), but it's important to note that the listings are neither complete nor fully representative for any country, continent, or state. Instead, what you'll find is contact info and a profile for those groups who heard about the online directory and had someone available to log on and enter their information. Thus the scope of the data in the *Directory* is only as good as the visibility and outreach of the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC)—so use it yourself, and help spread the word. (FIC is the publisher of the *Communities Directory*, the ic.org website, and this magazine.)

A noteworthy feature of the new *Directory* is that the listings are managed by the communities themselves, and the database is being constantly updated. That way folks surfing the website are always looking at the most recent data. In the future when a new paper edition is pending, the *Directory* staff will send out advance warning to all the groups listed, then six

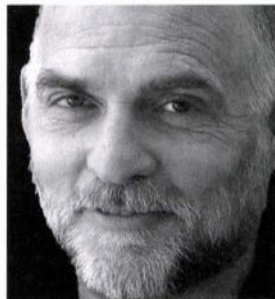
months later they'll take a new snapshot of the current data and dump that into the next printing (the recently published 4th Edition listings were captured in March 2005).

Additionally each group is asked a series of questions about their population, gender balance, visitor policies, ownership, joining fees, governance and leadership, financial and participation requirements, shared meals, dietary restrictions, percentage of food grown, sexual orientations, and shared spiritual practices, if any. So there's a lot of useful information to be distilled, and a great "Search" feature that allows you to hunt for groups with any or all of those specific traits.

One thing you won't get from reading the *Directory* listings is a sense of how each community's beliefs and practices translate into the reality of everyday life. Lucky for you, I'm feeling inspired to elaborate on a few generalities I've come up with, based on my many visits to a diverse cross-section of groups.

Most traits occur on a continuum from urban to rural, with the suburbs and small towns falling somewhere between. For example, the more rural the group, the farther apart the houses and community spaces—the most common exception being rural ecovillages which tend to cluster their buildings to leave more open space for agriculture, woods, conservation, and recreation. (See "The Village Can Save the City," pg 30.) Even then, compared to their

(continued on p. 75)



BY GEOPH KOZENY

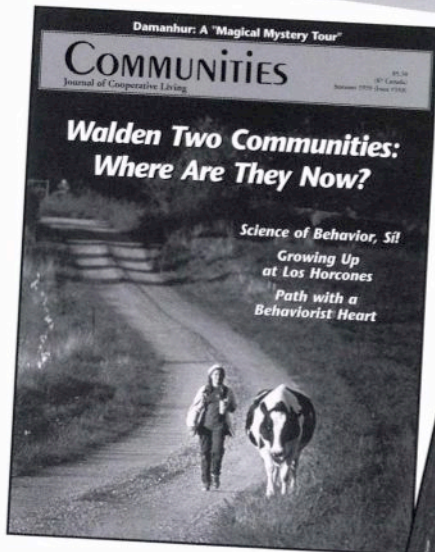
Of the communities listed in the Directory, about 40 percent are urban, suburban, or living in small towns.

more urban contemporaries, they tend to be further iso-

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