ACTIVATING THE URBAN COMMONS

COMMUNITIES

Life in Cooperative Culture

Winter 2017 • Issue #177

URBAN COMMUNITIES

Back to the City!

Green and Resilient Neighborhoods

Compact Community in an Ecovillage

Making a Case for Urban Cohousing

Community-Building in the City

New Culture is Everywhere!

You've probably heard of Network For a New Culture's (NFNC's)
Summer Camps (www.nfnc.org/sc)... but we're so much more!

Fall camps • Winter camp • Spring camp • Intentional Communities • Intentional Village

2018 Camps:
Visit www.new-culture.org
for dates, locations,
and details

Visit www.new-culture.org for a list of all NFNC related organizations and events.

Problem: In the face of rampant greed and short-sighted self-interest, it's so easy to lose connection to the extraordinary creativity displayed around this planet.

Response: Establish a centralized access point to sources of social and environmental inspiration — enabling activists and organizers, students and citizens to identify and amplify what might help our own acts of creation.

EXEMPLARS!

a free, searchable, living library of what is hopeful, fascinating, and sustainable.

Visit www.exemplars.world

your portal to designing a sustainable future

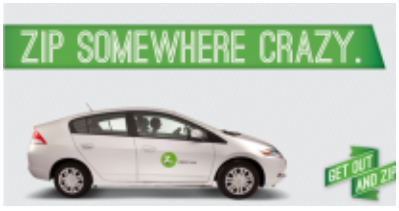
Browse the 4 domains of **www.exemplars.world**
For each Exemplar, the initial insight, the organizing strategy, tools, outcomes, and a link to websites.

View relevant essays and videos.

Submit Exemplars you have created or know of, as we expand the data base.

1. Cities, towns & communities

2. Businesses and organizations



3. Systemic interventions

4. **Cultural sustainability**

Curated by Paul Freundlich, Founder, Green (Co-op) America

Issue #177 • Winter 2017

URBAN COMMUNITIES

VOICES

ON THE COVER

A view of Capitol Hill Cohousing's rooftop garden and neighborhood context, Seattle, Washington (see articles, pages 55-59). Photo by William Wright Photography.

Communities
Life in Cooperative Culture

EDITOR
Chris Roth *(Lost Valley/Meadowsong)*

ART DIRECTOR
Yulia Zarubina-Brill

ADVERTISING AND BUSINESS MANAGER
Christopher Kindig

WEB SUPPORT
Pavan Rikhi *(Acorn)*

CIRCULATION MANAGER
McCune Porter *(Twin Oaks)*

SOCIAL MEDIA SUPPORT
Moumita Chakraborty

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT
Kim Scheidt *(Red Earth Farms)*
Kim Kanney
Sky Blue *(Twin Oaks)*

EDITORIAL REVIEW BOARD
Marty Klaif *(Shannon Farm)*
Parke Burgess
Valerie Renwick *(Twin Oaks)*

Communities (ISSN 0199-9346) is published quarterly by the Fellowship for Intentional Community at 23 Dancing Rabbit Ln. Rutledge MO 63563. Postmaster: Send address changes to Communities, 138 Twin Oak Rd, Louisa VA 23093. Index in the Alternative Press Index.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: $25 US, $35 outside US for four issues via periodical/surface mail. Single copies are $8 US, $10 outside US. All payments in US dollars. Available from Communities, 138 Twin Oaks Rd, Louisa VA 23093; order@ic.org; 800-462-8240; ic.org/subscribe.

BACK ISSUES: 23 Dancing Rabbit Ln. Rutledge MO 63563; order@ic.org; 800-462-8240; ic.org/back-issues.

EDITORIAL OFFICE: Chris Roth, Editor, Communities, 81868 Lost Valley Ln, Dexter OR 97431; 541-937-5221; editor@ic.org.

FELLOWSHIP FOR INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY: 23 Dancing Rabbit Ln. Rutledge MO 63563; order@ic.org; 800-462-8240; ic.org.

REPRINT PERMISSION: Community groups may reprint with permission. Please contact Communities, 81868 Lost Valley Ln, Dexter OR 97431; 541-937-5221; editor@ic.org.

ADVERTISING: Christopher Kindig, Communities Advertising Manager, Baltimore MD; 443-422-3741; ads@ic.org.

WEBSITE: ic.org/communities-magazine.

This magazine printed by Johnson Press of America, Pontiac, Illinois, USA.

Letters

Invaluable Resources

Congratulations on the superb fall issue of Communities (#176, "Learning from the Past"). Several articles are helpful for my paper and a bibliography on my theory of developmental communalism to go with it.

The value of the magazine, Directory, and all your editorial work are beyond measure for the whole field of communal studies, communities themselves, and the future of civil, sustainable society. There is no way to properly thank you and all who work and write for these publications.

Don Pitzer
Professor Emeritus of History and Director Emeritus of the Center for Communal Studies at the University of Southern Indiana in Evansville, Indiana

Twin Oaks as Catalyst and Microcosm

Occasionally I read Communities cover-to-cover, and issue #176 is one of those. Communitarian history is a specialty of mine, so I must point out an error in Sky Blue's "Note" about the FIC's 30th Anniversary. I assume Sky is referring to when the FIC was incorporated, which happened August 1986 at Stelle Community, not '87. I am one of the incorporators and Communities published my article about the meeting in issue #71-72, pp. 44-5, Summer/Fall 1986. (There is an error in that article; the original FIC was founded in 1949, not 1953.)

Back to the most recent issue, I am honored that my article was chosen for representing TO's 50th Anniversary! In my perspective, without Twin Oaks there would be no FEC or FIC. There might still be a Communities yet that is doubtful. People generally do not know how central Twin Oaks is to the communities movement because many of us greatly value the low-key, unassuming nature of egalitarian community. An example of that is the TO 50th, at which there was no oratory. No officers of the corporation gave any speeches lauding the founders, and no guest speakers fed our pride of accomplishment. There were presentations about TO history, yet they were not billed as main events. It was great that the TO 50th was just us, with no reporters or academicians, yet this lack of self-promotion is part of why the communities movement is generally unknown and little understood. We are indeed a humble movement, still learning and growing, and maybe it is best to not seek publicity, yet we are a good story that people want to know, once we get past the shallow appearance of things and into the analysis of the lessons we've learned. Thankfully, we do at least have a common voice through Communities!

A. Allen Butcher
Denver, Colorado

A More Harmonious Life

I enjoy your magazine because it reminds me of my youth. I traveled to Drop City in the 1970s, went to the Monday Night Class in San Francisco to listen to Stephen Gaskin, visited The Farm in Tennessee in the 1980s, went to week-long camps in renewable energy in 1980 in the Carolinas, worked in two communal living groups in which I felt I grew as an individual in Arizona and Palo Alto, California, went twice to visit Twin Oaks for Labor Day events (Guest Experience), went to a camp in New Haven, Connecticut also.

It seems your group's ideas and ideals are very beneficial to a more harmonious life.

Keep on publishing,

Doug Holmstrom
North Little Rock, Arkansas

Corrections

*Tree Bressen has alerted us to a couple mistakes in Sky Blue and Betsy Morris' "Tracking the Communities Movement: 70 Years of History and the Modern FIC" (*Communities *#176). The author of the book* Flight from the City *was Ralph Borsodi. And Tree never lived at Twin Oaks, only Acorn. Also, we've been informed that the photo at the bottom of page 27 accompanying Allen Butcher's "Fifty Years of Utopian Intentioneering at Twin Oaks Community," captioned "Many hands make light work while raising trusses on a new residence," actually depicts not a new Twin Oaks residence but Woodfolk House in Charlottesville, Virginia; most of the "hands" depicted were, however, Twin Oaks members. We appreciate receiving any corrections or feedback, so please keep them coming.*

We want to say **THANK YOU!** to our Community Members

We deeply appreciate your support. Contributions from our members are essential to providing programs and services. But even more than that, without you there wouldn't be a movement! You are the reason the world should be paying attention to this movement.

For more information on FIC Membership visit www.ic.org/membership

A-Beautiful-Life, Urbana, Missouri
Adawehi, Columbus, North Carolina
Alpha Farm, Deadwood, Oregon
Armadillo Cohousing, Austin, TX
Asheville Mountain Meadows, Mars Hill, North Carolina
Autumn Sun, Ashland, Virginia
Backyard Neighborhoods, San Francisco, California
Baynton East Housing Collective, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Bellbunya Community Association, Belli Park, Queensland
Belterra Cohousing, Bowen Island, British Columbia, Canada
Birdsfoot Farm, Canton, New York
Boulder Creek Community, Boulder, Colorado
Bright Morning Star, Seattle, Washington
Bundagen Co-operative Ltd, Bundagen State, Australia
Cambridge Cohousing, Cambridge, Massachusetts
Cambridge Cooperative Club, Cambridge,Massachusetts
Camphill Special School, Glenmoore, Pennsylvania
Camphill Village Kimberton Hills, Kimberton, Pennsylvania
Capitol Hill Urban CoHousing, Seattle, Washington
Cardinal Ridge, Fairfield, Virginia
Cascadia Commons Cohousing Community, Portland, Oregon
Charlotte North Carolina Grannies, Charlotte, North Carolina
Cite Ecologique of New Hampshire, Colebrook, New Hampshire
CoHo Ecovillage, Corvallis, Oregon
Common Ground Community, Blountsville, Alabama
Common Place Cooperative, Inc. Cambridge, Massachusetts
Communikindred, Aurora, Ontario, Canada
Community for Mindful Living, Berkeley, California
Confluence, Columbus, Ohio
Coweeta Heritage Center, Otto, North Carolina
Crystal Creek Permaculture Cluster, Cottage Grove, Oregon
Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage, Rutledge, Missouri
Dancing Waters Permaculture Co-op, Gays Mills, Wisconsin
Dandelion, Rutledge, Missouri
Donald's View, Eagle Rock, Virginia
Dunmire Hollow Community, Waynesboro, Tennessee
Earthaven Ecovillage, Black Mountain, North Carolina
Earthen Heart Community Homestead, Bangor, Michigan
EcoReality Co-op, Salt Spring Island, British Columbia, Canada
Elderberry Village, Rougemont, North Carolina
Emerald Earth Sanctuary, Boonville, California
Emerald Village, CA, Vista, California
Fern Hollow Ecovillage, Copper Hill, Virginia
Flagstaff Creative Cohousing, Flagstaff, Arizona
Fortunity, Asheville, North Carolina
Freedom-Universe, Ash Fork, Arizona
Ganas, Staten Island, New York
GlowHouse, Washington, District of Columbia
Goloka Sanctuary
Goodenough Community, Greater Seattle Area, Washington
Goose Pond Community, Canaan, New Hampshire
Great Oak Cohousing, Ann Arbor, Michigan
Green Grove Cohousing Community, Forest Grove, Oregon
Greenmount Eco-co-housing, Greenmount, Australia
Harbourside Cohousing, Sooke, British Columbia
Headwaters Garden & Learning Center, Cabot, Vermont
Heathcote Community, Freeland, Maryland
High Cove, Bakersville, North Carolina
Hygieia Homestead, Sterling, Michigan
Johnson's Landing Retreat Center, near Kaslo, British Columbia, Canada
Kalikalos, Pelion, Magnesia, Greece
Kingfisher Cohousing on Brookdale, Oakland, California
Las Indias, Madrid, Spain
Living Earth Village, Harrisville, New Hampshire
Living Miracles Worldwide, Kamas, Utah
Living Roots Ecovillage, French Lick, Indiana
Loblolly Greenway Cohousing, Gainesville, Florida
Lotus Lodge, Asheville area, North Carolina
Magic, Palo Alto, California
Maitri House, Takoma Park, Maryland
Monan's Rill, Santa Rosa, California
Monterey Cohousing, St. Louis Park, Minnesota
Morningland Monastery, Long Beach, California
Morninglory, Killaloe, Ontario, Canada
New Vrindaban, Moundsville, West Virginia
Noosa Forest Retreat Holisitc Permaculture Community, Kin KIn, Queensland, Australia
Oakcreek Community, Stillwater, Oklahoma
Oakwood Center, Selma, Indiana
Oasis Gardens, Roosevelt, Utah
Oblate Community of St Paul - IOCU, Clayton, Washington
One Island, Captain Cook, Hawaii
Open Circle, Etlan, Virginia
Pinnacle Cohousing, Lyme, New Hampshire
Planet Repair Institute, Portland, Oregon
Pleasant Glade, Tonasket, Washington
Port Townsend EcoVillage, Port Townsend, Washington
Pura Fruta, Puerto Viejo, Limon, Costa Rica
Putney Commons, Putney, Vermont
Quaker Intentional Village-Canaan, East Chatham, New York
Raw-Wisdom Vegan Community, Oneonta, New York
Red Earth Farms, Rutledge, Missouri
Rock Garden Springs, Big Bend, Redding area
Rocky Corner Cohousing, New Haven, Connecticut
RoseWind Cohousing, Port Townsend, Washington
Russian house #1, Jenner, CA
Saint Cecilia Catholic Communnity, Palm Springs, California
SEED International Ecovillage Agricommunity, Cahuita District, Limón Province, Costa Rica
Shannon Farm Community, Afton, Virginia
Smart Progressives, Oxnard, California
Smial.Community, Northcote, Victoria, Australia
Songaia Cohousing Community, Bothell, Washington
Southwest Sufi Community, Silver City, New Mexico
Spokane Cohousing, Spokane, Washington
Springtree Community, Scottsville, Virginia
Sticks and Stones, Golden Lake, Ontario, Canada
Struggle Mountain, Los Altos Hills, California
Sunburst Community, Lompoc, California
Sunflower Cohousing, Vieux-Ruffec, Poitou-Charentes, France
Tamarack Knoll Community, Fairbanks, Alaska
Teaching Drum Outdoor School, Three Lakes, Wisconsin
Template Homestead, Decatur, Tennessee
The Barley Jar - Urban Ecovillage and Spiritual Community, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Touchstone Cohousing, Ann Arbor, Michigan
Twin Pines Country Plantation and Guest Ranch, Norwood, Georgia
Upper Langley, Langley, Washington
Urban Village CoHousing, Somerville, Massachusetts
Valley of Light, Independence, Virginia
Village Hearth Cohousing, Durham, NC
Walnut Street Co-op, Eugene, Oregon
Whole Village Ecovillage, Caledon, Ontario
Wind Spirit Community, Winkelman, Arizona
Winslow Cohousing Group, Bainbridge Island, Washington
Wiscoy Valley Community Land Cooperative, Winona, Minnesota

THANK YOU!

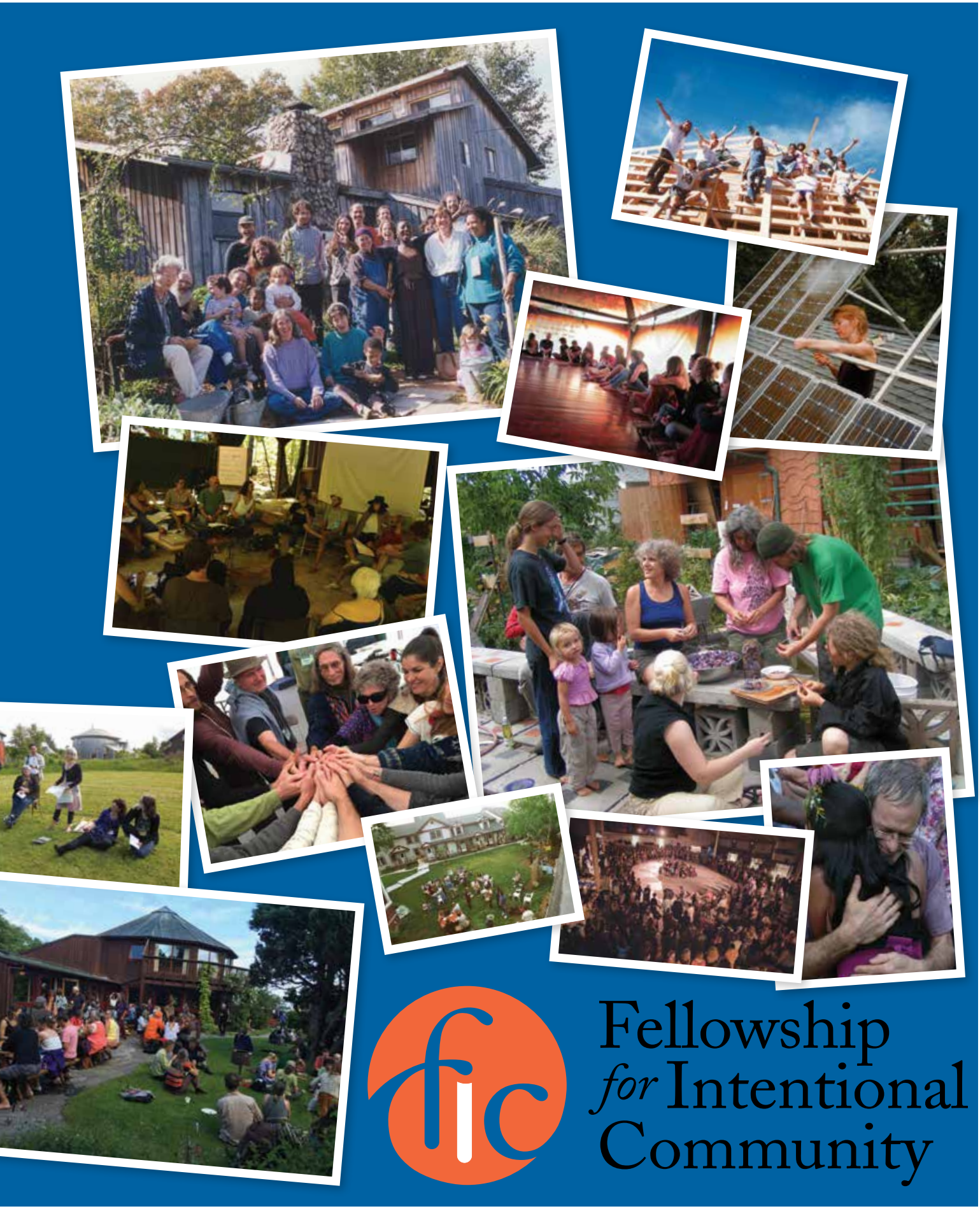
Happy 30th Birthday to the Fellowship for Intentional Community!

30 Years of Service to the Intentional Communities Movement

For 30 years the FIC has provided networking and support to co-ops, land trusts, cohousing, ecovillages, communes, and collective living of all kinds. We've helped people find communities, helped communities find people, and helped people who want to start communities find each other.

Help us celebrate!

Visit ic.org/fic-30th-birthday for lots of new content about the last 30 years and where we're going in the next 30 years.


Fellowship
for Intentional
Community

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 or shared projects.

Through fact, fiction, and opinion, we offer fresh ideas about how to live and work 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 also seek articles about cooperative ventures of all sorts–in workplaces, in neighborhoods, among people sharing common interests–and about "creating community where you are."

We do not intend to promote one kind of group 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 thematically to community living and/or cooperation, 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 Writers' Guidelines: COMMUNITIES, 23 Dancing Rabbit Ln, Rutledge MO 63563-9720; 800-462-8240; editor@ic.org. To obtain Photo Guidelines, email: layout@ic.org. Both are also available online at ic.org/communities-magazine.

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 handpick our advertisers, selecting only those whose products and services we believe will be helpful to our readers. That said, we are not in a position to verify the accuracy or fairness of statements made in advertisements–unless they are FIC ads–nor in REACH listings, and publication of ads should not be considered an FIC endorsement.

If you experience a problem with an advertisement or listing, we invite you to call this to our attention and we'll look into it. Our first priority in such instances is to make a good-faith attempt to resolve any differences by working directly with the advertiser/lister and complainant. If, as someone raising a concern, you are not willing to attempt this, we cannot promise that any action will be taken.

Please check ic.org/communities-magazine or email ads@ic.org for advertising information.

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; 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.

Notes from the Editor BY CHRIS ROTH

LIVING FOR THE CITY

As perhaps befitting its focus on Urban Communities, this issue turned out to be crowded—such that we decided to shorten some of our introductory material to make room. So I won't write much about the stories which follow other than to note that they trace a geographical journey from the US East Coast through middle America to the West Coast, and then hook back around to the North, eventually jumping the Atlantic. They also counter the stereotype that starting or joining an intentional community means escaping the city. As our authors demonstrate, in many ways no setting is *better* suited to intentional community than an urban one. And, even short of full intentional community, city-dwellers have many, ever-evolving options for creating more connection, mutual support, and sharing in their lives—also detailed herein.

Stevie Wonder sang in 1973:

I hope you hear inside my voice of sorrow
And that it motivates you to make a better tomorrow
This place is cruel, nowhere could be much colder
If we don't change, the world will soon be over
Living just enough, just enough for the city...

As suggested by those lyrics, it's hard to separate Urban issues from Social Justice issues—and impossible to consider the wonders of urban life without also contemplating its undersides. That being said, visionary and resilient urban dwellers have been working for decades, centuries, millennia to make living in the city something that can restore rather than degrade us as human beings and communities. (Tied in closely to these matters are "Class, Race, and Privilege"—our theme in Spring 2018.) No setting puts "civilization and its discontents" in clearer focus than an urban one—nor does any setting suggest more powerful hope for making "a better tomorrow."

We hope that when you finish the current issue, you'll have a little more optimism about the prospect of transforming humanity's presence on this planet by rebuilding community—one block, one neighborhood, one city...one global family...at a time.

• • •

Speaking of building community, we're excited to announce the impending publication of a new series of titles, *Wisdom of Communities*, collecting stories mostly from the past decade of COMMUNITIES. Volume 1, *Starting a Community*, to be published in early 2018, contains a wealth of resources and stories (more than 300 pages' worth) about creating and exploring intentional community, and should be an invaluable companion to resources for community founders and prospective founders already available through FIC's Community Bookstore (such as *Creating a Life Together*, the *Communities Directory*, and the *Best of* COMMUNITIES books). Volume 2, soon to follow, will focus on *Finding a Community*, and we plan two additional volumes to appear within the next year.

Please look for more new initiatives as well, as we enact ideas shared at recent staff meetings in hopes of bringing FIC and its publications to a wider audience. In a world that can very much benefit from any help making community a daily, lived reality for most of us (rather than a minority of us), we see this work as ever-more relevant. If you share this vision, we welcome your support, ideas, contributions, and involvement in this movement to transform how we live, from city to countryside, from coast to coast, from continent to continent—far beyond each of our individual places (though it always starts at home). Thanks for joining us!

Chris Roth (editor@ic.org), a long-time member of Lost Valley community in Oregon, edits COMMUNITIES.

SUBSCRIPTION SPECIAL!

Subscribe to Communities Magazine

And Receive *Within Reach - Journey to Find Sustainable Community* on DVD or Digital Rental for FREE with any subscription!

Use Promo Code "WRDVD" for DVD or "WRDigital" for digital rental.

Print Subscriptions (US): 1-year for $25, 2-year for $45, 3-year for $60

Print Subscription (International): 1-year for $35, 2-year for $65, 3-year for $90

Digital Subscriptions: (download from ic.org): 1-year for $20, 2-year for $35, 3-year for $45

Subscribe by Mail: call 1-800-462-8240, or send us your name, phone, email, group name or affiliation (if applicable), street, city/town, state/province, and postal code. Include total amount paid by check or money order, or pay by Credit or Debit Card by including your card number, expiration date, and CVV. Send to: FIC, 23 Dancing Rabbit Lane, Rutledge, MO 63563.

ic.org/subscribe

Back to the City!

By GPaul Blundell

An early meeting introducing Point A in DC.

There's an abundance to the city, an almost overwhelming abundance. Today this abundance showed up as 20 rolls of sushi. A couple weeks ago it showed up as about 30 lbs. of filet mignon. Before that it was a gross of eggs (a dozen dozen) and a crate of organic grass-fed heavy cream and a case of fair trade black Himalayan chia seeds. All free. All pulled out of a dumpster in the middle of the night and brought back to the main house of Compersia, the commune I call home in Washington, DC.

As anyone who has moved to the country to pursue the simple life will tell you: the simple life is not so simple. The dream of rural abundance, of growing all your own food and fashioning all your own tools, is more often a reality of long hard work and making do with less. Unless you're independently wealthy, there are not many places you can live where everything you might want comes easily and abundantly.

Fundamentally there is one difference that separates rural areas from urban ones: population density. Many communes and intentional communities settle in the country. Insofar as they desire to build a new world divorced from mainstream society this makes sense. With fewer people occupying the land there's more room to build and more room between you and your opinionated neighbors. Over the decade that I lived at rural Acorn Community, in central Virginia, this is certainly the reality that I experienced. The abundance of space, both physical and cultural, provided a lot of room to grow a little utopia and keep it insulated from the corrosive effects the mainstream would have on it. However, there are abundances in many places if you can appreciate and cultivate them.

When I first moved to Acorn in 2005 I came looking for proof that a better world was possible. My political blossoming in college, during the peak of the anti-corporate globalization movement and the run-up to the Iraq War, saw me immersing myself in the history and theory of anarchism. But in conversation after conversation my passionate insistence that we could, as a society, thrive without constantly brutalizing and dominating each other was met with skeptical requests to cough up the proof that my nice ideas could stand up to harsh reality. When I discovered Twin Oaks and then Acorn, all quite by accident, I knew immediately what I had stumbled upon and that the egalitarian communes movement was my life's work.

And the communes did not disappoint. Acorn Community, an egalitarian income-sharing commune, member of the Federation of Egalitarian Communities, and daughter of older larger commune Twin Oaks Community, was founded in 1993 and at the time of my joining listed "anarchist" as one of its self-applied labels. Acorn operates by consensus, runs a fairly complex and highly seasonal mail order garden seed business, and does it all with a minimum of formal structure. While there we saw the business quadruple in size (rising to over $1 million in revenue by the time I left), helped two other nearby communes to form, built a giant eco-groovy new headquarters for the business, and weathered an arson and a whole string of health, mental health, and interpersonal crises by various members. My time at Acorn and getting to know the other rural social laboratories of the FEC taught me or confirmed several important things:

- Prosperity and organization are possible without heirarchical domination of each other. People are, as it turns out, really good at managing complexity.
- Complex organizations can be run democratically with relatively small overhead. This is related to the above point but the distinction I'm making is that a business or organization can be both directed and managed in a non-heirarchical, democratic, and cooperative way.
- Motivation is available without individual or private reward, like wages. Human motivation is more complex. I found that people could be motivated to apply themselves to valuable labor by the prospect of collective enrichment as well as less tangible things like their values, personal curiosity, or simply love of a good challenge.
- Intense cooperation/communalization/socialization significantly boosts quality of life relative to

cost of living. In short, a middle-class quality of life is achievable at sub-poverty levels of income. And it comes with a lighter and less rigid labor burden than is required by almost all full-time jobs! A corollary of this is that intense communalization brings ecological impact down to ballpark global sustainable levels with relative ease.

• The socialized economy of the communes provides a supportive healing space for people dealing with various forms of mental illness (from simple things like anxiety to more complex things like psychotic breaks) as well as being flexible enough to make mental differences that were a problem in the mainstream not a problem in the commune.

What I noticed about all these is that none of them seemed to be a result of the communes' rural locations. In fact, for all the advantages of living in the country there were several glaring problems. The work that could be done in the country was generally pretty low wage. Low population density means commune life could feel isolating, particularly for minorities of any sort. Undeveloped land means that population growth is limited by the speed at which new residences can be built. Their remoteness made visiting them difficult for interested people. Perhaps most striking of all, though, is simply that there are a lot of people who want to live communally but do not want to live in the country.

Our society is run by the few at the expense of the many. It is consuming and degrading the environment we depend on. Inequalities of wealth and power are accelerating. The world is on fire. I thought I had found some ways to help put it out but now those tools needed to spread.

In the summer of 2014 I had the good fortune to be able to take a trip to Europe both for pleasure and discovery[1]. In Madrid, I visited the comrades of the Red de Colectivos Autogestionados[2] (RCA). Most of the members of the RCA were also members of the CNT, Spain's famous anarcho-syndicalist trade union which is remembered as the most successful anarchist organization in history, having fought off Franco's fascist coup for several years and controlled large areas of Spain at their peak. After Franco died and his fascist regime was dismantled, membership in the formerly illegal CNT exploded. However, despite sky-high membership the CNT did not display the strength or resiliency that it had historically and had been fading ever since. The RCA arose out of a very material analysis of this situation. Spain has a long deep history of cooperatives, long predating the Rochdale Society in England and with a stunningly high and widespread membership. It was this community of cooperatives that provided the material base and support for the combative and often embattled CNT during the decades leading up to the fascist coup. By the time Franco died (peacefully in his bed) he had largely succeeded in co-opting the cooperative movement and cleansing it of its leftist politics. Looking at this history the comrades who started the RCA concluded that for the CNT to regain its power they needed to rebuild the network of radical cooperatives that had fed and supported it.

There's an example of this closer to home and closer to now in the Movement for a New Society (MNS). A Quaker peace movement-derived organization that started in 1971 and lasted until 1988, MNS saw the world as being on the verge of a revolution and made it their mission to research, educate, train, and prepare the new society that could arise after the old one tumbled. To support their work and their activists they established a nationwide network of cooperatives and urban communal houses, often sharing income. In interviews I conducted with several veterans of MNS the value of the communes and cooperatives in supporting the work was reiterated again and again. This support came not only in the form of material support (to avoid bankruptcy) but also in social and emotional support (to avoid burnout) and as laboratories and testbeds for the ideas that MNS' activists were developing.

So here we were. The world clearly needed changing. We had some proven strategies for building effective movements. The rural egalitarian communes had done good work but had also clearly shown their limitations. The need to develop a network of urban egalitarian communes to support radical social change work was clear. In the Fall of 2013 several fellow communards and co-conspirators and I decided to try to do just that by launching a project called Point A.

Of course, we are not the first ones to try such a thing or things like it. Specifically on the urban egalitarian communes question, since I first joined Acorn there's been one or two urban communes in the FEC. When I first joined there was Emma Goldman Finishing School in Seattle, Washington, and a few years later they were joined by The Midden in Columbus, Ohio. Both shared the same general model and in the last two years both have devolved into simple group houses or co-ops and left the FEC. This is a sobering recent history but there are counterexamples if we widen our gaze a bit. Ganas, an intentional community with a smaller income- and asset-sharing commune at its core, has been thriving in New York City for 35 years. Over in Germany there are a bevy of income- and income- and asset-sharing communes located in major cities, some of which have been going for over 30 years[3]. In Spain (mostly) there's Las Indias, a nomadic but very stable income-

An early meeting introducing Point A in DC.

Photos courtesy of GPaul Blundell

sharing commune that's been going for 14 years. In Israel, a new generation of urban kibbutzim has arisen. In light of this, it's easier to consider the dissolution of Emma Goldman Finishing School and The Midden as something peculiar to that model or an accident of circumstance.

Point A took on the mission of working to cultivate ambitious and engaged egalitarian income-sharing communes in the urban centers of the American East Coast. Ambitious and engaged—to connect them to the wider work for social justice and liberation. American East Coast—because that's where the FEC has the most resources, and the FEC is a natural ally for this work. When we started working we went in every direction we could find at once: Researching examples of successful urban communes. Finding and forging contacts with collectives, cooperatives, and organizations that might make good allies. Conducting research into legal and tax options for urban communes. Conducting research into financing options for urban communes. Organizing public talks, workshops, and events. Building out a website and blog to point people to.

We started the work in one city: Washington, DC. This is the city in whose suburbs I grew up and where I had the densest network. It's where I wanted to get a commune started. And it's where I have stayed and worked, but the project didn't stay there. Soon after starting in DC we were enticed to NYC by some exciting prospects, and other Point A organizers started working there. Then we got involved with some collectives in Baltimore that we thought might be interested in converting. Then we were contacted by a new, and sadly short-lived, commune in Richmond, Virginia. Then a collective house in Binghamton, New York. Various Point A organizers have tried various tactics in each of these cities.

In DC, meanwhile, the project, as I was organizing it, maintained a laser-like focus on getting a single commune started. The general strategy was to start by recruiting potentially interested people from our existing network. These people would start the conversation that is the first phase of any cooperative project. One caution we had heard again and again was that the people to start the conversation would likely not be the people to start the commune. Keeping this in mind, we thought of each phase as a sinking island, a platform we could find temporary purchase on but that, if we wanted to continue, we would need to be planning to move on from. That first meeting had about 20 people. Of those, 12 ended up coming to our monthly meetings. After a little less than a year, a group of eight likely founders had identified themselves. Together those founders, of whom I was one, finished hammering out what we hoped was the bare minimum of policy and structure that we needed to start and put each other through our newly designed membership process. Of those potential founders, five made the jump and actually started the commune: Compersia, the first egalitarian income-sharing commune in DC (in a while, at least).

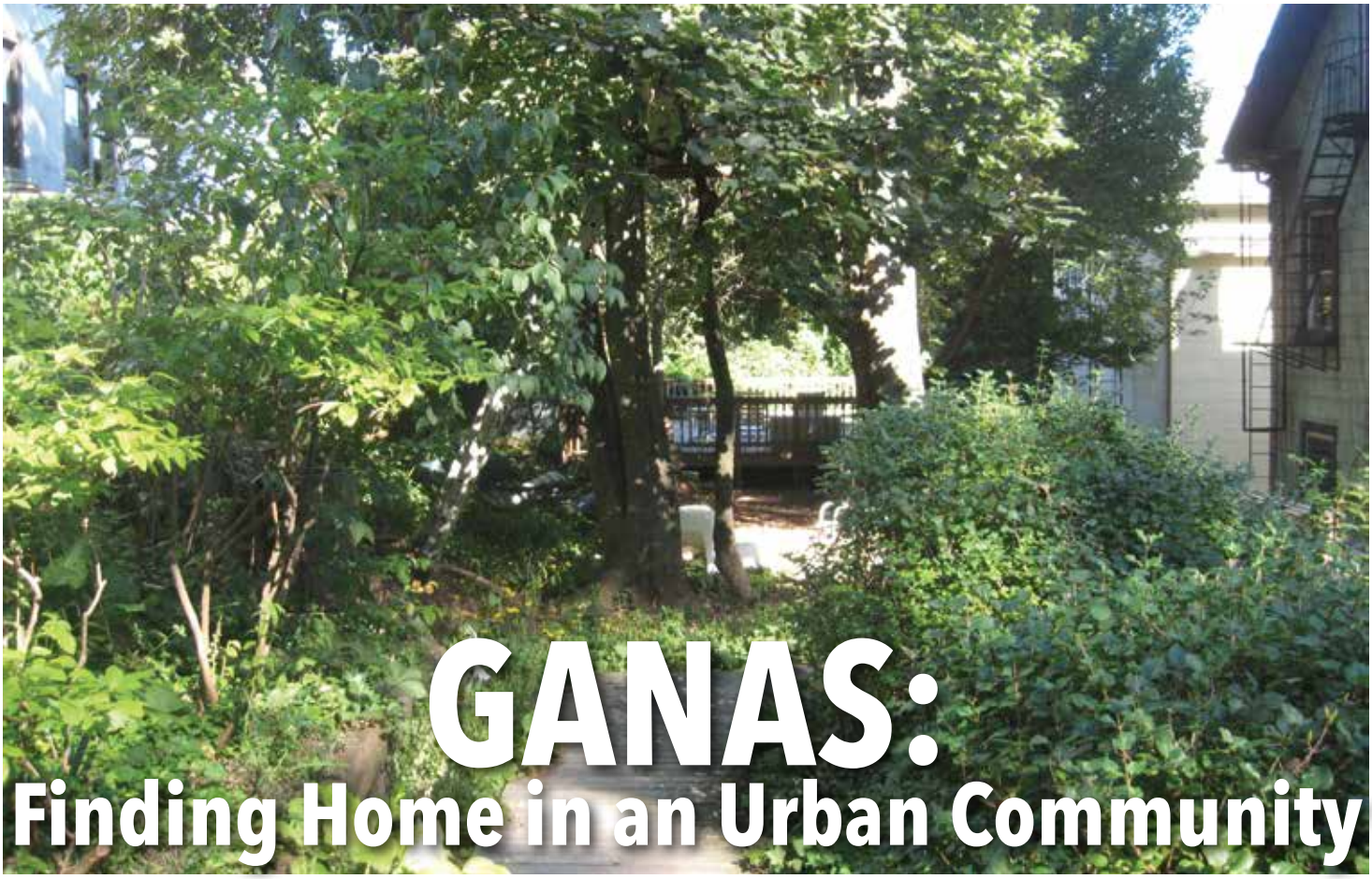
After that I stepped back from Point A work. My fellow Compersians and I had a lot of work cut out for us continuing to build out the agreements and policies we didn't have, figuring out how to live together, and figuring out how to run this urban commune we had created. Now, a year and a half in, we're still around. We're even growing! With any luck we'll need a second house before long to fit all our members.

To learn more about Compersia visit compersia.community or better yet email contact@compersia.community. To hook up with the Point A crew check out frompointa.org or send an email to info@frompointa.org.

GPaul Blundell is a member of Compersia Community in DC and an enthusiast about egalitarian community. He enjoys long easy bike rides, nerdy board games, and building the new world in the shell of the old.

Some of Compersia's founders crew at first retreat.

1. I visited a number of urban and suburban egalitarian communes in Europe and the results of my interviews, observations, and analyses eventually made it into a one-off podcast called "Income Sharing Across the Pond" available free on Soundcloud.
2. English translation: The Network of Self-Managed Collectives.
3. I personally visited Kommune Niederkaufungen in Kaufungen outside of Kassel and Villa Locomuna located in Kassel.



GANAS:
Finding Home in an Urban Community

By Aviva Derenowski

I grew up in Kibbutz Kinneret, one of the oldest kibbutzim in Israel, but my home and my heart are in Ganas, a multigenerational community in Staten Island, New York.

In my 40s, I moved from Israel to a rural community in Missouri. There I first learned of Ganas, a sister community to the one I lived in. "Ganas" means "desire to act" in Spanish. I stayed in this urban community for a few days during a visit to my cousins in New Jersey.

Eight years later, anxious to be married, I decided to move from my rural community to an urban community where I could increase my chances of finding a mate. I opened the *Communities Directory* and started to email communities who might be willing to accept me as a member.

I was determined to continue living in intentional community. I believed it was my calling. It was a privilege to live in the United States, away from the political turmoil in Israel, but I couldn't tolerate the thought of living on my own.

I emailed about 15 communities. Ganas was the first one to respond. The contact person asked me some clarifying questions. I told them all they wanted to know. A week later I received a new email, very short. It said: "When are you coming?" With those few words they stole my heart.

Once I arrived, I became involved in the process of deciding on delicate issues such as membership. As a rule of thumb, if we have an empty room, a new member can step in. But it's always "case by case." This is one of the most fundamental guidelines of my community. We have only four rules: No violence, No exploitation, Nothing illegal, and No non-negotiable negativity. The first three rules are pretty sensible; the last one may need some explanation. The people in Ganas realized that negativity, if not taken care of, can harm the community and the individual. This is why members are required to bring their concerns to the morning meeting, or to someone who can do something about it.

It doesn't always happen. Someone may vent on how messy the counter in their kitchen is, and decide to take no action. Unfortunately, when it happens, if nobody else cares about that kitchen, the issue will remain unsolved until somebody else is motivated by the same situation to come to the meeting and see what can be done about it.

Ganas is a diverse community. Some people work in the city in their profession; we say "they work outside." Others work in the community, either in one of its businesses or helping maintain our life by working in maintenance, housekeeping, or administration. There are those who have a fixed income, and others who combine these options.

In addition, we offer a place to stay for those who visit New York from a few days to a few years. Some of our friends come to stay with us regularly once or twice a year. We are always happy to see them, and exchange news from the last time they passed by.

We have a meeting five days a week for 90 minutes each morning, that each member is welcome to attend. They're called "planning," the main forum of discussion in Ganas. It's not perfect. Some people feel that others control the floor. Others don't like to come because 7:45 is too early for them. Sometimes what we discuss is so upsetting to me that it carries over for a few hours later. Last week someone who moved in wanted to keep their dog, and was devastated that no exception was going to be made for them. I was sad because I liked them, but we could accommodate only so much. They had to find a home for their dog somewhere else.

This year our expenses are going up, and as a consequence we struggle to increase our revenue. One idea, lately, was to sell new dressers in the secondhand furniture store. It was a complicated discussion. Some of us value the green business of selling used furniture, reusing valuable possessions instead of dealing with fast and cheap appliances. Others remind us that the demand for dressers is beyond our capacity at the moment. They said "If we are in business to make money, we must get cheap dressers and sell them a bit more expensive." The discussion is still open.

Feedback is one of the tools we use to solve problems. The theory behind this process is that others see angles about your problem that you don't. You may be surprised by what your friends come up with. When I am in conflict with a friend, I am initially convinced that I'm right and they're wrong. Through exposing the different aspect of the disagreement, I have a larger frame to deal with the situation. I can even see how this particular issue has happened before with other people. By focusing on solving the problem, I heal some of my past relationships. I have a dynamic with a coworker that reflects one I had with my younger brother. Through being the protagonist in many feedback sessions, I've become a more thoughtful person.

On my own, I'd never have followed paths that were suggested to me by my friends. When I came to Ganas, I was overly sensitive to the word "crazy." I regarded the person who said it in passing as if they related to a deep truth about me. Through my life here I learned to be conscious about having bipolar disorder, be religious about taking my medication, and rely on my friends to tell me if I'm unconsciously acting out.

Early this month I got an email from NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness). They asked for applicants to work with New York Police Department. This opportunity could happen only in an urban setting. The selected people would be trained to educate the police force how to deal with mentally ill people. I responded immediately. I hoped they selected me, but even if they didn't, I was glad that training took part in my city.

Some people find this lifestyle too intense. They don't want to share their bathroom with others, find dishes in the sink, and a full load of them in the dishwasher. They are disturbed when somebody is watching a show they don't like in their living room. It's not easy to share your house with others who feel as strongly about everything from the mundane to their housemates.

There are many reasons to be unhappy in community. Some of the people leave, others disconnect from public activity and concentrate on their work and their friends. They make it work for them, and they stay.

I, on the other hand, feel grateful each day that I live in community. I always find someone to share my joys and my sorrows. I can share a meal with others every day if I want to. People care about me, and I know each person I interact with. I work in Ganas in housekeeping. I usually clean or prepare the food for the cook. Sometimes I work in the clothing store and every Saturday I work in the Book Cafe for half a day. My life is full, and very rich. I love the people I work with, and when I have disagreements I can work them out directly or through my manager.

When I came, 13 years ago, I didn't date because I thought I was not good enough for the men I found attractive. I was loud, opinionated, and had a short fuse. As I talked to my friends (and listened to them), I started to date online. I followed my buddies' advice and said "yes" to anyone who said "yes" to me. I never ran out of dates. To date in New York City can be great fun, because you meet new people and and get to know the city at the same time. My goal was to meet a man I'd marry, and three years later I got married to Alex. I met him on OkCupid, a dating site, but found out immediately that he lived 10 minutes' walk from Ganas. When we met, Alex liked me but was not interested to live here. A few years later he could not resist the homey feeling. He was so well liked and appreciated. So he moved in. A year later we married.

It's amazing that my life led me to combine community living with the complexity of New York. There are so many opportunities here to develop and grow. Alex and I are into meditation. On Sundays we go to Zendo Village and meditate with others. Other times we meditate with friends in Ganas. It's all a matter of initiative. In the summer, the city teems with free art opportunities, music, and dance. I especially like The Theater of the New City that presents high quality plays. We walk to the ferry, take it to Manhattan, and join the venue.

There are quite a few artists in Ganas. Twice a year we put on a talent show, and I'm amazed by the amount of talent we have among our 75 members. We have comedians, musicians, poets, and story tellers, to name only a few. You may see one of our artists' pictures on the walls of the Book Cafe. Others participate in the open mic.

Our other businesses are a secondhand furniture store, and a secondhand and vintage clothing store. These businesses provide a great way to interact with the larger community. They contribute to a culture of conserving what we have, and making use of items others didn't want to keep.

We keep in touch with several communities, especially Twin Oaks in Virginia. They are our cousin in the country. We exchange visits and keep track of how each of us is doing.

Staten Island is the greenest borough of New York City, and it is a delight to hear the birds in the morning, see the lush greenery around us, and be close to the beach for a swim...all while living in this urban community.

Aviva has lived in Ganas community for 13 years, and previous to that in East Wind community in Missouri. She loves to meditate with her husband Alex, and to collect vignettes when she Skypes with her mother, who lives in Israel, for her coming book, As I Was Talking to My Mother. *She sells vintage clothing online as an experiment to see if it can be a new business for her community. You can check it out on Etsy at www.etsy.com/your/shops/VintageAtAviva/tools/listings?ref=seller-platform-mcnav and Postmark at poshmark.com/closet/avivanextobest. For more information about living in Ganas, email susan@ganas.org.*

Photos by Aviva Derenowski

DC COMMUNITY EVOLUTION AND CHANGE: Perspectives from Lutheran Volunteer Corps

By Sarah Beck

I've lived in a bunch of cities, but none has changed as dramatically as Washington, DC, specifically the Columbia Heights neighborhood where I lived in a faith-based community after college in 1999-2000.

At the time, Georgetown, DuPont Circle, and the upper Northwest were upscale neighborhoods, but most of the city, including Columbia Heights, was mixed aesthetically, economically, and racially. With over 50 percent of the population African American, the capital was known as "Chocolate City" then.

Our block was lined with oak trees and row houses in a variety of dispositions. Ours was simple and well-kept, but the lot beside it was empty. An elegant structure housed a fraternity across the street, but there were others boarded up with rats scurrying to the thrown-out pastries and chicken bones on the sidewalk.

In spite of the rough patches, or partially because of them, I felt enlivened by the urban environment; it was my first time living in a major city. I was raised in tract houses in suburban southern California, and not only was everything older in DC, but more intricate. As a pedestrian, I felt the world closer to me, attuned to the precision of architecture and speech. I noted the way professional men wore button-down shirts and tucked them in, the way locals tossed "southernisms" into conversation, and the first spring ivy to scale houses and churches.

Through Lutheran Volunteer Corps (LVC), our parent organization, six of us lived together in the row house. Our task was to "live simply, so others might simply live." Logistically, we were each placed at a nonprofit, and provided with health insurance and a yearly stipend slightly above the poverty line. The nonprofits benefited from dedicated employees for cheap, and the volunteers profited from the training and communal experience. My placement was teaching GED classes a few blocks away.

In numbers, at least, we were similar to the people we served, sometimes worse off, but we were also college-educated and white in a predominantly working class, Black, and Latino area, and committed to this simplified lifestyle for one year only.

As a whole, the district had obvious needs, especially in Columbia Heights, but it was still expensive. According to the US Census, the median gross rent in DC was $60 more than the national rate in 2000. As such, with limited resources, all of us low-income folks were forced to innovate to live beyond survival.

My housemates and I, for example, participated in a community garden so big it spanned a city block. During my first visit there, I was moved by the pale yellow/deep purple of an okra blossom in a neighboring plot. There was no water at the site, so we carried our own in buckets the five blocks there. We grew zinnias, nasturtiums, and sunflowers nurtured in a compost we "made" at home. At the end of the summer, we picked all the flowers for my housemate Josh's wedding.

It was probably my most creative year yet, now that I look back—making presents from happy hour flyers, copper wire finagled from the neighboring L'Arche community, and objects salvaged from the recycling bin.

More impressive was the innovation from my housemate Jerod, avid sports fan that he was, in a house without cable television. When he saw the house across the street had the Orioles game on, and he spied some binoculars someone left behind, he put the two together and watched the game from the living room couch. "One thing I try to keep in mind," he said from his home in

Minnesota, "is try to be content with what you have. It's fair to say LVC helped shape that."

I observed other city residents tap into their creative resources as well. "Compliment Man," for example, was in nearby Adams Morgan. Compliment Man made tips by giving accolades to the brunch goers on 18th Street: "Hey, I like those shoes."

It felt good to be in it together, as loose as the ties were between my neighbors, students, housemates, and myself. Now I'm reminded of my son's daycare provider when she put away all the toys for good, and the children interacted more. In a similar vein, with less house to hide in (I shared a room with my housemate Gretchen), fewer toys to distract ourselves (none of us owned cell phones), and our meager earnings forcing us to cook instead of eat out, we did interact and form a community. We grocery shopped and cooked dinner in pairs. We explored DC cheaply or for free: crashing a party with Ralph Nader, drinking $2 beers at nearby Common Share, visiting the free Smithsonians, and discovering the capital by foot.

With less house to hide in, fewer toys to distract ourselves, and our meager earnings forcing us to cook instead of eat out, we interacted more.

To be clear, tensions arose in the house, as disparate as our perspectives were, especially spiritually and meat-wise—and in the neighborhood and in the school where I taught. Guilt washed over me when I taught Langston Hughes to my adult students, who were mostly African American, as though I had anything meaningful to say about being a Black man in the US. In teaching I learned to avoid feigning expertise and try to open conversations instead. As a whole, I loved my students, so struck by the contrast between their hard lives and the kindness they showed me and others.

Now in a much wealthier and gentrified Washington, I'm wondering what work is to be done for LVC volunteers. The grittiness of our old stomping grounds is gone, and I don't think it's just nostalgia. It *is* different, feels different with the new condominiums, luxury restaurants, and chain storefronts. Now that a shopping complex has replaced the community garden, now that Common Share closed, now that the district is no longer dubbed Chocolate City, now that Donald Trump is president. Most of these changes came in the early 2000s, and many point to

Photos by DC artist Jenna North

the Columbia Heights metro stop opening in 1999 (the year we were there) as the precursor for the neighborhood change. But still, the differences feel dramatic, as they did for Josh, now a pastor and religion professor in Queens, when he visited Columbia Heights a few years ago. "I couldn't recognize parts of it," he said. "It just looked a lot more gentrified. It didn't have a dangerous edge."

Although it may be better masked, the fight for social justice in DC is far from over, especially in Columbia Heights. In his insightful study on the neighborhood, Justin T. Maher writes, "From 1999-2011, the average home price and household income in [Columbia Heights] rose at twice the rate of the city as a whole." And as of 2012, the district ranked third in US cities for income inequality, according to DC Fiscal Policy Institute.

As a consequence, the fight against gentrification—specifically the displacement of people—is at the heart of LVC's current work. LVC President Sam Collins said the volunteer model has evolved to address the changed urban landscape as well. The goal now is for volunteer work to come directly from the local community's needs. "We would like to play more that role," Collins said. "And not pretend that we're going into those communities and solving their problems." Even during my LVC year, I remember conversations about dismantling the colonial mindset in pursuing social justice. But now the affluent environment seems to demand it, and volunteers have no choice but to grapple with the messiness and discomfort of privilege, specifically white privilege in a privileged city—something I had the luxury to touch and let go of as I saw fit. "My presence as a college-educated white woman from the West Coast (that grew up in a middle-class family)," writes current LVC volunteer Keziah Grindeland in an email to me, "puts me in a position that requires that I am constantly checking my privilege."

So LVC's approach also seems to be one of transparency. "Even though we're trying to help, we're part of the problem/solution," Collins said, referring to the new LVC house in a gentrifying Anacostia. "We do the best we can and talk about it and make intentional choices."

Among other things, Josh says his time in LVC was the first time "I experienced anger for being white." Now as a pastor in Queens, he says his time in DC set the foundation for his ministry. "The longer I'm a pastor in an urban setting, the more I do more non-pastoral things. I'm just comfortable with a lot of urban complexities."

In my interview with Collins, he asked me about what I learned from my LVC year—I was grateful for the question. I learned the relationship between creativity and scarcity (and time); I gained an appreciation for community—something I struggled to regain in the years afterward; I learned not to be intimidated by money; I learned to further embrace difference, and eventually acknowledge my own privilege within it; I learned that only God can take us to a higher moral ground; I began my love for cities.

I learned to further embrace difference, and eventually acknowledge my own privilege within it.

Even in a wealthier Washington, the hopes and take-aways from the LVC volunteers are not so different. "My time as an LVCer has changed how I relate to the world, how I relate to money, organizing, social justice," writes Grindeland. "LVC has given me a framework within which to examine why I am here, and what that means for the city and people around me."

Sarah Beck freelances, advises community college students, and raises her four-year-old son in Brooklyn, New York.


Cinema Hearts.

Paul J Mangano


The Split Seconds.

1605 COMMUNE, Washington DC

By Bryan Allen Moore

My introduction to people living together purposefully, as opposed to circumstantially, did not occur until I moved to Washington, DC four years ago. My home, our community, is located one mile north of the White House. This gives us a unique view of national issues and places us squarely in politics, intentionally through work and activism or through a forced viewing by proximity.

Sometimes we have activities, hobbies, and careers or jobs that keep us separate from each other more than together. Even the term roommate implies that we are separate in some ways, because we do not typically speak of each other as a unified community. We always share a modest amount of financial burden that living in a house in the city requires, but the frequency of house meetings fluctuates. Perhaps the efficiency we have achieved over the years has allowed for the financial freedom to travel more often for some of our members, or the trust formed through our situation has made it easier on all of us to live without the necessity of regularly scheduled renewals of commitment to each other.

After reading about our house, I hope readers take away the notion that an intentional community does not always go through rigorous planning. There have been, and will be, unique opportunities and problems that arise from forming consensus as we go, as opposed to making an agreement before taking the first step.

Our particular community is formally referred to as The 1605 Commune, but I have only become interested in a thorough history in recent months. Shorthand monikers have been used over the years to identify our house, home, music venue, and community center. This identity brought us to the attention of the Right Wing Safety Squad in December of 2016. This group found us through its targeting of DIY music spaces and politically active communities, and we made the 4chan list of places marked for disruption in the wake of Oakland's Ghost Ship fire and our own local Pizza-gate conspiracy. This incident is too complex to expand on for the purposes of our story, but is a starting point for my own exploration of our collective identity.

For an extended weekend, I searched the internet for all traces of events that had occurred in our home with the hope of being able to manage, if not remove entirely, our digital presence. Other homes, venues, and artistic spaces were more successful at either re-branding or moving into obscurity, but the diverse nature of what we had been involved in over the years was too extensive. Thinking back on my futile efforts, I desperately wanted to protect everyone, perhaps at the expense of our legacy. As a private residence we were largely unaffected by physical manifestations of this movement, but it put me in touch with our past.

We did not start as an intentional community, but have slowly though not always permanently integrated intentional community concepts into how we approach living with each other. We have no charter, no mission statement, and not even a written agreement with the owner of our home. We dabble in consensus-based decision making. I have seen former roommates intimidated or uncomfortable with the kind of structure required by the more earnest collectives in our area. Although we do not share incomes, we maintain a robust "house fund" which I see as a gateway for more radical ideas. I have personally been able to escape a monotonous career and 40-hour work week through this shared living environment, but some of us are dependent on full-time employment and it is difficult to incorporate another set of guidelines into our lives, as would be required if we were to collectivize more.

I could not point to any specific criteria we look for in new tenants, but the aesthetic of our house is old, has funky remnants of former residents, and probably attracts a specific type of individual. My version of the guided tour starts in the basement, to remove all doubt as to the nature of our building. If you can make it past that, we conduct group interviews of prospective tenants. An adventurous spirit, focused on saving money, could be drawn into an appreciation not of the aesthetic but of the challenge living in a house built at the turn of the 20th century. Even if such a person had no awareness of intentional communities, their having to interview with upwards of 20 other people gives us an idea how they would react to living in such a crowded environment.

In my experience, the upside of this process is that we usually end up choosing a strong personality with great individual willpower and enthusiasm for life. The downside is that we potentially miss out on the more subtle gifts of quiet intellects, and those may be better suited to daily maintenance and balance.

Despite our best efforts laying out some general philosophy of living together, it is easy for potential residents to be enthusiastic about the benefits of our situation without understanding the work involved. The benefits are easily quantified. However, the reality of living with new people as they become tenants can be somewhat discouraging. Without a concrete set of guidelines, rules, procedures, or specific intentional mission, it is difficult to find potential roommates who can fully commit to and appreciate the differences between intentionally living with others and simply sharing the same space.

The implication of moving in with us should be a vision that is ambitious and idealistic, but the reality is that it is impossible to expect the kind of loyalty and commitment to intentional living ideals without trust earned over time. On a few occasions, we have been deceived by individuals who expressed interest in intentional living to get in the door, literally, and then became impossible burdens on the community. Momentum has been lost through these deceptions, but nonetheless they presented opportunities for hard lessons for those truly invested in living together.

Beyond the lives of current occupants, I wonder how much "community" is derived from a credible thread of former members keeping in touch with each other. Change has occurred in waves, mostly, and our home was generally unwelcoming in the beginning. The arrival of new roommates sometimes coincides with the departure of less compatible roommates and this is when we usually see drastic changes in house policy. Some policies get handed down and altered a little bit. Some roommates have such strong, individual visions of communal living that they simply cannot accommodate others, also causing significant shifts in policy.

The first efforts on the part of tenants to transform six bedrooms into a community occurred in August of 2009, when a few individuals got together and decided to work together on chores. There was not, in the beginning, 100 percent participation. An interesting solution to this problem was the concept of the "seventh" roommate. There were only six living in the house at the time, so the idea was that this extra "person" was incapable of contributing to the house in any way except to add to the clutter, the refuse, and wear on the house. In addition to chores, a couch-surfing profile was created online to allow the home to be open to sharing community with this imagined, temporary extra roommate. The idea behind these combined efforts was that we have a lot, so it is good to share. Dance parties and art projects followed shortly after, and it is at this point in our history that I begin to recognize our community that still keeps in touch eight years later.

How much former members identify with this intention is dependent on their interaction with house contemporaries. Some members of our community in the past, who otherwise held strong beliefs about shared communities, had disagreements with other members strong enough for them to withdraw or move out of the house entirely. We have no concrete expulsion policy, but we have discussed the subject twice in the four years I have been a resident.

Our members rotate frequently, numbering as few as five, but as many as 12 have been accommodated by the multi-purpose nature of our common spaces. The turnover rate of members ranges from one month to seven years, but given the age of our house the lifetime of our community is finite. Our age range spans between 19 and 38, and I suspect that is related to both the gentrifying neighborhood and the short-term opportunities our capital city

Maulrat.

Paul J Mangano

Erin White and Marshall James Kavanaugh.

Marian McLaughlin

Local punk band (BBC) playing in the basement.

The house.

Stephane Ott-Hauville

The Smirks.

Herschel Hoover

provides. Not everyone has contributed to the presence that our community takes, which is somewhat different from other intentional communities. While I would not judge our roommate configuration as ever having the properties of a set of cliques, it is difficult sometimes to get everyone together as a unified body.

We have two conduits for opening minds to ideas about collective living. The first is providing space for the Washington, DC chapter of Food Not Bombs. For more than two years, we have used our kitchen and living areas to host one of the many global, autonomous collectives focusing on food recovery and feeding the hungry. Each chapter has its own identity; for example, most choose to focus on vegan advocacy, animal rights, or local progressive causes. While the DC chapter prepares 100 percent vegan meals, we receive such generous, diverse donations every week that we are able to use this food to supplement many individual household groceries and supplies. When our core group meets, because we are located in the nation's capital, there is a sharing of information about a multitude of groups and initiatives that promote causes or correct injustices too numerous to recognize here.

The second access point is equally diverse and often happens the evening after our FNB chapter meets. Hosting music and performance art events is an important component to our community, transformed over eight years from those original dance parties into events that are formally promoted. We use the spaces we have, whether it is intimacy from hanging out in our living room with poetry and acoustic music or celebrating the DC punk rock tradition of a basement show. It is no coincidence that many in our community are musicians, and it is known in smaller circles that there is often a vegan meal waiting for bands that load in early.

While our FNB chapter may technically have 30 regulars, there is a broader group to which the donations it receives are shared. This eases the financial burden of everyone who participates, allowing those of us who engage completely some benefits of financial independence. I have seen the awe that food recovery creates in the minds of individuals who realize that they do not need to depend only on themselves and their occupation for their existence. The expansion of our mission is exponential because it also includes bands from an equally diverse list of international locations. Between the local, immediate sharing of food and the word-of-mouth experience of traveling musicians, it is difficult to estimate the impact our home has on the causes that are important to us.

I have seen the awe that food recovery creates in individuals who realize that they do not need to depend only on themselves and their occupation for their existence.

Finally, I will end as I began; by trying to figure out how to protect the community. I wonder if my interest in our history as a group, combined with the friendships I have made, is enough to sustain participation in something bigger than ourselves after I am gone. The owner of my home is in the twilight years and almost as venerable as the structure itself. I plan to go down with the ship, so to speak, but should things change in my life I still want people to be able to access our couch-surfing profile or talk about the 1605 mythology with enthusiasm.

Some barriers to this are becoming more familiar to me as I participate, and they all relate to the concept of privacy. Several members have withdrawn, physically or emotionally, when living in close proximity causes friction. I have experienced these symptoms myself during the two aforementioned periods where an expulsion policy was discussed. There can also be an irreverence towards established norms and prior decisions, or an unwillingness to honor agreements made in the past. I have fought several policies that I felt were outdated or did not recognize the limitations of individual schedules and life circumstances. Roommate fatigue can set in, when becoming too familiar through a sense of "knowing" how someone would think or feel is either repetitious, or causes someone to proceed without consent because a roommate's thoughts or feelings are anticipated. If the language I am using seems familiar in some way, it is because I have gained an understanding of the intentional living condition not just through experience, but through contact with other communities.

Meetings, dinners, message boards, email chats with people I have never met, and putting these words in order have given me temperance towards sharing my privacy with others. When someone comes into my home, shares a meal, hears some music, listens to a discussion, and then hears that we are all doing this on purpose, I understand that then they are invested and our efforts are protected.

Bryan Allen Moore is a Washington, DC-based artist. In addition to volunteering, Bryan facilitates and consults for several arts/cultural organizations in the National Capital Region. He is a recent convert to freeganism, dedicated to spreading the word about food recovery.

HONORING THE CONVERSATION: Turning a Neighborhood into a Community in Intown Atlanta

By Stephen Wing

"To change the world, you have to change the conversation."
—Tom Blue Wolf, Ani-Coosa (Muscogee Creek) Faith Keeper

1

One April evening, a small group of neighbors gathered on a big sunny back porch to begin a conversation. Some of us were meeting for the first time. Others had worked together for years on the board of the Lake Claire Community Land Trust. The topic was the level of sound at the Land Trust's bi-monthly drum circles and occasional music festivals. This had become a point of contention when a young couple moved in directly behind the Land Trust and found us an unexpectedly noisy neighbor.

We began the conversation as we begin our monthly board meetings, with the recitation of a blessing, followed by the lighting of a candle and the chime of a bell: *"We come together in peace to share our visions, honor our differences, and create community. Let us embrace the notion that the words we speak and the actions we take begin with good intention. This may help us listen with generous hearts and open minds."*

The issue was not resolved that night, but steps toward compromise were made. And something else occurred, something at once magical and mundane. The evening began with neighbors becoming acquaintances, and by the time it ended we knew a little about the minds and hearts behind the faces and the names. By putting conflict to the test of peaceful conversation, we were acting on our commitment to turn a neighborhood into a community.

The conversation continued on a Sunday afternoon in May when a larger gathering convened in the Lake Claire Cohousing Common House, across the cul-de-sac from the Land Trust's main entrance. This time each household on the three surrounding streets received an invitation, and we hired a professional mediator to facilitate. About 25 people came. This was a broader conversation that was long overdue. We heard from neighbors who had been silently putting up with us, formed new relationships, and opened avenues of communication for the future.

People all over Atlanta know instantly what you mean when you mention "the Land Trust," even if they never heard of a neighborhood called Lake Claire. Technically we are not even a land trust. Our 1.7-acre greens-

View of the stage and amphitheater from the highest point on the Land Trust.

pace contains no housing, just trees and paths, 60-plus garden plots, a playground, a solar-powered well, a Japanese meditation garden, a tiny farmlet, a pond inhabited by a large tribe of frogs and turtles, and one beloved emu. Amid the greenery are two gazebos, a sauna, a restroom, a deck with a view of Atlanta's downtown skyline, a small wood-heated structure for winter gatherings, and a stage and amphitheater. The land is owned by a 501(c)3 nonprofit made up of neighbors, and is protected from development by a Conservation Easement. It is the result of 30 years of volunteer efforts, a handful of grants, and a multitude of modest donations from neighbors and a wide circle of supporters.

People who move in next door to a high school know they're getting football crowds, stadium lights, school buses, and chattering teens. People who move in next to a city park know they're getting picnic and playground sounds, soccer or tennis matches, and (in our neighborhood, at least) an annual over-the-top music festival. People who move in next to the Land Trust don't necessarily know what they're getting.

What they're getting, above all, is an opportunity for endless conversation. We aren't City Hall or the school board, just a neighborhood greenspace trying our best to be a good neighbor. For better or worse, becoming a neighbor of the Land Trust sometimes requires joining the conversation and getting drawn into the vortex of community. That's what happened to me when after living down the street for over 10 years—and after surviving a bout with cancer—I decided to trade in my long-distance commitments for a nonprofit endeavor right in my neighborhood.

This ongoing conversation, I slowly realized, is an end in itself: a sort of group spiritual practice that is the true heart of community. It has been going on since well before my time, when a small group of neighbors first began to discuss what might happen to three empty lots the transit authority was using to build a new rail line along Dekalb Ave. It's a conversation that will never reach a final resolution and fall silent, since issues will always arise among neighbors, and in the end community is the only alternative to eternal warfare.

2

The young couple who sparked this particular dialogue represent the changing demographics of Lake Claire, which is rapidly gentrifying. Homes that change hands here these days are frequently knocked down to build something bigger. To the new arrivals, the Land Trust is easy to take for granted, a neighborhood park that happens to be privately owned. But unlike a park, as our new neighbors discovered, this tract of greenspace comes with a community, and like every community, over the years it has evolved its own quirky culture.

The house the young couple bought had just been renovated, but they immediately gutted it to make it their own. They also cut down a huge oak that had probably helped to shield the previous owners from Land Trust noises. To their credit, when their baby arrived and had trouble sleeping through the drum circles, rather than suffering in silence or complaining to the police, they spoke up and joined the conversation.

We tried various sound baffling techniques, limiting our decibel level during festivals, eliminating hoots and cheers and even cowbells from the drum circles. The dialogue continued by phone, text, and email. But in the end, nothing we could offer made them feel at home in their new neighborhood. And for us, the conversation made it clear that the sound of drumming and occasional amplified music was not just ornamental but something vital to our community culture.

When the conversation reached a stalemate and began to repeat itself, the young couple did try calling the police. But Atlanta's sound ordinance is not easy to interpret, and decibel levels are tricky to measure. The police recommended that we do what we were already doing: talk. Our neighbors finally had to recognize that they had bought their house and moved in after checking out the neighborhood, but without investigating the nature of the community that lives here. Rather than try to impose their values on us, they recognized their mistake and graciously bowed out. They sold their house and moved away, a new family moved in who genuinely love the Land Trust and all its noises, and everyone concerned breathed a sigh of relief.

Beth Willson

Kids onstage at the Land Trust's 2010 Earth Day festival.

On one level this was a failure on both sides, time and effort gone to waste. It was sad to lose our new neighbors after they had invested so much. But in my opinion they did the right thing. The purpose of a genuine conversation is not necessarily to agree, but simply to understand each other. Of course it involves expressing one's own viewpoint, but also a commitment to actively *listen*, accepting the views of everyone present as equally valid. No contribution to the journey of mutual understanding ever really goes to waste. Uncomfortable situations lead the conversation into new places that enrich us all. Regardless of failures and successes, the conversation goes on.

3

One thing everyone agreed about that afternoon in the Common House was that having a Land Trust on our block is a positive thing. Those three lots overlooking a busy street could have become something we all detest. But since its founding in the mid-1980s the Land Trust has become many things to many people. It is a crossroads for not just one but many communities—neighbors who walk their dogs or rent a garden plot, families visiting the playground, the Children's Garden, or Big Lou the Emu, drummers and dancers attending the drum circle, musicians who come for the Friday Night Jam, Boy Scouts and Brownies, the folks who sweat in our sauna at night or join an early-morning outdoor yoga class. We host weddings and memorial services, birthday parties for children (but not adults), fundraisers for other nonprofits and for ourselves.

Every first-time visitor seems to have the same reaction: open-mouthed wonder at the lush greenery and peaceful ambience, followed by amazement that this exists 10 minutes from downtown Atlanta. Then, of course, they tell all their friends. Every other week we get a request for some new activity—filming, classes, concerts. The overwhelming majority of these we must decline, because our guiding principle is the comfort level of the neighborhood. We have a policy of "one quiet weekend a month," which allows us our two drum circles plus one other public event every month. We have no off-street parking, so the constant stream of visitors can sometimes inconvenience residents coming home from work. Luckily, a nearby men's shelter in a former church allows us to use its parking lot for public events, such as our musical fundraisers.

The festivals—our "Peace & Love Fest" in the spring and "Jerry Jam" Grateful Dead tribute in late summer—have been the Land Trust's main source of revenue for many years. Their success depends on a loyal crew of volunteers who don't necessarily live nearby, but belong to the wider community of Land Trust supporters. But the festivals also depend on a different kind of support from our closest neighbors. These are the folks who must tolerate the music and traffic and late-night voices on the street. Even if they don't attend the festivals or even visit the Land Trust, without their patience we could not raise the funds we need. Like the residents in close proximity to parks and schools, they seem

The author and Robert Pue, who coordinates use of the sauna, posing with newly installed map of the Land Trust.

Dawn Aura.

NOTICE TO YOUNG PEOPLE

We created the Land Trust for you.

We didn't realize it at the time; we were young then ourselves. Now we're 30 years older. The land we gave our time, love, and energy to make so special will always be here, preserved from development by a Conservation Easement. But we will not. We are counting on you to carry on the work of caring for it when we are gone.

That's why this place is not just a Land Trust, but a **Community** Land Trust. Community goes back to ancient times when people lived tribally and depended on one another to survive. It's the bond that holds indigenous societies together to this day. It is the "we" that balances the "me first" of modern-day individualism.

Most problems in today's world are caused by too much "me first" and not enough community. The Land Trust is one small place where community has been planted and is trying to grow.

But lately we've been experiencing a problem with young people who come here with a "me first" attitude. They disrespect the land and the community by doing illegal things that harm our reputation among our neighbors, and by coming at night, when we are closed.

As a result, we've had to invite the police into our sanctuary of peace and love. If young people continue to act like children instead of adults, the next step is to erect a fence. Please don't let that happen. Spread the word—the word is "respect."

If you enjoy coming here, join the community that keeps it going. Join us for community gatherings like drum circles and music fests. And join us for Community Work Days, giving back to the land that gives us so much. Since we're a nonprofit, community service hours are available for volunteers. And you even get pizza!

Money can't buy community. But working together on something worthwhile makes it come to life. Try it out on our next Community Work Day, the third Saturday of every month, starting at 4:00 pm.

Big Lou the Emu.

Doug Barlow

Youngster communing with Big Lou the Emu.

Superman enjoying our swing on his day off.

to understand that a community effort like the Land Trust is worth a certain amount of inconvenience. And in return, we are careful to balance their needs with those of the wider community.

Our drum circles, too, are primarily attended by visitors from beyond Lake Claire. The drumming is audible to a smaller radius of neighbors, but occurs more frequently, so these events too have their impact on the neighborhood. A few years ago, when attendance declined, the drum circles stopped bringing in enough donations to cover the cost of staffing them. After some soul-searching, the Land Trust board decided to continue them anyway as a service to the wider community. The sound of drumming twice a month and the extra traffic and parking were already part of the balance we had been maintaining.

4

That conversation was part of our ongoing exploration of the relationship between "community" and "neighborhood." How can a neighborhood remain a community when it is continually changing? The Land Trust's founders, the original "trustees," are aging, retiring, stepping back one by one. Long-time neighbors who were deeply involved have moved away. New people moving into the neighborhood have different needs and expectations. Children who grew up here go off to college and leave the neighborhood behind. Sometimes we wonder who will carry on the intensive maintenance that keeps our land from being swallowed by the luxuriant vegetation of our semi-tropical climate.

The families who established the Land Trust 30 years ago had moved into a block of "fixer-uppers" to raise their kids on a tight budget. They had pooled their savings to bid on the three lots. The developer they were bidding against backed out when the neighbors outbid him on one of the lots, leaving them the owners of a large tract of kudzu and holders of a large mortgage. They bonded around the hard work of clearing kudzu and trash, laying out gardens, building humble structures with fancy woodwork, raising funds to pay the mortgage with an annual "cul-de-sac sale" and street dance. They shared a monthly potluck, hunted Easter eggs in the spring, and carved jack-o-lanterns in the fall.

The intensity of their shared focus transformed a group of neighbors into a tight community. But gradually a split developed. One contingent saw the Land Trust as a neighborhood project just for neighbors. Others began to see its potential as a gift to the world. The drum circles, founded in the early 1990s, began attracting people from all over metro Atlanta. The stage, originally conceived as a venue for amateur drama, was discovered by music-lovers, who plugged in to help raise funds. Teens invaded in search of a peaceful place to get high, and spread the word to their friends.

The rift among the trustees widened until the conversation grew loud and caustic. They recruited a neutral neighbor to facilitate and keep the meetings peaceful. But finally the tension split the group, and the founders who did not appreciate all of Atlanta converging in their back yards departed. It was not an amicable parting. By the time I got involved, I marveled at how magically harmonious our meetings were. Each began with our customary blessing: *"We come together in peace to share our visions, honor our differences, and create community . . ."* I found the words a powerful and moving reminder of why I was there. It took me a while to realize why they had become necessary.

The founders who still live here continue to share meals and vacation trips, help with illnesses, deaths, and births, and so on, all stemming from early relationships built on a simple goal. But most of them rarely walk down the street to visit the Land Trust. One of them is overtly hostile; for him the conversation is over. Not that he has given up complaining about the "tourists" who have invaded his neighborhood. But when I try to answer, speaking up for the positive influence of our green oasis in these people's lives, his voice invariably rises and drowns out my response. His bitterness allows no room for anyone's point of view but his own.

But it's clear to me now that creating a Land Trust just for neighbors never was a realistic goal. A "neighbor" is anyone who can afford a house in the neighborhood. As Lake Claire gentrifies, the price of living here goes up. New neighbors bring new values. Kids don't stick around to carry on a legacy just because it was created for them. We still host Easter egg hunts and pumpkin-carving every spring and fall, attracting families who share our values wherever they may live. Change is inevitable. The land remains.

5

Today the Land Trust community is defined not by geography, but by participation. Who keeps up with the weeding, the mowing, wood-chipping the paths, paying the bills? Who shows up for meetings and work days? Why don't our newer neighbors see the value of our green gem and step up to participate? As the neighborhood changes, the only way to keep community alive is to keep communication open. The only thing that continues indefinitely into the future, besides the land itself, is the conversation.

Land Trust board and committee meetings are dedicated to continuing the conversation that got us here. They are open to anyone, and often the eight current board members are outnumbered by equally dedicated friends and neighbors. New board members are drawn from this contingent who have proven their interest by showing up. Only board members can vote, but it is rare that an issue divides us so deeply that a vote becomes necessary. We talk, we listen, sometimes we pass the talking stick, and gradually the answers become clear.

The current board includes one original trustee, and several others occasionally join us. I am one of several newer members who got involved after the founders broke up. Our meetings are a bridge

between the old Lake Claire and the new. Once a year we hold our "annual meeting," as all nonprofit corporations are legally required to do, and invite all of our diverse constituencies to come together. This year we were thrilled to see two of our newest neighbors, both parents of small children, show up and listen as the board discussed nighttime security and other mundane matters.

Between meetings, the conversation continues via email. The board's Yahoo group includes several dozen people who actively or occasionally speak up. Many a minor issue has been discussed and resolved without taking up meeting time. Other items that end up on a meeting agenda have been thoroughly aired and examined by the time we meet. But we have occasionally gotten ourselves into trouble by taking an issue too far in our virtual conversation that would be more productively discussed face-to-face.

One recent incident highlights the importance of face-to-face conversation. In recent years we have been plagued by hordes of teenagers who are irresistibly attracted to our little oasis—to the point where we've had to hire an off-duty officer to discourage them from congregating after dark, when we are officially closed. One evening as twilight was falling, one of my neighbors encountered a young African American woman near the pond. Perhaps a little too sharply, my neighbor informed the young lady that the Land Trust would be closing at dark, and she abruptly turned and left.

A few days later, we received an email from the visitor complaining that to her, the incident felt racially motivated. My neighbor sent back a humble, heartfelt apology. But the young woman never responded, and we all felt a bit remorseful at this lost opportunity. The Land Trust is one place in our race-charged city where black and white folks regularly cross paths with smiles and hellos. But this doesn't magically create racial harmony; that takes vigilance, focus and attention, unblinking awareness of past traumas, and proactive "eyes on the prize" of a just society. In other words, it takes a conversation. Email clearly falls short.

What my neighbor momentarily forgot under the accumulated frustration of a steady stream of young trespassers was that in our divided society, the issue of race is never far from the surface. People of color are individually as diverse as any demographic group; the one thing they all have in common is good reason to be wary of whites. It doesn't matter that my neighbor intended no offense. It doesn't matter that she has a bi-racial grandchild and a "Black Lives Matter" sign in her front yard. It doesn't matter that she spoke in the same tone of voice she uses with everyone, especially young people crossing the Land Trust close to dark. Every encounter between people of different skin colors, no matter how trivial, will either advance the cause of racial understanding or set it back.

The young couple with the newborn, the angry former trustee, and the offended African American visitor could all be regarded as embarrassing failures of the civilized art of conversation. Instead, I see them as examples that prove my point. Through the ordeal of conversation, the young couple found their way to another community that shares their values. The possibility of conversation is always open to the ex-trustee, should he ever decide he is willing to listen respectfully after speaking his mind. And our African American visitors have much to teach us if they choose to take on the challenge of conversation. The land itself is neutral ground, a quiet oasis amid the rumbling of the trains where life slows down to nature's pace, a lush green garden that can nourish sharing and learning and the slow growth of relationships.

Community, as Gary Snyder once pointed out, is the opposite of a network. Where a network connects like-minded folks who are geographically dispersed, community brings together the people of a particular place, who are inevitably diverse. And while many communities are "intentional," most of the world's communities are not. They're made up of individuals who happen to share a neighborhood and must work out their differences without resorting to violence. In our case, the particular place is a greenspace we must learn to share; the community is a convergence of many communities, a microcosm of the diverse communities that must somehow learn to share our communal planet Earth.

"Let us embrace the notion that the words we speak and the actions we take begin with good intention. This may help us listen with generous hearts and open minds." Conversation, the bedrock of true community, is the exchange of viewpoints no matter how divergent, the act of disagreeing without being disagreeable. Even if no point of agreement is ever reached, as long as we succeed in keeping the peace—preserving respect between equals—warfare is averted and civilization remains a civil enterprise. All grownups understand this principle and live by it as best they can.

I only wish the world was run by grownups.

Stephen Wing is a poet, activist, and secretary of the Lake Claire Community Land Trust in Atlanta, Georgia. He's the author of an eco-comic novel, Free Ralph!*, two books of poetry, and 16 self-published chapbooks, including the "Earth Poetry" series. His original bumper stickers travel the world under the name "Gaia-Love Graffiti." He has written for* Communities *in the past about the Rainbow Family gatherings, which he still attends. His poem about the Land Trust, "In Land We Trust," was published in issue #170, Spring 2016. Read more of his work at StephenWing.com.*

Chris Riser

Migrating egret dropping in to enjoy our pond.

Beth Willson

Kids at play during the Land Trust's 2010 Earth Day festival.

ENRIGHT RIDGE URBAN ECOVILLAGE:
A 13-Year-Old Retrofit Ecovillage in Cincinnati, Ohio

By Jim Schenk

Last year we bought a bar. It had been a family bar for over a hundred years, until about eight years ago. The bar had become a haven for drugs, shootings, and police runs. The Enright Ridge Urban Ecovillage had the chance to purchase the building and liquor license, and so we now own the greenest pub in Cincinnati. It went from Paradise Lounge to its new name, Common Roots. We select local and organic drinks as much as possible. We are now open three nights a week from 7 to 12. Open mic night is on Thursdays, and other events happen on many other nights. This was a major purchase, made in our 12th year.

I'm getting ahead of myself. Back to 2004 when we began the ecovillage...

Imago is an ecological education organization founded in 1978. We reached a point at which we felt that we needed to live our values. After a number of attempts, we decided on developing an ecovillage on Enright Avenue, where Imago has its center and where we had a number of residents who supported our work. We also saw this as an opportunity to create an example of how we can live ecological lives in the city.

Our belief is that humans need to stay in the cities. Moving out of the cities would destroy the ability for other species to have places to live and would reduce the farmland that we require for food. We also have numerous houses and established infrastructure already existing in the cities. For ecological reasons, we need to keep these structures and use them rather than tear them down and start over with virgin lumber and other materials. We need to convert our present cities.

As an ecovillage in an existing neighborhood, with existing housing, we had the potential to form the ecovillage fairly quickly. The night we met in June of 2004, the ecovillage began. We didn't have to wait and find a site or plan for the site development or find financing and then build—we just started. The buildings were all here. The people who came together already lived in the neighborhood. So, we could just begin.

The first evening we brainstormed ideas of things we would like to see in the ecovillage and decided to focus on five areas: potlucks, marketing houses in the ecovillage, signage, developing a walking path around the ecovillage, and a youth group.

This isn't to say that everything was easy. We live in a neighborhood with many other people. We had to convince them that it was a good thing for this to be an ecovillage, even if they weren't interested in ecology or in community. To this end we put out a monthly newsletter and did an exercise called "Treasure Mapping" as a way to help people realize we weren't trying to pull the wool over their eyes.

The newsletter consisted of a "gossip column" about people in the ecovillage, coming events, what the ecovillage committees were doing, educational pieces, and problems that might exist in the neighborhood. Many people contributed to the newsletter. It wasn't fancy, but it was informative.

Treasure Mapping is a way of encouraging people to give input. We took two sheets of 4' x 8' plywood, cut them in half and made a 4' x 4' box. Each side had a different question in terms of what they wanted to see in the ecovillage, in regards to: Housing, Marketing, Family, and Greening the Ecovillage. In the newsletter and then two handouts, we let people know about the event, the date and times. Enright is 3/4 of a mile long, so a little hard to communicate within. We loaded the box on the truck. In advance we had divided the street into eight sections with eight to 10 homes in each. We had "ambassadors" who passed out the fliers about the event, and when we came to their section they went door to door to encourage people to come out. On a Saturday morning we went around to each section, pulled the box off the truck, put it on a table with magazines and scissors, marking pens and blank sheets of paper so that people could create a collage around what they would like to see within our four topic areas. Over 2/3 of the homes were represented. When completed we took the box back to the Imago Earth Center, and invited people to help decipher the information on the collage. From this we developed Task Forces to work on specific areas.

This was our beginning.

We were incorporated as a nonprofit in 2007. We needed a board of directors. Since 2007 we

have gone through two board structures. The first was to invite everyone in the neighborhood to be part of the board. While this was a good idea on paper, few people came to the board meetings. The second structure saw elected officers and the chair people of our Task Forces (now called committees) making up the board. Anyone could come to board meetings and be part of the meeting. However, if there was a controversial item, the board members alone would decide, by consensus, on this decision.

The neighborhood has become a desirable place to live, so there is little opposition. A rough estimate gives us about a third of the ecovillage involved in the ecovillage, about an additional third open to thinking of themselves as part of it, and about a third indifferent.

But there are struggles...

Most of the people who live in the ecovillage have lives outside the ecovillage. When moving to a rural ecovillage, people give up most of the previous lives and the ecovillage becomes the new center of their lives. Most of those who lived in the ecovillage when it began had jobs, recreation, spiritual practices, etc. outside the neighborhood. The ecovillage is just another thing on their agenda. Most of the people who moved to the ecovillage moved from within Cincinnati, which meant they too had their lives outside the ecovillage. We have struggled with how to make the ecovillage more of a center of people's lives. While we have a simple membership fee of $25 per year, we recently started membership categories where members are required to make an initial financial commitment and for each year following, along with a yearly work requirement. While this seems to help some, there is still a feeling that we need to create deeper relationships among members. This is still on the drawing board.

About a third of the ecovillage is involved in the ecovillage, about an additional third open to thinking of themselves as part of it, and about a third indifferent.

We have had a good number of young families move into the ecovillage. This has been exciting. However, with family demands it is hard for some families to really get involved. We also have the struggle of separation and divorce with families in the ecovillage. This is especially difficult when the families have been deeply involved in the ecovillage. In most cases both parties are loved and respected. Figuring out how to relate to the two parties is especially challenging when they have become a major part of the community. We aren't aware of any formula for this. It seems to be different in each case and relationships are different in each case both within the family and within the community. It does create major stress in the community. While we haven't had a big problem with people siding with one or other of the couple, experiencing their pain and filling holes that are created by their frequent withdrawal from their role in the community are huge. The board especially has had to struggle when members of the board have chosen to leave or take a leave of absence.

We have also struggled with people working for other residents in the community. People have hired their fellow community member to do work for them, and sometimes they are

Part of the 2-mile hiking trail in the urban forest beginning at the Imago Earth Center and wrapping around the Ecovillage.

Ecovillage's weekly potluck at the Common Roots Pub.

Jerry Ropp is a resident contractor who has helped rehab 19 houses in the Ecovillage.

Photos courtesy of Robert Johnson

CSA shareholder pickup day at the greenhouse; workers separate the week's harvest for collection on Saturday mornings.

not pleased with the work done. There have been cases where mediation was used, while other times feelings of resentment fester. At one point the housing committee decided not to hire people in the neighborhood to do any of its rehab work. Although this seemed like the opposite of what one would want in an ecovillage, where we should be providing for each other and supporting each other, there is little doubt that this will remain an issue that needs to be dealt with on an individual basis, especially in an ecovillage where the majority of people have not bought in to being directly involved in the ecovillage.

While there are major issues, the majority of residents of the ecovillage revel in the gathering of such wonderful people forming the village. We believe it is a huge improvement in the way people live over most neighborhoods in our cities. It both forms community and provides an ecological framework for living in the city. Many of us see our efforts as a real demonstration of how we can live better in our cities. A lot of exciting things have happened:

The purchase of the Common Roots Pub: the pub is as green as we can make it, and is run totally by volunteers.

Our ecovillage CSA provides households with food every year. We are now in our ninth season and are running strong. The CSA food is grown in backyards, lots, and any other available land in and near the ecovillage. The trip to pick it up isn't far for the shareholders, just up the street.

Our monthly newsletter, "The Ridgerunner," keeps people in the community informed about what is going on. It is particularly important since a good number of people aren't actively involved in the ecovillage. The website (www.enrightecovillage.org) serves people inside the ecovillage as well as beyond. There is also the Community Earth Alliance website (www.communityearthalliance.org), a place you can find out about houses available in the ecovillage and other information.

The weekly potluck—at the pub—is an opportunity for people to come together to share in great conversations, good food, and green drinks. It is also on Thursday evening, which is Open Mic night at the pub. Once everyone is full, they can stay and listen to some great music.

The woods around the ecovillage provide a wonderful place to hike or just sit and connect with the other residents of the ecovillage, our non-human residents. We are only seven minutes from downtown Cincinnati, but have some 200 acres of woods and greenspace surrounding us, with a mile-and-a-half trail leading through it.

We also have Imago in the ecovillage, which was the impetus to starting the ecovillage and remains a mainstay. Its 40 acres of preserved land and building are key assets for the ecovillage.

We offer a monthly tour of the ecovillage as well as offer consultation to other neighborhoods interested in forming their own retrofit ecovillage. I have just finished, with the input of other ecovillage residents, a book on the ecovillage, which is now in the process of finding a publisher. I see it as a kind of "how to" book on creating a retrofit ecovillage in a city neighborhood.

These are a few of the things that make our ecovillage a good place to live. At this time only our head farmer in the CSA is paid, with most all work in the ecovillage carried out by volunteers. While there are always opportunities for more people to be involved, we have established a solid group of people who are passionate in helping make the ecovillage work.

The urban retrofit ecovillage is one way we can recreate our cities. While there are some other urban retrofit ecovillages in the US, we would like to see more of them formed within neighborhoods throughout all of our cities. We don't claim to have the only answer to living ecologically in our cities, but it is definitely one of the possibilities.

Jim Schenk helped start Enright Ridge Urban Ecovillage (www.enrightecovillage.org) and is an avid promoter of the retrofit urban ecovillage. As mentioned in the article, he has completed a book on the Enright Ridge Urban Ecovillage as a model for making our cities sustainable, and is seeking a publisher. (Any suggestions?) He is available for consultation. Contact him at jschenk@imagoearth.org.

Open Mic night at the Common Roots Pub.

Chris, David, and Laura work digging holes on the berms for the raspberry plants at Lake City.

THE RADICAL SABBATICAL: Discerning an Urban-to-Rural Move

By Laura Lasuertmer

I've long harbored dreams of living in a farming community, all the while relishing the convenience of town life and the "farming" we do in our urban community. At the Bloomington Catholic Worker[1], we've turned our lawns into garden beds, planted fruit trees in the back yard, tended chickens, and warded off rats. We store rainwater for gardening—and for the kids to use in their mulch-and-mud culinary creations. On spring days, when the sun is warm but the air is cool, Leo, my two-year-old, stops his play to point and shout, "A woodpecker, Mama!" I often feel like this is the only life I should live.

Perhaps it is. But what of those farm dreams? My husband, David, completed a permaculture design course last summer and now feeds our two children onion grass, creeping charlie, and even the occasional grub from the compost. He salvages downed locust trees by the railroad tracks to build garden beds. He's channeling his anxiety about climate change into acquiring skills and getting intimate with the natural world. He's willing to make the move, but I can't imagine leaving our community and the conveniences of town life.

So the question arises: What do we do with our daydreams? How do we decide which life we should live?

The Radical Sabbatical: A Tool for Discernment

Over the last three years, our community has embraced sabbaticals and other routinized breaks from our shared life. We now have staycations: two weeks each year (one in the spring, one in the fall) in which we cease all communal activity. We have also instituted annual six-week breaks from our shared work of housing people experiencing homelessness. But the crown jewel of routinized breaks is our radical sabbatical. Every seven years, each family (there are currently four) is required to leave the community for two months and set out on an adventure. At the beginning of June, David and I and our children, Alice and Leo, took leave of the community to try out the farming life at three Catholic Worker farms.

The original Catholic Worker farm was founded in 1935, two years after Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin began publishing *The Catholic Worker* newspaper. However, the farms did not flourish and spread the way the urban houses of hospitality did. It is only in the last 10 years that the Catholic Worker farm movement has grown significantly: there are currently 19 farms across the United States. Over our years in the movement, we've become friends with some of the farmers.

We knew that a radical sabbatical at Catholic Worker farms would not only root us in work on the land and with community, it would also allow us to engage in questions of social justice and faith. For me, discerning whether to start a Catholic Worker farm is not simply about the farming. It's about studying the ways in which the farming life addresses injustice and inequality, issues that are at the heart of the Catholic Worker movement.

1. The modern Catholic Worker movement includes people from diverse religious backgrounds and some non-religious members as well. It is not officially affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church.

A New Philosophy of Labor
Lake City Catholic Worker Farm, Lake City, Minnesota, June 2–June 19

"Manual labor is not something to avoid. Manual labor, in and of itself, is what we are striving for.... The payoff is to live off the fruit of your own labor, which is the only just way to live," Paul explained. We were sitting by the fire pit behind the barn, eating beef roast from a neighbor's farm, drinking hard cider from Door County. It was an evening of celebration and discussion, a time for the venerable Catholic Worker practice of clarification of thought. It was also a moment of rest at the end of two weeks of hard work. Paul continued, "There's this idea, that we resoundingly reject, that life should just be smooth. And that smooth life is because we are able to let someone else grow our food."

The Freids were living at the Winona Catholic Worker house in 2005 when they began to reject the idea of the easy life. They knew that their life-long vocation was to the Catholic Worker, but they no longer wanted to live on donations that the house of hospitality received. They dreamed of making and selling communion wine. After working in a vineyard in Winona, they began to look for land with a south-facing slope and found 51 acres near Sara's parents in Lake City. For two years, and with a three-year-old daughter, they camped on the land as they built their strawbale house. When they finished the house, they built a barn, and a chicken coop, and winter housing for their pigs and piglets. Aside from constructing buildings, Paul noted that manual labor has also built relationships, especially between the Lake City Catholic Workers and people in need: "Chris [a former guest] would not be out here if we did not work together. Nor would Sean [a 17-year-old neighbor]. If we said, just come out here and hang out, we wouldn't be as integrated in our relationships."

We built our relationships at Lake City planting 1,000 raspberry bushes into berms that traversed 30 acres of pasture. The first task was to cut down the shoulder-high grass. One afternoon, I strapped on the weed whacker and pushed through the grass to find the berm. With headphones and goggles in place, I found myself immersed in a muted whir. It was not peaceful work—and I was grateful. When I had imagined farm life from the comfort of my living room, I had imagined the picturesque bits. I couldn't hear the incessant squeals of 30 pigs waiting on me to get their feed ready in the morning. I didn't know to imagine myself pushing a wheel-hoe through dry dirt, bending down to inspect the ground for miniscule carrots. Here I was learning that I could enjoy weed whacking, not because it was fun, but because it needed to be done and I could do it.

Sometimes, though, it was overwhelming to walk through the farm and imagine myself as the farmer. At home, I tend two children, a small house, and a small garden. It often feels like more than I can manage. So how do you tend acres of plants and 40 pigs and three children and 20 chickens and a large house and a guest experiencing homelessness, all the while singing in the church choir and taking your kids to tennis camp and working part-time off the farm? Or rather, how do you do all that and remain as joyful as the Freids? The answer is that you have to love the work. Did I love the work? I had begun to relish the exhaustion and satisfaction I felt after digging holes all day. But was I bored as I weeded the carrots? Or was it good for my soul to tend the vegetables? I left Lake City uncertain about my relationship with manual labor.

Founded in 2007, **Lake City Catholic Worker Farm** is Sara and Paul Freid, their daughters Clare (12), Louise (6), and Millie (5), Shay O'Toole, and Jake Olzen. At Lake City Catholic Worker, the long-term vision is to bring about a new philosophy of labor by creating a farm that employs the community, guests, and the under-employed in the area. They aspire to start a just business based on perennial and humanely raised animal agriculture. In all things they do, they desire to bring a spirit of joy.

Clockwise from bottom left at Lake City Catholic Worker: Clare Freid, Sean (neighbor), Brian, Shay, Paul Freid, Chris (friend), Louise Freid, Sara Freid, Millie Freid.

The Lake City strawbale house.

Lake City: One of 1,000 raspberry plants enjoying the sunset from its new home on the berm.

Shay O'Toole mixes milk with corn to feed the sows, at least one of which is pregnant. Lake City Catholic Worker Farm.

Alice and Leo stand at the pen of 56 chickens about to be butchered at Anathoth Farm.

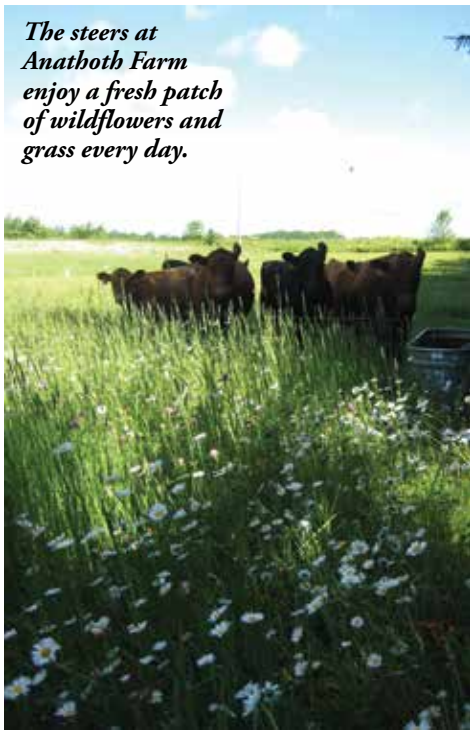
Mike and Barb at Anathoth Farm still farm with a used 1960s tractor.

Sacramental Agriculture
Anathoth Community Farm, Luck, Wisconsin, June 19–July 4

They call it sacramental agriculture. It looks like big, gorgeous steers eating wildflowers in lush pasture surrounded by fragrant pines. It looks like laying hens wandering through tall grass. It is a four-year rotation in their two acres of garden: vegetables, pigs, cover crop, potatoes. The rest of the world calls it regenerative agriculture and rotational grazing. For Mike Miles and Barb Kass at Anathoth Farm, it is sacramental agriculture because it mimics the invisible grace of the natural systems that restore health and fertility to plants, animals, and our earth.

Mike and Barb founded Anathoth Farm 30 years ago, but it did not begin as a farm. "We were looking for a place to stage resistance: nonviolent, gospel resistance," Mike said. They had moved, pregnant with their third child, to northern Wisconsin in 1983, after spending three years as part of the Jonah House activist community in Baltimore. They immediately joined local groups who were protesting ELF, a nuclear submarine communication system. Over the years they were involved in significant activism work, including 10 years organizing the Wheels of Justice bus that brought stories from Iraq and Palestine to folks across the United States.

While they always grew food for themselves, it wasn't until 10 years ago that they started raising animals. Mike read *The Omnivore's Dilemma* by Michael Pollan, which introduced him to Joel Salatin. "I began looking at the amount of petroleum on my life and wanted to remove more and more of it. [I] started asking if I can't make an impact on the world within three hours of where I live, then what's the point?"



The steers at Anathoth Farm enjoy a fresh patch of wildflowers and grass every day.

The entrance to Mike and Barb's home at Anathoth Farm.

Photos courtesy of Laura Lasuertmer

They started looking at the topography of the farm. They were taking hay off the hayfields and they realized they could turn that hay into protein—raising meat and sequestering carbon at the same time. This year they are raising seven steers, four pigs, and four batches of 60 chickens. They move the animals once or twice a day to ensure that the pasture is tended by the animals rather than destroyed.

Ethical living has been foundational to life at Anathoth. Mike and Barb's reconstructed 1892 log cabin sits on a basement greenhouse that filters the greywater from the kitchen and bathroom sinks. The composting toilet has a urine diverter that funnels pee to a 55-gallon drum, from which comes the most wonderful of fertilizers: pee-tea. The only shower in the house is a wood-fired stand-alone tub in the greenhouse, used only in the winter. Solar showers are used in the summer. Newly installed solar panels supply electricity.

"We earn next to nothing. But we're living like kings," Mike said, sitting down to a dinner of their own grilled steak and asparagus. They have created systems that eliminate waste and produce abundance, without costing much more than their own labor. Observing their lives, I saw that land was essential to their pursuit of a just and ethical life. It allowed them to opt out of the exploitative food and energy systems we are dependent upon in the city. At Anathoth, I started to understand the connection between justice, labor, and life on the land.

The night before we left, I asked Mike and Barb if they had any advice for us.

"Be realistic about your skill sets," Mike said.

"That doesn't mean [you have to know] everything," Barb countered. "How do you castrate a steer? Look on YouTube."

Mike laughed remembering their first attempt. "When you look at the YouTube video and the cowboy says, 'Do this' and you've got a little calf on its back outside with a rope around its neck...and you cut the end of the scrotum and you're digging down in there with your fingers, you're kind of committed. So yeah, think about your skill set." He paused. "The other thing is to realize that grace happens.... You just have to be open to it."

I felt open out there among the towering pines, with the eagles overhead and the wildflowers swaying in the pasture. I felt open to imagining a different life for myself. When a neighbor remarked, "Learning to farm is not the hard part. The hard part is finding the courage to do it," I knew he was right. At Anathoth, courage sprouted, small and fragile but with the potential to bear fruit.

Founded in 1987, **Anathoth Community Farm** is Barb Kass and Mike Miles. They practice regenerative agriculture, rotational grazing, vegetable gardening, and hospitality to all who come their way.

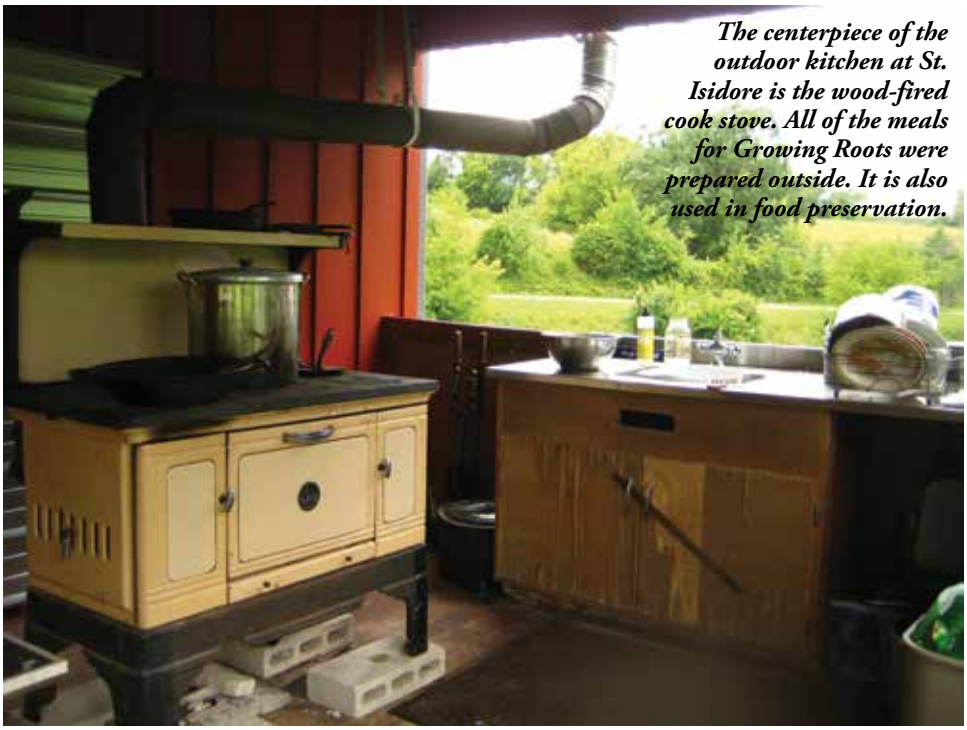
The Agronomic University

St. Isidore Catholic Worker Farm, Cuba City, Wisconsin, July 4–July 28

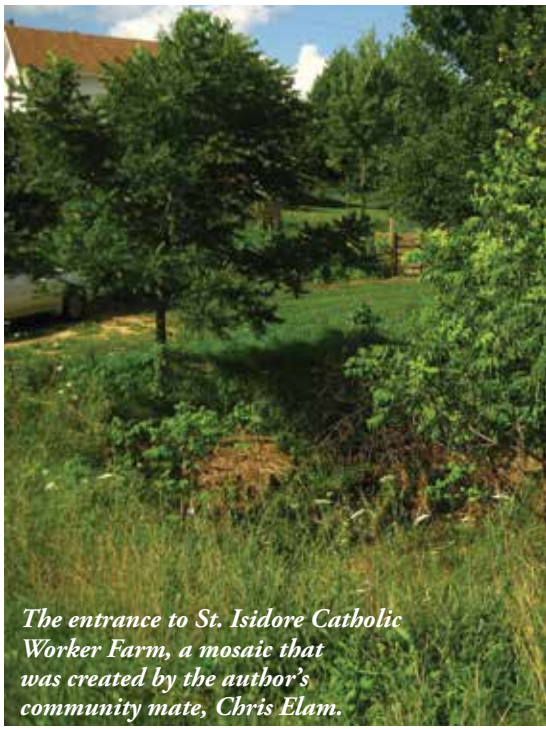
Our first full day at St. Isidore, we spread fabric below the mulberry tree, climbed into the branches, and shook. "It's raining mulberries," I said to my kids, Alice and Leo, who gathered fruit in their mouths instead of the bowls. Raquel, an intern at the farm, was walking the roadside in search of black raspberries. Brenna, a community member, was canning bourbon cherries on the outdoor wood-fired cook stove. Two chickens we'd butchered at Anathoth Farm were baking in the oven. Mary Kay, a community member, was up on a ladder harvesting more cherries. Eric, Brenna's husband, was behind the barn splitting firewood. Peter, Mary Kay's husband, was out in the pasture putting up new fencing for Violet, the milk cow. When the mulberries were harvested, David transformed them into a mulberry crisp and that too went in the cookstove oven. That night we feasted entirely on Catholic Worker farm food. "If we're not eating well," Mary Kay said, "then I don't know what we're doing out here." Good food and regenerative farming are parts of St. Isidore's mission, but there's also the Agronomic University.

Peter Maurin's vision for the Catholic Worker farm was a place where workers would be scholars and scholars would be workers. "His vision," Eric said, "was to create communities on the land that were basically centers for training people to engage and transform society." At St. Isidore that means that prayer, study, and labor are crucial parts of each day. St. Isidore also hosts workshops, college groups, and Growing Roots sessions, which are four-day radical education retreats for up to 20 participants. These programs always include time to labor on the farm, with the belief that good education feeds not just the mind, but also the body and spirit. "Our Growing Roots are ways to think critically about society, but it's also a time to just be human, fully human together, and engaging on all levels of our personhood," Eric said.

At Growing Roots, which coincided with the last week of our Radical Sabbatical, I was surprised by the singing. Songs flew around the farm—from the fields where we harvested garlic to the barn where they broke the silence of morning prayer. Growing Roots discussion sessions took us through the conquest and colonization of Native Americans, placing blame not only on European settlers but also the Christian Church. We needed songs—of sorrow, of repentance, of hope. One night I

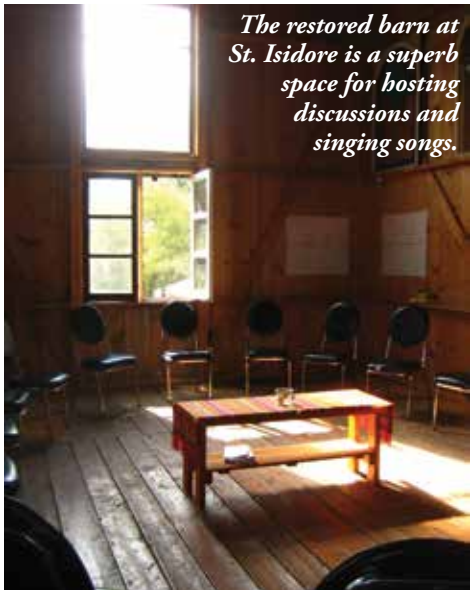


The centerpiece of the outdoor kitchen at St. Isidore is the wood-fired cook stove. All of the meals for Growing Roots were prepared outside. It is also used in food preservation.



The entrance to St. Isidore Catholic Worker Farm, a mosaic that was created by the author's community mate, Chris Elam.

The schedule for the Growing Roots session on Decolonization.



The restored barn at St. Isidore is a superb space for hosting discussions and singing songs.

The farm house at St. Isidore.

Violet is moved daily, sometimes to the front lawn to help keep the grass short. David and Leo watch her graze. St. Isidore Catholic Worker Farm.

sat in a circle of 15 women with Liz Rog, a song leader from Iowa, teaching us parts of simple, layered a cappella songs. All levels of my being were engaged. Song somehow synthesized the labor of our hands, the work of our minds, and the ache of our hearts, bringing an emotional center to Growing Roots. When we departed St. Isidore on the last morning, we left thoroughly changed in body, mind, and spirit.

St. Isidore Catholic Worker Farm was founded in 2016 by Brenna Cussen Anglada and Eric Anglada, and Mary Kay McDermott and Peter Yoches, and their children, Micah (6) and Clare (1). St. Isidore's mission is to live in such a way that all creation may flourish.

The Return: Imagining an Urban-Rural Relationship

Our sunflowers are taller than the house. Ripe tomatoes dangle from sprawling plants like a string of red lights. We are home. Before I left, I imagined I would return home still uncertain about the farming life. I find instead that two months of examining this question has confirmed a deep desire to live in community on the land.

We have begun to dream of a Catholic Worker farm just outside of Bloomington. I see the families from our community there, sometimes for days or weeks at a time. The kids run in the woods looking for morels and wild blackberries. I dream that guests who need respite from the city come to soak their feet in the creek and catch fish in the pond. I dream that our work there is to tend the land, to detach ourselves from unjust systems, and create a community where reverence and gratitude for creation are integral to daily life. I dream that we have hundreds of blueberry bushes, their branches adorned with deep purple globes. Together we harvest and eat.

This is a dream of the evolution of the Bloomington Catholic Worker, not a severance of ties but a transformation. When I dream this dream, I see it all in the golden light of the sunrise, as if all the seeds will sprout and rain will fall exactly when we need it and there will never be conflict in community. The gift of our sabbatical is this energizing vision and the stories of other dreamers who made the move from the city to the farm. They have given us the courage to dream. It is our work now to pull that dream down from the clouds and root it in the ground, tending it and giving it life.

Laura Lasuertmer is a member of the Bloomington Catholic Worker (BCW) community in Bloomington, Indiana. With her husband's help, she is finding new ways to balance motherhood and writing. She is grateful to Lake City, Anathoth, and St. Isidore for their generous welcome, revelatory conversations, and good ol'-fashioned hard work. For a taste of the Catholic Worker movement, all are welcome to join our annual Midwest gathering, held every September near Preston, Iowa. Email lertmer@gmail.com for more information.

Supported Growth

By Amanda Crowell

In 2006 my brother's organs were donated after his accidental death. Two months later, his nine-year-old son and I were walking our dog around my inner-city neighborhood when we walked by something I'd never noticed before: an overgrown lot with what looked like a sign and the vestiges of garden beds. We walked into the lot around piles of debris and collapsing beds and did not walk out again for three hours. By the time we left, the debris was cleared and the beds were somewhat visible—and we felt better. We went back almost every day that summer, and by the end of the summer, we had not only restored the original landscaping, we had grown eight large beds' worth of fruits and vegetables and met many of the neighbors. They would stop and see what was going on in the long-forgotten lot; their children would come on a Saturday morning to pet the dog and poke around. By August I found myself offering some of the unexpectedly abundant zucchini to every car or pedestrian who stopped to look at the garden.

Over the next three years, I expanded the original garden, created a new garden in another corner lot by my house, and became a consultant and manager for the International Institute's welcoming garden for recent refugees and immigrants. Because of my garden connections, I also learned how to set up fundraisers and block parties. The gardens provided me not only with healing after loss, but also a community and the confidence to share my love for my community with the people around me. I didn't do it alone, however. My neighbors, my friends and family, St. Louis City, my alderman, my local state representative, the extension center, and Gateway Greening all helped me become more a part of my community. Here's how I did it in St. Louis; many urban areas have similar resources. The main thing to remember is do not be afraid to ask!

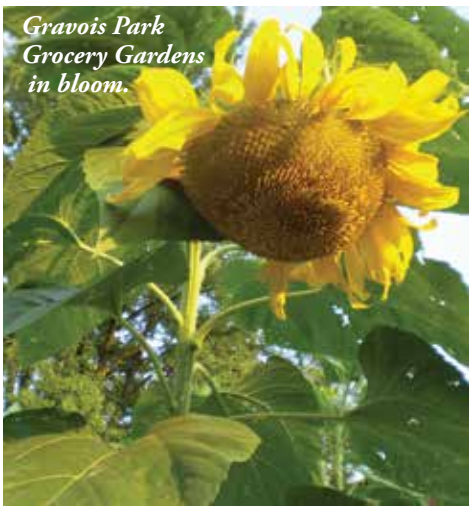
Finding available government resources

There weren't any functioning community gardens in my neighborhood, although there were a number of wonderful community gardens in other neighborhoods in the city. Thank goodness for the internet; I was able to discover that the City of St. Louis Land Reutilization Authority (LRA) leased vacant, city-owned lots to community gardeners for $1 a year. A quick phone call to the LRA got the easy form sent to me. The helpful clerk also pointed me to the Forestry Division for deliveries of free mulch and compost and the Water and Sewer Division for a reducer and key for the fire hydrants, crucial when the gardens needed watering during the St. Louis summer droughts. The signature of my alderman was necessary to get the key and reducer, and thus I met my alderman, who was able to introduce me to my state representative. Both of them were able to steer me towards other services provided by the city and the state for community initiatives, as well as help me understand more about the politics of my city.

Finding support

Give someone a fresh tomato, and they will give you anything you want. Actually, all I had to do with family, friends, and local businesses was tell them I wanted to grow fresh tomatoes,

International Institute garden workday.



Gravois Park Grocery Gardens in bloom.

Three of our best helpers!

and help appeared! My aunt and uncle had re-done their deck and were willing to give me the untreated boards that they took down. My dad brought his power tools down for a work party, and neighborhood fliers, emailing friends, and the new neighborhood listserv brought out almost two dozen volunteers. A tiny local nursery gave us a bag filled with expired seed packets, all of which grew just fine. As a teacher, I also found that offering students extra credit for community service—and then mentioning my gardens—was a fantastic way to get help. Fellow teachers who also believed in community service often sent students my way as well.

Learning

Once I was registered with the city as the sponsor of a community garden, I began receiving newsletters. The newsletters were full of tips about grants, message boards, and classes offered to community gardeners by the Lincoln University Cooperative Extension. Before the newsletter, I had no idea that most states have Cooperative Extensions from land grant universities; now I know to look to them for any agricultural questions. St. Louis is also the home of Gateway Greening, an organization that offers classes, plants, seeds, and access to community gardens. Gateway Greening was always available to answer questions and to point me at someone in another garden who could help. They also served as a central point for volunteers looking for gardens, invaluable to me as someone who needed help. I took advantage of many class offerings; I could not tell a zucchini from a cucumber when I began gardening, much less how to identify the beetles particular to each.

Money

While I had many donations of time and materials, by the second summer there were a number of items that needed to be purchased, including long hoses, signage, and netting for trellises. Asking in my neighborhood led me to a new neighbor who had just set up Fort Gondo, an art gallery around the block; he donated his space for a fundraising night. Artist friends donated their musical abilities, their paintings, their poetry, and their love. We set up for 30 attendees and had 50; we made enough to purchase everything we needed and to throw the block party later that year. We weren't a nonprofit; we were just local gardeners staying local, and the neighborhood supported that with wide-open arms.

Challenges

The source of occasional frustrations but mostly the source of many joys in community gardening was the community. While some community gardens in the city had petitioned for wrought-iron fencing around their gardens, I did not want to shut out my neighbors. This did mean, however, that we would often find condoms, beer cans, and dead fireworks interspersed with our lettuce and leeks. Once someone drove through the garden and knocked down a donated apple tree. We sometimes had children too young to know their address show up to dig for worms and run through the sprinkler; it was hard to find the sweet spot between welcoming children who were in awe that the little green pockets held peas and trying to keep everyone safe. We could not get consistency in gardeners, so instead of the "claimed bed" organization used by most community gardens, we had mini-farms. If you worked, you could take food. Food did, of course, disappear. It was a lower-income neighborhood in a rougher part of town. As long as they weren't destructive in the taking, though, we cheered people eating fresh veggies and kept going. We always had more than the volunteers could eat anyway; we never had to buy any produce from the stores. Connecting with my neighbors about recipes, memories, and work made getting out into the beds at a cooler 5 a.m. worth it every time. I even got some great recipes for okra!

Fun

The best part about meeting the neighbors was having *neighbors*. They would chase "hooligans" off the gardens if they saw any. They'd play with my son and pet my dog. In my search

Fun with the sprinkler on a garden work day.

Bud, local nursery owner and frequent garden donor, with his babies.

Photos by Amanda Crowell

Volunteers excited about ordering seeds.

International Institute garden workday.

Workday fun!

for resources, I discovered that we could get a permit to block the street for a block party, so two years in a row as a harvest festival we had a Halloween block party, with decorations, candy, lots of free veggies, and almost a hundred folks in costumes dancing in the middle of the street. The second year the fire department came and cracked the hydrant and turned on a giant sprinkler. Who knew tomatoes and zucchini could do so much to bring out the community?

Suggestions

I learned quickly to keep a bed empty and to bring a bucket full of hand trowels to lure the younger ones away from the food beds. Sprinklers rather than soaker hoses might not have been as water-efficient, but they certainly made the gardens popular in the Midwest summers, and the teenagers would often help after a good soaking. Be prepared to live in your gardens, especially for the first couple years! Most important, be aware of your motivations. I began gardening as a way of self-healing, and then it grew into an activity I could do *with* my community. One irritated epithet that I heard applied to community gardeners in some other neighborhoods with a similar racial makeup to mine was "The Missionaries." While many city residents would like someone to organize a garden—who has that much time?—they don't need to be "taught" or "saved," and will be particularly sensitive to that distinction if it's a primarily black neighborhood with white gardeners moving in. Also, while a fence might be useful against some troublemakers (and I did occasionally wish for fencing around my gardens), be aware that the message you are sending is an exclusionary one. In the gardens I knew of in similar neighborhoods, most of the ones with the high wrought iron fencing had primarily white gardeners, despite being in primarily black or equally mixed neighborhoods. An argument could be made that the gardeners themselves were responsible, but walls certainly did not help. By welcoming in neighbors of all races and their children to work, to share the food, to ask questions, and to share their memories and recipes, we created allies that made it less necessary to have fencing.

It's been eight years now since I had to leave the gardens for a job up north. I passed the gardens on to some of the volunteers, and when I went back a few years ago I was sad to see that both of the gardens were surrounded by five-foot-tall wrought-iron fencing. The neighborhood took a hit during the housing burst, but has come back as a somewhat gentrified neighborhood, with some distinct lines between the new, hip city-dwellers and the long-time residents whose housing prices are increasing accordingly. The racial tension that has always simmered in St. Louis has come to boil several times since I left, including the travesty of the Michael Brown shooting. While I did see racism in my neighborhood when I lived there, it mostly came from those who did not live there; what I primarily saw were people of many races and backgrounds working together at gardening, surviving the heat, and making it through the long summer days with laughter. I still thrill at Facebook posts from volunteers with pictures of their gardens or stories of the most recent community gathering. All the resources I took advantage of are still there, and many have become even better resources through web development and time to grow.

Growing a community garden in a city means relying on many networks, on putting yourself out there. If you have the chance, I recommend it. Call some clerks, pull some weeds, share some zucchini. You will sweat, you will learn, and you will never regret it.

Helpful Links

Gateway Greening
www.gatewaygreening.org
City of St. Louis
www.stlouis-mo.gov/government/departments/mayor/initiatives/sustainability/toolkit/establish-a-community-garden.cfm
Missouri Botanical Garden
www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/gardens-gardening/gardening-in-st.-louis/community-gardening.aspx

---

Amanda Crowell lives in mid-state New York with her husband, son, front yard farm, and enough rescued animals for the time being. Her current passion is holding Trash 2 Treasure events where folks can clean out their homes and live the hope of a sharing economy.

The Dolphin House, Looking Forward

By Brittny Love

We are living in powerful times where the desire for community and a regenerative lifestyle is at the forefront of most of our minds. We've watched, and been a part of, a world that allowed greed and corporations to take over, and where sustainability and the best interests of the whole have taken a back seat. Many of us have felt the urge to uproot ourselves from the city and settle on a plot of land out in the country, but we've wondered, *what about the cities and all the people we know back home?* This has been the dilemma for my friends and me in the desert valley of Arizona.

Our intentional community began about a year ago, when a dear friend was killed in a car accident. Kelly was an incredibly special and ambitious woman, who dedicated much of her time to nonprofit organizations, art, and making the world a kinder place. Her sudden passing was especially difficult on our close friends, and her boyfriend opened his home for the Dolphin House to embark on intentional community living. We had 10 people living in a four-bedroom house, with a couple toddlers in the mix. The members ranged in age from early 20s to early 30s and varied in ethnicity. Although I lived at my own place nearby, I attended weekly meetings where we would touch base and address issues and concerns.

It always impressed me to see how well this group of friends managed to coexist together, maintaining a tidy home, cooking healthy meals, and spending most of their time dedicated to creating art and music. They also dug up the back lawn and replaced it with a permaculture-style garden, where we've been experimenting with different edible plants and learning the art of growing our own food. Some of the issues that arose were learning to deal with so many people in a shared space, and handling relationship challenges as we learned to humble our egos and listen to one another. Our evening circles were very productive in maintaining a mature space for everyone to speak and be heard.

We've known that living at the home wouldn't be permanent, but an experiment for what we want to embark upon with establishing an ecovillage. Everyone in our group is very involved with community events and passionate about bringing awareness and education to the surrounding cities such as Tempe,

Mesa, Chandler, and Phoenix. The numbers of "awakened" young adults in the state are strong, and there is a strong desire to build a better world, but there is lack when it comes to places to hang out and be productive together.

The Dolphin House has hosted several block parties in which we've held workshops on backyard gardening, jewelry making, and guided yoga and martial arts practices. The intention for our block parties has been also to reach out to those in the neighborhood and create a stronger human connection.

Our community is currently considering land that's not too far from the Phoenix area, but still puts us more in the forest. One of the concerns we've had for building in the city is the stricter regulations and zoning laws. For example, Heathcote, near Baltimore, Maryland, has been forced to close its outreach programs due to unexpected zoning issues they've faced with the county which have taken several years to try and get resolved. Our intention is to build an ecovillage where we can continue to host workshops while helping those who visit remember how to connect with the Earth. I believe one solution leading to a better world is taking the wisdom and knowledge of nature back to urban areas and implementing it.

While I was visiting Denver, Colorado, I met an organic farmer who lived in the heart of the big metro area. "I used to be afraid of the cities. I didn't like being in them at all, but a lot of people live in these dense areas, including my friends and family. If we were all to run off to the woods, there would be no one here to help the places that really need it," James said.

"Have you faced any issues from the city for being an organic farmer?" I asked.

"There are a lot stricter codes and zoning laws. For some reason, the city of Denver doesn't like greenhouses, which I find odd. I also can't label my produce as organic at the market unless it's certified, which entails paying money," James added. "I feel like if people knew how to build shelters and grow their own food, we wouldn't need to spend so much time developing and strengthening a system that doesn't serve us as a collective."

We live in a country where our voice counts. If we can get people to care about growing food, strengthening community, and being self-reliant, I believe there will be a big change in our politics and how we function as a society. Money needs to be put toward creating food forests, community gardens, sustainable building, and creating places that human beings can enjoy together. Imagine if we could have creative control over our cities again? What amazing art would we create? How could we design our buildings better and to be more exciting? What if we could include more rooftop gardens and edible landscaping? What if we stopped saturating our soil with weedkiller and other toxic chemicals?

As human beings, we are more capable and stronger than we usually give ourselves credit for. We can't sit back idly, waiting for someone to

come fix things; we must be the ones motivated to make change. We have incredibly creative minds and the ability to transform our world; the only thing that holds us back is fear and the belief that we won't be supported in our endeavors. This is the time to come out of our shells, to take risks, to be motivated to initiate new projects, events, and gatherings—to share our skills with one another and inspire the younger generation who will eventually take our place as the leaders of this world.

If you're reading this, please know that you're not alone and you're never too small to make a difference. Start a small garden, inspire your neighbors… Reach out to those in your community and have conversations! We are at a choice point of doing what's right for our evolution, or choosing to stay the old course. What will motivate us to step up and be the change we want to see in the world?

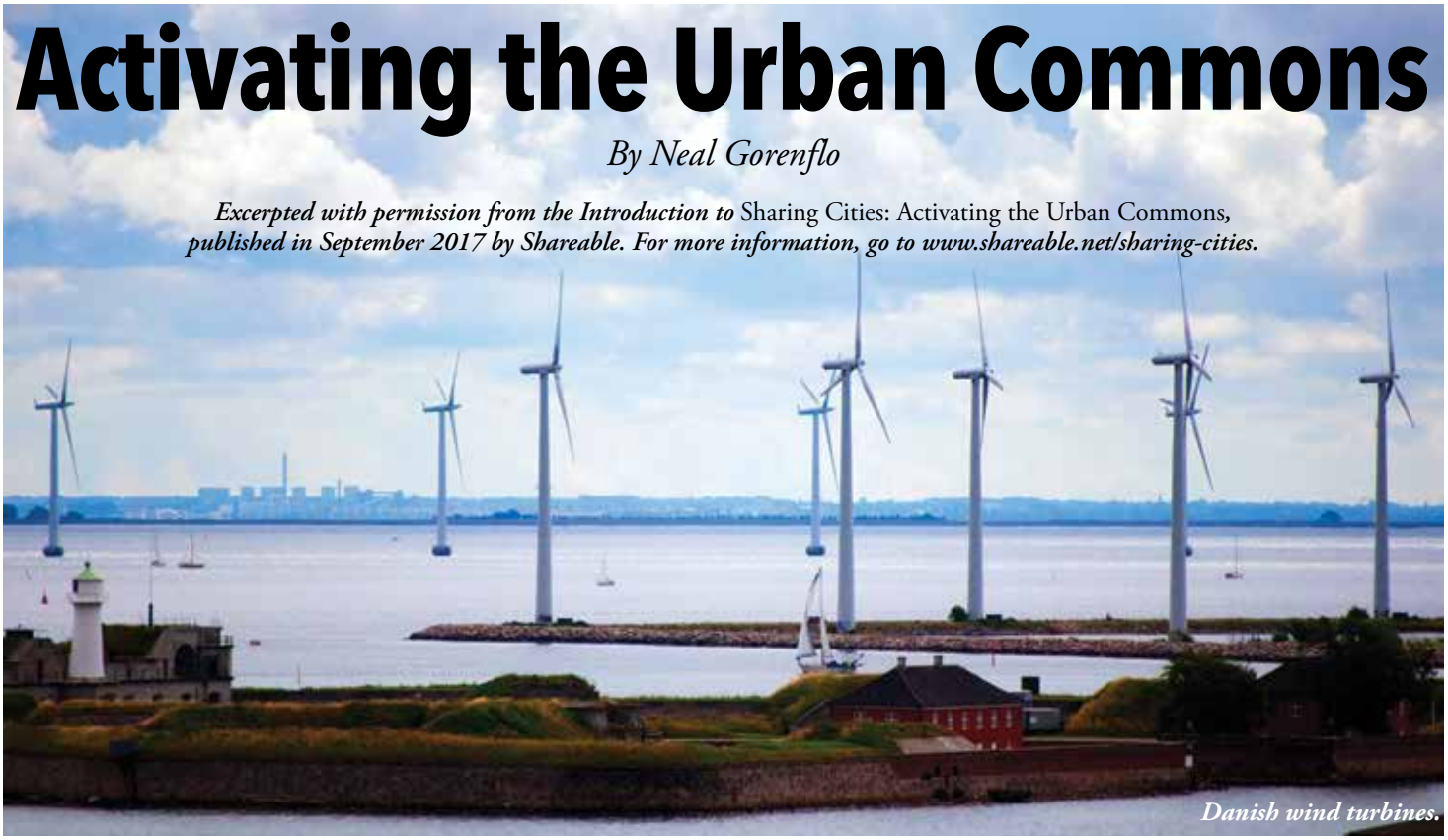
Brittny Love is the author of the inspiring travel series, Diary of a Starseed. *Her books and videos are available at StarseedStory.com.*

Photos courtesy of Brittny Love

Activating the Urban Commons

By Neal Gorenflo

Excerpted with permission from the Introduction to Sharing Cities: Activating the Urban Commons, ***published in September 2017 by Shareable. For more information, go to www.shareable.net/sharing-cities.***



Danish wind turbines.

www.CGPGrey.com

Sharing Cities: Activating the Urban Commons is a collection of 137 case studies and policies in 11 categories that demonstrate that a city run by the people is not only possible, but that much of it is already here. From participatory budgeting in Brazil to resident-managed public spaces in Italy to taxi cooperatives in the US, there's almost no service that can't be run democratically by citizens for each other.

In the backdrop of increasing privatization, income inequality, and fiscal challenges, the growth of self-organized, democratic, and inclusive means for city dwellers to meet their needs couldn't be more relevant. These cases and policies taken together offer a new vision for cities that puts people—not the market, technology, or government—at the center, where they belong. More than that, the book represents a claim on the city run by people—a claim increasingly being made by city-residents the world over. Our book was written for a broad audience, but may find special resonance with those who share this people-first vision of cities and want to act on it. Written by a team of 15 fellows with contributions from 18 organizations around the world, *Sharing Cities: Activating the Urban Commons* not only witnesses a movement, but is a practical reference guide for community-based solutions to a range of challenges cities face such as affordable housing, sustainable mobility, and more.

The Start of a Movement

On May 7, 2011, Shareable, the nonprofit media outlet I cofounded two years earlier, hosted a daylong conference called Share San Francisco at the Impact Hub coworking space in the city. We brought together 130 leaders from city government, nonprofits, and social enterprises to explore one key question, "How can we amplify the city of San Francisco as a platform for sharing?" We wanted to learn how San Franciscans could share more when they already shared a lot. After all, cities are fundamentally shared enterprises.

We hoped to catalyze positive change from a set of opportunities coalescing around cities—some particularly evident in San Francisco, where Shareable is based. What has transpired since has gone well beyond our expectations. It all started with a conversation around a few observations that by themselves are important, but have world-changing potential if managed together for the common good.

The keynote speakers—including Lisa Gansky, entrepreneur and author of *The Mesh*, Jay Nath, at the time San Francisco's Director of Innovation, and myself—framed the opportunity for sharing in cities around the following observations:

• Humans have only recently become a globally-connected, urban species with more people living in cities and owning a cellphone than not. We've only just begun to tap the potential of a new situation.

• In an era of gridlocked, ideologically-driven politics, cities are where change is still possible, as exemplified by pragmatic, solutions-oriented leadership we see in issues like climate change.

• With the rise of extremely low-cost production technologies and highly efficient, coproduction methods, producing things could become far more democratic and distributed geographically. Dependence on multinational corporations for goods and services could be greatly reduced.

• Cities are more energy-efficient per capita than nonurban areas, thus mass adoption of collaborative models of production and consumption could dramatically improve that efficiency.

• If managed correctly, these trends could turn cities into great places to live for everyone while addressing challenges that threaten our species' very existence, like climate change, wealth inequality, and social division.

• Government, business, and civil society all have a role to play and have to work together to realize this opportunity.

I illustrated the potential impact with carsharing, which had already been studied extensively by Susan Shaheen and her team at the University of California, Berkeley's Transportation Sustainability Research Center (TSRC). TSRC's 2010 survey of North American carsharing members showed that one shared car replaced up to 13 owned cars, and 51 percent of members joined to gain access to a car when they previously did not have access to one. A separate estimate by the National Building Museum showed that for every 15,000 cars taken off the road, a city could keep $127 million in the local economy. Not surprisingly, the large majority of spending on cars ends up in the coffers of multinational corporations.

As I concluded in my keynote at the event, there aren't any other innovations I know of that can more dramatically increase access to resources, boost the local economy, and reduce resource consumption simultaneously. I asked participants to imagine the whole economy organized around access rather than ownership, and the huge impact that might result from such a transformation.

In any case, we did our best to make the case that sharing and cities offered a unique, world-saving opportunity. The message became a cornerstone of the global sharing cities movement that started to unfold shortly after Share San Francisco.

In San Francisco, city officials showed immediate interest. Nath wanted to learn more. Over the next six months, we shared our knowledge with him, connected him to more local sharing entrepreneurs, and discussed how to grow the local sharing movement. He eventually asked Shareable to host an educational roundtable for Mayor Ed Lee about the sharing economy and organize the public launch event for a new city government task force called the Sharing Economy Working Group (SEWG), which was to take point in formulating sharing-related regulations.

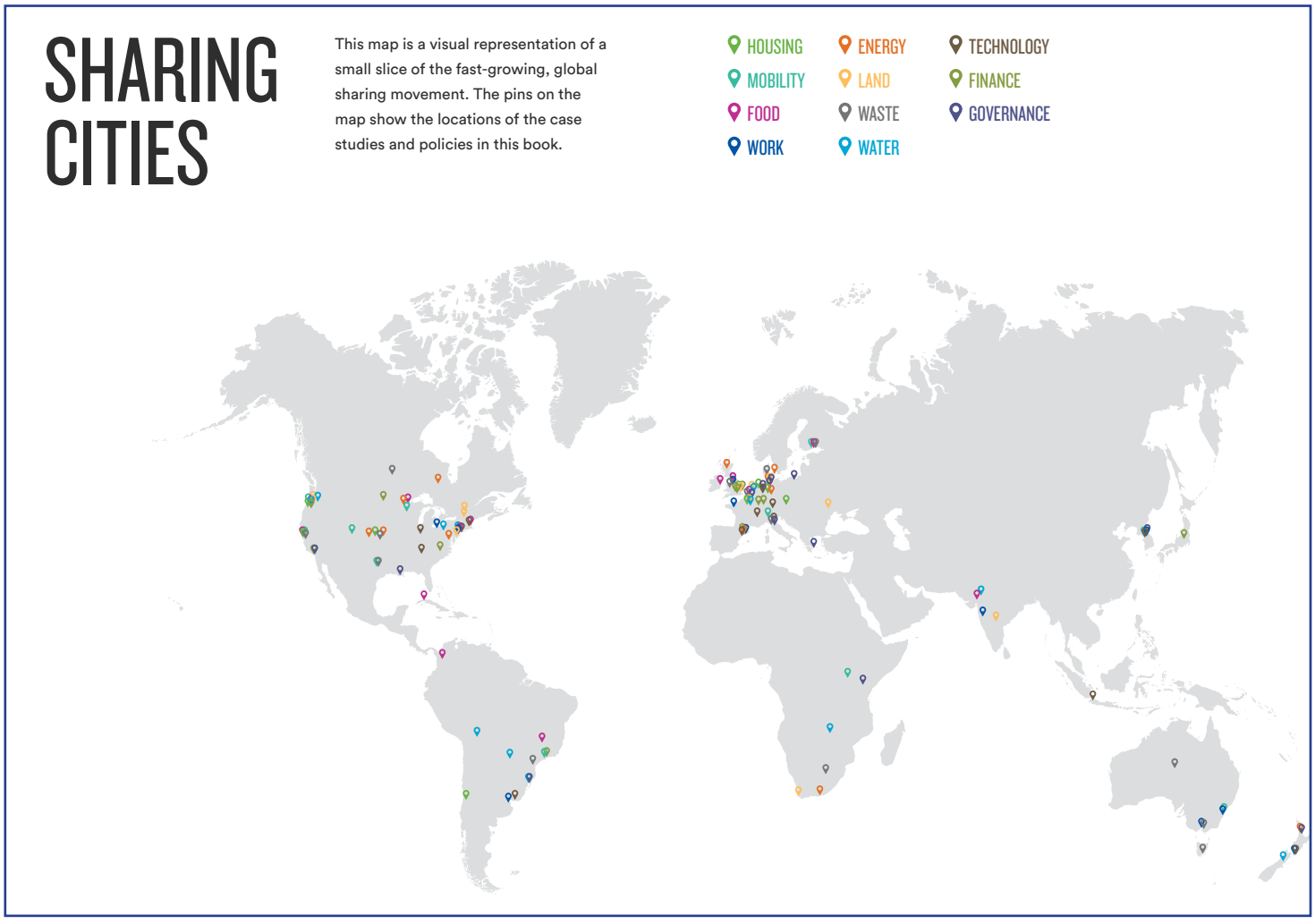
Milicent Johnson, Shareable's community organizer at the time, took the lead in organizing the SEWG launch event, which was held April 3, 2012, at SPUR, San Francisco's urban policy think tank. Mayor Lee, the president of the board of supervisors David Chui, and I gave the keynote talks, along with other leaders from various sectors. After the keynotes, I moderated a panel featuring local sharing entrepreneurs, including Joe Gebbia of Airbnb, Jessica Scorpio of Getaround, and Leah Busque of TaskRabbit, all soon to be white-hot focal points of the global sharing-economy phenomenon. Gabriel Metcalf, executive director of SPUR, later told us that it was the most attended event in SPUR's 100+ year history. Much to our surprise, the event also garnered significant worldwide press coverage.

Just six months later, Mayor Park Won-soon of Seoul, South Korea, launched Sharing City Seoul, at least partly inspired by San Francisco's SEWG. In contrast to SEWG, Sharing City Seoul had more substance. It was launched as a substantial package of policies and programs with the goal to mainstream sharing in Seoul, and in the process, address Seoul's most pressing problems including unemployment, pollution, and social isolation. It had funding, a multiyear implementation strategy, numerous citizen-stakeholders, and the city's 60-person innovation department behind it.

However, Sharing City Seoul's importance to the sharing cities movement goes far beyond its instructive details. It is Mayor Park's signature program for a mega-city of 10 million people. Moreover, Seoul is part of a small cadre of the world's largest, most modern cities that are defining what a city is in the 21st century. In this context, Mayor Park decided to tell a new story about what a city can be, a story that diverged significantly from the usual talk of cities as competitors in a ruthless global market. Instead, he focused attention on a practical, interpersonal action—sharing—that ordinary residents can engage in to help each other and the city as a whole. Unlike some efforts, it's a genuine extension of Mayor Park's career as a human rights lawyer, social justice activist, and social entrepreneur—someone who clearly saw the great human and environmental toll his city has suffered in catapulting itself from a backwater to one of the world's most modern cities, in one generation.

For these reasons, Sharing City Seoul became the single biggest catalyst of the global sharing cities movement and earned Mayor Park the prestigious Gothenburg Award for Sustainable Development in 2016. Its impact has been immense. It has inspired dozens of cities to start similar programs:

• In Europe, the London-based SharingCities.eu consortium is working with London, Milan, Lisbon, Warsaw, Burgas, Bordeaux, and other sharing cities projects, though with a strong techno-commercial bent. Netherlands-based ShareNL has long worked with Amsterdam (the first European



sharing city) and is now reaching out to many more cities in Europe and beyond through their newly-formed Sharing City Alliance. Last year, the Paris-based nongovernmental organization OuiShare cohosted Sharing Lille, a multifaceted festival attended by over 1,000 people meant to foster more sharing in Lille, France. The 2017 theme of the organization's flagship Paris event—OuiShare Fest—is cities. In addition, its far-flung members are working with numerous cities on sharing projects through its network in Europe and South America.

I've only mentioned cities that we know of—and our network has its limits—that self-identify as a sharing city or have a sharing cities program. There are also other cities—such as Bologna, Barcelona, Frome, and many more—that do not use the label "sharing city" to describe projects or development strategies where sharing, the commons, and coproduction play a central role.

In addition, there are many efforts that we consider part of the movement that do not involve a city government. For example, there's ShareCity (sharecity.ie), a large, university research project led by scholar Anna Davies studying food-sharing enterprises in 100 cities from around the world. There's Friends of the Earth UK's Big Ideas project (www.foe.co.uk), which catalyzed Duncan McLaren and Julian Agyeman's groundbreaking book, *Sharing Cities: A Case for Truly Smart and Sustainable Cities.* There are also cities like Portland that have a rare concentration of grassroots sharing projects including clothing swaps, lending libraries, and shared workspaces (www.shareable.net/blog/in-portland-you-can-have-all-you-need-by-sharing). Sharing cities are part of, and intersect with, a much larger and more diverse set of efforts by people working toward sustainability, democracy, and shared prosperity in cities.

Sharing cities are part of a much larger set of efforts by people working toward sustainability, democracy, and shared prosperity in cities.

As the sharing cities movement unfolded, Shareable catalyzed it further through continuous news coverage, publishing the first ever sharing cities policy guide, *Policies for Shareable Cities*, in 2013, and launching our Sharing Cities Network, an events network. Together, this helped grow the movement, particularly among local activists and politicians in the US and Europe.

• In Asia, the Sharing Economy Association of Japan (SEAJ) is currently developing sharing cities programs with 26 rural municipalities in Japan. Last year, five Japanese cities—Chiba, Yuzawa, Taku, Hamamatsu, and Shimabara—unveiled plans, developed with SEAJ, to foster more sharing. And, of course, the movement has taken off in South Korea. On November 6, 2016, at Seoul Sharing Festival, which I attended as a member of Mayor Park's Sharing Economy International Advisory Group, seven Korean cities—Seoul, Jeonju, Suwon, Seongnam, Siheung, Gwangju, and Don-gu—signed a joint declaration announcing their plans to develop their sharing cities programs together.

This is just a start at outlining the movement. It's hard to judge its scope and size because, like many movements, there is no central organizing body and its boundaries are somewhat fuzzy.

A Book Is Born

When we decided to produce the book (an idea suggested by members of the Sharing Cities Network), we wanted to maintain the ethos of sharing by producing it collaboratively. We assembled a team of 15 fellows from nine countries to crowdsource the book proposal and write the book. We officially launched the project January 20, 2016. Simone Cicero, our collaboration fellow from Rome, Italy, ran what became an extended visioning process to create a shared understanding of the purpose, structure, and content of the book.

The team decided to create a collection of short, accessible, and mostly time-tested case studies (of enterprises, mostly) and model policies (laws, regulations, or city plans) that support sharing in cities. We decided to organize the cases and policies by 11 functional areas of a city—housing, mobility, food, work, energy, land, waste, water, technology, finance, and governance—and curate about six of each per chapter. Each chapter is the product of two fellows who together selected and wrote the cases and policies. In addition, 18 organizations contributed articles including ICLEI, Story of Stuff, and Club Cultural Matienzo.

The collection not only illustrates the vision of a sharing city through examples, but also communicates the book team's core belief. We believe that it's possible to run much of a city on a commons basis, that a city could be in nearly every way of, by, and for the people, and that the urban

Celebrating the installation of solar panels on a roof.

CPA.coop (Community Purchasing Alliance, Washington, DC)

Headquarters of Banco Palmas and Instituto Palmas, in Fortaleza (CE).

Banco Palmas. Palmaslab

LabGov team after a civic maintenance operation on a piece of property being turned into a collaboratively owned and managed community land trust in Rome, Centocelle.

www.labgov.it Christian Iaione

commons is, as Silke Helfrich pointed out in her IASC Urban Commons Conference keynote in 2015, a "concrete utopia" (commonstransition.org/imagining-the-rurban-commons-in-2040). In other words, a credible utopia that's well within reach because its parts already exist, though they've not yet been assembled in one place to make a complete sharing city. The team wanted the book to represent this concrete utopia and serve as an assembly manual for it, or at least a start at one.

It's an unfinished work. We've imagined it as the kernel of an open-source project that requires a community to fully flesh it out. Or as version 1.0 of limitless versions, because we've only scratched the surface of what's in a dynamic, growing field. There's so much more to be recognized publicly. Uncovering it needs to be an ongoing community effort. One of the lessons I learned while working on *Sharing Cities* is that there's a blindness to the power to meet our own needs without complete dependence on the market or state, which is made more poignant because we need this power now more than ever. Hopefully, the book opens many eyes to what's abundant as leaves of grass in a vast plain. Perhaps it's human nature to overlook what's always around us. And to live in a city is to be completely enveloped by what is shared, from sidewalks and streets to parks and squares to space and time itself. So I strongly encourage you to expand this catalogue of hope.

To live in a city is to be completely enveloped by what is shared, from sidewalks and streets to parks and squares to space and time itself.

What's in the Book? Civic Imagination

There are 69 case studies and 68 model policies in the book. Though only scratching the surface of what's out there, the geographic and sectoral diversity of our selections will expand the reader's view of what's possible. Together, they are provocative in the best possible way. It is amazing what ordinary people can do when they commit to projects where personal interests and the common good are aligned. The case studies undermine the myth that "there is no alternative" to capitalism—TINA for short—and show that "there are many alternatives"—known as TAMA in the commons world.

Take, for instance, RideAustin, a nonprofit Uber alternative that has raised $8 million in donations, facilitated over 1 million rides, raised $100,000 for local charities through its app, and is on track to be self-sustaining through an innovative funding model, all without charging drivers anything. Along similar lines is COwOP Taxi in Seoul. Seoul supported the development of this new taxi service that combines convenient ride-hailing technology with driver ownership and control of the business. These are just two of many examples that prioritize community and/or worker control over a global, investor-controlled option that extracts as much revenue as possible out of the hundreds of cities it serves. Why should a city risk dependence on a startup that extracts money from the local economy when it can cultivate options that keep money circulating in it?

Also consider Club Cultural Matienzo, formed in 2008 in the wake of a tragic nightclub fire that killed 194 people and triggered a wave of club closings that throttled Buenos Aires' grassroots arts scene for years. CCM innovated a safe, legal, profitable, and worker-controlled business model for cultural spaces. Its support helped the number of local venues grow by 800 percent (from 100 to 800) in nine years. Today, these clubs buy supplies together to reduce costs, host multi-location festivals, and lobby the city for arts-friendly policies. The result is a vibrant arts scene that supports artistic talent at a mass scale while creating decent jobs for young workers. This is far cry from the commercial club scene that all too often exploits artists, workers, and fans with little regard for overall vibrancy of a community's arts scene. In Buenos Aires, grassroots culture is supported as a commons.

The model policies are exciting in their own way. As legal tools, they open space for the kinds of projects highlighted by our case studies. Most, like the ghost tax regulation in London (to reduce vacant housing), peer-to-peer parking regulation in Montreal (to increase supply of parking in crowded areas), and open land data policy in Rotterdam (to manage land better), are solutions aimed at addressing specific challenges. However, there are a few policies that are multifaceted and represent a new commons-based paradigm. This includes Cuba's agricultural model, Barcelona's policies for the "commons collaborative economy," which is made of 120 crowdsourced policy ideas to create a more fair, local sharing economy, and the regulatory foundation of Seoul Sharing City. Another paradigm-shifting standout is Bologna's Regulation on Collaboration Between Citizens and the City for the Care and Regeneration of the Urban Commons, which allows citizens to no longer be passive recipients of city services, but active agents in shaping public life for the better. It provides a legal framework and administrative process by which citizens can directly care for urban commons such as parks, streets, cultural assets, schools, and much more. It fills a gap in administrative laws that don't allow citizens to maintain or create public assets and services in cities.

The book also covers some expected territory—how cities should regulate Airbnb and Uber. However, our book fellows' interest in this aspect of sharing cities was surprisingly low. It was more of a box to check. The book team felt that while it's important to reorient aggressive commercial actors toward the commons, the more game-changing innovations are commons-based from the beginning.

There were many challenges in selecting the case studies and model policies even though our crowdsourced book proposal set out clear standards—that they be commons-oriented, city-based, and easily-replicable. For instance, there are few cases and policies that are purely

Volunteer team gardening outside a housing residence in Todmorden, UK.

Incredible Edible Todmorden Team www.incredible-edible-todmorden.co.uk/contact

Tharanath Gajendra

Seva Cafe Volunteers preparing the food for the day.

commons-oriented. The majority of the pieces have a commons element, and the rest arguably set the stage for commons development. For instance, Barcelona's Solar Thermal Ordinance helps to localize renewal energy production, setting the stage for a commons approach to energy, but doesn't imagine a commons in its effort to promote sustainability.

The scale requirement was also a challenge, because sectors like energy, water, and waste have critical regional and national dimensions. This sometimes made it difficult to find solutions that were discretely city-based. In addition, many cases did not fit snugly into the categories the team chose. This was particularly true of the broad, paradigm-shifting policies—like Seoul Sharing City—which seek impact in a variety of areas. This was a lesson in the intertwined nature of different socio-geographic scales, the inadequacy of siloed approaches to resource management, and the need for whole-systems thinking in urban design.

These are days when city residents need options, especially as established institutions all too often fail to exercise what urban commons scholar Christian Iaione, a Bologna regulation coauthor, calls "civic imagination."

Content in Context

The commons was part of, but not the core of, our sharing cities vision when we hosted Share San Francisco in 2011. This changed pretty quickly for two reasons. First, it was clear that sharing cities could easily be co-opted by commercial interests to help promote a technological vision of cities or simply be subsumed under the corporate smart cities rubric as in the case of SharingCities.eu. We had experienced this kind of co-optation firsthand with the sharing economy. We chronicled the birth of the sharing economy in San Francisco starting in 2009, but once billions of dollars in venture capital started to flow into these once fragile and communitarian-minded startups, the concept of sharing became a moral cover for a particularly aggressive extension of business as usual. When this happened, our reporting turned critical on the Silicon Valley version of the sharing economy. We also began to frame sharing in relation to geographic-bounded communities through our sharing cities reporting and activism to reduce the chance of co-optation. Still, the risk remains.

Second, and most importantly, we benefited greatly from ongoing collaboration with a community of commons theorists including Michel Bauwens of the P2P Foundation, Silke Helfrich and David Bollier of the Commons Strategies Group, Christian Iaione of LabGov (who cowrote the Bologna regulation), law scholar Sheila Foster of Fordham University, and others. Over the last few years, they've worked within a wider network of stakeholders to flesh out a commons-based political economy for cities through a global program of research, public communication, and civic laboratories. We at Shareable were fortunate to have participated in some of this work, but we mostly reported on it. We did this because we not only saw their work as groundbreaking, but also believed it could help define and defend a people-first vision of cities. We felt that any such vision of cities, sharing cities or otherwise, needed its own political economy or it would simply melt into the corporate grid, no matter how good the intentions. That's what our experience with the sharing economy taught us.

The Urban Commons

The importance of the urban commons to cities today is that it situates residents as the key actors—not markets, technologies, or governments, as popular narratives suggest—at a time when people feel increasingly powerless. To paraphrase commons scholars Sheila Foster and Christian Iaione, the city as a commons is a claim on the city by the people (digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1698&context=ylpr). Furthermore, a commons transition is a viable, post-capitalist way forward, as the groundbreaking fieldwork of the P2P Foundation in Ecuador (wiki.p2pfoundation.net/Commons_Transition_Plan) and the examples in our book suggest.

But what is the commons and why is it a credible alternative? David Bollier's excellent primer, *Think Like a Commoner*, gives a good definition (www.shareable.net/blog/new-book-inspires-us-to-think-like-a-commoner).

According to Bollier, the commons is:

- *A self-organized system by which communities manage resources (both depletable and replenishable) with minimal or no reliance on the Market or State.*
- *The wealth that we inherit or create together and must pass on, undiminished or enhanced, to our children. Our collective wealth includes the gifts of nature, civic infrastructure, cultural works and traditions, and knowledge.*
- *A sector of the economy (and life!) that generates value in ways that are often taken for granted—and often jeopardized by the Market-State.*

Importantly, as Bollier points out, the commons is not merely a resource and the people who use it. The most important component is the relationship between a resource and its users, which is embodied in the user-managed governance arrangements that regulate access.

The commons is a credible alternative or augmentation of state and market resource management because it's been used for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. An estimated two billion people rely on it today, mostly in rural areas. It's also been extensively studied. Nobel Laureate Elinor Ostrom's decades of research on the commons contain a message that couldn't be more relevant today—that commons-based resource management is often more efficient and long-lasting than state or market approaches. The book benefited greatly from the contributions of Ryan Conway, a member of the Ostrom Workshop at Indiana University, a legendary center for commons research since 1973. The policy he contributed about polycentric planning for climate change in Dortmund, Germany goes even further. It reflects Ostrom's belief that a decentralized, local approach to climate change could be more effective in aggregate than current global approaches.

While the commons is a promising approach to urban challenges, the study of the commons has historically been focused on relatively isolated, rural, natural resource commons like irrigation systems, fisheries, and forests. In comparison, research on urban commons is fairly new. It remains to be seen if the commons can become

the new, dominant paradigm for resource management—as some commons activists posit—in a place like the city where all the forces of society come to bear.

Still, we at Shareable believe that the commons needs to be elevated to a dramatically higher level of importance in urban development, but not to the exclusion of the state and market. Instead, the three spheres of commons, state, and market must be put on a peer basis institutionally, harmonized, and managed to control the excesses and foster the strengths of each. We don't think government or markets are inherently good or bad. They, like any institution, including the commons, can be guided to serve or degrade the common good.

As such, commoners must build and fight, to borrow from Cooperation Jackson. We must build the urban commons and reform the government and market. Urban commons can't thrive if the government and market enclose them, which is all too often the case. Moreover, cities need strong, socially responsible versions of all three spheres to become truly resilient. Coral reefs are famously resilient because every function in the ecosystem is managed by numerous species in different ways. Similarly, cities need a heterodox political economy to thrive. This is a job for the finest versions of all our tools. Simply replacing one orthodoxy with another is not the way forward. As Elinor Ostrom herself once said, "No panaceas!" In other words, no simple, one-size-fits-all formulas, and that goes for the commons too. It's not the answer to everything.

In this way, a sharing city is less a thing and more a mindset and a dynamic, participatory process characterized by the below principles, and perhaps more:

• **Solidarity.** Sharing Cities is a new story about cities that recognizes community as the heroic protagonist in urban transformation. In this story, people work together for the common good rather than compete for scarce resources. Sharing Cities challenge popular narratives that portray high technology and competitive markets as key drivers of cities. A Sharing City is of, by, and for all people no matter their race, class, gender, sexual orientation, or ability. In other words, Sharing Cities are primarily civic, with residents focused on taking care of each other, their city, and partner cities too. To paraphrase Thich Nhat Hanh, the next Buddha will be community. A multitude of loving, human-scale communities will be the means by which we protect all life on earth. The solution is us.

• **Private sufficiency**, civic abundance. To quote George Monbiot, "There is not enough physical or environmental space for everyone to enjoy private luxury...Private luxury shuts down space, creating deprivation. But magnificent public amenities—wonderful parks and playgrounds, public sports centres and swimming pools, galleries, allotments and public transport networks—create more space for everyone, at a fraction of the cost." Civic abundance should include public schools, spacious squares, expansive walkable cityscape, extensive bikeways, lending libraries, fablabs, pocket parks, coworking spaces, cultural centers, child care co-ops, food pantries, and more. In fact, each neighborhood should have a mix of civic amenities tailored to their needs. Sharing Cities are a path to abundance and celebration, not deprivation and drabness that downscaling private consumption can suggest.

• **Distributed architecture.** Sharing Cities reflect a shift in cities from an industrial model, which centralizes various functions of a city in separate areas for batch processing by bureaucracies, to a networked architecture, which distributes functions throughout the city for real-time processing through open networks. The distributed model is characterized by mixed-use zoning, modular architecture, event-based use of multifunction assets, and onsite processing of energy, water, and waste. It also enables new ways to manage resources (access over ownership) and multiple types of currencies (fiat, local, reputation) and property (public, private, and community). Sharing Cities' distributed architecture has the potential to dramatically increase the well-being of all city residents while dramatically decreasing consumption.

• **Common needs, co-designed solutions.** Sharing Cities focus on common needs and pragmatic, community-developed solutions as opposed to top-down, one-size-fits-all solutions. This requires co-design, experimentation, learning, and iteration by the community. It also requires avoiding unnecessary replication of divisive national politics at the local level, which can take the focus off of common needs and solutions. To paraphrase Father Arizmendi, the founder of Mondragon cooperative: ideologies divide, common needs unify.

• **Transformation over transaction.** Sharing Cities emphasize solutions that build residents' ability to work together. This is preferable to solutions that reduce provisioning to mere economic transaction. Services that build collaborative capacity can produce transformative social goods, lead to new collaborations, and help put a community on a positive, long-term trajectory. As in the case of Northern Italy, a strong civic culture can last for centuries and is a pre-condition for long-term shared prosperity.

• **Local control, global cooperation.** Sharing Cities create many democratic, local centers of power that cooperate globally. This can take many forms. For instance, city governments could develop an open-source urban commons technology stack together. Think Airbnb and Uber, but with locally-owned, democratically-controlled instances of services that are also connected through a global platform. This is what futurist Jose Ramos calls "cosmo-localization." It's a strategy to achieve scale while building solidarity.

• **Impact through replication, not just scale.** Sharing Cities can systematically encourage the documentation of local solutions so they can be adapted and replicated in other places. Here, solutions are only loosely connected. This process requires minimal technology and administrative investment. Scale is not the only path to dramatic impact. Both scale and replication strategies should be pursued.

• **Cross-sector collaboration, hybrid solutions.** To thrive, the urban commons must adapt to the dense institutional web of the city. Unlike isolated rural commons, urban commons have no choice but to negotiate mutually beneficial relationships with government and the market. This must happen at the project and city scale as demonstrated by Bologna's urban commons. Sharing Cities' solutions are often hybrids of the commons, government, and market.

• **Systems thinking, empathy.** City residents, urban planners, local politicians, and single-issue

Ortsteil Berlin-Friedrichshain: Rigaer Str. 78, Hausbesetzerszene.

Angela M. Arnold commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rigaer_Str_78_-_Hausbesetzer_F%27hain_110311_AMA_fec_(10).JPG

Lisa Goldapple / Atlas of the Future

Residents in unique intergenerational Dutch retirement home.

advocates need to increasingly see how different functions within a city interact with each other and are shaped by the surrounding region. For instance, the impacts of land use, transportation, housing, and jobs on each other are profound. They must increasingly be planned together, and at a regional scale. Stakeholders groups need to have empathy for one another and co-design urban solutions that optimize for the whole, not just one or a small cluster of issues or jurisdictions.

• **Build and fight.** Sharing Cities seize local opportunities for commons development that are open today. Many commons projects need little if any funding or permission to start. While political change is necessary, it's unwise to depend solely on it or wait passively for it. Today's urgent challenges require immediate action. That said, a completely independent, parallel economy is not possible. The urban commons needs to be fought for politically too, and that takes long-term vision and commitment. As in the strategy of Cooperation Jackson, we must build and fight.

What principles would you add?

A Call to Action

This is no time for mere resistance. Nor is it time for blame, resignation, or sharpening our differences. It is time for bold, new visions. It is time to reach across boundaries, identify common needs, and work together to meet them directly where we live. It is time for pragmatic solutions by the people. It is time for human beings to go on new, creative adventures together as if our lives depended on it, because they do.

This call to adventure in cities must be answered. There, "the fierce urgency of now," to quote Martin Luther King Jr., is felt acutely. Soul-searing, society-rending levels of inequality, racism, pollution, and social isolation are the daily lived experience of billions of city dwellers, now making up over half the world's population. Yet, cities remain places of great hope. There, the potential for change is as abundant as suffering. Cities are simultaneously leading us toward and away from the brink of extinction. They are rising faster than nations to meet global challenges like climate change—at the same time they are the key drivers of such systemic problems. We live in a new age of cities, but the human future has long been forged in cities, the cradles of civilizations and arguably our species' most important and durable social innovation.

The future, however, is never assured. It must be made together. We must decide together what kind of cities we want to live in and what kind of people we want to become. We are more knowledgeable than ever about what makes a great life and what brings out the best in human beings. Our power to shape the conditions that shape us has never been greater. So, there may be no more important question than this: How can we turn cities from impersonal engines of destruction into intimate communities of transformation?

The global economic crisis woke many up to the realization that prioritizing economic growth over all life on planet Earth is the source of the multiple crises we face and not a solution as some establishment politicians stubbornly insist. As the recent shifts in global politics suggest, there's growing agreement among ordinary people that the status quo is failing us.

What now?

To paraphrase commons scholar Keith Taylor, when markets and governments fail, we have us. In other words, we have a largely unacknowledged ace up our sleeves, another way to provision our lives that puts us in control—the commons.

Let's use it.

Based in San Francisco, Neal Gorenflo is the cofounder and executive director of Shareable, an award-winning news, action, connection hub for the sharing transformation (see www.shareable.net/users/neal-gorenflo). Neal is also executive editor and contributor to the book Sharing Cities *(see www.shareable.net/sharing-cities).*

The Freifunk-Initiative installing wifi antennas in Berlin-Kreuzberg in 2013.

Boris Niehaus (JUST)

Hello SafeMotos.

www.safemotos.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Eric.jpg

COMPACT COMMUNITY
at Maitreya EcoVillage in Eugene, Oregon

By Robert Bolman

Robert Crumb's iconic illustration, "A Short History of America," starts with its first panel depicting a pastoral country scene. The next panel introduces the railroad to this setting; the next panel, a telegraph line, a small house, and a dirt road. Subsequent panels add more and bigger buildings, more utilities, pavement, etc. By the 12th panel, our bucolic country setting is choked with cars, pavement, and all the ugliness that has characterized the suburban "growth and development" that followed WWII.

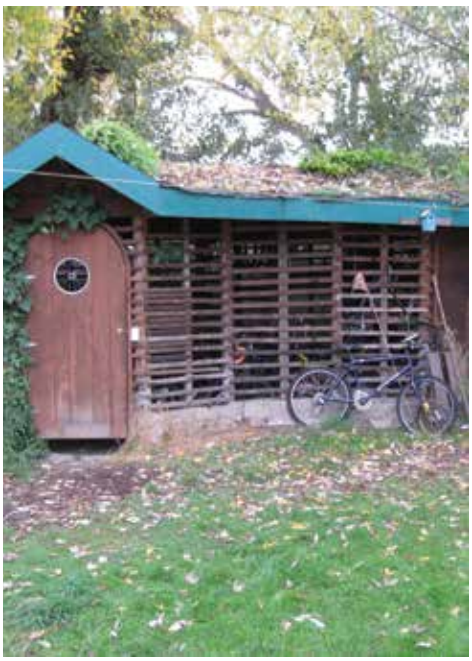
The final three panels depict three possible future scenarios: ecological collapse, the techno-future with flying cars, and the ecotopian future with bicycles and trees. We all wish to avoid ecological collapse; I feel that the financial and energy resources are not going to be there to support the techno-future; which leaves us with the ecotopian future. It is that scenario that I would like to see urban planning strive for.

Social and architectural critic James Howard Kunstler laments that suburban sprawl has been "the worst misallocation of resources in human history." Countless cheap, flimsy tract houses, strip malls, burger joints, and big box stores fan out in most directions from our cities—all of it built with the full expectation that we will always drive around in cars. Meanwhile, US tourists flock to European cities for the pleasure of vacationing in a humane, pedestrian-scale urban environment: Taller, mixed-use buildings line the street, defining it as a large, outdoor room. Flowers, parks, and trees combine with sidewalk cafes and corner markets to create a festive, lively environment where people walk many places, public transit is fast and convenient, and community flourishes. After their European vacation is over, US tourists return to their own wretched US cities where the downtown is commercially comatose and all serious shopping is done by driving to the Walmart on the edge of town.

It will be more challenging than most people understand for US-style automobile culture to survive the end of fossil fuels (a whole other essay). Urban planners consider 15 dwelling units per acre to be the minimum density necessary to support reasonably fast and efficient public transit. Most suburban sprawl development in the US falls woefully short of that. So, in terms of land use, we've painted ourselves into a corner.

In 1991, I sold a single house in San Francisco and bought five contiguous city lots with a smattering of older houses about one mile west of the center of Eugene, Oregon. Already a builder, I soon discovered green building. That led me to permaculture, intentional community, appropriate technology, and renewable energy; all of it culminating in the ecovillage and broader ecocity concepts. Owning vacant city land, I experimented with various green and natural building techniques. The more interesting things I built, the more interesting people moved in. Upon completing a triplex in 2002 and with a regular meditation group, we named the place Maitreya

Photos courtesy of www.maitreyaecovillage.org



Chris Roth

EcoVillage. It has continued to organically grow and change ever since. Much of that change has been focused on density—density of dwelling units, density of food production, density of uses and activity, density of fun and laughter.

In a nutshell, where urban development is concerned, we need to have sufficient density to support functional public transit, bicycling, and walking, and yet have it be so beautiful, fun, green, and rich with community that people will enjoy being there—not yearning to jump in their cars to get away.

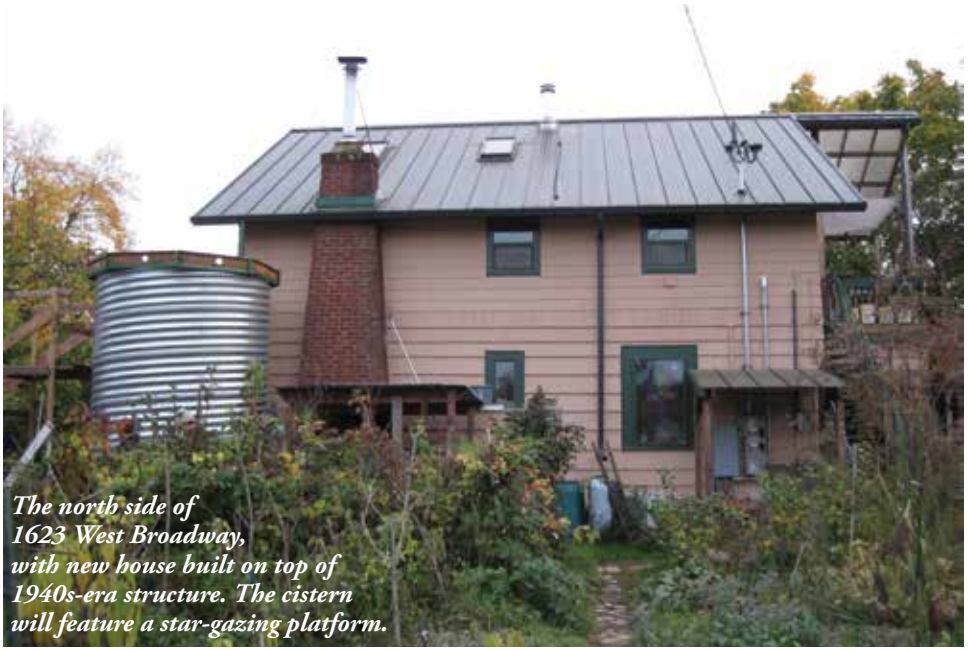
Many historical cities were dense for security purposes. The oldest part of Barcelona has some streets so narrow that a car can't physically fit on them. Not coincidentally, this is arguably the most fun, vibrant, and lively part of the city—the streets filled with people walking places and never a dull moment. I would argue that nowadays our cities should densify again—also for security purposes. Like a threatened turtle, pulling its legs and head into its shell, we must pull our urban extremities inward in preparation for life without fossil fuels and the approaching "Long Emergency," as Kunstler calls it.

With some residents having bought an adjoining property, Maitreya EcoVillage now houses about 30 to 35 people on 1.25 acres. In addition to about 10 dwelling units, there is also a Cascadian anarcho folk grass band, a brewing cooperative, a wood shop, a steel fabricating area, a koi pond, a sauna, a strawbale and earthen community space, a cob guest cottage, a biogas digester, a free food distribution area, and lots of gardening. Currently under construction are an octagonal meditation sanctuary, a 4000 gallon rainwater cistern, an outdoor kitchen and an 8.5 ft. x 16 ft. tiny house complete with bathroom and kitchen that I wish to Airbnb—bringing an educational, ecotourism component to our village. Next year I want to build a permanent greenhouse to experiment with aquaponics.

I built a new house on top of an existing, single story 1940s-era house—an example of what could be done to millions of dreary, energy-wasteful US homes: making them all into creative, net-zero-energy, eco-trophy duplexes. I have a few rooftop decks in mind. The idea is to go up rather than out—wanting to make Maitreya as full as possible of fun and interesting activity all within its limited urban footprint. Richard Register's ecocity vision includes rooftop gardens and rooftop cafes with bridges joining rooftop to rooftop. An important aspect to stacking up the urban fabric is that the farmland surrounding our cities is more precious than we've understood. When the tractor trailer rigs stop bringing our food from 1500 miles away, we'll appreciate the tragedy of having paved over so much farm land.

While it's still a glorified landlord-tenant arrangement, I like to think that I'm the world's coolest eco-landlord. We have business meetings at least once per month where decisions are made by consensus. (How many cats are acceptable in an urban ecovillage setting?) Having gotten to be 61 years old without producing any children of my own, I have a standing offer among those here that upon their organizing a credible financial entity to assume ownership, I will bequeath it a substantial percentage of the equity. Thus, Maitreya EcoVillage will hopefully continue boldly into the future with a life of its own.

Robert Bolman is a green builder and artist. In 1991 he bought one acre of land west of the center of Eugene, Oregon that is now Maitreya EcoVillage.



The north side of 1623 West Broadway, with new house built on top of 1940s-era structure. The cistern will feature a star-gazing platform.

Chris Roth

GREEN AND RESILIENT NEIGHBORHOODS: Portland, Oregon and Beyond

By Jan Spencer

Early going for greening the neighborhood: Jan Spencer's permaculture back yard.

In late September, I had the much anticipated opportunity to visit several ecovillages in Portland, Oregon. Always on the short lists of greenest cities in the country, Portland is located where the Willamette River meets the Columbia. Ten thousand years ago, this location was periodically submerged under 400 feet of water, thanks to the glacial Missoula Floods.

These days, people are flooding into Portland and I was on my way to stay the night at Columbia Ecovillage and next day, visit Cully Grove Garden Community and Kailash Ecovillage. I was to discover ecovillages come in all sorts of flavors.

Columbia Ecovillage: Planting the Seeds

A friend connected me with a fellow at Columbia. Denny and his wife Anne had lived at Columbia Ecovillage (CEV) from the beginning, about eight years. As it turned out, Denny was a highly informative and enjoyable host. Our interests were the same—how to green our homes, but also, reach further into the neighborhood and community. We had a great time.

Arriving at CEV, and veering right past a sign advising "Watch for Children," I entered a mostly shaded parking lot. It was surrounded on all sides by 1970s-era two-story apartment buildings that contain 37 condominiums. There is ample and thoughtful landscaping, much of it edible, a number of large trees, a covered and secure bike shed with dozens of bikes and trailers inside. I saw an extensive recycling area, and chipped wood paths that connected the parking area with attractive two-story buildings where residents live.

This all looked well cared for. The first residents I talked with in the parking lot were friendly and pointed me to where Denny lived. Stepping past a kid's trike on the chip path under a chestnut tree and up the stairway, I came to Denny and Anne's comfortably arranged three-bedroom apartment. Within minutes, I had made friends with Denny, Anne, and their two resident cats; we were soon back out the door to see Columbia Ecovillage.

Columbia occupies almost four acres in an older neighborhood. It has a condominium ownership model. The founders bought an old farm house behind the apartment complex in 2004 and were later able to buy the apartment complex with the intention of creating a cohousing community. They took on the liability of a sizable upfront investment. Once the word was out about the new project, it did not take long to attract interested persons to buy in.

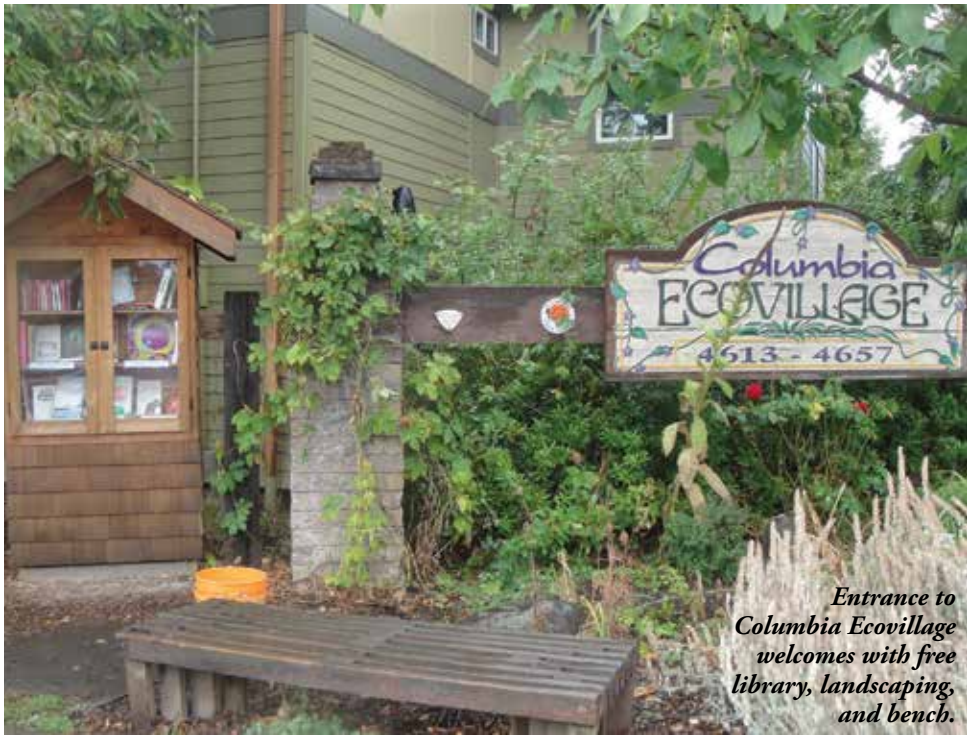
Eight years later, Columbia looks to be thriving. Denny showed me around. The place has many attributes common to cohousing such as shared laundry, arts and crafts space, kid space, and common house. We ran into several other members out near the entrance. A comment was, "It takes 15 minutes to walk across the parking lot." Not because it's such a big parking lot; rather, you always run into people you need to talk with.

The outback open space was maybe half the land area of CEV, which included extensive bamboo plantings and huge black walnut trees. The veggie gardens were personal plots and the cooperative fig grove featured seven different kinds of figs. The chickens looked happy. A cluster of multi-thousand-gallon rainwater storage tanks clearly showed the group was serious about water storage.

A number of well maintained older outbuildings date back to the farm days. One they call the speak-easy, where members and friends gather to play music, make noise, and have fun. The most distant ecovillage boundary provided views of neighboring properties. I saw gardens and creative-looking outbuildings on the large lots where others seemed to have similar ideas to Columbia. Denny affirmed that many of the neighbors were on good terms with CEV.

Residents of Columbia confer in the parking lot.

Cooperative living can mean shared tools, such as these at Columbia.



Entrance to Columbia Ecovillage welcomes with free library, landscaping, and bench.

Participation is a core value at Columbia. There are frequent shared meals, informal get-togethers, work parties, and committees. Members are required to participate at least nine hours a month in community projects, while some people take on many extra tasks as their time and interests allow. There are pod work groups for chickens, rainwater system, bookkeeping, yoga, public relations, maintenance, special events, hosting visitors, managing the Common Hall, and more.

Columbia is governed as a self-managed condominium. Work and decision making take place in four self-organizing domains: administration, facilities/maintenance, land use, and social life.

Overall, Columbia looked great. Most of the members I met were Baby Boomers. Their collective values were all good; protect nature, conserve resources, respect each other, egalitarian management, and balance group needs with self.

Denny was a wonderful host to show and tell about the ecovillage. He also knew a great deal about what was happening in the nearby neighborhood. That was next on the agenda.

We passed by front yard gardens here and there on the leafy streets of Cully Neighborhood. We visited a half acre property that included an eco-minded preschool, a Gypsy-looking tiny house, and quarter acre flower farm. Denny kept up a running commentary of anecdotal greening-the-neighborhood stories the whole time.

I was already impressed with everything when we came upon a cluster of five homes with both practical and amusing features. There were front yard gardens, a co-op house that hosted community happenings, a Bathtub Museum, vernacular public art, and a streetside reclamation spot for neighbors to repatriate small items stolen by a four-footed cat burglar.

I asked Denny if Columbia Ecovillage may have had a hand in greening the neighborhood. Modest as he was, he told me the neighborhood already had a history of eco-friendly culture that predates Columbia, but he also said Columbia has certainly had some positive influence and adds significantly to that culture.

Our 42nd Avenue: Greening the Neighborhood

Like my suburban property in Eugene, an ecovillage such as Columbia is great but, again, the scale needs to go far beyond several dozen exceptional households in a neighborhood with thousands that are not so forward-thinking.

Denny told me about a small nonprofit, Our 42nd Avenue, helping to green the neighborhood. I was about to see a small but very significant tool, and projects it is facilitating, with enormous potential for transforming economy and culture.

42nd Avenue in Cully Neighborhood, just south of Killingsworth, is ground zero for small-scale eco-minded economic renewal. It's a several-block commercial area, four or five blocks from CEV, with several empty or underused commercial buildings, although the zone already can boast of several vibrant stores and cafes.

In their own words, "Our 42nd Avenue is economic development by the community, for the community, a collection of residents, business owners, local employees, commercial property owners, community institutions and others."

From their website, their vision: "42nd Avenue will be a welcoming, safe, walkable and eco-friendly commercial district that nurtures a diverse population with affordable goods and services. The district will be distinct for its vibrancy, with attractive storefronts, an interesting streetscape, and destinations where people can gather and meet their everyday needs. The environment will foster stronger connections amongst community members and stimulate local economic development and employment opportunities."

Economics is the dominant force that has shaped empires, started wars, fabricated culture, determined haves and have-nots all through history; from the Phoenicians, to Marxism, to the Chicago School, right up to the present. Just about all the escalating social, political, environmental misadventures of our time are a product of global market capitalism. From my perspective, creating green, uplifted, and healthy alternatives to market capitalism is the most urgent task of our time. What would a society look like where the economic system's task was to serve the public good rather than monetize, exploit, and degrade it? Our 42nd Avenue is the choreographer of a set of modest actions—a model that could be upsized as much as people involved want to take it.

Denny took me to the last farmers' market of the season in the midst of the 42nd Avenue redevelopment zone. There were farmers and craftspeople from the nearby neighborhood. A person from Our 42nd Avenue was tabling to explain the group's work. I saw lots of mixing and mingling, buying and selling. The market was eco-friendly, festive, a coming together at the neighborhood scale.

I met several of the farmers, had a beer, and chatted with a lot of people.

Afterwards, Denny showed me some of the small farms in the nearby neighborhood and they were beautiful. People were building businesses with specialty crops and value-added food-related activities. One property was owned by supportive neighbors, another made available by a community-minded church.

One fellow at the market had a startup across the street, incubated by Our 42nd Avenue. His budding new business, still very small, is an urban farm and garden store, to sell products and provide services to both home gardeners and larger urban farms. Perfect!

Up the street was a sizable empty commercial space. Our 42nd Avenue was in discussions with the property owners, local businesses, and interested community members to make creative new use of that space that would be true to the ideals of Our 42nd Avenue and the neighborhood.

This brief exposure to a small urban area caused me to imagine. I had seen small but important elements of a more green and local economy. Certainly this part of the neighborhood is not going off the mainstream grid, but if there is to be a greening of the neighborhood culture and economy that moves in a mindful direction, this could be what it might look like in the early going. Everything that I saw can grow, inspire nearby commercial zones to do likewise, form clusters, and expand much more widely into the community.

My Communal Backstory: Texas, Arkansas, Israel, and more

My own awareness of ecovillages and intentional communities started 45 years ago in north central Texas, of all places. Whitehawk was an intentional community north of Denton, Texas, where I went to college. Several friends lived there, out north of town past the shuttered and bunkered Nike missile base.

In the mid '70s, it was off the grid; the 12 or 15 homes were all earth-sheltered ferrocement burrowed into the south-facing slopes of the prairie landscape. Most had exposed glass walls facing the south. Except for the windmills, the place looked a bit like a moon base.

About the same time in the late '70s, I became involved with a back-to-the-land community in the Arkansas Ozarks named Sassafras. We were off the grid and three miles from a paved road. Steep Cave Mountain Road up to our place blew out more than one radiator.

Our neighbor's kids would nail dead birds on the gate we had to open to cross his property to access ours. We grew a considerable amount of our own food in this gorgeous and rugged Ozark valley that ranged in elevation from 1200 feet above sea level down at Beech Creek to over 2300 feet at the cliff above, only a quarter mile away. You could drink the water in the creek. You could get lost in the caves on the property.

A favorite pastime was working things out with each other. We were all OK. We had community projects, frequent sweat lodges, workdays, and an outdoor kitchen, complete with resident rattlesnake under the woodbox. The place was on the commune circuit with many visitors in the summer. The community's unique coming-to-an-end is a favorite counterculture story in the northwest Arkansas Ozarks.

In the mid '80s, I spent a month as a volunteer on a nonreligious kibbutz in Israel. My final few miles of travel arriving to the kibbutz was in an armored personnel carrier. The place was near Nazareth and was home to about 500 people.

On a rocky hilltop, Kfar Hahoresh was a planned community with a large central recreation space surrounded by nice landscaping, residential and service buildings, all very modern. Kids grew up together, not with their parents. Most of the older ones couldn't wait to leave. There was a primary school and basic health care on site.

Almost everyone worked at the kibbutz. An important community business was a large automated kosher bread factory. When I had a choice of jobs, I always went to the avocado orchards down in the valley.

A majority of the residents were from eastern Europe, emigrating in the mid 1930s when Fascism was on the rise. There were few if any private cars. I can appreciate the site design, social and economic aspects far more now than when I was there, 35 years ago.

I spent two early springtime weeks on a foggy, chilly, and rocky hilltop in south Italy with a group of radical pacifist Catholics. They were into extreme voluntary simplicity. It was cold, no electricity, no machines. Core to their beliefs was that any involvement with the mainstream economy was complicity in damage that economy did to people and planet.

The common denominator of all these places was some kind of disaffection for the mainstream culture and economy and what it did to people and the environment. These visits and the passage of time give me more of an appreciation for the ideals of living more green, modestly, and cooperatively.

Back to the Present: Cully Grove Garden Community

After leaving Columbia Ecovillage, I shifted only a quarter mile, still in Cully Neighborhood, to another ecovillage called Cully Grove. While Columbia and Kailash, which we will have a look at shortly, made use of existing built infrastructure, Cully Grove is an infill project on an undeveloped two acres.

Instead of a conventional subdivision of 16 detached homes, the plan for Cully Grove was to build relatively modest eco-friendly homes, to preserve open space with heritage trees, and design for social interaction and cooperation among the residents. The results are beautiful.

There is a shared garden area, shared bike shed, community house, and shared workshop

Cully Grove combines residential density with open space, saving heritage oak trees.

Farmers' market on 42nd Avenue brings the Cully Neighborhood together.

Front yard gardens build community in the neighborhood.

Photos courtesy of Jan Spencer

space. Interestingly, if you don't have a car, you don't pay for parking. The homes are insulated above code, and appliances are more energy-efficient than they have to be.

Which brings us to cost. These are full-size, 1500-square-foot homes and nicely appointed. Cully Grove is a more upscale project than Columbia, and even more so compared to Kailash. Cully Grove is a beautiful place and quite possibly, some homeowners could afford more than this. It makes me wonder: how do people with both money and concerns about eco and social footprints reconcile the two?

Amidst many social and outdoor amenities, living at Kailash is still accessible to people of modest means.

Kailash Ecovillage: A Grand Slam

I left Cully Grove and drove five miles south to Kailash Ecovillage with a high level of anticipation. I already knew a good deal about Kailash thanks to its very informative website and was not disappointed.

Ole and Maitri Ersson bought a run-down apartment complex in SE Portland in 2007 with a loan from a progressive local bank. At the time, the complex was notorious in the neighborhood. It was like the Wild West for drug dealing with occasional shootouts in the parking lot. Many of the 32 one-bedroom apartments were not fit to live in. That all changed with the new sheriff and deputy.

Today, Kailash (KEV) strikes me as a grand slam home run of socially and ecologically thoughtful urban renewal. Perhaps the most impressive features of Kailash are how the down-and-out infrastructure has been repaired and repurposed; also the long list of social and outdoor amenities for the 60 or so residents; and finally, how living at KEV is accessible to people of modest means.

A lot has been accomplished since 2007. Kailash is surrounded on three sides by newer two-story apartments. To the east, one finds brick, '40s-era suburban-bungalow-type houses on sloping streets with many trees. It's a nice-looking neighborhood.

KEV is a great example of the benefits of open space as a function of residential density. In land use planning, greater residential density can also translate into more open space. About half of Kailash is residential and parking; the other half is garden, orchard, and open space.

Early on, 16 parking places and several smaller concrete areas were depaved and turned into garden, a great example of reclaiming automobile space in favor of productive use. In 2010, the acre next door, covered with blackberry jungle, was purchased to complete the current two-acre size of KEV.

The outdoor part of Kailash includes 46 individual garden plots and shared garden projects. There are 53 fruit trees, a small vineyard, blueberries, cane fruit, and a large bamboo patch that screens the perimeter, making for a nice green enclosure. There is also a cooperative tool shed and small intimate contemplative area with a wet weather brook, hammock, and sitting area. Also outside is a large compost area and shared covered bike area. There is a greenhouse and space for small individual and creative outdoor projects. The KEV website has extensive documentation of all these features.

The apartment building has seen upgrades since its Wild West days. In addition to the one-bedroom apartments are many amenities such as an 1100-square-foot community room, community kitchen for events, games collection, big screen TV with surround sound, internet station, and more. Kailash has hosted meetings from outside the ecovillage along with in-house parties, discussions, and gatherings.

Kailash Ecovillage transforms two acres with depaving, gardens, and many creative projects.

Place making in Cully Neighborhood adds flavor, personality, and identity.

There is also a laundry room and the mail room has member bios at each mail box so people can become better acquainted. This may sound like an infomercial but it serves to show the detail of planning for making life at Kailash a positive experience for all involved.

Participation is essential for keeping all this going. There are teams to take care of the bike area, library, compost and recycling, fruit trees, garden, and indoor amenities. A car share project is in the works. Members are asked to commit a minimum amount of time to the community.

KEV also reaches out to the wider neighborhood. There are several garden plots used by people in the neighborhood. Wood chips delivered are made available to anyone in the neighborhood. There is a community bulletin board down by the street. Kailash actively networks with other ecovillage and cooperative living groups in Portland.

Kailash has a ham radio for disaster use while several members are active in the neighborhood association and city emergency response program. The scale of Kailash gives it the capacity to reach out like this in so many different ways.

Members' rent is similar to the surrounding neighborhood. That means people of average means can afford this very unusual ecovillage lifestyle. I can see residents here as students in a sort of school for ecological and cooperative lifestyles where they can experience alternatives to mainstream economy and culture. The "graduates" are likely to apply their "degrees" at KEV to positive effect in the wider world.

A grand slam. That's a good way to describe Kailash Ecovillage. I honestly could not imagine a more complete repurposing of a two-acre patch of urban infrastructure and space. You can find much more detail and photos at the Kailash website, www.kailashecovillage.org.

Re-Greening Humanity: Multiple Centers of Initiative

The three ecovillages I visited all have a keen interest in reducing their members' ecological footprints while building social cohesion. They all make use of existing urban land use opportunities. Each one started with an ambitious idea that resonated enough that others wanted to be involved.

There has never been a time in human history where reducing our eco footprints and building social cohesion have been more important. These qualities are vital requisites of perhaps modern humanity's greatest adventure, fitting into the natural world.

One can find allies, assets, and opportunities for this historic adventure just about anywhere. All over the country, a growing number of people are not only concluding the current mainstream economy and culture are not appropriate, but they are taking initiative to pioneer alternatives.

Initiative comes in many forms, such as changes to one's own home and property as in Cully Neighborhood. One property making mindful changes often leads to a nearby neighbor or two or three doing something similar, like the five front yard garden cluster near the Bathtub Art Museum.

These three ecovillages all have a keen interest in reducing their members' ecological footprints while building social cohesion.

Cully's emerging clusters, ecovillages, neighborhood farms, and Our 42nd Avenue support each other and all help move these ideas further into the neighborhood and beyond. And they have company.

Progress is a single front yard garden in Beaumont, Texas, the only one locals have ever seen, that starts to cause a buzz in the neighborhood. Elsewhere, someone might buy the property next door, taking the fences down, and that sets off a chain reaction and a few years later, all the back yard fences are gone and a shared identity emerges between a dozen houses. That's what

happened at N Street Coop in Davis, California.

A group of neighbors might start to coalesce because of a shared geographic characteristic like Enright Ridge in Cincinnati. East Blair in Eugene, Oregon is a legal nonprofit that owns 11 residential properties, and they are managed in a mindful way that benefits the members, the environment, and the neighborhood.

A growing number of properties in the neighborhood are trading grass for garden, creating edible landscapes, catching rainwater, depaving, building with natural materials, and more.

These and other examples of organic transition towards economic and cultural transformation are the previews of a more green and peaceful future.

River Road Neighborhood: Permaculture and Paradigm Shift

River Road Neighborhood, three miles northwest of downtown Eugene, Oregon has a small but significant and growing identity as a place with an appreciable number of people interested in permaculture and paradigm shift. There have been dozens of permaculture site tours over the past 10 years to show and tell the growing number of properties in the neighborhood that are trading grass for garden, creating edible landscapes, catching rainwater, depaving, building with natural materials, making use of passive solar design, and constructing small accessory dwellings.

River Road hosted the 2015 Northwest Permaculture Convergence at the neighborhood recreation center, in the middle of this suburban neighborhood. Many of the event coordinator positions were taken by residents in the neighborhood. The neighborhood association played a big part in putting on the convergence. Part of the event was free and open to the community. Over 700 people from the neighborhood, Eugene, and beyond attended the event.

We have had other permaculture events, classes, and work parties. A 65-tree filbert grove on public property along the Willamette River has been restored in cooperation with the city. Several like-minded property owners have taken down back yard fences. A small but growing number of people are buying properties in the neighborhood because they know there is a small but growing momentum for creating a more green and resilient neighborhood.

A new opportunity has presented itself that can be an important catalyst for greening our neighborhood. The city of Eugene is putting a substantial amount of staff time and resources into a high profile neighborhood visioning process that is intended to help guide our neighborhood into the future. The entire series of meetings, discussions, and input will take over a year. Public participation is an essential part of the effort, with the city sending out lots of mail to neighborhood residents explaining the importance of the visioning process and urging them to participate.

To insure alternative perspectives in the neighborhood are part of the process, the River Road Green and Resilient Caucus has formed. The Caucus asserts the mainstream economic system and the consumer culture it has created are the cause of a wide range of well documented social and environmental problems such as climate change; social, economic, and political disequity; damage to public health; resource issues; and much more.

Further, the Caucus states that to plan a future for the neighborhood based on the same land use, transportation, and development assumptions and policies that have already caused so much damage to public health and the environment is continuing to live in a highly flawed past, not a vision for a green and resilient future. Three members of the Caucus are also board members of the neighborhood association, while overall, the neighborhood association board is sympathetic.

The first public meeting attracted well over 300 people sitting at round tables in discussion groups of eight to 10 people. The Caucus contributed an impressive display of posters, photos, and explanations along a wall, describing suburban permaculture, front yard gardens, green neighborhoods, and ecological approaches to economy and culture.

Over 50 posters about green and resilient living were given away while dozens of people browsed the display. Many discussion groups included permaculture-minded neighbors who added green and resilient content to the conversations and written comments.

The Caucus is also writing a "Green Paper" that will inform the visioning process with more detail about greening the neighborhood; it will go out to the neighborhood and become part of the public record. We are using this rare opportunity of public process to put green, resilient, and permaculture ideas out to the wider community.

There are tens of thousands of neighborhoods all over the country with green and resilient potential. They all have assets, allies, and opportunities already there to work with. They just need to be called on. Small projects can inspire larger projects which can lead to clusters. Clusters can grow into ecovillages, eco-neighborhoods, and eco-communities. The more, the sooner, the better.

Jan Spencer lives in Eugene, Oregon. He has traveled for over five years out of the country, all over Europe, east, central, and south Africa, New Zealand, Israel, and Central America. Jan has been transforming his quarter-acre suburban property for 17 years. His interests are a fusion of permaculture, urban land use, economics, neighborhoods, and social uplift. Jan has been on the board of his neighborhood association for over 10 years. He has made presentations on the East and West Coasts and in between, written blogs for Mother Earth News*, and is available to present to colleges and conferences both in person and via internet. His website is www.suburbanpermaculture.org; contact him at janrspencer@gmail.com.*

Neighbors discuss green and resilient ideas at big neighborhood visioning event.

Making a Case for Urban Cohousing

By Grace H. Kim

A view of Capitol Hill Cohousing's rooftop garden and neighborhood context.

William Wright Photography

While cohousing has traditionally been established in rural or suburban contexts, as a cohousing consultant I am seeing an uptick in those who are interested in building urban communities. There are benefits to urban cohousing, many of which are mirrored in the reasons my husband and I chose an urban location in Seattle to start our own cohousing community. While our reasons for choosing this urban lifestyle are personal, I believe they resonate with many other families, seniors, and individuals, such as those who found and joined us on our cohousing journey. Here, I will make a case for urban cohousing, and discuss how our community has benefited from our densely urban location. Please note that I use "community" to describe our cohousing community and "neighborhood" to describe the greater neighborhood that surrounds it.

Why choose an urban site?

There are some simple yet practical reasons to choose urban cohousing. Urban sites usually have the zoning in place to build multifamily housing, whether it be stacked flats or clustered homes. This translates to reduced time and expense for land use approval, there are no rezone applications or hearings, and there is a reduced likelihood of neighborhood opposition. Fewer hurdles to development can mean fewer expenses and a faster development process.

Urban sites also have the added benefit of convenient access to coffee shops, grocery stores, and restaurants. But because of our society's reliance on cars, one's ability to drive and maintain a driver's license can stand in the way of the convenience that walkable neighborhoods afford. For many, including the young and elderly, walkability should also be considered interchangeable with independence. Walkable neighborhoods allow everyone of all mobility and ability levels to enjoy the freedom of meeting with friends, running errands, and going about one's day without relying on another person to shuttle them to and from the activities of daily life. The same is true for individuals who choose to live without a car, families with one vehicle, and others who might otherwise be homebound without access to a vehicle.

Walkability, in conjunction with the abundance of services made available by an urban site, makes urban cohousing an attractive option for many cohousers.

How "urban" is urban?

"Urban" means different things to different people. For those who are used to living in rural areas, urban is anything within the city limits. For others urban is a single-family house in a residential neighborhood within walking distance of coffee shops and a grocery store. For still others, urban means living in a multistory building within a dense urban neighborhood with shops and services at the street below. When starting a new urban community without a site determined, it's important to define what you mean by "urban" so that newcomers are clear about how urban you intend to be.

Our site is located in Capitol Hill, one of the densest neighborhoods in Seattle and purportedly among the densest west of the Mississippi. Our community was built on one-tenth of an acre, just 4,500 sq. ft. The conventional single family lot in Seattle averages 5,000 sq. ft. The building is five stories tall with nine two-to-three bedroom homes that range in size

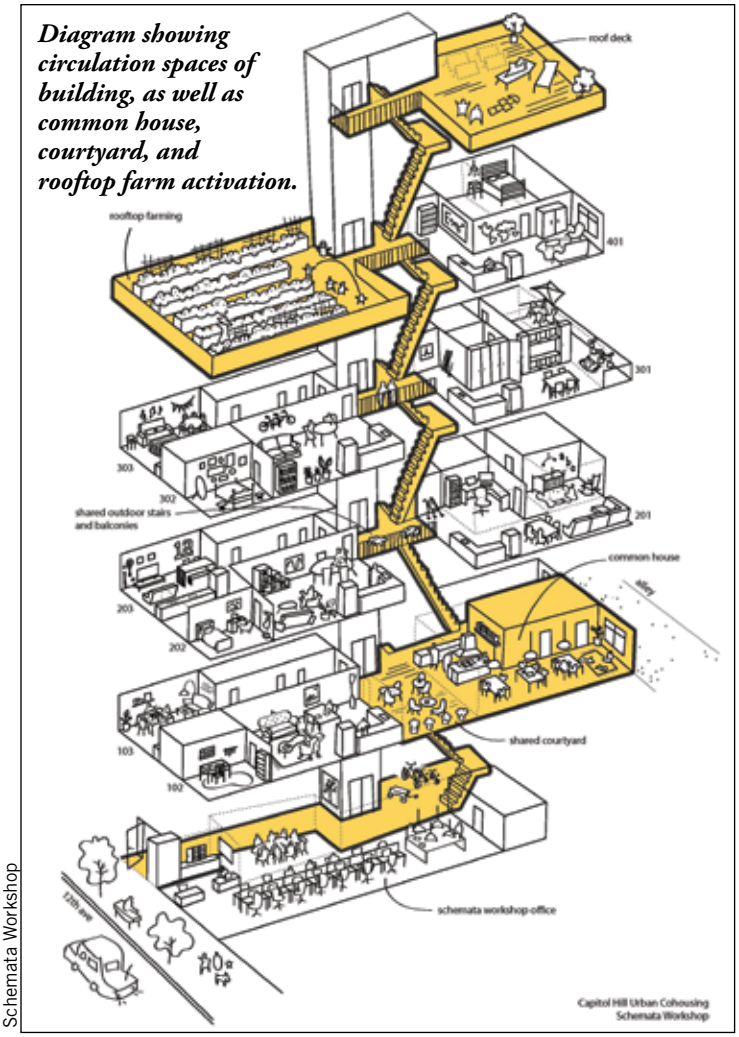


Diagram showing circulation spaces of building, as well as common house, courtyard, and rooftop farm activation.

Schemata Workshop

Common house activity after an event.

Schemata Workshop

View of courtyard from above with resident children playing.

Schemata Workshop

from 810 sq. ft. to 1,300 sq. ft. My architectural office is located on the building's ground floor, and our street brings restaurants, coffee shops, and neighborhood services within steps of our front door. This is how we defined "urban."

Who does urban cohousing attract?

Urban sites attract a diverse set of people for many different reasons. Use our community as a case study of this fact: Our community is made up of singles, retirees, empty nesters, and families. We are 17 adults and 11 children, all full-time residents. The adults range in age from mid-30s to late-60s, the kids from one year to 16 years. We have four school teachers, three university professors, three architects, a graphic designer, a computer scientist, a web designer, and a finance director from a local nonprofit. Three of our nine households are comprised of people of color.

Every family and individual had different reasons for joining us. One woman moved from another local cohousing community because she wanted to be closer to the performing and visual arts venues where she attends events two to three times a week. A couple of retirees lived on Capitol Hill for 30 years before joining us. They had looked into cohousing before but didn't want to relocate to a more residential part of Seattle. Our site is halfway between their two previous homes, and gives them the urban density they desire. Many of the families in our community already lived in the neighborhood but were renting and, in addition to community, liked the housing stability cohousing provides.

Our location has the added benefit of proximity to city transit, such as Seattle's Light Rail. Our residents who work at the University of Washington appreciate being one stop away from the campus by light rail. This is a community in which my husband and I plan to age in place, so we wanted to live in a neighborhood that was vibrant and diverse, with all of my daily needs within walking distance.

Just within our community, there are varying and unique reasons for being attracted to cohousing in an urban environment.

Engaging the neighborhood at large

Our urban location makes neighborhood connections possible by proximity and daily reminders of these pressing community needs. Many in our community are involved in our neighborhood. Several members are involved with a local homeless youth advocacy, job training, and housing services organization. I serve as the chair of Seattle's Planning Commission and am involved with the Chamber of Commerce and my daughter's public school PTA. I also serve on the board of an advocacy organization for affordable housing in our county. My husband chairs the Capitol Hill Ecodistrict and the Disaster Preparedness committee for our professional association. Two of our community's teenagers are very involved with an LGBTQ youth organization.

We have a rooftop farm that provides produce for a farm-to-table restaurant located about six blocks from our building. And we have been talking with the local community college to engage their sustainable agriculture students in internship opportunities.

Our urban location makes these connections possible by proximity and daily reminders of these pressing community needs.

What does urban cohousing look like?

Urban cohousing looks a lot like suburban and rural cohousing, just concentrated in a smaller footprint. In our building, we reimagined the idea of the pedestrian path vertically, connecting our homes with a common staircase and shared balconies. Instead of a large outdoor recreational area, we have a central courtyard that serves as a dining area for meals, play area for children, and gathering space for meetings or events. Our Common House anchors one side of the courtyard and provides a common kitchen, and more eating and meeting spaces. The large glass, French doors that connect the Common House to the courtyard give us flexibility in using the two spaces.

The three homes per floor share access to a balcony that overlooks the

courtyard. This exterior space means we can see each other come and go and has the added benefit of reducing our heated and conditioned spaces.

When he visits, my father says our building "feels so alive." There is life and activity all around to remind us that we are not alone. This is true for all cohousing, and possible in an urban environment when we consider traditional cohousing elements in new and imaginative ways.

How does community come together in urban cohousing?

Cohousing in an urban environment doesn't make creating community any more difficult than in rural or suburban cohousing. Depending on goals or values, different cohousing communities will come together for different reasons and in different ways.

In our community, we come together for meals. We have dinners three times a week—just about every other day. Our meal program has mandatory cooking participation, and, because of the ease of our system, we have high participation. There are times that the teenagers don't come, or that one of us has an after-work meeting, event, or are simply out of town but there are often guests—sometimes several—and it generally feels like a dinner party. While people are welcome to take a plate to go, it is more typical that people in our community linger after dinner to share in continued conversation.

We also come together in our civic engagement. In the Common House, we host events for the nonprofit organizations that we support. Sometimes we have sign painting parties for rallies and marches, and we'll host friends and fellow marchers for dinner after those events.

And, of course, we love to come together to celebrate birthdays, anniversaries, or weddings. We never have more fun than when we get to eat cake and to dance.

But I need a garden!

When we were recruiting for our group, and even now when I make presentations about our urban community, I often hear "but I need my garden." And to address this concern, we talk about all the many ways we bring nature into our homes and community.

While most people think they need dirt in the ground, we know that in urban locations, the dirt in the ground around us is sometimes contaminated from spills, or leaching, or simply car pollutants like oil, lead, and brake dust. In our community, we garden with raised bed planters, we import clean soil, and we control what goes into it by farming organically with no chemical pesticides or fertilizers. In our rooftop garden, we produce food for our community dinners but also for our neighborhood restaurant partner. On our balconies and private terraces, we plant fresh herbs and flowers.

We each have a chance to garden in the way that works for us, and we can bring the natural world indoors. Urban sites can also provide easy access to parks and other green areas, so the children in communities like ours rarely want for space to run around and play, even without a traditional yard.

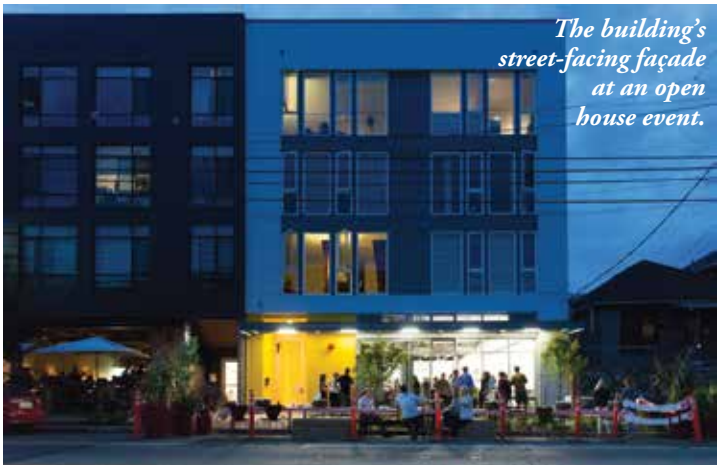
Conclusion

Urban is not for everyone, but for those who are interested in cohousing without losing access to the amenities, conveniences, and vibrancy of city life, it can offer a unique alternative to other types of housing. Our urban community is far from perfect, but we all feel quite lucky to have the community and quality of life that we have found living here.

Grace H. Kim is a member of the American Institute of Architects and co-owner of Schemata Workshop, based in Seattle, Washington. She is also the cofounder of Capitol Hill Urban Cohousing (for whom Schemata Workshop served as architect). Grace is an internationally recognized expert in cohousing, with a special expertise in Common House Design. She has served on the board of the Cohousing Association of the US and has visited over 80 communities in Denmark and North America. Grace gave a TED talk on cohousing which can be seen at www.ted.com/talks/grace_kim_how_cohousing_can_make_us_happier_and_live_longer.

Meal prep for community meal in the common house.

Mark Hipple



The building's street-facing façade at an open house event.

Danny Ngan

View of residents' shared balconies from inside a unit.

William Wright Photography

Community-Building in the City

By Sheila Hoffman and Spencer Beard

We have lived in the heart of Seattle, on Capitol Hill, for more than 35 years. This is the story of how we landed in an intentional community.

We love the density, diversity, and walkability of our neighborhood. The idea of intentional community always interested us. When we explored cohousing in the early '90s everything seemed to be out in the country. Living in a rural setting seemed isolating to us. After 20 years in a large house where we spawned two all-volunteer community groups, but had no children and didn't know our neighbors despite efforts, we decided to downsize to a new, nearby 150-unit condo that was marketed as community-living. For the first few years it was "cohousing lite" because we did many things to foster community. But when community isn't "intentional" it really is not sustainable. We soon felt isolated again because no one shared our vision for community. In 2010 we heard about a forming cohousing community with property located in our neighborhood. And that is where our story begins.

Challenges We've Faced

1. Finding the People, and Developing Community

We began with regularly scheduled introductory meetings promoted through the neighborhood blog. We joined the group after that first meeting and got to work by publishing a website with our vision and values to help attract folks who would be a possible fit. During this process we "kissed a lot of frogs." Many folks were excited about cohousing and/or our project, but for an assortment of reasons it didn't work for them. Barriers included timing, size of units, cost, and lack of parking. Of course in some cases it just wasn't a good fit. It was a "self-selecting" process with no application form, background checks, or community approval. Potential candidates simply came to more and more events. And it worked. After several years we had all nine of our families committed and participating. Everyone involved was drawn to living in community AND specifically to this urban Capitol Hill location.

Our intention to build our skills as a community was an integral part of our success. Early on we had several all-day, professionally facilitated workshops which included creating our vision and values, learning to make decisions by consensus, conflict resolution, communication styles, and power dynamics. From the beginning we had monthly business meetings with potlucks, and sometime before construction started we added biweekly Supper Club. We organized social events such as roller-skating, going to baseball games, bowling, game nights, pumpkin carving, and post-Thanksgiving potlucks to create connections and a sense of community. There were also numerous team meetings to devise plans for our common meals, integrate the kids into the community, draft our legal structure and operating agreements, and most importantly design and develop the building and how it would all get financed and maintained.

2. The Property

Property in the city is at a premium. Generally developers buy it and then sell condos to make back their money with a hefty profit. Of course since we were not building to sell at a profit we had to factor in the higher property costs.

The site itself is one city lot, about 4500 sq. ft.—40 ft. wide and 113 ft. deep. Original plans explored buying adjacent lots, but we were unable to make that happen. To maximize floor area we chose to build lot-line to lot-line, which meant no windows on the north and south. To include windows would have meant a 3 ft. setback, which would mean lost living space and a higher rent per square foot.

We were required by the city to have commercial space on the ground floor and the site topography allowed for a maximum height of five stories. This limited the number of units we could create in our space. Combined with the limitations of a single lot, we ended up with nine apartments ranging from 810 sq. ft. to 1300 sq. ft. plus 900 sq. ft. for our Common House.

Fortunately parking spaces were not required because our location is in an "urban hub" with a myriad of transportation options including bus, light rail, bike and car shares. This saved us hundreds of thousands of dollars for the cost of underground parking. We're in walking distance of hospitals, library, groceries, parks, farmers' market, restaurants, entertainment venues, and colleges.

3. Time and Money

The rule of thumb we'd heard going in is to expect the process to take about five years. When we started in 2010 we thought that having a site and cohousing-savvy architects already in place would save us time. Our project actually took longer. We lost a full year due to the lawyers who couldn't comprehend that the founders didn't want to make a big return on their original investment to buy the property or that the LLC we formed wasn't motivated by the capitalistic idea to maximize profits.. That delay put us on the back side of a construction boom in Seattle, which meant we had difficulty finding contractors and subcontractors within our budget for the project.

In 2014, as we neared closing on our construction loan, our developer realized we had a $700K shortfall in the equity our group was bringing to the table. She helped us brainstorm a way to raise the money, a seemingly impossible task. Within a month we raised all the funds through low-interest loans from friends and family—including those who didn't know us personally but lived in cohousing and wanted to see us succeed. Our developer

mistakenly believed that once the building was completed we could get a large enough mortgage to pay off these loans. Sadly, the new loan amount came in lower than expected. The final amount was based on the LLC's net income and since we want to keep our rent low, our loan was correspondingly lower. So it will take longer than we planned to retire our debt.

4. Unique Financial Model

Why didn't we just build condos? Due to the 2009 crash, no one was lending for new condo construction and we learned that the national Coop Bank was not interested in financing any new cohousing projects. We developed our own model. We formed an LLC which owns the building, which is how many apartment buildings are owned. Since we are all members of the LLC, we essentially rent from ourselves.

Being both landlords and tenants was unconventional enough to make the bank underwriters nervous at first. But actually it offers advantages to the community. For one thing it allowed younger families and those without liquid assets to remain in the community—we didn't require each family to have a large down payment for a home. It also means when families downsize, they can change the unit they occupy without changing title and without the associated costs of selling and buying into another more expensive one which would be a typical condo scenario.

5. Construction Delays and Quality

We started with a big vision and high values around sustainability and construction quality. But once again monetary realities created challenges and compromises. With all the construction in town, prices skyrocketed for everything from labor to materials. Along the way we had to scale back some of our green building plans. We still retained many sustainable features which also enhanced our community interaction such as taller windows, higher ceilings, and wide walkways.

One setback was when our electrical contractor went belly-up mid-project. The General Contractor had to find a replacement. Then the new contractor had to review and fix a lot of what was thought to have been already completed. Construction delays ultimately ate up any budget that might've provided some of the comforts of home such as rooftop furniture and Common House furnishings. One way we have addressed it is with occasional anonymous funding sourced within our community for the things removed from the budget.

Notable Successes

1. Meal Program

We decided early on that meals would be the glue of our community. Therefore our Common House kitchen and dining areas were designed to accommodate our whole community and guests, including having a pantry, guest room, and laundry.

We consider our food program a huge success. In fact, a cohousing visitor from Australia declared it was "brilliant!" It provides a variety of tasty meals. It frees up busy parents and professionals from almost half their evening meal preparation. This simple system where everyone participates requires no bookkeeping. The head cook decides the menu, buys the food, then leads the prep with two assistants. The cook spends what they want, recognizing they will enjoy 17 meals free over the next six weeks. Everyone's special dietary needs are accommodated along with a commitment to being nutritious and delicious.

We've had fun with figuring out interesting menus—some simple and others much more elaborate with specialty cocktails and desserts. Plus, guests are always welcomed.

2. Decision-Making

We've learned there is a great power in community we might call Trusting the Group's Wisdom. On many occasions we've been to the edge of throwing in the towel because a problem seemed insurmountable. We've found that when we hit an impasse the best approach is to remind ourselves of these two important points:

1) Keep an open mind rather than being attached to the idea you came in with AND...

2) Remember it's about what is best for the community.

With these points guiding us, we consistently come out the other side with a better solution than any one of us started with.

3. Rooftop Farm Partnerships

The city requires a certain amount of greenspace in every urban project. Rather than grass, trees, or flowers, we opted to create a working farm to support our goals of sustainability and community partnerships. Since most of us have full-time jobs and/or children, we partnered with Seattle Urban Farm Company (SUFCo) to design, construct, and operate our farm. We held a web-based "BarnRaiser" to raise the donations to pay for the build-out of the raised planters, the additional structural system to support the roof, and the irrigation system. Then we partnered with a nearby white-tablecloth restaurant that is paying the on-going maintenance costs directly to SUFCo. In return they get a large percentage of the harvest for their upscale "farm-to-table" menu. The community also gets some of the fresh produce for community meals. And best of all, our kids learn where their food comes from, how it grows, and can get their hands dirty.

In Closing

We have now lived in Capitol Hill Urban Cohousing for more than a year. We love living in community with adults and children, sharing meals three times a week, being available to each other's needs including walking children to school, pet sitting, repairs, outings, etc. Recently we all attended the wedding celebration of one of our resident couples. We clearly have built not only an apartment building but a true sense of community.

Sheila Hoffman and Spencer Beard have had "founder's energy" for decades, having founded and led the local chapter of EarthSave International in the '90s as well as founding the Evergreen Tandem Club in 2001 and of course being part of founding Capitol Hill Urban Cohousing on Seattle's Capitol Hill (capitolhillurbancohousing.org). Sheila develops WordPress websites and Spencer is a retired elementary school teacher. At 68 and 65 respectively, they are the elders in CHUC.

Photos courtesy of Sheila Hoffman

TERRA FIRMA:
A Single Mother Discovers Community

By Shoshana Magnet

My story of intentional communities is partly the story of having a child on my own. When I was 34, the relationship that I'd been in since I was 20 broke up, and all of a sudden I was the loneliest I had ever been in my adult life. I knew that I wanted to have a baby, and although I was lucky to have incredibly loving and supportive family in town, I also knew that I needed to develop more of a community around me—in part because I wanted lots of connections for the child I hoped to have.

Although I owned a lovely house in a child-friendly, urban neighbourhood in my hometown of Ottawa, I found myself walking my dog every day without running into a single person I knew, circling my block, longing to have someone with whom to have a few minutes of conversation. Although I am a dogged and eager community builder, I had struggled for years to make the communities of which I was a part cohere and thrive. People moved away, people were busy with work or with children. Sometimes, the thought of coming home to my lonely house on Friday evening, with a long weekend ahead of me, made me want to fall to my knees and howl. I actively dreaded the weekend, when others would disappear into the routines of family life. I liked my neighbours in my old neighbourhood, and enjoyed talking to them on the street, but I felt shy about keeping them talking on the street too long when the expectation was that they were headed in the door.

In the midst of this period, I took a lot of long walks and listened to a lot of podcasts, including one on intentional communities. I had never heard of this term, but the emphasis on geographic proximity and being connected to your neighbours immediately felt like a thrilling possibility. Intrepid researcher that I am, on one long evening alone in my single family home, I plugged the term "intentional community" into Google along with my city's name, and up came a single search result. For weeks, my to-do list had at the top "call intentional community," but I felt too shy or too disheartened to do so. Finally, I summoned up my courage and called directly. The lovely member who was the contact for Terra Firma immediately invited me to dine with Terra Firma members.

Terra Firma is a small cohousing community centrally located in the neighbourhood called Old Ottawa East. Organized as a condo, in which there are condo owners, Terra Firma originally consisted of two triplexes that share a common and enormous backyard. The group started meeting in 1992, bought the properties in 1997, and has since joined the two triplexes together with two more condo living spaces as well as a common house, including shared kitchen, guest room, and bathroom. We are small; there are 12 member families of Terra Firma. Seven families live in the condos that have a common backyard; my family and four other families also are members but live on the same block or close by. Terra Firma has organized dinners in the common house twice a week, on Wednesdays and Sundays, although some families come less often.

What one of my neighbours calls the "hard" advantages of Terra Firma are numerous. There is a beautiful shared backyard and facilities include a hot tub, a sauna, a beautiful and enormous garden, a set of swings, a tiny little pond, and a tree house. What we like to think of as the "soft" advantages of Terra Firma have to do with both practicality and connection. It is easy to find someone to collect your mail or put out your recycling. We have a listserv where we ask each for everything from a ride to the airport to the name of a good plumber. I love living in an intergenerational community where I can talk about music and math with neighbours in their 70s or how to best kick a soccer ball with a neighbour under 10.

Having used a clinic with an anonymous donor to become pregnant, I joined Terra Firma when I was four months pregnant. I rented out my big house, found an apartment to rent down the street from the condos, and (having received a huge amount of moving help from my family and chosen family) took a deep breath and left my single-family home of 10 years. The change for me was instantaneous. While pregnant and on my own, sometimes a challenging or isolated venture, I could walk my dog around the block and have my neighbours ask me how I was feeling, or if I had felt the baby move. I received spontaneous dinner invitations or just had nice daily conversations that made me feel more connected. And I also had other people to nurture—to me one of the life experiences that makes me feel connected and happy. I had people to shuttle to or from the airport. I had plants to water or people for whom to hem curtains. After I'd had my baby, Terra Firma members collected and got me a generous gift certificate, and most importantly, they were eager to meet my baby. I love that members greet my son by name and are interested in his growth.

After a year in the community, I knew that I wanted to stay, and I was lucky enough to be able to buy a house which my best friend and I share across the street from Terra Firma. We love our chosen family home, although it's important to note that this purchase results in part from my class privilege. I had enormous help from my family. The only house that was available needed tons of renovations, which would have been impossible to manage as a single mother of an infant without my family meeting contractors and helping me to make it possible.

Terra Firma members helped as well. Still amazing to me is that, when I needed to move out of my new house due to the extensive renovations required, I wrote to Terra Firma members and asked if they knew of anything coming up for rent. My neighbours Keith and Diane were going to visit their son out West, and they offered their condo to me and my infant son free of charge for the two months that I needed to move out of my house. It still brings tears to my eyes to think of the email I got telling me that they would love to have us stay there—they even refused to let me pay for utilities despite all the laundry I did with my infant. Terra Firma helped to make the world feel like a warmer and more welcoming place to me as a single mother.

Our community has challenges. We sometimes have conflicts that are difficult to resolve. Terra Firma has tried a number of different strategies for conflict resolution. These have included using outside mediation as well as practicing resolving the conflict ourselves. Some strategies are drawn from the Quaker tradition. For example, if community members are in conflict, each one might be appointed a support group of a couple of members of their choosing from the community. Each side of the conflict can then vent and debrief with their support people privately. After allowing for this support period, both sides and their support teams meet to try to work out the conflict.

I myself greatly benefited from a related technique when I had conflict with a member of the community about money. When we met to talk, following Quaker tradition, she suggested that we begin with a moment of silence, and that we have a person from her Quaker community to hold a supportive space. I'm Jewish, and this

ritual was unfamiliar and a little bit frightening to me at first. When we had our meeting, I could not believe how helpful it was to begin with a moment of silence. It allowed me a quiet moment to think about all the things for which I am grateful—that I was part of a community where people were committed to working through conflict. It gave me a moment to just give thanks for all the wonderful and challenging parts of my life. And I was also grateful to have an outside person there to silently be with us in our conflict because it encouraged me to speak using my best self. I felt I learned a lot from this method of conflict resolution, and I felt closer and more connected to the person with whom I had the conflict. One of the things we have learned, and that we would encourage, is that other communities develop a process right away for how they will be engaging in decision-making and how they will resolve conflicts when they arise.

Our community continues to have ongoing conflicts, as do all people who are in relationships with one another. Some of them have been helpfully resolved and some have not. We are still struggling to figure out how to grow as a community when we have different needs and different desires as to what we want our community to look like. Although these relational processes are a challenge, the opportunity to be connected to one another is, for me, incredible. I feel so lucky to have all these adults and kids saying hi to me and my son. Sometimes parenting is a lonely venture. Often in these moments, a quick chat with a neighbour, the offer of a shared glass of wine on a neighbour's porch, or a trip together to the park can be completely uplifting. Or one of my intentional community members might just hold my baby while I put on his snow suit, and the extra pair of hands and friendly smile make all the difference. I met one of my new closest friends because she was friends with one of the Terra Firma members, and this friendship with a woman on my block who has a baby of the same age has been an incredible gift. Had I not joined Terra Firma, I would never have spoken to my best friend about moving in together, and our shared house has been the most wonderful living situation of my adult life.

I'm so grateful to be part of Terra Firma. Just this morning, I was feeling a bit blue. While we were all putting out our recycling in our pajamas, a number of my neighbours stopped by to chat. I had the chance to have a two-minute vent session and a hug from one of my neighbours, and being seen, however briefly, in my sadness, was a profound and mood-changing experience. These "soft" forms of connection made possible by my intentional community make life a so much more pleasurable and connected place for me and my son.

Shoshana Magnet is Associate Professor at the Institute of Feminist and Gender Studies at the University of Ottawa.

Photos courtesy of Shoshana Magnet

Urban Kibbutzim: A Growing Movement

By Anton Marks

The first kibbutz was established over 100 years ago, and over the following century, a network of almost 300 full income-sharing agricultural communes was established all over Israel. The plan was based on anarchist principles, whereby this federation of communities would coalesce into a whole cooperative society, without centralized government or borders.

Fast forward to the year 2017. The rural kibbutz communities are in retreat, there's a strong central government and, albeit for very different reasons, the country has no clear borders.

However, there are those who have picked up the mantle of taking responsibility for shaping the society, young people who are establishing hundreds of urban communes that, both individually and as movements, are effecting change in the inner cities—communes of educators who are working against violence, racism, homophobia, and poverty.

I am a member of Kibbutz Mishol, one of the many intentional communities that have been established over the past 20 years. We are 130 people, all living under one roof, making decisions together, bringing our children up together, sharing all of our income, 10 cars, our living spaces, and a handful of dogs, cats, and chinchillas.

Our kibbutz is in the city; in fact, we are situated in one of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country—and it's a choice. We've made this choice to work together with our partners in the local municipality, and together with our partners who live in this city, to shape the wider community for the benefit of all of its citizens—Jews, Arabs, those from the former Soviet Union, from Ethiopia, asylum seekers, religious, secular, left, and right.

We have established a nonprofit organization through which we run all of our educational projects. For example, we run a local public elementary school, non-formal education in after-school centres, a youth movement, a coexistence project, and educational tours to Poland. In addition, we have teams of people working together taking responsibility over the inner functioning of our community—looking after our cars, our building, our children, our finances, our learning, our relationships, and our culture.

It's a healthy tension in our lives: to what extent are we focused on the internal—living together and improving our relationships, creating a community that makes decisions by consensus, challenging societal norms when it comes to gender roles, understanding the different needs and different abilities of our members—and to what extent on the external—our interactions and impact on the surrounding society? Do we exist for ourselves, as a lifestyle choice, or is our aim to use community as a vehicle for changing the world around us?

The kibbutz-building enterprise started as a way of addressing the needs of a developing society and a developing economy—agriculture, creating towns and villages, defending the borders, building a public health system, a nationwide union, newspapers, etc. Today the needs of the country can be found in the inner cities, draining the social swamps of society, rather than the physical mosquito-infested swamps of the early 20th century backwaters of the Ottoman Empire.

Photos courtesy of haaretz.co.il

These urban communes, largely situated in the geographical and economic peripheries of Israel, springing up like mushrooms after the rain, are a model of how an alternative society can be built within the existing capitalist society—not as isolated independent communities, but as a network of communities which together offer an example of how society can be structured in a more just and equitable way.

Anton Marks has been active on the international communal scene for many years; he is a board member of the ICSA (International Communal Studies Association) and has attended three of their international conferences. He has also been general secretary of the Intentional Communities Desk (formerly known as the International Communes Desk) and was editor of their magazine C.A.L.L. *for 15 years.*

Photos courtesy of Gabriel Freund

Dreaming of a Shared City: Akko Educators' Kibbutz

By Gabriel Freund

When the 20 young founders of the Akko Educators' Kibbutz, a cooperative community of teachers and social activists, settled 12 years ago in the northern Israeli coastal city of Akko, they threw themselves into their project to facilitate social change by establishing programs to benefit the Jewish and Arab youth living in the city's impoverished areas. Things went smoothly for the first few years as they set up weekly youth movement activities and an afternoon club for at-risk youth. But that abruptly changed on Yom Kippur, the holiest day on the Jewish calendar, in October 2008, when an Arab resident of the city drove his car playing loud music through an exclusively Jewish neighbourhood. Whether it was an intentional act of disrespect or an absent-minded faux pas, the response to the action soon turned violent. It took police three days to quell the chaos of nationalistic demonstrations, furious retaliations, and general ugliness on all sides that left a swath of destroyed property and injured people in its wake.

The event, which became known as the Akko Riots, exposed the depth of the mistrust, animosity, and racism that fissure the seemingly calm surface of day-to-day life in a mixed city of some 50,000 Jewish and Arab (primarily Muslim, but also Christian and Druze) residents—one of the few cities in Israel where the two peoples live and work so closely together. In addition to leaving a wound that has yet to fully heal, the riots also gave the members of the Educators' Kibbutz pause to reconsider their purpose and mission. Graduates of the progressive Israeli youth movement HaNoar HaOved VeHalomed and members of the social activist Dror Israel movement, they had come to Akko in 2005 in the spirit of Israel's original kibbutzim—agricultural communities that were at the heart of building the young country. Rather than toil on the land, however, a wave of new pioneers spearheaded by Dror Israel was settling in cities and towns throughout the country, establishing intentional communities with the goal to reinvigorate the ideals of the country's first kibbutzim and adapt that model to bridge the economic gaps and inequality that have contributed to poverty and an eroding social fabric within Israel's densely populated urban environments. A shared space for living and collaborating closely together, so the idea goes, would create the best conditions for creativity and innovation. In this way, a cooperative of educators working a range of different educational angles in the city and its surroundings would be able to break through the barriers facing any lone teacher or youth counsellor.

The Akko Educators' Kibbutz would do this by working to bolster the next generation, building relations between the Arab and Jewish youth of the city, which exists on the periphery of Israel's overall economic success and suffers from high levels of poverty and urban decay. Their effort was embraced by the mayor of Akko, who offered the kibbutz temporary residence and work space in a vacant and run-down compound that once housed a military convalescent facility. Known by local residents as the Nofesh—"vacation home"—it proved to be an adequate platform from which this group of young idealists could launch their agenda for social change.

But the Akko Riots cast a harsh light on the rifts within the communities they hoped to serve and the role they would have to play to make a lasting and peaceful change in the city. Addressing the needs just of youth would not be enough to truly effect change; they would need to reach all of the city's residents—Jew and Arab, young and old. With the reordering of their priorities came the evolution of new projects to directly target Arab-Jewish relations and focus on cultural and educational activities for all the residents of the city and its surroundings.

So was born the Akko Advot Center. "Advot" is the Hebrew word for ripples, and the name reflects the approach of the community-education center to creating change through grassroots democracy and shared goals. With bilingual programs to encourage Jews and Arabs to learn each other's languages and cultures, annual celebrations and commemorations of days that promote unity and civic responsibility among all residents, and a training program for local business owners to make their establishments accessible and inviting to employees and customers from all national and religious backgrounds, the Akko Advot Center seeks to empower the city's

residents to shape a more tolerant, peaceful, and vibrant future.

By building a broad network of local activists, the Akko Advot Center hopes to create the capacity to respond quickly to local issues as they arise. Just such an instance occurred in 2014, after a long summer of heightened tension that followed Israel's military conflict with Hamas in Gaza. The cooperative environment of the Akko Educators' Kibbutz means that people are always discussing the projects that they're working on, sharing ideas, and identifying common challenges. This is how they recognized, looking ahead at the calendar, that Yom Kippur and Eid-Al-Adha, the holiest days in Judaism and Islam respectively, would fall on the same day. Advot went into action immediately. They printed fliers in Hebrew and Arabic and mobilized groups of Jews and Arabs throughout the city to talk with residents about the importance of tolerance and mutual respect. The Advot Center brought religious leaders from both communities into every school in the city to discuss the significance of the holy days and the importance of mutual respect. The plan of action was based on the concept that education is a more effective strategy to reach people and effect desired peaceful outcomes than enlisting the police to employ the threat of force to maintain order. When the day came, both groups celebrated their holy days in peace.

Michal Keidar is a founding member of the Akko Educators' Kibbutz and the director of the Akko Advot Center. "We believe that Akko's diversity is something to be celebrated, not begrudged," she says. "Right now, Akko is defined as a 'mixed city.' Our strategy is based on taking the reality of the mixed city and working towards a vision of a 'shared city.' If we can show that Jews and Arabs here can do more than just tolerate each other, but, rather, truly live together in solidarity, then it could shine as a beacon to the entire country."

It is an ambitious dream. Now, as the Akko Educators' Kibbutz embarks on this new chapter, its members seek a better vantage from which to help implement change. For 12 years, the Nofesh has been a good home. In spite of its dilapidated state, the place has a certain physical charm. Built near the city's southern shore, it offers commanding views of the Mediterranean Sea and across Haifa Bay to Mount Carmel and, to the northwest, the ancient stone walls and turquoise minarets of Old Akko, which is best viewed as the setting sun paints the Levantine sky shades of violet, pink, purple, and red. But the members of the Educators' Kibbutz—which has grown from the original 20 to nearly 100, and includes 11 children—did not come to Akko for the views. They came to make a difference, and that is taking place in the heart of the city.

It is no longer possible for members of the kibbutz to achieve their goals from the physical outskirts of the city; they must move into the

social and cultural core of the community they want to serve. About 18 months ago, the kibbutz identified a building near the city's commercial center and Akko's mixed inner-city neighbourhoods. The four-story building of white stone was just seven years old and had been a private nursing home until it went bankrupt. With only modest changes, the building would be perfect for the needs of the kibbutz. Renovation of the top three floors would turn them into living areas for communal residential life and creative collaboration, and the ground floor would provide public activity space—a physical interface between the kibbutz and the broader community. These were the precise conditions that would allow the unique social innovation that the Educators' Kibbutz represents to become what it needs to be. The building would allow for a model of urban communal living combined with activist outreach. Nothing like it existed anywhere in Israel.

But buying the building wasn't possible without partners from Israel and abroad. Members of the kibbutz sought resources throughout the country and overseas. It was a difficult task—not everyone, they learned, is supportive of the idea of financially backing a large cooperative community. They came close several times to signing an agreement for the building, only to have their financial backing fall through. Sometimes it was difficult not to become disheartened.

"The kibbutz has made such a huge commitment to the future of Akko. I truly believe that if we succeed in what we're trying to do, others will follow in our path," said Mirit Sulema, a member of the Educators' Kibbutz and one of the leaders of the fundraising drive.

"Not just those seeking to live communally like we do, but also people throughout Israel, and maybe throughout the world, who want to make change in the places that they live. That's why we do what we do."

An agreement was recently signed with the previous owner of the new building, and the kibbutz is now one major step closer to making the dream a reality. But as of the writing of this article, the campaign is still underway. According to Sulema, it will take several more years to find enough economic partners to help fully realize the kibbutz's dream. For now, all eyes are turned resolutely to the future of the kibbutz and that of the community it serves.

For more information about the Akko Educators' Kibbutz contact Mirit Sulema at mirit-s@drorisrael.org.il.

Gabriel Freund was born and raised in Perth, on Australia's west coast. When he graduated high school he spent a gap year in Israel, where he was inspired by stories of the kibbutz spirit of collectivism and pioneering energy. Three years later he returned to Israel for a working vacation which never ended. Gabe lived in a cooperative community in Haifa for five years working on various educational projects and studying literature at Haifa University. In the summer of 2017 he moved to Akko to join the Educators' Kibbutz, where he works as a program director at the Akko Advot Center for the promotion of grassroots democracy and shared existence.

REACH

REACH is our column for all your Classified needs. In addition to ads intended to match people looking for communities with communities looking for people, Reach offers ads for events, goods, services, books, personals, and more to people interested in communities.

You may contact the Advertising Manager Christopher Kindig to place a Reach ad. Email Ads@ic.org, call 443-422-3741, or go to communities.ic.org/ads/ for more details or to submit your ad online.

THE REACH DEADLINE FOR ISSUE #178 - Spring 2018 (out in March) is January 24, 2018.

The rate for Reach ads is Up to 50 Words: $25/issue or $75/year; Up to 125 Words: $40/issue or $125/year; Up to 350 Words: $60/issue or $175/year If you are an FIC Member you may take off an additional 10%.

You may pay using a card or PayPal by contacting Christopher online or over the phone using the contact information above, or you may mail a check or money order payable to Communities with your ad text, word count, and duration of the ad, plus your contact information, to: The Fellowship for Intentional Community, 23 Dancing Rabbit Lane, Rutledge, MO 63563.

Intentional communities listing in the Reach section are also invited to create a free listing in the online Communities Directory at Directory.ic.org, and also to try our online classified advertising options. Special prices may be available to those who wish to list both in the magazine and online.

COMMUNITIES WITH OPENINGS

HUNDREDFOLD FARM IS A 10-HOME COHOUSING COMMUNITY near Gettysburg, PA. Our custom designed energy efficient single family solar homes are surrounded by 80 acres of fields and forest. Community gardens and a greenhouse provide organic produce year-round. Four ready to build lots start at $75k. Come grow with us! www.hundredfoldfarm.org

ALPHA FARM IS A SMALL RURAL COMMUNITY FOUNDED IN 1972, located in the Coast Range of western Oregon. We are seeking new members to assist in our current revitalization and the development of new community income streams. Of particular interest are individuals with a cooperative mindset, skilled in Office Administration, Auto Mechanics, Infrastructure Maintenance or large scale Organic Gardening. If this sounds like you, please contact the Visitor Coordinator at alpha@pioneer.net.

COHOUSING A LA MEXICANA! Located near Ajijic Lake Chapala, 3 Acres are ready for building homes. We stand for Sustainability, Community, Multiversity and Aging in Place. We are seeking quality VISIONARY AND ADVENTUROUS members/investors to embrace this unique opportunity. Contact Jaime Navarro at rancholasaludvillage@gmail.com or www.rancholasaludvillage.com

HILLS, WOODS, PASTURES, GARDENS. Currents is a small, rural, multi-generational community 14 miles outside the university town of Athens, Ohio. Co-op inspired, consensus that works, solar micro-grids, our own water system. In our 36 years we've made a good start; now, still inventing ourselves, we're actively seeking a next generation. Looking for some long-time friends/intentional family. Especially for people with small children or a group who have dreamed about building a life together. 162 acres which, with sufficient vision and sweat, might include… small-scale cooperative farming? Craft shops and home-based business? If you would like to help imagine and build and don't mind not-starting from scratch, please inquire. Housing options now available. Send inquiry to heycurrents@gmail.com.

ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE - AND WE ARE BUILDING IT. Bread and Roses Collective is looking for new members to join our project of creating sustainable urban living for activists and change-makers. We have two Victorian houses, 10 adults, one toddler, and a half-acre organic permaculture garden in the progressive Westcott Neighborhood of Syracuse, NY. We are within a mile of three universities and a hotbed of local activism. The houses are collectively run as a consensus-based nonprofit. We require a commitment of at least a year, share our vegetarian food, and are committed to affordable housing.www.BreadAndRosesCollective.org 315-422-4924info@breadandrosescollective.org

DANCING WATERS PERMACULTURE CO-OPERATIVE - We are a 34 year-old community of 13 seeking that combination of people who will bring us to active collaboration and mutual respect so all can participate meaningfully, as we move forward with stewardship of our land and resources. 130 amply wooded acres in the rolling hills and valleys of the Driftless area of southwest Wisconsin, a rural area rich with lush watersheds, small towns, practitioners and institutions of sustainability and resilience, and a burgeoning restorative culture. Homes are commonly owned. Collaborative work is a focus, balanced with supporting member's own projects and careers. Decisions are by consensus; meetings twice monthly, potlucks and work parties. Activities: gardening and putting up food, firewood gathering, building maintenance, orchard, haying, hogs, chickens, eating together, singing, game times. For more info please read our listing at ic.org under "Community Directory" before contacting us. Contact: Rikardo: rif@countryspeed.com, or 608-872-2407

SPIRITSONG COMMUNITY -- We are a small community of five people wanting to be ten people looking for new members. We are located in Napa county, CA. We live on 37 acres of mainly wooded land 2 miles up a dirt road. We have several structures available for people to live in. We are off the grid of the Internet, we have organic gardens, and a small dairy herd. We have a non-dogmatic interest in Spiritual Awareness. Contact Rory Skuce 707-965-3994 or middletownmassage2@yahoo.com

COWEETA HERITAGE CENTER AND TALKING ROCK FARM are located in the mountains of Western North Carolina in a beautiful and diverse temperate rainforest. Coweeta is looking for others who would like to join together to form an Intentional Community embracing the principles of Voluntary Simplicity. Simply put, we wish "to live simply so that others may simply live." It is a recognition that nature provides us with valuable services and resources that we can use to enrich our lives. Utilizing local resources, appropriate technology, and working cooperatively, we can discover creative ways to meet our needs as "directly and simply as possible.". Come join Coweeta and learn how to live lightly on the land and enjoy the Earth's bounty! Contact Coweeta for more info or to schedule a visit!! Contact Paul at coweeta@gmail.com.

DANCING RABBIT ECOVILLAGE, RUTLEDGE, MISSOURI. Come live lightly with us, and be part of the solution! Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage is an intentional community and educational non-profit focused on living, researching, and demonstrating sustainable living possibilities. We live, work and play on 280 acres of lovely rolling prairie, and welcome new members to join us in creating a vibrant community and cooperative culture! Together we're living abundant and fulfilling low-carbon lives, using about 10% of the resources of the average American in many key areas. Our ecological covenants include using renewable energy, practicing organic agriculture, and no private vehicles. We use natural and green building techniques, share cars and some common infrastructure, and make our own fun. We welcome individuals, families, and sub-communities, and are especially seeking women, as well as people with leadership and communication skills. Join us in living a new reality: sustainable is possible! 660-883-5511; dancingrabbit@ic.org

SANTA ROSA CREEK COMMONS, SANTA ROSA, CALIFORNIA. We are an intergenerational, limited equity, housing cooperative 60 miles north of San Francisco. Although centrally located near public transportation, we are in a secluded wooded area beside a creek on two acres of land. We share ownership of the entire property and pay monthly charges that cover the usual expenses of home ownership. We have kept our costs reasonable by sharing all of the responsibilities of our cooperative and much of its labor. All members serve on the Board of Directors and two committees oversee the welfare of the community. We enjoy a rich social life and a mutual concern for the natural environment. Contact: Membership 707-595-4399.

HEARTWOOD COHOUSING ~ DURANGO / BAYFIELD, COLORADO. Where the high red-rock deserts of the Four Corners climb into the stunning San Juan Mountains. 24 homes ~ 350 acres of woodland, pastures, and community gardens. Established in 2000. ~ Happily rolling into our 18th year. Heartwoodcohousing.com FB/HeartwoodCohousing

FAIR OAKS ECOHOUSING, EAST OF SACRAMENTO, CA - A family-friendly green cohousing community – construction starts Spring 2017. Thirty townhomes on 3.7 acres with a large clubhouse, pool, gardens, and orchard. Fair Oaks is 18 miles east of downtown Sacramento, with easy access to the American River Parkway, Fair Oaks Village, shopping, and K-12 schools. Learn more at www.FairOaksEcoHousing.org.

ESCAPE THE MONEY CURSE! For more than 40 years we have refused to work for money. We are dedicated idealists who try to live out the teachings of Jesus within a communal/nomadic lifestyle. We welcome visitors, even if just for a short time. Full-time members share

all that we own in common, living simply, and gleaning most of our food and other needs from what society throws out. We try to share these and other Christian principles through words and actions. We distribute self-produced literature and DVD's, while counselling those in need. Most of us live in vehicles and travel constantly. Visitors need not endorse all of our beliefs, but they would be expected to share their own ideals with others as we travel and to share responsibilities. It's a narrow path, but one of adventure, brotherhood and intimacy with God. Will you walk it with us? www.jesuschristians.com email: fold@idl.net.au

SERVICES

MAKE PEACE WITH MONEY FOR YOURSELF, YOUR COMMUNITY, YOUR WORK. Learn to raise money for your project or program or have us do it, affordably. (We never take a percentage; instead, we charge by the hour. You'll know what it will cost before we ever start through our free "scope of work" discussions with you.) We also offer moneycoaching to help keep you on healthy financial footing, and help you achieve what you want in the world. Contact us to find out more or browse our blog: http://www.raisingclarity.com/blog. Contact Beth Raps: bethraps@raisingclarity.com, 304-410-2612, and visit www.raisingclarity.com

OPPORTUNITIES

INNISFREE VILLAGE IS SEEKING ONE-YEAR VOLUNTEERS TO LIVE, WORK, AND PLAY in community with adults with disabilities. Experience the beauty of the Blue Ridge Mountains on our 550-acre farm in Crozet, VA and build lifelong friendships and memories. For more information, visit www.innisfreevillage.org/volunteer or email info@innisfreevillage.org.

TO CELEBRATE 45 YEARS OF BUILDING INTENTIONAL URBAN SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY, Morningland Monastery in Long Beach, California will offer a few work/study opportunities for those interested in Monastic Immersion. We are an offline lay monastery dedicated to 'simple living and high thinking' through meditation, service, study, and ceremony. All faiths welcome. Our practice is Maha Anu Ati-Yoga, an ancient yoga for spiritual awakening. Open houses, retreats, digital detox, and special events offered monthly. Applicants for Monastic Immersion must complete an interview process. Call 562-433-9906 or write explaining your interest and what you can contribute to our community. "Environment is stronger than will." -Yogananda. offline. unplugged. real. Morningland Monastery, 2600 E. 7th St, Long Beach, CA 90804

THE ECOVILLAGE INSTITUTE - The purpose for EVI is to enlighten the whole of the human experience. All our programs take place at the heart of Cite Ecologique of NH Ecovillage. To learn more, please visit our web site www.evi.life or call 603-331-1669. "Live Free and Inspired"

FREE NATURAL BUILDING INTERNSHIP IN MOAB, UT! Join us for our five-month internship, where 16 interns will work together under natural building instructors to build two straw bale homes from foundation to finish. Homes are built for low and very-low income residents of the community. Housing and food stipend provided! Next internship begins February 1st, 2018. Contact Claire Spalding at coordinator@communityrebuilds.org or (435) 260-0501. More info at www.communityrebuilds.org

VOLUNTEER IN HAWAII! Your new path awaits. Find community in a dynamic environment that aims to be a living model for a healthy and vibrant planet. Share 120-acres of jungle paradise with as many as 200 guests, volunteers, and staff, while enjoying fresh, local meals served 3 times a day, up to 50 classes in permaculture, yoga, wellness, and spirituality each week, and much more. Embodying the strength and beauty of the Big Island, Kalani Honua is a non-profit retreat center supporting local and global transformation through nature, culture, and wellness. Located on the breathtaking Red Road on the Puna coastline, we invite you to recharge as you find yourself here amidst the raw, creative energy of Hawaii Island. Kalani offers multiple options ranging from 1-month Sabbaticals to extended stay Volunteer and Skilled Trade programs. Volunteers provide service in our Kitchen, Housekeeping, Landscaping, Maintenance, and Permaculture Departments and enjoy all of our on-campus amenities and classes. Skilled Trade scholarships are awarded by application and are available in a variety of disciplines, including construction, maintenance, vehicle and small engine mechanics, IT and culinary arts (to name a few). For more information on Kalani and our programs: Visit our website at www.kalani.com/volunteer. Contact our Volunteer Office: volunteeroffice@kalani.com 808-965-0468 ext. 117

SUCCESSFUL HIGH-END CUSTOM CABINET SHOP ON SHANNON FARM COMMUNITY is seeking a buyer for our privately owned business. We are located near the Blue Ridge Mountains of Central Virginia about 27 miles southwest of Charlottesville. There would be time available for learning our business and learning about joining Shannon Farm Community (see listing page on ic.org or in the Directory). Our exit plan is to gradually hand over the reins of the business as we edge towards semi-retirement. Business began in 1977! www.heartwoodkitchens.com. Respond to jenny@heartwoodkitchens.com.

THE LUKAS COMMUNITY, A RUDOLF STEINER INSPIRED COMMUNITY, is currently seeking compassionate, hardworking individuals, couples or small families to live with and help care for our developmentally challenged residents in beautiful extended-family homes and to participate in our therapeutic programs, including weaving, woodworking, organic gardens, animals, crafts, music, drama and dance. For more information, go to www.lukascommunity.org. To apply, please send a resume and cover letter to David Spears at lukas@lukascommunity.org or The Lukas Community, PO Box 137, Temple, NH 03084.

PUBLICATIONS, BOOKS, WEBSITES, WORKSHOPS

BEST OF COMMUNITIES BOOKS - We've distilled the most insightful and helpful articles on the topics that you–our readers–have told us you care about most, and have organized them into 15 scintillating books. Learn about Starting or Visiting a Community, Consensus, Good Meetings, Making Agreements, Solving Conflicts, Cooperative Economics, and more! Available in print and digital format: www.ic.org/best-of-communities

"REINHABITING THE VILLAGE: COCREATING OUR FUTURE" - created by Jamaica Stevens and Executive Produced by Keyframe-Entertainment - is a 352-page graphically rich, softcover book showcasing the work of 12 Visionary Artists and over 60 Contributing Authors. The book features "Voices from the Village" sharing their experience, best practices, strategies and resources

to empower communities through practical wisdom and inspiring perspectives. The book offers a roadmap and blueprint for building a legacy for our future through the shared development of social technology tools, innovative templates, models, permaculture guidelines and resources that are useful to communities everywhere. Buy the book at: http://keyframe-entertainment.com/culture-art/reinhabitingthevillage/ Discounted bulk book orders are available, please contact info@keyframe-entertainment for more info.

CENTER FOR COMMUNAL STUDIES - UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN INDIANA -- The Center for Communal Studies is a clearinghouse for information and research on communal and intentional societies worldwide, past and present. The Center maintains a reading room, and an archive of 500 historic communal records and 10,000 online images, with special strength in twentieth-century American communal groups. The Center annually awards cash prizes for Undergraduate and Graduate Student Papers, as well as a $2,000 Research Travel Grant. We are located in Rice Library on the campus of the University of Southern Indiana, Evansville, IN 47712. Phone us at 812/465-1656 or email charison@usi.edu. Evansville has a regional airport with jet service from Chicago, Atlanta, Dallas and elsewhere. See our website (http://www.usi.edu/liberal-arts/communal-center) for additional information about research opportunities, lectures and conferences. Online resources are at http://www.usi.edu/library/university-archives-and-special-collections/collections.

FREE GROUP PROCESS RESOURCES at Tree Bressen's website: www.treegroup.info. Topics include consensus, facilitation, blocks and dissent, community-building exercises, alternative formats to general discussion, the list goes on! Articles, handouts, and more - all free!

FRIENDS JOURNAL IS A MONTHLY QUAKER MAGAZINE FOR SPIRITUAL SEEKERS. Our mission is to communicate the Quaker experience in order to deepen spiritual lives. Read Friends Journal in print and online, Watch QuakerSpeak videos, Listen to free podcasts of articles. Subscriptions start at just $28/year. Thank you for reading!

REAL ESTATE

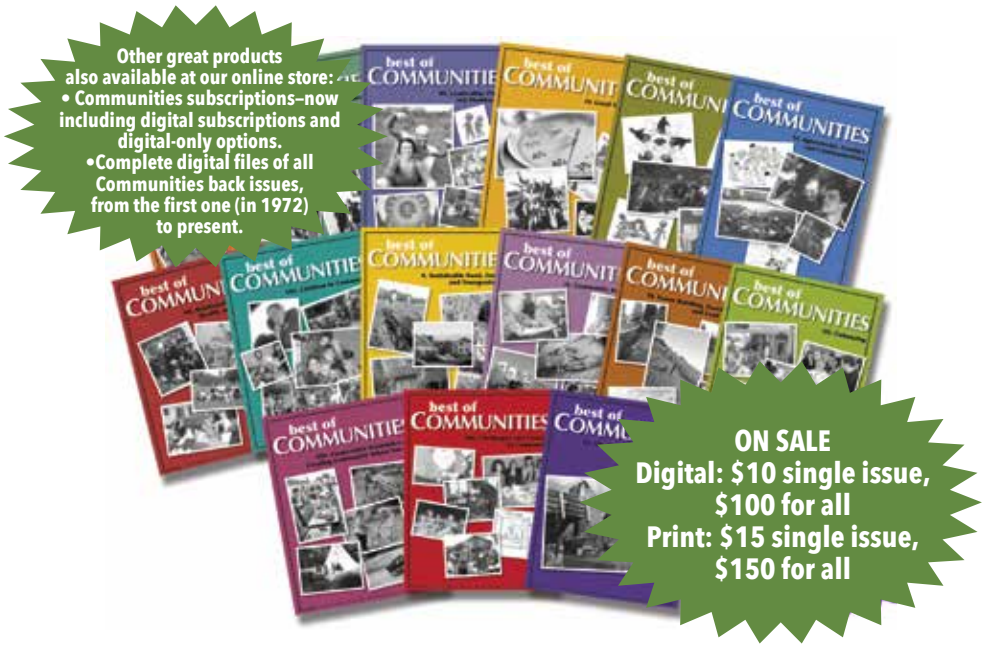
TWO ADJACENT WOODED LOTS NORTH OF COLUMBIA, MO. Beautiful and rolling, native plant diversity, seasonal creek. Seeking ecology-minded folks interested in community gardens and animal care, and cottage industry. One lot, 10 acres/90k with pond. The other, 14 acres/140k with water, electric, metal building, and driveway. More on ic.org

LIVE YOUR DREAM - AND HELP FIC! -- Incredible property now for sale, which includes a $10,000 donation by the seller to FIC when it is sold! 80 acre retreat in the mountains of Western NC has everything needed to start and sustain a Community of 35-40 members in hard housing, plus 100 or more in primitive housing and camping. Includes Canopy zip line business, orchards, honey bees, trout farm, bath houses, greenhouses, laundry facilities, workout room, hydro power generator, chicken coop, pig sty, picnic shelters, 18 hole disc golf course, hiking & biking trails, and much more! $1,250,000. Owner financing available. Contact Cleve Young @ 828-765-9696, or email ads@ic.org.

Find more resources at
ic.org/communities

Best of Communities Bundle of All 15 Special Issues

The Fellowship for Intentional Community is pleased to offer you the cream of our crop–the very best articles that have appeared over the last 20 years in our flagship publications: Communities magazine and Communities Directory.



In the Best of Communities we've distilled what we consider the most insightful and helpful articles on the topics that you–our readers–have told us you care about most, and have organized them into 15 scintillating collections:

I. Intentional Community Overview, and Starting a Community
II. Seeking and Visiting a Community
III. Leadership, Power, and Membership
IV. Good Meetings
V. Consensus
VI. Agreements, Conflict, and Communication
VII. Relationships, Intimacy, Health, and Well-Being
VIII. Children in Community
IX. Community for Elders
X. Sustainable Food, Energy, and Transportation
XI. Green Building, Ecovillage Design, and Land Preservation
XII. Cohousing
XIII. Cooperative Economics and Creating Community Where You Are
XIV. Challenges and Lessons of Community
XV. The Peripatetic Communitarian: The Best of Geoph Kozeny

Each collection is comprised of about 15–20 articles, containing a total of 55–65 pages. All are available in both digital and print format.

If you're hungry for information about cooperative living, we have a menu that will satisfy any appetite! If you're thinking about starting a community, this collection offers an incredible storehouse of practical advice. If you're thinking of joining a community, these special issues will help you discern the right things to look for, and how to be a savvy shopper.

While there are some classic pieces that date back to the '90s, the vast majority of the articles in The Best of Communities Bundle have been written in the past dozen years, representing cutting-edge thinking and how-to explorations of the social, ecological, and economic aspects of sustainable living. We've gathered insights about what you can expect when raising children in community, and offer a wealth of information about what it's like to grow old there, too. For dessert, we have the collected wisdom of over 50 essays from Geoph Kozeny (1949–2007), the Peripatetic Communitarian.

Please support the magazine and enhance your own library by taking advantage of these new offerings!

ic.org/best-of-communities

A Universal Story

Hippie Family Values
Video/DVD by Beverly Seckinger
64 minutes, 2017
Available to the educational market through New Day Films, newday.com/film/hippie-family-values; available for individual streaming and home DVD purchase through hippiefamilyvalues.com; also check film website for upcoming community/public screenings or contact bsecking@email.arizona.edu to arrange one

Hippie Family Values is a beautiful film, shot over a 10-year period at a 40-year-old communal ranch in southwest New Mexico, and also benefiting from archival videos and photos. We get to know members of four generations—including the hippie elders' own parents, children, and grandchildren—as residents explore what it's like to call a remote desert outpost home, building lives together based on countercultural principles, cooperation, and back-to-the-land ethics and practices.

We witness transitions—departures, returns, new children, deaths—as well as the birth and waning of various projects and dreams. Most of all, we get an intimate feel of this unconventional extended "family" and how it—like any family and any community—goes through inevitable changes.

The Ranch faces the same dilemmas any long-lived community does: how do we care for our elders? How do we bring in "new blood" and welcome innovation while not losing our core values and practices? How can we be home to both the old and the new? How do we cope with the gradual slide that often seems to happen from collectivism toward individualism—and how can we come back together when we seem to be drifting apart too much?

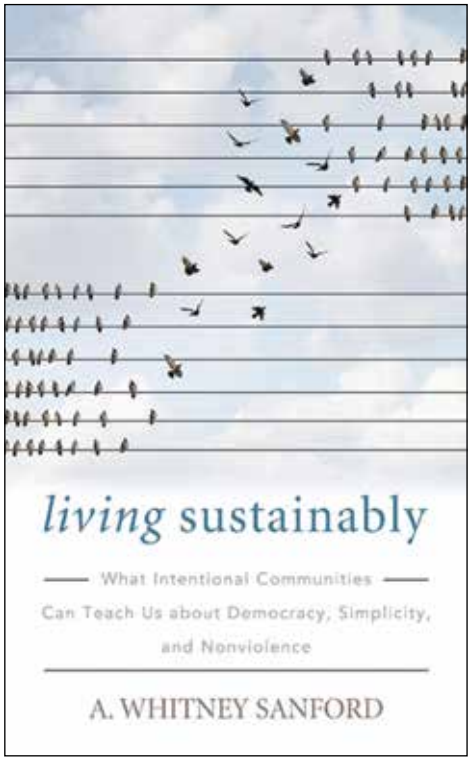
It also faces dilemmas particularly acute for rural, back-to-the-land communities: how do we keep people here when local economic opportunities are few? How do we balance the counterculture we have created with the prevailing cultural forces that surround us? How do we stay connected to the outside world—including friends and family who have not chosen to join us, and in fact may have very different aspirations—while at the same time staying true to the land, the community, and the vision that we've committed our lives to? And how do we follow our personal passions and paths when they seem to diverge from life on the ranch, or when a larger or different adventure calls, or when our remote rural community begins to feel like a dead-end rather than a paradise? And how do we deal with the emotions that come up when we separate from people who are, in effect, lifelong family, through community if not through blood?

Hippie Family Values is an intimate view of community members who, over the course of time, ask these questions of themselves and of each other, but who, throughout, also live very much in the present. I found myself growing fond of different Ranch members, then experiencing the pangs of their departures (or of the waning of their hopes as a particular plan became unworkable). I'm sure my vicarious emotions were just a taste of what the actual individuals involved felt at each transition or setback, but they were also a reminder of what any one of us who experiences such cycles personally goes through emotionally.

In her email introducing the film to me, filmmaker Beverly Seckinger described its nature well: "*Hippie Family Values* is not really an issue-oriented film, nor does it have a strong narrative plot. Rather, I see it as more of an ethnographic film—an intimate slice of life, filmed over many years, in the course of which we experience a bit of the texture of life in this back-to-the-land community, and ponder the phases of life, from birth through death, with an emphasis on aging. What did it mean to commit to this community, and live for decades there, raise children there, and now face aging and death, wondering if the community will survive into the next generation?"

Far from being a "downer," though, this honest meditation on change, loss, and transition—as well as connection, fulfillment, caring, and fun—within a loving community felt liberating to me. Every moment it depicts comes across as alive and palpable in the present, and also, in the end, proves evanescent—a realization that sometimes comes as a rude shock. But if communitarians and communities can recognize these transitions as inevitable—signs of having lived, rather than of failure—then I think we'll have a lot more acceptance and joy, and more ability to embrace or at least appreciate every stage of the multiple overlapping journeys that we experience as community members and simply as human beings. In fact, this is a film that I believe anyone—hippie or not, communard or social conservative—has the capacity to relate to in some way, and to learn from.

Chris Roth edits Communities *and is not getting any younger himself.*



Being the Change

Living Sustainably: What Intentional Communities Can Teach Us about Democracy, Simplicity, and Nonviolence

By A. Whitney Sanford

The University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, 2017, 298 pages

A. Whitney Sanford's new book introduces readers to the worlds of both urban and rural intentional community dwellers across the United States. Her cases include Catholic Worker houses in several American cities, Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage and the Possibility Alliance in rural Missouri, Cobb Hill Cohousing in Vermont, Twin Oaks Community in Virginia, and many others. Some of these communities have completely separated themselves from the fossil fuel economy, while others practice car-sharing; some emphasize regional sustainability, and others self-sufficiency.

Sanford's study of the ways in which democracy, simplicity, and nonviolence are practiced in these communities offers many thought-provoking models for a different kind of life in contemporary America. Her book is an engaging overview of the quirks and challenges that these communities face, as well as their many achievements. Sanford is a trustworthy guide, whose sensitive and nuanced portraits are based on many hours of participant observation and interviews. The men and women she speaks with and the communities she visits practice a wide variety of ways of living sustainably, yet they all share the desire to "be the change they wish to see in the world" (240).

In some ways these communities are as different from one another as they are from the outside society, and they are both separate from, and living in continuity with "the world." Here is where Sanford's study has broad appeal. Readers will come away with an understanding that these communities are not outliers, that their agendas have relevance for many Americans.

For instance, "deciding what to eat" plays a significant role in the book, reflecting Sanford's interest in food and gardening. These communities overlap with the larger DIY (Do It Yourself) movement and the proliferation of farms, CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture), and restaurants catering to the many Americans who want to eat locally and sustainably. Interest in "reskilling," which is central to these communities—canning, grafting, animal husbandry, construction—is also of wider interest. Although many of these communities have chosen a spatial isolation that more easily allows for experimentation with new ideas and practices, they also share with many people outside intentional communities an emphasis on what Sanford call "the three legs of sustainability—equity, ecology, and economy."

Yet what marks these communities as separate from the concerns of most Americans are the constraints of living in community with other people. Negotiating the tension between the needs for privacy and for community, "finding a balance between personal autonomy and community life" (77), is a central preoccupation of Sanford's interlocutors. While her book gestures at the paths people take to these communities and the problems that arise when they join them, I would have liked to see fuller stories about individuals' journeys to and struggles within specific communities. The disadvantage of a study that is so broad and includes so many different kinds of communities (which is also a strength of the book) is that readers do not get a full sense of the intimate processes of dealing with conflicts and tensions. For example, nonviolent communication is a central concern of the book, but we do not get a real sense of how it takes place at ground level in interpersonal relationships and community meetings.

Another facet of community life that Sanford glosses over is the practice of spirituality, religion, and ritual. Many ritualized activities are mentioned, but not analyzed or discussed in much detail. How do community rituals around food, one of the most contested areas of community life, create cohesion; resolve or increase tensions? How do personal religious or spiritual commitments shape participants' experiences of these communities? Reading *Living Sustainably* on the heels of a recent trip I took to the Shaker Village at Pleasant Hill, Kentucky, I was struck by the absence of ritual and spirituality in Sanford's study.

Last summer I visited the Shaker Village, not far from where I grew up in Louisville, Kentucky, and I could not help thinking about the Shakers and other 19th century communitarians as I read *Living Sustainably.* Recent restoration work at Pleasant Hill has focused on restoring native prairies, with breathtaking results: wildflowers, medicinal plants, butterflies, and birds were in abundance during my visit. The Shaker Village's restaurant sources many ingredients from its gardens and serves livestock raised on site. While this is no longer an active community, but more of a living museum and tourist site, I could not help but wonder how the history of the Shakers and their earlier version of DIY might provide an illuminating backdrop for the communities readers encounter in Sanford's book, especially the ways in which spiritual commitments infused every aspect of Shaker life and work. While *Living Sustainably* could be adopted in a variety of courses in disciplines such as environmental studies and peace studies, it does not provide much historical, religious, or cultural context of the rich history of intentional communities in the US. The focus is very much on the present and future, not the past.

Readers like Sanford and myself who have not chosen to live in intentional communities, but are interested in living more simply and sustainably by commuting on bicycle or growing our own food, will find this book just as valuable as those who live in these kinds of communities. And for those of us who have not departed from more individualistic lives and homes, this book may change our minds. It will certainly leave its readers with a richer understanding of both the tribulations and joys of living in intentional communities.

Sarah M. Pike is Professor of Comparative Religion at California State University, Chico, and the author of Earthly Bodies, Magical Selves: Contemporary Pagans and the Search for Community *and* New Age and Neopagan Religions in America. *Her latest book,* For the Wild: Ritual and Commitment in Radical Eco-Activism *was published in September 2017.*

FIND YOUR PURPOSE
FIND YOUR PLACE

In One of Over a Dozen Rural and Urban Communities Across North America

CAMPHILL
ASSOCIATION
OF NORTH AMERICA

Lifesharing communities www.camphill.org **Lifechanging service**

Subscribe to Communities Magazine

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

Each issue is focused around a theme:

- Social Permaculture • Service and Activism
- Ecovillages around the World • Gender Issues
- Finding or Starting a Community • Spirituality
- Community and the Law • Food and Community
- Community for Baby Boomers • Right Livelihood
- Technology: Friend or Foe? • Business Ventures
- Renewable Energy • Youth • Diversity ...

• Reach listings—helping communities looking for people and people looking for communities find each other.

What Readers say about Communities

I love Communities magazine. Deciding to be communal is the best decision I've ever made in my life. Communities has been there from the beginning.

–**Patch Adams, M.D.**,
author and founder of the Gesundheit Institute

Communities has become one of our go-to sources for thought-provoking pieces about people opting out of the rat race and living life on their own terms.

–**Christian Williams**, Editor, Utne Reader

Each issue is a refreshing antidote to the mainstream media's "me, me, me" culture. Communities overflows with inspiring narratives from people who are making "we" central to their lives instead.

–**Murphy Robinson**,
Founder of Mountainsong Expeditions

Community has to be the future if we are to survive. Communities plays such a critical role in moving this bit of necessary culture change along.

–**Chuck Durrett**,
The Cohousing Company, McCamant & Durrett Architects

For more than 40 years Communities has done an outstanding job of promoting the communitarian spirit as well as serving intentional communities and other groups coming together for the common good.

–**Timothy Miller**,
Professor of Religious Studies, University of Kansas

For many years we've been associated with and have strongly supported Communities because we're convinced of its unique contribution to the communities movement in the United States and the world.

–**Lisa and Belden Paulson, Ph.D.**,
cofounders of High Wind community

Communities has been important to me ever since I began researching intentional communities back in 1980.... The Editors have always been willing to include critical articles which challenge accepted norms.

–**Dr. Bill Metcalf**,
Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia

Communities is an invaluable resource.

–**Professor Emeritus Yaacov Oved,** Tel-Aviv University

Subscription rates (print plus digital unless you specify): 1-year $25 US ($35 international), 2-year $45 US ($65 international), 3-year $60 US ($90 international), lifetime $500 US. Sample of current issue: $8 US ($10 international). Prepurchase of 10 copies of single issue: $50 US. Digital-only (downloadable worldwide from ic.org): $20 per year.

To subscribe or order copies by mail, please send us your name (of individual or contact person), phone, email address, group name or affiliation (if applicable), street, city/town, state/province, and zip/postal code, with the total amount paid by check or by Visa/MC/Discovery, with card number and expiration date. For gift subscriptions, please send addresses of gift recipients. Also, please let us know if you do not want your name shared with like-minded organizations.

Please mail to FIC, 23 Dancing Rabbit Lane, Rutledge, MO 63563, call 1-800-462-8240, or subscribe online at ic.org/subscribe.

Now including digital subscriptions and digital-only options!
ic.org/subscribe

Fellowship for Intentional Community

Communities:
Life in Cooperative Culture
23 Dancing Rabbit Ln,
Rutledge MO 63563
Subscriptions - 4 issues:
$25 US, $35 International
ic.org/communities

0 92846 85962 1 74

$7.95 / $9.95 Canada