

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

- Why do we want to learn about communities?
- How does the “community” impact/influence the ability to produce a good local food system?
- Is a “community food system” possible without a good community base?

■ So if we think a committed community is necessary to foster the concept of a local food system we need to know:

(1) What is a sustainable community?

(2) How can we work toward building communities?

(1) What is a sustainable community?



- A community that can persist while meeting the needs of its members and the needs of subsequent generations.
- American communities could exist because of the general tolerance, prosperity and abundant land in the US.
- Examples of peaceful revolutions, often during times of political or religious unrest, where members can find individual fulfillment and yet be part of a community.

History of communities in the United States

- Utopian Communities: to implement a plan for a perfect society on earth. Shared collective goals and ideologies.
 - *1663 - Dutch Mennonites in Delaware; 1st in US
 - *1663 - 1776 - 20 new communities, primarily religious and German
 - *1728 - Amish in Pennsylvania
 - *1774 - Shakers in Sabbathday Lake, Maine. Founded by Mother Ann Lee (English). Still in existence but with very few members.

*1824 - New Harmony, Indiana. Founded by Robert Owen (British). First secular utopian community.

*1800 - 1850 - 90 new communities formed, both religious and secular.

*1840 - Brook Farm, Massachusetts and North American Phalanx, Red Bank, New Jersey. Founded by Charles Fournier (French). Secular.

*1870 - 1895 - 100 new communities. Mostly secular.

*1874 - Hutterite Bon Homme in South Dakota.

*1900 - Estero, Florida. Founded by Cyrus R. Teed.

- **Communes:** A relatively small, often rural, community whose members share common interests, work and income, and often own property collectively. Commune members usually place the group ahead of the nuclear family unit, generally maintain a 'common purse' and collective household and make intimate as well as general decisions as a group.

Some communes began with a charismatic leader, others did not. The average age of commune members in 2001 was 40+. Often based on personal growth and self-fulfillment.

*1965 - 1973 - “Next wave of new communities” following utopian communities. 2000 new communes formed with a total membership over 250,000.

*2000 - 627 officially listed in North America. However, some sources put that number at 12,000.

Intentional communities: A newer term for any group of people living together with a common purpose. Usually not as closely tied as communes. Usually do not share income. A broad term which includes most sustainable communities, beginning with utopian communities.

Cohousing: First cohousing project in Denmark in 1972. Centered around the concept of balancing community and privacy.

Characteristics include; participatory process, intentional neighborhood design, private homes & common facilities, resident management, nonhierarchical structure and decision making. Hundreds in existence in the US.

- Sustainable communities: formed to address the environmental, social, economic and spiritual needs of the members.

A community of homes built around sustainable principles: clean air and water, efficient resource use, mimicking natural ecosystem cycles, more community and GOOD FOOD.

1903 - Letchworth, England. Garden City concept developed by Ebenezer Howard. Model for sustainable communities in the US.

1920 - Welwyn Garden City, England. E. Howard.

1925 - Sunnyside, New York.

Radburn, New Jersey. Both developed by Regional Planning Association of America, modeled after E. Howard communities.

1936 - Greenbelt, Maryland.

Greenhills, Ohio.

Greendale, Wisconsin. All developed with help from Franklin D. Roosevelt administration.

1940 - Columbia, Maryland.

Reston, Virginia. Same basic plan as earlier.

1970 - 1980 - many more projects initiated.

1972 - Concept of “sustainable design” receives international attention.

1980 - 1990 - Political climate encouraged urban sprawl.

1990 - present - Many new projects.

Seaside, Florida. Part of “liveable communities network” developed by Duany, Plater-Zyberk and Davis.

Playa Vista, LA, California. “Pedestrian pocket communities” in an urban setting.

Laguna West, Sacramento, California.

1991 - Ahwahnee Principles adopted by many city planning commissions.

1992 - Earth Summit in Rio. Encouraged sustainable growth.

1993 - Congress for New Urbanism formed. Smart Growth Initiative. CA and CO leading the way.

1997 - Northern Innovative Communities: Sustainable Communities through Sustainable Agriculture.

2002 - World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg.

Abundance EcoVillage

- 2000, Fairfield, Iowa. Modeled after Village Homes. Founded by Lawrence Gamble and Mark Olson.
- 15 Acres, 21 single family, 3 - 3 family; common buildings.
- Agricultural base with 4000 square foot greenhouse.
- Solar and wind as energy source.
- Rain catchment and water recycling.

Earthaven EcoVillage

- 1991, Black Mountain, North Carolina. Founded by Geoph Kozeny.
- 325 Acres, 60 people hoping to grow to 150. Eventually 11 neighborhoods around a central core.
- Spiritual base.
- Agriculture essential, with permaculture design, managed by Imani Farm. Forest management.
- Educational Center.



EcoVillage

- 1992, Ithaca, New York. Founded by Joan Bokaer and Liz Walker.
- 175 Acres, 60 homes, 150 people. 2 neighborhoods built.
- Community base with agriculture component essential. 80% greenspace, 55A in permanent conservation easement, 10 A organic farm run as CSA.
- Education on sustainability primary concern.

The Farm



- 1971, Summertown, Tennessee. Founded by Stephen Gaskin with many friends from California.
- Over 800 Acres, 250 people.
- Spiritual base. “We are all one.”
- Agricultural base. Organic farming with sustainable practices.

Findhorn EcoVillage



- 1962, Moray, Scotland.
- 45 buildings, 300 people. Many community buildings and spaces.
- Agricultural base. 15A CSA “Earthshare” provides 70% of fresh food for community. Meat, etc, provided by 95A farm nearby.
- Green buildings and systems. 15% electricity from wind. “Living Machine” waste treatment.
- Many community businesses.

Sirius Community

- 1980, Shutesbury, Massachusetts.
- Spiritual base.
- Agricultural base. Organic farming with sustainable practices.
- Education an important component.

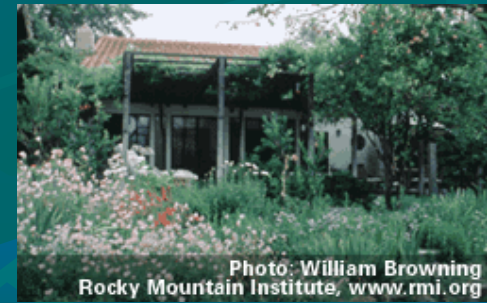


Village Homes

- 1972, Davis, California. Developed by Michael and Judy Corbett, Garden village concept.
- 60 Acres, 242 units (apts & houses), 650 people. 16% low income, labor can be down payment.
- Community base.
- Agricultural land throughout with organic orchards, vineyards and gardens. Greenbelts connect all. Can go to center without crossing streets.

Village Homes, continued

- Green buildings, south orientation. Passive and active solar.
- Natural drainage system.
- Cul-de-sacs with narrow streets.
- Common spaces for neighbor interaction. Parks and swimming pool.



Designing Sustainable Communities

GENERAL PRINCIPLES:

- (1) Plan for sustainability from the beginning.
Design for ecological principles first.
- (2) Location: should be chosen for ecological stability. Often this is not possible.
- (3) All community development is site specific.
A community can't go too far in the planning stage before a site is chosen.

COMMUNITY STRUCTURE:

- (1) Size; population size and physical size
- (2) Density of population desired
- (3) Type of housing; individual or shared
- (4) Diversity; who will be included
- (5) Resource sharing
- (6) Responsibility sharing
- (7) Development of By-Laws

■ PROJECT STRUCTURE:

- (1) Developer/owner
- (2) One landowner with other homeowners
- (3) Land owned collectively
- (4) Leasing land
- (5) Land held in trust

All options have pros and cons. Must have support from town political structure and financial institutions.

■ RESOURCE USE:

(1) Air supply. As one of our most important resources, a location must be chosen with clean air in mind. You usually cannot fix this on a neighborhood or community level if it is a problem.

(2) Water:

a. supply - there must be enough for the planned community.

b. quality - a source of uncontaminated water must be available.

c. flood control - some system to manage water flow and drainage through the community.

Possible solutions to water issues:

- a. supply: install cisterns for rainwater collection, use water conservation methods, use dual piping methods to utilize gray water when feasible, plant drought tolerant plants rather than lawns.
- b. quality: use no chemicals or fertilizers, use integrated pest management, choose a location far from industry or conventional agriculture, develop artificial wetlands.
- c. flood control: reduce pavement, develop artificial wetlands, install natural drainage system.

(3) Food supply and quality: achieved through decentralized organic food production. Utilize a diversity of plants. Small household gardens are the most ecologically sound. Food processing can be done efficiently in communities. Buy from local producers. Enough land must be designated for agriculture to support the food needs of the community at a sustainable level, whether it is in large areas or small plots.

(4) Shelter: needed for protection from weather and sense of security.

*providing a mix of housing types is best - large, small, rental, own.

*develop ways to be inclusive - labor as down payment, build your own.

*creative financing is often necessary - HUD, USDA Rural Development, small local banks

*use green design whenever possible

(5) Energy:

- *conserve whenever possible.

- *use alternative sources - solar (passive and active), wind, biomass, small-scale hydroelectric, geothermal, fuel cells.

- *Structure for low energy usage - most important.

Make pedestrian and bicycle traffic convenient, minimize automobile use, locate near public transportation or incorporate it into your plan, locate near services and schools or incorporate into your plan.

(6) Other resources: Incorporate into your plan mechanisms to reduce resource use. Reduce, reuse, recycle.

AESTHETICS: In order to be sustainable, a community must be pleasing for the residents who live there. Recreational facilities should be provided for the enjoyment of the members. Gathering places are essential.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION: Community members must feel like their voice is heard. Some system for consensus building must be utilized.