Building community: College Creek cohousing

John Benjamin Den Boer

Iowa State University
Building community: College Creek Cohousing

by

John Benjamin Den Boer

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Jamie Horwitz
Michael Martin

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This is to certify that the Master's thesis of
John Benjamin Den Boer
has met the thesis requirements of Iowa State University

Signatures have been redacted for privacy
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Introduction

Cohousing is an interactive, democratic development of community in which the decisions and compromises made along the way are just as important as the built environment that the decisions created.

This thesis has a story component to capture that sense of process.

This story is supplemented with quotations from various authors on community.

I have also added my own comments on the story, the quotations and pictures and their connection to each other.

“Question: What do you feel is the primary condition for the practice of design and its propagation?”
-Madame L. Amic

Answer: “Recognition of need.”
-Charles Eames

Charles Eames, in his answer to Madame Amic, suggested that each solution is unique to the need.

In cohousing this means there is no universal ideal cohousing development. Each community’s character is a reflection of the individuals who live in the community.

Plato

“Would a painter be a the worse because, after having delineated with consummate art an ideal of a perfectly beautiful man, he was unable to show that any such man could ever have existed?

He would be none the worse.

Well, and were we not creating an ideal of a Perfect State?

To be sure.

And is our theory a worse theory because we are unable to prove the possibility of a city being ordered in the manner described?

Surely not, he replied.

That is the truth, I said. But if at your request, I am to try show how and under what conditions the possibility is highest, I must ask you, having this in view, to repeat your former admissions.
One day Stewart Phillips and Francine Kats, two English professors, were together in the English lounge discussing an article written in the Ames Tribune. "Hey, Stewart, did you read this? Apparently over 70 percent of the households in Ames have both parents working. I guess you aren't alone in your situation."

"Yeah," responded Stewart. "Barbara and I sometimes have a tough time trying to figure out who's bringing which child where at what time, especially with six kids to keep track of."

Randal, another English professor, who had just walked into the room and couldn't help hearing the conversation said, "I just heard about something called cohousing from a friend; have you heard about it?"

"No," said both Stewart and Francine, "What is it?"

"Well, I'm not exactly sure what it's all about, but I think it was invented in Denmark a number of years ago. From what I understand, a group of people gets together to live in a housing complex..."

"Oh, like a commune?" asked Francine.

"No," answered Randal, "I believe the members of the community own their own houses."

Kathryn McCamant and Charles R. Durrett

"In Denmark, people frustrated by the available housing options have developed a new housing type that redefines the concept of neighborhood to fit contemporary lifestyles. Tired of the isolation and impracticalities of single-family houses and apartment units, they have built housing that combines the autonomy of private dwellings with the advantages of community living. Each household has a private residence, but also shares extensive common facilities with the larger group, such as a kitchen and dining hall, children's playrooms, workshops, guest rooms, and laundry facilities."

"The obvious practical advantages—child care, common dinners, shared resources—are not the main reasons why people choose to live in Trudeslund. One resident, John Nielsen, wrote:
My friends who live near San Francisco have just started attending meetings for some cohousing thing near them.

"Hmm . . . Maybe I'll look into it," said Francine. "It sounds a little like something I lived in during my childhood in New York."

The Next Day

The next day in the English lounge, Francine approached Randal. "Hey Randal, I did a little looking on the web and apparently there are a lot of cohousing groups out there. Some of the people who live in these places claim that it has totally changed their lives."

"Hmm . . .," responded Randal, more interested in the pile of essays he needed to grade.

"Apparently," Francine continued, not dissuaded by Randal's lack of interest, "this is a more economical, environmentally friendly, and healthier way to live. People have more free time, 'cause they share the chores, and it's cheaper 'cause food and other things are bought in bulk, reducing the costs per household."

"Francine, I really need to get these essays graded. Could we talk about this later?" Randal asked.

"Sure, I'll go talk to Stewart about this," said Francine as she walked down the hall to Stewart's office. "Hey Stewart, do you remember Randal's comment about cohousing?"

"Sure," answered Stewart looking up from his book.

"Well, it turns out that it's the miracle living solution everyone's been searching for," said Francine.

"Oh really?" asked Stewart, turning a page in his book.

Our primary motive for wanting to live in a community was the desire for a richer social atmosphere—for both children and adults. The many practical advantages which we later discovered, we hadn't even thought of in the beginning." p. 12

On the Spirit of the Township in New England:

"Thus daily duties performed or rights exercised keep municipal life constantly alive. There is a continual gentle political activity which keeps society on the move without turmoil." p. 69

The transformation the Russian revolution attempted to affect was unsuccessful because of the sudden and immediate change the planners expected of the members of the community.

"The idealism of Russian housing reformers of the 1920's is summed up El Lissitzky, who wrote: "The important thing is that the housing block, which up to now has merely represented the algebraic sum of self-contained private apartments, has now been transformed into a synthetic complex for total communal living." p. 62
“Well, not exactly, but I’m really interested in it at the moment. It seems like something that we should consider pursuing. Do you think that you could live in a cohousing community?” asked Francine.

“Umm . . . I don’t know if I could live in a commune; I really need my privacy,” said Stewart.

“I know, so do I, but I think something like this could really solve some of those problems we were talking about,” answered Francine as she pulled out a book on cohousing and opened it up for Stewart to look at.

Stewart took the book and started turning the pages. “Well, this looks like a small village, not quite what I was expecting. Hmm, it sure would be nice not to have to cook every night, but that would mean I’d have to cook for a lot of people some nights huh?”

“Yeah, if I have figured out right, if there were 30 people in a community and there was a meal for everyone four times a week, you’d have to cook once a month.”

“Well, that wouldn’t be so bad -- if people could stand my horrible cooking,” said Stewart, grinning.

Kathryn McCamant and Charles R. Durrett

“Cohousing also differs from most of the intentional communities and communes we know in the United States which are often organized around strong ideological beliefs and may depend on a charismatic leader to establish the direction of the community and hold the group together. Most intentional communities function as educational or spiritual centers. Cohousing, on the other hand, offers a new approach to housing rather than a new way of life. Based on democratic principles, cohousing developments espouse no ideology other than the desire for a more practical and social home environment.” p. 17

Rob Sandelin writes on 05 February 2003 21:12 UTC

“Is living cooperatively an ideology in and of itself?

To live together cooperatively requires lots of time talking with, learning about, and learning how to trust the people you live with. It often means accepting people’s differences, learning how to compromise and to adjust your personal desires to meld with the desires of others.
Francine was unable to stop thinking about cohousing. She continued to investigate examples of different cohousing communities in the United States and also in Europe and Canada. Every community was very positive about the experience, and, while admitting the faults, they all seemed to be happy that they made the choices that they did.

She also discussed this new idea with a number of friends, all of whom seemed moderately interested. Yet none of them seemed as excited as Francine, and most of them told her that they preferred their current living arrangements.

“We just don’t want to spend all the time and energy needed to get something like that to work,” they all told her.

A couple weeks later, at the breakfast table, Francine was eating her blueberry muffin and reading the classifieds when she came across an advertisement in the Ames Tribune.

Are you looking for an alternative to your current housing situation? Wishing you didn’t have to cook supper every night? Do you need more time in your day? Do you wish for more time and people to socialize with? Does daycare cost more than you can afford? Do you want to garden without having to maintain an entire yard?

Then maybe a Cohousing community is for you. There will be an informational meeting next week at 7:30 at the local coffee shop. All people interested are encouraged to attend. No commitment is necessary. Call Miriam Walters at 555-4983 with any questions.

These are actions that “liberals” do well.

Are these ideological actions? If an ideology is a system of beliefs, then isn’t cooperative living full of social beliefs, which initiate actions?

And if so, how could cohousing ever be non-ideological?”

Figure 1-Lano del Rio Colony advertisement (Dolores Kagan p. 122)
“Hey Jim,” she said to her husband, “are you busy next Thursday evening?”

“No, I don’t think so,” he answered from behind his book on Chinese cuisine.

“Well then, we’re going to go to a meeting about cohousing,” Francine informed him.

The Coffee Shop

On the following Thursday, Francine and Jim went to the local coffee shop to hear what Miriam Walters had to say about cohousing. There were thirteen people sitting at a table with a little sign on the edge that said cohousing meeting.

“Hi,” said Jim sitting down at the table, “I’m Jim Greene, and this is my wife Francine Kats.”

A smaller woman with blond hair and blue-rimmed glasses said, “Oh hi. We were just getting acquainted. I’m Miriam Walters, the person who put the advertisement in the newspaper. I guess I’ll just continue explaining who I am and why I’m so interested in cohousing, and then the rest of you can introduce yourself and explain why you are here as well.”

“Sounds good to me,” said an older man with a German accent who sat across the table.

“Okay, as I said before, I’m Miriam Walters, a graphic designer. The majority of my work is typesetting and the design of manuscript layouts for a number of the professors here in town. I am a single mother with a nine-year-old son named Stephen.

Foster Stockwell

“A basic belief in the establishment of all communal experiments is that it is possible to reshape the future by deliberately laying foundations in the present. The proponent establishes a new community as a lever to pry society loose from its ancient abuses.

He or she imagines the growth of a new society through the continual replication of the successful elements of the experimental community.

For the most part, the proponent worried little about whether political and economic forces at work in established society will permit such contemplated changes. All that the communitarian considers necessary is to present a plan for social salvation, begin to experiment with it on a small scale, interest the general public in its development, and then watch it grow among the population.” p. 4

Alison Woodward

“Few studies have been conducted on the social characteristics of the residents of Swedish community. . . . Generally single female parents are overrepresented. . . .

Households with children make up slightly more than half the households and slightly more than half of these are one-parent households.” p. 84
“That is one of the real reasons I’m interested in cohousing. Every day it seems like Stephen has some after school activity that he needs to attend, or some person’s house that he needs to be at to do this school project. I’m finding that I don’t have time to work and also drive him around all over the place. I’m hoping that in a cohousing community I wouldn’t have to drive him around as much and that maybe other people could share chauffeuring duties with me sometimes.

“Okay, next! I guess we’ll start with you here on my right.”

The girl next to Miriam was of medium height, with dark brown hair and in her twenties. “Hi, my name is Cindy Wilson. I’m a reporter for the Ames Tribune. A lot of my life consists of running from one meeting or event to another and since I have a very unpre-dictable schedule I can’t ever seem to get everything that I need to do finished. I was hoping that a cohousing community would give me some more time. Maybe I could eat better suppers. When I come home after a long day at work, I really don’t feel like cooking for myself.”

“Okay,” said Miriam. “I think those are some good reasons. Next.”

The next person beside Cindy had straight blonde hair. She was in her forties, and her husband was short black man. “Hi, I’m Katie McPherson and this is my husband Philip.”

“We’re here on a whim,” interrupted Philip, grinning.

Foster Stockwell

“The designers of America’s early commune experiments were also bound by conventional thought patterns and moral disciplines to a much greater extent than they usually realized.

No matter how wild and various their experiments, no community model was ever totally new.

The members and organizers could withdraw from some of their nation’s more obvious institutions and expressions, but, because these cultural attitudes and mores were a part of their heritage, they inevitably selected and modified from the culture they ostensibly rejected.

And this has always been the case with utopian planning. Plato, in his republic could not escape a structured hierarchy of priests, warriors, and servants, and Thomas More could not conceive of his Utopia without slaves and war, thus each communal plan is a reservoir of ideas partly rooted in the past and partly budding forth from new crossings and mutations.
"I am a freelance writer at the moment. I write articles for various magazines. I also collaborate on books with people," continued Katie. "I used to write speeches, and I started out in reporting, so I know what reporting is like, Cindy."

Philip took a sip of coffee and said, "I'm a Chemistry professor at Iowa State. I've been doing research on low cost methods of detecting contaminants in people's houses. We're here at this cohousing meeting because both of our careers keep us very busy. Sometimes just finding time for supper between deadlines and evening meals is a challenge, never mind trying to shuttle our kids to their various soccer, music and play practices. We're hoping that cohousing could mean that even during really busy times, the kids could eat something besides frozen pizza."

"Also, we're hoping to have some more space for gardening than our current townhouse allows. But I really don't want to waste time mowing grass," added Katie.

The next person around the table was a thin woman in her thirties. "Hi, I'm Karen Wendell, and like Miriam, I am a single mother, but with two girls, Hally and Jennifer. I am getting my horticulture degree at Iowa State while working at Country Landscape. I'm interested in cohousing for the obvious reason that I hardly have enough time in the day to take care of my girls, besides taking classes and working at Country Landscape."

"I'm not sure if I should be here 'cause I really don't have any money, but, when I graduate, I'd like to settle down here in Ames."

There is a lot we can learn from communes.

The intense communal character demonstrates the benefits and flaws in each community allowing us to learn what is successful and what isn't.

Communes are hard--Living together is often difficult. People need to work to live together. However, the advantage of living together is a great benefit.

Just considering economics, the Amana colonies amassed a huge amount of assets in 90 years.

Yet the exceptions--those utopian communities that established the social basis for a long existence—are dramatic and noteworthy; much can be learned from them about the forms of social organization that make communes a living viable, and practical arrangement..."

The Amana community, or the Society of True Inspiration (the Inspirationists) maintained seven communal villages in Iowa for ninety years, and when it divided in 1933 into a church group and an industrial group, it split more than $33 million worth of assets among its members." p.10

Figure 2-Amana, 2002
Figure 3-Site Plan-The Amana Colonies (founded by the Inspirationists) ca. 1880 (Hayden p232-233)
“I'm really happy to hear that some people are interested in gardening. I love gardening and really want to spend more time in my own garden. Unfortunately I can't do that in an apartment.” As Karen finished, she turned to look at the older German man who had spoken up earlier. He understood the signal and said,

“My name is George Weibe and this here is my wife of 50 years, June,” said the elderly man next to Karen. “We are here because my wife wanted us to come. I'll let her explain why.”

“Yes, my name is June,” said George's wife, “We both grew up in Germany, but moved to the US in the sixties. We were looking for more opportunities. George was a house painter and then a realtor, and when he got tired of the realty market went back to painting houses. I’ve worked a number of years for the unemployment office here in town. Our children are all grown up. Now that George is retired and we are getting older, we are thinking about selling the house since it's too big. We want to do more traveling so that we can visit our kids.”

“George loves to garden, but he was thinking that he might have to give that up if we would have to move into an apartment. That was one of the main reasons we are so interested in cohousing.”

The eighth person around the table was a tall man in his late twenties. He had a large amount of curly hair that stuck out in all directions.
“Hi, I'm a Ph.D. student here at Iowa State University in recreation science with a geography emphasis. My undergraduate work was in history. I became interested in cohousing last semester when I lived for a semester in Sweden. I had to board with a family for a couple months who lived in a cohousing complex. I've grown accustomed to it, and now it is really lonely living by myself in an apartment here in Ames.”

“Oh!” Francine jumped in excited, “You can maybe tell us a little bit what cohousing in Sweden is like.”

“Sure,” replied Gordon, the Ph. D. student, “I'll tell you about it later.”

“Yeah, that's probably a good idea,” suggested Miriam. “I think we need to keep on moving. Otherwise we won't be able to get through everyone. Who's next?”

“That would be me,” answered Garcia, “I am a senior at Iowa State in computer science. That however, is not my first love. I am a musician, a classical guitarist, whose dream is to open up my own recording studio where I will produce albums for small market musicians. I see computer science as a way to make money to allow me to do what I want.

“I read the ad in the newspaper and I'm interested in cohousing because I like socialist systems. I grew up in Spain and my grandfather would tell stories of the Spanish Revolution and how Franco squashed the Republic which my grandfather was a part of. Ever since those stories, I've been fascinated by socialist organizations. This is one that I'd like to be a part of.”

The Inspirationists layed out their Amana communities as groups within groups.

The colony was broken down into small villages and each village into smaller blocks and each block was divided into groups that ate at the same kitchen house.

This allowed the elders to maintain control over the members.

However, this small size also allowed the members, no matter their social stature in the group, to directly affect some level of the community's operation.

Dolores Hayden

“Environmental design is still an interesting aspect of Inspirationist history; families occupied suites within communal houses grouped in neighborhoods served by communal kitchens, a complex pattern repeated in seven adjacent but separate villages on their Iowa domain.” p. 239

Figure 6-An Amana house which housed two households (Dolores Hayden 225)
“Now, wait a minute,” said George Weibe, “I’m not going to join any communist group. I won’t allow my money to pay for other people too lazy to make their own.”

“Okay, that’s something that we can talk about later,” said Miriam smiling while trying to calm down George and turning to Francine and Jim, “I guess that just leaves you two.”

“Well,” said Francine, “I am a professor of English here at Iowa State University, and my husband is a retired professor of philosophy also here at Iowa State.”

“Even though I’m retired, I think I am probably busier now than when I was teaching,” interjected Jim stretching out in his chair.

“We are here,” continued Francine, “because I grew up in worker’s union housing as a child in New York, and I remember that it was a very interesting and social place to live. Maybe now that I’m older I’d like to get back to living like that.”

“Well, it’s getting late,” said Miriam, “and I need to get back to my son, but I think that we really need to meet again because I can tell that there is a lot of interest in this type of housing. I believe some of the advantages that I listed in the advertisement could really make a difference in my life, and I’m sure your lives. Are there any questions?”

“Yes, when are we going to meet again?” asked Gordon. “I’m free on Thursdays and Mondays. Other than that, I really can’t meet any other night.”

“Does Thursday work for everyone else?” Miriam asked the group.

Dolores Hayden

“Inspirationist architecture relied on compromise, but what it lacked in emotive power it made up for in sound common sense.” p. 225

Dolores Hayden

“As time passed, Inspirationists seem to have concentrated on improving their own gardens for personal revenue. Like Mormons and the union colonists, they busied themselves with the processes of life they could control, and the collective grew weaker and weaker, until the “Great Change” in 1932 instituted individual ownership of houses, land, and shares in the Amana Corporation...”

...Amana was not only the largest but also the most systematically developed communitarian site...

...As a complement to agriculture, each village also developed crafts and industries, a blacksmith’s shop, a cabinetmaker’s shop.” pp. 229-231
From the head nods and yeses it seemed like it did, so she took out her day planner and wrote in it. "All right, I'm putting next week Thursday at 7:30. If you could all write your E-mail addresses and phone numbers, I'll let you know where we will meet. Come prepared to talk about what you want and what you would be willing to give up to get it. Also, be sure to encourage your friends to come. I'd like to see a few more people if we actually decide to go ahead with this."

**The Library**

The next week Miriam Walters let everyone know that the next meeting was to be held in the Ames Public Library. In addition to letting everyone who had attended last week's meeting know, she also put another advertisement in the newspaper. Francine was having second thoughts about the whole idea. "Hey Jim, do you think it's a good idea to join this thing? I mean, if it goes under how are we going to get our money back out of it? We can just turn around and sell our house to anyone on the block."

"Francine, I don't know those answers yet, but we haven't made any commitments either, so it doesn't hurt for us to attend until we need to make a decision."

"I guess you're right, Jim. I just don't want to be getting into something stupid."

The second meeting was held in the library because Miriam believed that more space was needed for an actual discussion. Francine was really surprised to see everyone from last week there. "I wasn't sure how many of you people were going to come back," commented Francine to the group.

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**Dolores Hayden**

"One can contend that the residents viewed their villages differently, focusing their attention on the interiors of the blocks rather than on the streets, in accordance with the community's overall attitude stressing design as internal order rather than external display.

Thus, an observer with traditional ideas of streets would look down the main street of an Amana village and perceive a line of houses. But Amana residents would concentrate on the interiors of the blocks, where a network of "foot streets" joined the houses with communal kitchen houses, turning each interior area into an active pedestrian space." pp. 237, 238

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**Stewart Brand**

"A building is the interface between two human organizations--the intense group within and the larger, slower, more powerful community outside." p. 73
"We all sort of know what we are getting into," commented Philip, "so we were pretty interested before we got to the meeting last week."

Looking around, Francine saw ten new people. "Hi everyone, I'm Francine," she said, introducing herself. "I know four of the ten here: Randal and Jackie Franklin and Stewart Phillips and Barbara Stanley.

"But how about the rest of you?"

"Maybe, we should wait a minute, Francine, and make sure everyone is ready to get started." suggested Miriam.

"Oh, sure, sorry." said Francine, quickly sitting down.

"All right, if everyone can get seated, we'll get started. I, as many of you know, am Miriam Walters. We'll just get the new people to introduce themselves and then we'll get started." She turned to a woman who had silver hair and appeared to be in her eighties.

"Hi, I'm Wanda Post. I was an elementary school teacher for most of my life. Now that I'm retired I like to volunteer for various organizations. I'm interested in cohousing because, like the newspaper ad said, I love to garden, but I really can't push a lawn mower around, and during the winter I like to go to the south to get away from the cold weather."

"I guess I'm next," said an overweight man in his forties, "Tonya and I are interested in this cohousing thing, 'cause Tonya is a night manager for a 'Kum and Go,' and I drive truck. There are some nights we have no way of making sure the kids are in bed. Maybe a cohousing arrangement could allow us to ask our neighbors to look after our kids from time to time."
Also, we'd like to think about purchasing a house, and this seemed like a potentially affordable way."

"Hello everyone, I'm Barbara Stanley," said a tall woman with long black hair, "Stewart, my husband, works with Francine, and she was able to convince him that this new type of living arrangement would work well for us. I must say, reading the advertisement, it sounds pretty nice. Stewart is really interested in gardens as well; so it's nice to hear that so many other people are interested in gardening."

"Hi, I'm Randal Franklin, and this is my wife Jackie. Like Francine and Stewart, I have the dubious honor of being an English professor. Jackie and I both really like to sit at home with a good book. We don't have a very elaborate lifestyle. At this point in our life this means that we really have too much space in our house. Our daughter moved out a couple years ago. Some of our friends in northern California are organizing a cohousing community, and when I mentioned it to Francine she just seemed to be fascinated with the idea. So since I lit the divine spark, I thought I couldn't do anything but also join," joked Randal.

"I think it'd be great to have a great opportunity to socialize in un-planned situations," commented Jackie.

"Okay, next please," said Miriam impatient to get going.

"Well, I'm Anne Veenstra, and this is my husband Simon," said a young blond woman in her early twenties, gesturing to a blond man in his mid-twenties. "I'm an elementary school teacher at the local school, and Simon is a graphic designer."

Internalizing the community like the Amana colonies did is an interesting concept because we don't usually organize our neighborhoods that way. For us everything must have equal access.

While every building having equal access to a road is democratic, the practical nature of the Amana people reveals itself in the town planning. It's just easier to put the public buildings in the middle. That way everyone has a short walk from their house to church or school.
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<td>5</td>
<td>Smith</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gordon-Ph.d. Student</td>
<td>Outdoors/Camping</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Weibe</td>
<td>June-Retired</td>
<td>George-Retired</td>
<td>Gardening/Cooking</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Wendell</td>
<td>Karen-Student Horticulturist</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>McPherson</td>
<td>Katie-Freelance writer</td>
<td>Philip-Chemistry Professor</td>
<td>Gardening/Outdoors</td>
<td>Roger, Nancy and Mary</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Wilson</td>
<td>Cindy-Reporter</td>
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<td>Post</td>
<td>Wanda-Retired</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Manly</td>
<td>Tonya-Kum and Go night manager</td>
<td>Steve-Truck Driver</td>
<td>Mechanics/Music</td>
<td>Ida, Sophie, Jenna, and Jan</td>
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<td>Fanso</td>
<td>Garcia-Student</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Veenstra</td>
<td>Anne-Elementary School Teacher</td>
<td>Simon-Graphic Designer</td>
<td>Woodworking/Music</td>
<td>Jeffrey</td>
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Figure 9-College Creek Cohousing Households
He works for AMS which does layouts for Dupont, Dow Chemical and various other larger companies. Simon loves to do wood working. He has been building all of the furniture in our house. In fact, he won't let me buy anything which means I have to wait until he's built our dining room table before we can have any guests over.

"Anne is exaggerating there. I just don't see the point if I'm going to make the table anyway," asked Simon.

"I guess we're looking for a place to buy that is inexpensive and a place where we could raise a family. The daycare option was attractive for us, since Anne plans on teaching after we have children."

"I am an appliance repairman and my amazing wife here takes care of our three rowdy children. She graduated from college with a degree in early childhood development and is actually looking for some children to take care of besides ours. We were curious about this ad in the newspaper. When we found out our good friends Simon and Anne were going to this meeting, we also decided to come."

**Needs and Wants**

"Well, that's everyone I think," said Miriam, "Now we need to get down to deciding what would be necessary in a community for us to be willing to become a part of it.

I'm going to suggest that everyone who is serious about this community should pay $100 so that we can get an idea of who is interested. This will also cover any costs that will come up in the process of forming this community." Without too much grumbling people pulled out their check books and wrote checks for the suggested amount.

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**Dolores Hayden**

"In appearance, the kitchen houses resembled the ordinary residences, with larger extensions at the rear.

It is interesting to note that, while the kitchen was communal, one person was in charge of its operation.

For tasks to be done, responsibility must be delegated, or assumed.

The perception of individual ownership must be maintained.

Figure 10-The plan of an Amana communal kitchen house (Dolores Hayden p. 238)

The second floor of the houses served as the kitchen boss's (kuchenbas) living quarters; the first floors, as communal dining rooms, where 30 to 50 people came for 3 to 5 daily meals and evening prayer meetings." p. 242
When that was finished Miriam got up and stood next to the white board. “Okay, what do we need in this cohousing community?”

“Friendly neighbors who’ll help you push your car out of the driveway if it’s stuck on a patch of ice,” said Cindy.

“Alright, friendly neighbors,” said Miriam writing that down, “Next!”

“I think we need to be sure we have enough privacy. I think outside private space will be very important,” ventured Barbara Stanley.

“We need a community that will make it easy to socialize with others.”

“I would like to be able to make my furniture in a wood shop,” suggested Simon.

“I would really like to learn how to make stuff out of wood,” said Garcia turning to Simon.

“Well, I can teach you,” offered Simon.

“Very good,” said Miriam, cutting in, “We are starting to think communally already.”

“I think we need to think about a day-care,” said Karen Wendell. “That’s the real reason I’m interested in this thing. I really need a less expensive place for my girls to stay during the day.”

“A garden, and tool shed, if we are talking about what we would like,” said George Weibe.

“I wasn’t talking about what I would like. Day-care is a necessity that is not readily available, and when it is, it’s too expensive! I would like a garden as well, but it’s not essential,” said Karen, a little upset.

Figure 11-An Amana communal kitchen (Dolores Hayden p. 243)

Dolores Hayden

“Whatever their inefficiencies, throughout the society’s history the kitchen houses were a bulwark of collective living.” p. 242

Alison Woodward

“The atmosphere in the dining rooms of Blenda and Prostgardshagen (two cohousing communities in Denmark) contrast dramatically with the more formal restaurant atmosphere of Rio and Fristad. Children and adults press around large refectory tables and, especially at the beginning of the dinner hour, the atmosphere is noisy and intense as people talk about the experiences of the day and try to persuade their children to settle down and eat. Later the children troop off to the nearby playrooms while the adults settle down for coffee and dessert.” p. 90
“I think we need a place where people can settle down after supper to just hangout and enjoy each other’s company, like a family room, some cozy comfortable space.” thought Wanda Post out loud trying the change the subject.

“Speaking of supper,” said Joe Greene, “we need a really nice kitchen, a place where we can really cook.”

“We need some office space outside of our homes so we can get out of our families’ hair,” suggested Katie McPherson. “Not just so we can have peace and quiet, but so that mess from work doesn’t spread through the family’s space.”

“One other thing that I can think of is a place to store outdoor stuff,” mentioned Gordon Smith. “If I’m living in a cohousing sized house, I don’t want to store my Kayak, mountain bike, tents, sleeping bags, and various other kinds of equipment in my house. It’ll just get too crowded, and if anyone wants to use it, it’ll be a pain for them to get at.”

“If we are talking about what we would love to have, I would love to have a recording studio,” said Garcia, “then I could start my record label quite soon.”

“Well then,” said Miriam, “I think that’s a good start for tonight. “I know an architect that might be willing to come talk to us at the next meeting.”

“Understand that there are risks involved, but because we all made a strong commitment at the beginning, it will be much less risky for everyone involved.”

“Now, we also need to start thinking about where we want to live. Does anyone have any preference about where in Ames they would like to live?” asked Miriam.
“Let’s live out in the country,” said Gordon, “then we can go hiking and biking and still have lots of space to garden and have pets and do everything that people want to do.”

“No,” said Anne, “I’m an elementary school teacher and I need to live in town because I need to be near school for all the after school activities that I need to run. For all the people that have children, living in the country means driving back and forth a lot for after school activities.”

“Well, I don’t want to live in the suburbs,” said Stewart. “They just make me depressed.”

“I think we need to live close to some schools so the children can either walk, or it’s only a short drive to school,” said Sandra Pearson.

“Are there any other people who’d like to say something?” asked Miriam. “Okay, then we’ll meet next week at the same time and most likely the same place.”

On the way home Francine asked Joe, “So Joe, what do you think. Do you want to go ahead and do this? I mean, we’re going to be committed to the whole thing for quite a long time.”

“Well, Francine, I guess we need to ask ourselves how long we plan on being here. I think that maybe just supporting it as something that potentially could be better than what we have now is probably the right thing to do.”

“Oh, don’t get so noble about this. It’ll just be nicer to live with other people in a neighborhood that is organized around helping each other out. There’s nothing too amazing about that.”

The first half of the nineteenth century, the difference between communitarian attitudes toward the land and the attitudes of other Americans seems striking. In that period most American farmers made money through the rising prices of land, not through successful cultivation. Thus, while many farmers waited for a chance to sell out at a favorable price and move west, they impoverished their land by cropping in constantly to its most lucrative staple.” p. 29

**Dolores Hayden**

“Thus, the founders of communes who first revised traditional utopian thinking in light of their collective vision of the American landscape then enriched and developed the American landscape with their collective efforts.

The ideal of a paradisical garden provided a symbolic explanation for each settlement’s location and sustained the members’ commitment until their domains had been developed. Then the communards could draw strength and inspiration from their own landscapes, the real gardens which they had developed.” p. 18
Meeting the Architect

The next week was a cold and rainy week. The sky was overcast and, while it still felt like winter, there was no snow, only the yellow brown of dead grass. Gordon Smith had been out biking on some county roads, thinking about which bike races he was going to participate in during the upcoming summer.

Like Gordon, most of the people who had attended the previous meetings were either grumpy or thinking about other things when they met that evening at 7:00 in the public library. Most were wishing for either a change in the weather or some sign that spring was coming.

"Okay," said Miriam, "I'd like to get everyone seated so we can get started. There are coffee and cookies on the side table, and here is Joe Daniels, a local architect who is going to talk with us and help us decide on what site we want to locate this project. Joe Daniels has done research on cohousing and is familiar with multiple household housing projects. With that I'll turn it over to Joe."

"Hello, everyone. Thank you Miriam for the introduction. I'd first like to say that I'm really excited to hear that a group of people is thinking about living in a cohousing community, and I am very honored to have an opportunity to talk with you for a little while about where you might want to happen on the project.

"First of all, are there any questions about what type of community we are talking about?

Kathryn M. McManamant and Charles R. Durrett

"A feeling of community first emerges during the period when residents are working together to reach their common goal. Typically, few participants know each other before joining the group. During the planning and development phases they must agree on many issues closely tied to their personal values. Despite the intensity of the planning period bonds form between the residents that greatly contribute to the community after they move in.

Having fought and sacrificed together for the place where they live builds a sense of pride no outside developer can 'build into a project.'" p. 40
I understand that you want to make a cohousing community similar to the cohousing communities started in Denmark and starting up all over the United States. I would also like to encourage everyone to think about communities in the past that might have a concept or organization similar to the type of community you are trying to develop.

“I’ve told people before that I’m not going to live in a communist neighborhood. I haven’t worked my whole life to have my money stolen from me,” complained George.

“Now, don’t worry Mr. Weibe,” said Joe, “I was only suggesting that there are alternative models of living that might give us something to contrast our current lifestyle with. This could help us decide where on a scale of community interaction the community wants to fall and how everyone feels about sharing.

“Another thing we need to think about is where in Ames people would like to live. Am I correct in understanding that people don’t want to live in the country because many people need to be close to schools, businesses and the University?”

“From the nodding heads, I can see we are thinking about some property in Ames. In the next week I’ll look for some property that could suit the needs of this community. Then I’ll present the options and let you people choose.

“Moving on, I’m going to get some of you to explain what are some of the things that have attracted you to cohousing. How is living in a cohousing community going to meet your needs and expectations?

Anne Whiston Spirn

“The perception of the world as a complex network of relations has been a major contribution of ecology, permitting us to see humans, ourselves, as but one part of that web. There has been a tendency, however, to move directly from these insights to prescription and proscription, citing ‘ecology’ as an authority in much the same way that ‘nature’ was employed in the past to derive ‘laws’ for landscape design and to define a single aesthetic norm, in this case ‘the ecological aesthetic.’” p. 257

Alexis de Tocqueville

On townships:

“The people are the origin of power in the township as elsewhere. They handle their principal affairs themselves, no municipal council.” pp. 63-64
“We need to be completely clear that while this is an attractive form of living, it is very different from what you now have, and it will require adjustments, sacrifices and a willingness to compromise. In addition we need to talk about how you will organize. I expect you to be the motivation behind the community.

“This will be your place to live, so if anyone isn’t happy with something, don’t dismiss it. Many cohousing communities employ consensus decision making, in which every single member of the group must be satisfied with the decision before the community proceeds. Now—I’m going to warn you—this is a slow method of making decisions, but that’s something the community needs to decide. Are you willing to take a little longer making the decisions or do you need to get this community moving?

“Unfortunately I won’t be attending every meeting that you hold, I’d love to help you develop your idea of your community, but there are a couple good reasons for me not to attend.

“First of all you are now a community which means that you need to make decisions for the whole community without external input. My presence would make the community less comfortable to express its ideas, especially when the community doesn’t like a part of my design. I’m going to be honest with you here, many of you probably won’t like what I come up with at the beginning. That’s great. I want you to tell me where you want to go with it. All of the material I’ll be presenting is meant to be marked upon. Just draw in or write in your corrections.

Alexis de Tocqueville p605 on privacy:

Therefore, whatever the progress toward equality, in democracies, a large number of little private associations will always be formed within the great political society.

However energetically society in general may strive to make all the citizens equal and a like, the personal pride of each individual will always make him try to escape from the common level, and he will form some inequality somewhere to his own profit.

Lawrence J. Vale p94

For Jefferson, as for John Adams and Madison, the possession of private property signaled the supreme expression of individual freedom.
"The second reason is that I don't want to put any pressure on you to make quick decisions that are not fully worked out or developed. I have a number of projects going on at the same time, and, if I attend every single one of this group's meetings, decisions would have to be made quickly because I'd have to charge you for my time."

"I suggest that the community thinks about writing a charter which will clearly state the rules that you decide upon. There are many cohousing communities you might want look at to see how they organize themselves and you should also have a lawyer look at your charter to be sure that it is within the law. Yeah, the cost will start to accumulate quickly, but I want to encourage you to continue. The possibilities of this type of housing are very exciting. This is the most innovative development of the most important building type in the United States," said Joe.

"I'm a truck driver, and my wife manages a convenience store, so we don't have lots of money, I don't want to pay for a fancy building. In fact why do we even need you to design our houses for us? I'm thinking I know what I want in my house already. Why do I need you to tell me what I need?" said Steve Manly.

"Well, Mr. . . . "

"Steve Manly."

"Mr. Manly, you have raised a very good point, and I'm glad that we are talking about this right at the beginning. I understand what you mean. You have lived in houses for your whole life so you should know what is good and bad about houses."

Alexis de Tocqueville


"In America not only do municipal institutions exist, but there is also a municipal spirit which sustains and gives them life.

The New England township combines two advantages which, wherever they are found, keenly excited men's interest; they are independence and power. . .

In making municipalities strong and independent, . . . [European governments] fear sharing their social power and exposing the state to risks of anarchy. However, if you take power and independence from a municipality, you may have docile subjects, but you will not have citizens." p 68
“There are a number of advantages to each site. I’ll just briefly mention the advantages and disadvantages of each, and then as a group you can discuss them. Try to decide which one would be the best for the group.”

“First of all, Somerset is a development that is attempting to encourage a more pedestrian scale of development. They have worked at trying to put stores near to houses so one could potentially walk to shop. So that would be a good thing for this community since I’m assuming that one of the advantages of a cohousing community is less use of vehicles. Also there are schools and other services in the area. The disadvantage would be that moving into a development where there is a preconceived notion of what all the houses and buildings in the development should look like might mean that you are limited in how you could build your community.
Figure 13-Story County, the four possible sites
Figure 14-The City of Ames. The three sites in Ames
"I was planning on approaching this cohousing community with the understanding that many of you aren't able to spend lots of money on this development. Therefore it is going to have to be relatively affordable. I am going to caution everyone at the beginning about thinking about taking the cheapest possible route every time. We need to do an analysis of the life expectancy of the cohousing community and compare the total overall cost with the initial up-front cost of construction. Once everything is built, you will need to have money to maintain your houses, and we need to consider how the building behaves in relation to the environment."

**Four Possible Sites in Ames**

The next Thursday the group met again at the library. Everyone was in an upbeat mood, and Joe Daniels, the architect, noticed this as well.

"Well, everyone seems to be very cheerful today. Is there any specific reason?"

"No," said Miriam, "I don't think so. We have decided to proceed with the project, and I believe everyone who signed up is going to participate. We are in the process of writing a charter for the group."

"Okay, well let me show you what I have for you," said Joe. "There are four possible sites that I have found in Ames. The first is up in Somerset, the new urbanism development on the north side of Ames. The second is the Lincoln Center parking lot by Lincoln Way and Grand Ave. The third is on the west side of Ames on a bit of undeveloped farmland just north of College Creek. And the fourth is a country option, a little north on highway 69 on the Skunk River."
Also, it is far from the larger grocery stores and other types of stores that sell cheaper products. Somerset is essentially trying to become a wealthy upscale neighborhood which will probably mean more restrictions than you are comfortable with."

"Second, I put this option in there because it could solve some problems quickly and easily. The parking lot of the Lincoln Center, which has the Hobby Lobby, Hastings bookstore and the east Hy-Vee, is far larger than it needs to be. This second option would be to take a small portion of that parking lot and turn it into a cohousing development. I know everyone is thinking that they wouldn't want to live on display like that but think about it a minute. You would be able to show everyone in Ames how great cohousing really is.

**College Creek Site**

Figure 20-Panoramic view of the college creek site

Figure 21-View looking northwest on college creek

Figure 22-Aerial photograph of the college creek site

Figure 23-View looking southeast on college creek
The development could become a showcase for a better way to live. In addition to that, you would be really close to a lot of services that would make life easier. There is a grocery store very close. Schools, video stores, and most other services are pretty much within walking distance.”

“The third option would be the College Creek location. I am drawn to this site because it is hidden back behind the west Ames Hy-Vee. The site itself is on farmland at the moment which is being developed for subdivisions. If you choose this site I would recommend buying close to the College Creek because the community could then take actions to protect the Creek from contaminants.
Some of the attractive options of this site are that it's close to schools and just north of university farmland that probably won't ever be developed. Also, the site is secluded. There is enough space to satisfy your needs for years.

"The fourth site is on the Skunk River, and I know people mentioned that living outside of Ames wouldn't be an option. I thought I'd present a variety of options, and you could pick the option that would satisfy the community's interests and needs. The Skunk River site is a really beautiful site. The land is really cheap since it is outside of the city, and there would be lots of space to spread out. Pets and animals could easily be raised on part of the land. I love this land, but the disadvantage is the distance from Ames which is about a fifteen minute drive. Public transit doesn't come out there, and it wouldn't be easy to bike to work from there."

So, those are the four sites. After I answer any of your questions, I will leave, and you can decide which site you would like to buy to develop your community.

With that invitation a woman raised her hand and stood up.

"Hi, I'm Wanda Post, and I'd like to ask you which site you consider to be the best, since you are the expert."

"Wanda, you are a retired school teacher, right? Well, I don't think I should bias the community's decision. I chose all four sites as real possibilities. I believe that your decision will help determine for this community what the community considers important. This site selection is just as much about you as a community as it is about picking a good site for your needs.

Excerpt from Alexis de Tocqueville's "Democracy in America" (translated by Silvio W. Bedini and printed on page 70):

"The New Englander is attached to his township because it is strong and independent; he has an interest in it because he shares in its management; he loves it because he has no reason to complain of his lot; he invests his ambition and his future in it; in the restricted sphere within his scope, he learns to rule society; he gets to know these formalities without which freedom can advance only through revolutions, and becoming imbued with their spirit, develops a taste for order, understands the harmony of powers, and in the end accumulates clear, practical ideas about the nature of his duties and the extent of his rights."
Does the site fit you, and more importantly do you fit with the site?"

"Excuse me, Mr. Daniels, could you tell us if we are close enough to walk to a bus stop at any of the sites?" Asked Anne Veenstra.

"Another good question—that was one of the things I considered when selecting each of the sites. Somerset is about one block away from the bus, Lincoln Way is right on a bus route, College Creek is about four or five blocks away and Skunk River, as I mentioned before, would not have any public transit access."

"All right, I'll leave everyone to talk about the sites then," Joe said as he packed up his briefcase and put on his coat. "I'll see everyone next week, and we'll talk about what you want in your community."

Which Site to Choose?

"Okay," said Miriam, standing up, "what does everyone think?"

"I'm thinking that I don't want to be on display for the whole entire world," said Karen Wendell. "I get enough stares being a single mother. I don't need more attention because I live in an unusual house."

Katie nodded in agreement, "I don't think that building on a parking lot was exactly what I had in mind when I joined up for this cohousing community. Besides that would be really noisy."

"I don't think there would be room to garden," commented George Wiebe.

"Well, then we are all agreed? The Lincoln Center option is out."

Alexis de Tocqueville On freedom

"It cannot be repeated too often: nothing is more fertile in marvels than the art of being free, but nothing is harder than freedom's apprenticeship." p. 243

Alexis de Tocqueville On power/prestige

"Do you set out to organize a nation so that it will have a powerful influence over all others? Do you expect it to attempt great enterprises and, whatever be the result of its efforts, to leave a great mark on history?

If in your view that should be the main object of men in society, do not support democratic government; it surely will not lead you to that goal." p 245

Stewart Brand

"O'Neill and his co-authors noted that ecosystems could be better understood by observing the rates of change of different components. Hummingbirds and flowers are quick, redwood trees slow, and whole rewood forests even slower. Most interaction is within the same pace level—hummingbirds and flowers pay attention to each other, oblivious to redwoods, who are oblivious to them. Meanwhile the forest is attentive to climate change but not to the hasty fate of individual trees. The insight is this: "The dynam-
"Does anyone want to give a reason to keep it as a possibility?" asked Miriam.

"The architect guy did have a point about it being close to the grocery store. We wouldn't have to go far for a cup of sugar," thought Cindy, "but, I'm pretty sure that people wouldn't be very comfortable with living on that corner. Besides, that land is pretty expensive. I don't think we should waste our money on such expensive land when we aren't a business."

"Well, that leaves three other options. What about Somerset?" asked Miriam.

"As I said before, the suburbs make me depressed, no trees, all cookie cutter houses, and absolutely no individuality allowed," said Stewart. "I think Somerset looks like a dressed up version of the suburbs."

"I like the idea of having stores and a school really close," said Sandra Pearson. "It would be nice to be able to walk to pick the kids up from school. I'd like to live there. Things are well kept up and everyone seems to take care of their yards."

Gordon stood up and walked across the room to pick up one of the chocolate cookies on the table, "I don't think Somerset would be where I want to live. It has this fake appearance, I would like to live in a real place, and a place that doesn't care about being in a particular style."

"Okay, those are interesting opinions," said Miriam. "What about the other two options?"

"I vote for the Skunk River option," said Gordon through a cookie. "That's the most space, the cheapest land and we wouldn't have to worry about people bothering us."
Bike paths will be developed along College Creek to allow people to bike from the western neighborhoods to the middle school and as far as into campus town.

Figure 32-College Creek Cohousing and neighboring areas
Also we would have a lot of space for biking, camping and keeping animals."

"I don't think Skunk River could work. It's way too far from Ames," said Anne Veenstra. "I remember saying that we needed to stay in Ames because of all of the children that needed to be taken places by their parents."

"I love nature as well," said Garcia, "We want this community to be connected to the environment as well, as the greater community around us. I see an opportunity to do both at the College Creek site."

"What do you mean Garcia?" asked George Weibe.

"College Creek runs from the west side of South Dakota through some farmland near the site and past the cross-country field, towards the University, where it forms Lake Laverne and then connects to Squaw Creek and shortly after that to the Skunk River, which eventually empties into the Mississippi River that flows south into the Gulf of Mexico."

"So?"

"I'm just amazed how that works. How what we do here in Ames could impact what happens in Baton Rouge, Louisiana."

You can notice that Ames itself is part of the Mississippi watershed.
We are networked by the water that flows past us.
We hope our actions will have a trickle effect.

Figure 34-This is a map of the upper Mississippi watershed (www.usace.army.mil.inet/functions/cw/cecwoumiss.gif)
There is a connection between everyone in the Midwest whether we realize it or not, by the water that flows past us.

"You're right, that is very interesting, but I really don't see the connection between water and community," questioned Karen Wendell, "What we do in our community won't matter to anyone outside of us. No one is going to care if we live differently than the next person."

"I'm not sure if I agree with that," said Barbara Stanley. "Everyone's actions impact the people around them. As a teacher, I know that when I model an appropriate response towards an obstacle, the children will quickly see how I respond and learn. I think that building a new type of community will definitely influence the larger community around us, and it could cause other groups of people to organize and take control of their houses and lives."

"Garcia, you were talking about some sort of connection you saw between the location of the College Creek site, and the relationship of College Creek to the great Mississippi?" asked Miriam.

"The Mississippi might be a little larger than we want to think about. Maybe the Skunk River would be better. The water from College Creek flows to the Skunk River, like our cohousing community is in Ames. I guess I like the analogy of College Creek. Also the subdivisions west of South Dakota are mainly connected to the rest of Ames by roads. By moving between the suburb and campus town we would be able to access the suburbs with a bike or take a walking trail to Campustown and the University."

"Hmm, that's an interesting idea, Garcia," said Philip McPherson.

Lawrence J. Vale

"Jefferson describes a new kind of environmentalism— even, perhaps, an environmental determinism.

In contrast to the old emphasis on the sacred quality of the Puritan religious community, the Jeffersonian vision of sacred spaces and divinely rewarded behavior credits land, property ownership, and labor for making a 'chosen people' virtuous." p. 95

Rosabeth Moss Kanter

"For many communities the various communal themes come together in the one idea of a return to the land. By carving out a piece of land of their own and engaging in agriculture, they fulfill a number of the impulses toward Utopia. They gain closer contact with nature and the natural order and return to a simpler life more concerned with the fundamentals of existence. The kinds of job to be done around the land often require not special skills and provide an opportunity for everyone to work equally—even the children—rather than undermining the brotherhood with excessive specialization. The products are visible and can be consumed by the community; members together can truly and directly appreciate the "fruits" of their joint labor. A number of tasks, such as the harvest, lend themselves in particular to communal work efforts with all members participating. The physical labor required by a land base way
"I bike to the University now, but usually it's along busy roads. A path could wind along the creek all the way to the University, you're right!"

"Well, are there any other good reasons for the other sites? I'm going to say at the moment I like the thought Garcia has behind his reasoning. If it was up to me, we'd chose the College Creek site, also because of the potential it has a if someone would be interested in a sustainable approach to living with the land," mused Miriam.

"Let's go with College Creek. It seems to meet most of our needs, and I don't believe there are any major objections to it. I believe it is the best compromise out of the four sites we had to chose from," said Simon Veenstra, standing up and getting ready to leave. "I think we should talk about this next week. Let Mr. Daniels know and see if he has any ideas about what type of buildings we might need."

"You're right Simon," agreed Wanda Post. "We need to talk about this next week to see if everyone is still in agreement."

With that, everyone packed up and left the library, talking about each of the sites and arguing about whether the choice was a good one or not.

**The Community Describes Itself**

Miriam contacted Joe Daniels the next day and told him that the group seemed to think that the College Creek site was the best site to chose. She also quizzed him about charters for cohousing organizations, and he promised that he'd bring one for their examination next week.

They decided to plan that Joe would attend the next of life is vital to integrating the body and mind. The land also provides the community with its own means of livelihood and direct access to its own natural resources and sustenance, reducing the community's dependence on the outside and increasing its self-sufficiency. Finally, the Utopia stakes out on the land its own territory, sometimes far removed from the outside world and under its own control, which can be an important source of identity." pp. 52,53

**The Amana Charter.**

William Rufus Perkins and Barthinius L. Wick

"‘Articles of Incorporation’ of the ‘Amana Society.’

State of Iowa, Iowa County,--ss:

To all Whom these Present shall Come,

Greeting:

Know Ye, That William Morschell, Charles M. Winzenried, Christman Willhelm, Christian Metz, Theobald Meimburger, John Beyer, Jacob Whitmer, Jacob Schnetzler, Samuel Scheuner, George Walz, Jacob Winzenried, Joseph Elzer, and Peter Haldy, all of lawful age and citizens of the United States, and a majority of us citizens of the State of Iowa, and County of Iowa, for the purpose of forming ourselves into a religious and charitable society, for the benefit of ourselves, our associates and successors, under and by virtue of an

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[Image of page with text]
meeting to present some similar cohousing examples and show the community some of his initial ideas. They decided that the community would be satisfied with the College Creek site over all and that once the group was organized with a charter, they could look at purchasing the land. That decision would require financial commitments from all of the members.

Next Thursday everyone was talking excitedly before the meeting. Many were discussing what type of difference the community could make in their lives.

"I think eating something besides Ramen noodles and frozen pizza every night could be nice," said Cindy Wilson. "These days I am just too tired to cook when I get home."

"Just be glad that you can get away with that," said Karen Wendell. "I have two little girls who need to eat a good meal. So after work and school, I don't have a choice about whether I want to cook or not."

"I'm also thinking about being able to hang out at night without having to drive anywhere. This really could simplify my life," said Cindy.

"It would make my life even simpler if we are going to include a day-care in this community. That way I could just get the girls dressed and walk them over to the day-care before getting in the car and driving to work. At the moment, I need to get up at 5:30 just so that I have enough time to get the girls ready and over to the day-care at 7:30 to get to class by 8:00," said Karen.

"All right, everyone!" announced Miriam. "We need to get started now so everyone can get home earlier than last week."

The pursuit of happiness for the members of Amana was one of the goals set out in the charter of the colonies.
“There are a couple things we need to discuss this week. First, if everyone is willing to move forward with this community, we are going to have to form a charter and sign it in order to organize the group. That will allow the group to start a process to purchase the College Creek Site. Since this is a significant step, we will need complete commitment once we decide to go forward with this.

“What will weaken the group is hesitancy from the members, so we are going to require another level of financial commitment that will not be refundable if you chose to withdraw later in the process. I hope this upsets no one. Everyone must understand that if we are serious, and I think we are, this will be successful, and we won't need to worry about failure. Many groups in the past weren't successful because their members weren't required to be committed.”

Taking out a magic marker, Miriam walked up to the white board at the front of the room and turned to face the group.

“Okay, we need to decide what services we are going to share, and how much we are going to make things private. I would like to say at the start that I believe we need at least some private outside space for each unit in this complex, where people can be outside, but still have privacy.”

“I'd agree with that,” said Anne Veenstra, “I'd like a little space for Jeffrey our son to play outside, just by himself. I'd like space for him to be outside where I can see him while I'm inside.”

“What about day-care?” asked Randal Franklin. “I understand that day-care is one of the things promised in the advertisement that you took out, Miriam.”

Success is partly dependent upon people getting more value from being a part of the community than they could get by living by themselves.

Foster Stockwell

“The intentional quality of the community is important. Utopias often have a clear legal definition as well, chartered or incorporated under the law as towns, economic organizations, educational establishments, or churches. All of this involved distinction between the inside and the outside, a distinction recognized by the larger society as well as by the members.” p. 19

William Rufus Perkins and Barthinius L. Wick

“New Harmony and Brook Farm were failures—in spite of the wealth, the learning and the high social position of their members. The German Inspiration Community, which has never boasted of the learning of its members, and which can not point to great authors nor to splendid lineages as among its historic treasures, had succeeded, partly, because it possessed, not the elements of outward display, but others more essential to success—industry, frugality and perseverance.” p. 66
"Could I say something here a minute?" asked Sandra Pearson. "I am trained in early childhood development and one of the draws for me was the opportunity to work in a community as a person who would take care of the children of that community."

"I love kids, and this would be a dream job come true. I believe a day-care for the community could supplement its income with fees for children from outside the community as well. That could mean that once the building is constructed the cost for the members of the community could be very low."

"Well, if this community does nothing more than provide day-care, I'd be happy!" said Karen Wendell.

"I'd love the chance every once in a while to take care of some children as well," said Wanda Post. "I was an elementary school teacher for years, and I still like children. I don't always get a chance to see them these days."

Everyone seemed pleased with the idea of day-care, especially now that it appeared that it could be more affordable than previously thought.

"All right, day-care . . .," said Miriam writing that up on the white board. "What else do we need?"

"A kitchen!" said Jim Greene. "I believe one of the major ideas of this community was that it'd share meals together. I think a kitchen should be one of the major focuses of this community. We need a building that is easy to maintain, efficient, but comfortable like a house."

"What do you mean by home-like?" asked Francine.

Figure 35-One of the kitchen houses now used as a store

Alison Woodward
"As one female teacher in Blenda(A cohousing community in Denmark) expressed it"The dining room is the heart of the house and therefore enormously important. Even though I am not able to eat there regularly, I do my turn at working willingly . . ." p. 88

Alison Woodward
"Designing a kitchen to be used by amateur cooks preparing meals for 20 to 80 people is a very different design problem than designing an institutional kitchen. In the communal kitchen children and other tenants can be expected to come in and out during meal preparation, meaning that extra space is needed for social interaction and for extra helping hands. Another
"I'm not sure I want to be spending a lot of money to make a kitchen that we only spend a couple hours a day in very nice. I mean we could just take a plain box and use that for a kitchen. We don't need anything fancy for a place to eat."

"I disagree," said June Weibe. "The cohesion of the community will be strengthened at the meals. The way I understood the advertisement is that we would be eating a number of times a week to make everyone's busy lives more manageable."

"I understand what you are saying about being a community at a meal, but my whole day is spent teaching and talking to students. When I come home from work, I'm tired. The last thing I want to do is talk to people. I'd prefer to take my meal and just sit down with a book," explained Francine.

"Okay, I believe both sides have good points," said Miriam. "We can't assume that everyone wants to be close to everyone all of the time, and I think we need to plan for that in this community. However, I believe that people are interested in having more social interaction than they get at the moment in their present living conditions. Am I correct?"

Miriam paused to look around the room, and noticed that most of the people were nodding their heads. Satisfied, she continued, "Then we need to continue talking about what else needs to be put into this community so Joe Daniels can develop something for us. If you have questions, please come talk to me and we'll work out the problems."

Cindy Wilson stood up and said, "I think we need a place to hang out, some place other than the kitchen, where people can just relax and talk."

The issue of cleanliness also presents difficulties. How does one best provide an easy-to-clean meal center and still retain a homey atmosphere?"
"Having two different places to be will be good, so people can choose where they want to be. I was thinking of something a little like a coffee shop."

"We also need a place for music," said Garcia, "a place for performances, and music making."

"Do we really need all of that?" asked Steve Manly. "I mean, I don't drink coffee, and I also don't play any instrument. There isn't much reason for me to use either very much. What I think we need more than either of those two things is a shop where we can fix cars. That makes more sense, 'cause everyone needs their car to be repaired sometime."

"I would never use a shop," said Francine, "I don't know how to do anything to a car, and I don't have any interest in learning."

"If we are going to have a car shop, we should also think about a wood shop. It would be just as useful as a car shop," said Simon. "I've already made a bunch of chairs and tables myself and saved Anne and me hundreds of dollars."

"I believe we need to think about compromise and accommodation instead of just looking at our own needs," said Philip McPherson. "We are moving into a community where the things we do might serve those we live with. It won't be just you Steve, working only in the shop on your own car. Instead, you might have the opportunity to change the oil in the cars of various members of the community cheaply. By doing that, you make the shop worthwhile to yourself and also to others because they spend less money, and you have the enjoyment of working on the car."
“This could continue into other areas of the community, for example, music. While not everyone plays, some do, and they could use that space to entertain the rest of the community.”

“I’m sure there are other options and opportunities that we can discover if we look at them a little more closely.”

“Thank you Philip,” said Miriam. “I believe Philip has an interesting idea there that could possibly make this community more engaged and exciting than we thought before. People aren’t just going to be using spaces for their own benefit. They will be interacting with each other and helping each other learn new things.”

“I think we need some office space for those of us who stay at home to work,” said Katie McPherson. “I’m a freelance writer, and I need more space than what I can make at home. An office would allow me to meet people to interview them in a professional atmosphere instead of my house. Then I could possibly share some office tools like photocopiers and faxes. Also some reference materials would be nice, some stuff that everyone would find helpful like encyclopedias, dictionaries, and other books.”

“I could also use something like that,” said Miriam. “A place to do some graphic design that would be out of the way of Stephen and his friends. I also like to spread out, and I don’t always like to have to pack everything up all the time.”

“I want to garden,” said George Weibe. “I need to be able to plant vegetables and flowers. That’s the reason I’m interested in this community. If there isn’t going to be any chance for me to garden then I’m not interested.”

Along with the single household dwelling, the lawn has come to symbolize achievement of the American Dream.

The illusion of luxury dictates that the lawn must serve no purpose, other than to be uniform and green.

A community built on land covered by native Iowa plants would be breaking from that tradition.

It’s really interesting to note that lawns have only become popular after World War II.

I wonder why.

Lawrence J. Vale

“The emerging American society also used housing as a way to symbolize and actualize a system of parallel rewards for good citizenship.” p. 92

Stevie Daniels

“Lawns have been called ‘an institution of democracy.’ Driving through the suburbs of the United States today, seeing street after street lined with uninterrupted green expanses makes it easy to understand the reasons for this label. Since the practice began in the country, a little more than 100 years ago, it has spread as the population has. Wherever single-family homes have been built, the lawn has surely followed.” p. 3
"I'd agree with you, George," said Karen. "A chance to garden is probably the main reason I'm interested in this community, instead of just living in an apartment with no chance to garden.

"I would also suggest that we build a greenhouse as well. That way we could have vegetables during the winter. Also if we are going to be taking care of this property ourselves, we'll need tools, and a place to plant seedlings."

"Well, those are all interesting ideas. Is there anything more that we need to consider?" asked Miriam.

How about places for visitors to stay? asked Anne, "we always get a lot of people visiting and it would be nice to have a separate place that they could relax and call their own."

Gordon stretched out his feet and said, "I think we need to think about a place to keep camping equipment and bikes and other such things. People should have access to camp-

**Stevie Daniels**

"Why should our homes be circumscribed by nonnative plants and sit in a moat of nonnative grass that requires constant watering, fertilizing, and mowing to meet the conventional standards? Somehow we have arrived at the point in which homogenization and monotony are called 'aesthetically pleasing' and not cutting the lawn is called 'un-American.' Some have referred to the lawn as an ‘American tradition’ but it is hardly so. Only extensively implemented since World War II, it is a monocrop of species that are not indigenous to the United States; they are non ‘American’ plants. They are not part of any of our native plant heritage, they do not thrive well without constant care, and they do not feed wildlife." p. xiii
ing things so they have a chance to be exposed to the outdoors."

"Why should we share all of that camping stuff? I don't camp and I really don't care to bike," said Tonya Manly. "I think my money should be spent on stuff that will benefit me."

"Sounds good, Tonya," said Philip. "Then all of the money you put into the general fund will be spent on the things you care about, and the money that Gordon, and some of the rest of us who want these things will be spent on camping equipment."

"Well, okay . . . ."

"If that's resolved," suggested Miriam, "I think we have enough ideas here for our architect to proceed."

With that Miriam started to pack up and everyone stood up. Some people gathered in groups to discuss the different spaces that were suggested as public earlier. The people were discussing what would go in their favorite public space, which people could use it and how the space would operate. After half an hour of discussion, some of the members didn't seem inclined to leave at all and finally the library staff came in and asked them to go home.

The next day all the members got an e-mail with a list of the public spaces that were suggested the night before. Miriam wrote a little explanation after each public space and listed some of the reasons that each space was a part of the community.

To everyone, Here are the spaces that we talked about last night. I'm passing these on to Joe Daniels, and he'll meet with us next Thursday night. If there are any questions let me know and I'll forward them.

I'm not advocating complete eradication of lawns, just a reconsideration of their value.

Lawns are useful for playing sports on; however, large portions of our lawns never get used.

Perhaps if they aren't used we should consider planting those areas with something that requires less water, fertilizer and mowing.

The Amana colonies would carefully weigh the pros and cons to painting their buildings, and decided based upon clear economic reasoning.

Perhaps we should evaluate our practices with similar criteria.

William Rufus Perkins and Barthinius L. Wick

"Their gardens give evidence of careful cultivation, and are always objects of interest on account of the air of neatness and taste which everywhere prevails in them; the houses are models of cleanliness. There are the massive brownstone houses erected nearly forty years ago; the old farm buildings and the new brick houses, all built on the same plan, and of nearly the same size. There is not a sign of paint on any of the buildings, and this gives to the villages a somber appearance. At Ebenezer they painted their houses, but discovered that it was expensive and did not preserve the wood long enough to justify the additional cost of a coat of paint every few years."

pp. 72-73
to Joe or let the whole group know about the question. People can answer it the best that they can.

a. Wood/car shop— People sharing knowledge about crafting, cars are a tool essential for people, especially if they don't have money to spend on fixing them. (Cars are one of the folk-arts of the US)

b. Day-care—Value of child care for busy families, also the value of teaching children how you would like them to be taught. Affordable day-care is one of the most difficult things to find; also the ease of having a day-care right next to your house is invaluable, minimizing the time you need to spend getting to work. The day-care would also take in children from the neighborhood. This would allow interaction of the children from the community with children from the neighborhood.

c. Greenhouse/potting shed—Concern with taking care of the land, emphasis on locally grown food, the value of the locality, composting our leftovers to return them to the earth to be used as nutrients for the plants. A mixture of cultivated flowers and vegetables with indigenous plants suited to Iowa. A reduction of resources used to maintain the land. Turf grass only in areas that are used for playing on. There is value in taking care of a piece of ground. There could be an option for people in the community to take care of plots of ground around their houses, otherwise if would be planted with Iowa grasses and wild flowers. The under-maintained plants will be allowed to migrate through the site. There won't be a predetermined location for each type of plant.

Any discussion of nature as this quote alludes to is difficult because of the multiple concepts of nature we possess as a culture.

However we think about nature, we must respect it.

The relationship we form with it, where we receive and give meaning to the idea of nature, must be strong and lasting.

Anne Whston Spirn

"Nature is an abstraction, a set of ideas, for which many cultures have no one name, 'a singular name for the multiplicity of things and living processes.'

The singular quality of the word masks this multiplicity and implies that there is a single definition, an impression which is grossly misleading . . .

Nature is both given and constructed. There is always a tension between the autonomy of nonhuman features and phenomena and the meanings we ascribe to them.” p. 251
d. Library—Storage of information, available for all, a sharing of resources for the people involved, reducing cost by preventing duplication, also allowing businesses to remain small because the overhead is shared by a number of businesses. Library also allows people space in the community for a quiet atmosphere to read. Meeting place for the whole community to gather. A place for the community to be more formal.

e. Outdoors equipment—Sharing outdoors equipment allows people who have not experienced a lot of camping or cross-country skiing an opportunity to try it without a huge expense to find out if they like it or not. This service could be offered to the public as well. The Outdoors equipment storage is on the bike path route, a potential stopping point along the path. This allows for another type of environmental experience, one where sustainability is closely connected to an appreciation for the environment and its beauty.

f. Kitchen—Communal space, similar to the kitchens of the Amanas or communal kitchens of the past. This space is focused on gathering, connecting the community through the act of eating. Food preparation is an art or skill that can be taught. Some of the skilled cooks of the community who are in charge of the kitchen are available for questions of the other members of the community. Needs space to sit and talk—comfortable chairs, seating arrangements?

g. Coffee/Laundry—I’m having second thoughts about this part of the program. How can it work with another communal eating space in the community? Laundry, why should it be outside of the...
private units? Economy? Are people willing to sacrifice the ease of a private washer and dryer? Music might make it more workable if this space is a place that is separate from the kitchen, which allows some choice in socializing. People can reserve this space or the kitchen space and other members of the community have a space to go.

h. Guest houses--visitors are welcome to stay. The importance of hospitality and generosity. Separate guest house allow guests and hosts more privacy which in a community setting is especially important.

The Design-First Try

With the information provided by the cohousing group, Joe Daniels went to work attempting to find an appropriate solution for a seemingly over complex program that included seven different public spaces and fourteen private units. The traditional arrangement of cohousing communities suggested placing all the public uses in one building, which was at the end of a street or cul-de-sac and at the other end placing parking, thereby encouraging people to walk the length of the street to get at the public services in the community building. This design is intended to encourage chance meetings by the members of the community. So, taking the established ideas, Joe Daniels worked up a concept that had the public spaces in the center of the complex in one large building with the residences encircling the public spaces. He wasn't completely satisfied with the idea, but, following the established ideas about cohousing, he worked up some sketches and diagrams to present at the next cohousing meeting.
The members of the cohousing community had decided to meet half an hour earlier to discuss the charter that they had drafted up. It listed the financial obligations and also how some of the private units would be designated rental units. This was decided because the community wanted to encourage an economically diverse group of residents.

When Joe got there, he was asked to wait while the community continued to hammer out the details associated with becoming a legalized community.

A half hour later he was ready to leave when they finally asked him to come in and discuss with them what he had developed that week. Joe walked into the room and set up his materials. He took out some of his initial sketches and also showed some examples of other cohousing developments.

"From what I understand about this community, gardening is an important activity to many of you.

That's interesting because many communities in the past thought of their communities as gardens.

I propose that much of the property you will purchase be turned over to native prairie plants, in an attempt to achieve an informal, low maintenance site.

The space near the buildings will be divided up among the members who are interested in gardening. They will 'own' their own plot and any left over gardening areas will be planted with wild flowers. These beds can be adapted as interest in gardening grows or wanes.
"Continuing on you see there is a basic layout that most cohousing communities follow. So here I've proposed a main building in the center, with your private residences encircling the public building. Your residences will all be similar. That will allow you to adapt them for future use. Rooms can be used by one neighbor or a wall can be built up and another torn down and the room can be used by the other neighbor. Your private residences will be small, but the public space will more than make up for that loss of space. So, that's the idea. Are there any questions?"

"I don't like it!" said Jim Greene. "That building in the middle is way too big, and it feels like we are going to be moving into some sort of institution."

"It's not that bad, Jim!" said Francine. "I think it's really practical. Everyone will be really close to the public stuff, but still pretty private on the other side of the residences. Also being able to share rooms with one's neighbor is an interesting idea. I'm sure we could make it work."

"If we go with this design, I'm not going to live in this community," said Simon Veenstra. "I don't want to walk all that ways from my car parked at the front of the large building. Also, there are some older people here. Does that mean that they'll also have to walk all that ways to get to their residences?"

Dolores Hayden

"The structure of the inward-turning blocks which developed in all of the Amana villages . . . is shown most clearly in the plans of Main Amana and South Amana.

I believe the interior focused neighborhood allows people easy access to the important buildings which are at the center of the neighborhood.

In College Creek Cohousing, the public spaces are surrounded by private units, while ringing an interior communal outside space. This space is meant for both cars and pedestrians.

The cars need to carefully navigate the narrow spaces, which will keep them moving slower, with the understanding that the pedestrian is in charge.

In both cases six or seven residences and kitchen houses surround the block where the main church is located. The only access to the church is by the foot streets penetrating the center; the only access to the schools; which are located inside blocks, is by foot streets, the same is true for the South Amana kindergarten."
"This building could be really difficult for me, especially in the winter," agreed Wanda. "When you are eighty, slipping on some snow or ice means going to the hospital with broken bones. So, the closer I can get to my house with my car, the safer it is for me."

"Okay, I can see that this idea is not very popular with you people. So give me ideas about what you want to live in," said Joe. "I'm open to ideas. Also, as I said before, this is your community. You are in charge. So let me know what you want." With that Joe took out a big marker and wrote on the top of a large piece of paper, "What needs to be in College Creek Cohousing for people to want to live there?"

"I like your idea about being able to share rooms," said Francine. "I can see that, as people's needs change, they might need more or fewer rooms in their homes."

"I don't think we want a large building in the middle of the whole community," said Garcia, scratching his head. "I see this as a group of small houses, like communities of the past where the sharing happened in each other's houses."

Cars are a reality in the United States. How we treat them and what we consider their function to be is critical.

I believe the approach of rejecting the car outright does not improve community in the United States. This country has ideas about itself that cars validate. One of these ideas is the need for independence.

People like being about to drive across the country by themselves.

They don't want have to wait for the next bus, and many times because the size of the United States, personal vehicles are the most practical mode of transportation.

Another fact about cars is their symbolism for most Americans.

Cars these days in many ways hold more symbolic power than single household detached residents. Their appeal comes from the low cost compared to the luxury, and the thrill and excitement of owning something that can project power. Comparatively cars are a lot more affordable than houses.

With all of these issues, how do we deal with cars?

I believe by incorporating them into the culture of the community.

Cars are here to stay in the US. They maybe come more fuel efficient and smaller, but their symbolic power is too strong to allow them to be eliminated.

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From: PattyMara Gourley
<pattymara@juno.com>
Date: Mon, 30 Dec 2002
Subject: In Praise of Parking (lots)

Here at Tierra Nueva, Central CA Coast, we have two parking lots. When planning our pedestrian-friendly community, with cars allowed only on the periphery, the parking lots were considered necessary evils, and somehow "less deserving" than the more politically correct common spaces like the village green and pedestrian pathways and gathering nodes.

We have mild weather year round, and don't have to deal with snow or a tremendous amount of rain, so our outdoor parking works fine.

After living here for nearly five years I have learned to really appreciate our two lots. A myriad of sports activities take place in both, including: basketball, roller blading/hockey practice, scooter races, wagon parades, skateboard tricks
“That’s right! A casual observer might not even know that there is a whole bunch of public space in this community. That would be a secret for the community itself.” said Randal, getting excited. “I mean, we could just have a bunch of houses that look normal, but hey! Here is the kitchen that everyone can eat in, here’s the shop where everyone does projects.”

“Sort of sharing in secret, huh?” asked Joe with a smile. “Are you wanting to hide the fact that you are sharing these spaces?”

“We don’t want to hide these spaces at all!” said Stewart, quite forcefully. “If we are building this we need to be proud of what we’ve accomplished, not hide it.”

“But, don’t you think that since this is a community primarily about housing, that we shouldn’t emphasize the communal quality of it so much?” asked Randal. “I mean, I like the idea of sharing. I just don’t want people to think that we are a bunch of communists over here.”

“I told you before, if this is turning communist, I’m taking my money and leaving!” said George. “I want a place where I can grow my vegetables and not worry about people trying to take my money from me to give it to no good, lazy slobs!”

“Now, calm down, George!” said June. “Its not that bad!”

“Well,” jumped in Miriam, “I think we need to think about finding some balance between hiding the public spaces and making them overtly obvious. Joe’s design went to the one extreme where that was what dominated the whole community.

and bicycle riding. In addition, there is a tremendous amount of social interaction which occurs when folks are coming or going to their cars, and one can always get a sense of who’s home (or not) by whose car is there (or not).

Our garages and carports offer storage for stuff as well as for cars/motorcycles. One of our members does antique restoration and repair in his garage at the entrance to the site, and he serves as a “gatekeeper”/greeter for the community. Others have set up wood shops or art studios. And occasionally another member spends the night sleeping in his garage when he needs personal space away from his spouse.

I’ve learned to release my judgements about cars, parking lots and garages/carports. They play a necessary and nurturing role in our community life.

Patty Mara--Tierra Nueva

www.gourleydesign.com
Randal seems to be thinking that the housing itself is what needs focus. Both ways of going about it have their advantages. So, we should look for something in the middle—a compromise.

“If I’m hearing you people correctly, you want a community that lets people know that it has public spaces, but doesn’t shove it in their faces,” said Joe, grinning. “I think we can make that work. If we separate the different public spaces among the private units, the public spaces won’t be as obvious.”

“What are some other things that you are interested in seeing at College Creek Cohousing?”

“I’m wondering who will take care of the kitchen?” asked June Weibe. “Are we all taking turns cleaning it, and if we do, how do we make sure that people do their jobs?”

“Are there any suggestions?” asked Miriam, standing up and walking to the front of the room. “I think we need to start planning some of these things because they will affect how we arrange the public spaces, who will have access to what, and other such things.”

“Why don’t we put people in charge of each space for a month. Each space can be rotated through the community, with each person taking care of each public space until they’ve done everything, and then they’ll start over again,” suggested Philip. “That way each person will do an equal amount of work, and it’ll all be fair.”

“I don’t think that will work . . .” said Cindy Wilson. “I can’t be in charge of the car shop. I don’t have the first clue about cars, or wood. It wouldn’t make sense for me to be in charge. Actually I don’t even like cars.”
"How about we find people who like to take care of cars and have them look after the shop?" asked Miriam. "That way they'd know what they are doing. They'll probably be the people most likely to be in the shop anyway, so they should be in charge. Then they can live close to the public space they are responsible for."

"Sounds fine to me," said Simon. "I'd be in the shop most nights anyway whether I was in charge or not."

"Oh no, not another reason for him to live in the shop. That's just what I need!" complained Anne good-naturedly.

"So, Miriam, that sounds like a plan," suggested Joe. "Now, how are we going to determine who is in charge of what?"

"Does anyone have any ideas?" Miriam asked the community members present, looking over the crowd.

Two or more households are directly responsible for each Public space.

The people who had the greatest interest in a specific public space were chosen to be near it. In addition residents were placed as close as possible to the secondary public spaces that they also had an interest in.
"Did everyone hear her?" Miriam spoke up loudly over the numerous discussions that had sprung up as people discussed what they would be interested in and who would be best suited to be in charge of which public space. "Okay, everyone, just write down what you want. We'll figure out later if there are any discrepancies or other problems, and we'll talk with the people involved to figure it out."

With that, everyone tore out pieces of paper, wrote their names and the two public spaces that they would be interested in taking care of. Each person put their paper in a brown bag, and Miriam pulled them out and taped them on the side of the white board. After everyone had turned in their pieces of paper, Joe wrote the seven public spaces up in the middle of the white board and proceeded to place the various households close to the public spaces that they had indicated they would be interested in. Next he drew arrows from the households to their secondary interests. It soon appeared that this was a complicated and confusing arrangement. Households were squashed here and there on the board with wide-open spaces in other places. Even so, Joe appeared to be satisfied as he stepped back to take a look. With this he took out his digital camera and took a couple pictures of the white board. He turned to face the quiet crowd, and with a smile, said, "Okay everyone, this is something I can work with. Give me another week, and I'll have something new for you. I can actually see how this will turn out which is something that I wasn't sure about before tonight. You have been most helpful! I'm ready and eager to get to work on this now."
Figure 50-The community public/privacy layout
Figure 51-College Creek Cohousing Site Plan
With that, Joe packed up his materials turning just before he stepped out of the door, he said, "I'll see everyone next week. Have a good week!"

The New Design

The next week Joe returned with his arms full of papers and materials. The whole community gathered around to see what he had. "Okay, step back everyone!" said Miriam. "Give him some room so he can arrange the stuff."

Joe entered and started to arrange the materials he had brought. He took a couple minutes to set everything up.

Once everything was set up he turned around and the group who had been busy talking until then quieted down to hear what he had to say.

"Good evening everyone. I've been eagerly preparing for this meeting the whole week. And I think you will appreciate the results of your decisions at last week's meeting. This diagram here is a direct expression of you people as individuals connected as a community by the public spaces you share. I believe that the communal nature of this cohousing community will be evident in the plan of this community."

Each household will be given the chance to design their own house.

The idea is that given a basic layout, with excessive height in the central space, the individuals will be able to decide how they want the place to look.

The units will be brick inside and out, however, the materials that fit into the space will be highly customizable.

This allows people to change the look of the unit without major structural changes.

Figure 52-George and June Weibe's house

Figure 53-Garci Fanso's apartment
Figure 54-College Creek Cohousing Private Unit
"If we look at what we had on the white board last week, I made a new drawing of it here."

**Private Units**

"Now, we need to consider the design of the private units. From what I gathered last week and in previous discussions, the private units, while important were to be considered private, and not part of the architect's responsibilities."

If you will look at this plan here, you will notice one large two-story space that will serve as large common room.

You may think right away that this two-story space is impractical and a waste of materials, but I've intentionally created a space that has extra room to allow individuals to customize their living spaces themselves. I foresee people installing loft spaces and additional spaces that will service their specific needs. The bedrooms will be attached to the side of the great room; most of your households only need one or two bedrooms. Those households with two bedrooms will have the bedrooms stacked on top of each other. For the couple households that require three or more bedrooms, the bedrooms will be on either side of the great room. The 'L' shape that this arrangement forms will enclose the private outside space."

"Question," asked Barbara, "Where are the stairs to get to second story bedrooms?"

"The stairs? Oh, they are usually in the middle of the common room. They'll serve to separate the space into a living room part and a kitchen or dining space. The bathroom will also be tucked into that space as well."
“What type of kitchen will we have?” asked Sandra.

“The kitchen will depend on the household’s needs. Some households with a number of small children may need more kitchen space than households with no children. Ideally, most of the larger meals will be eaten in the public kitchen. That allows you to use the space in your own house for other things. However I know that sometimes that’s not possible.” answered Joe.

Public Spaces

“Next, we’ll look at how the interests you indicated have turned into a physical form. If you remember back to last week, every household indicated which public spaces they were especially interested in—enough to be responsible for. Most public spaces have two households as caretakers. Looking at this diagram (Figure 47) you can see that there were only a few possible ways to arrange the households to make it work.

“With the desires of the individual members determining the layout of the community what needs to be done now is to detail how the public and private spaces interact with each other. You may notice that the community appears to be interiorly focused. That is a result of necessity, but it also emphasizes the community you are establishing here. The interactions between people will happen on the interior of the community; the more private space will be on the exterior.

The spaces that will be used in the interaction with the Ames community such as the office space in the library, the day-care, and the kitchen, are located near the entrance of the community.

Figure 57-The library plan

Figure 58-Luke and Sandra Pearson’s house
Figure 59-Plan of the Library

Figure 60-View one of the library

Figure 61-View two of the library

Figure 62-View three of the library
There is a turn around and parking available. This is where members from the Ames community can park to pick up their children from the day-care, or meet with people who have rented to office space for their businesses.
“Can that space be rented by people who don’t live here?” asked Katie McPherson.

“That’s something you will have to decide for yourselves,” answered Joe.

“I think we should let that space be rented by anyone, just charge more money to people who don’t live here,” said Simon Veenstra.

“That sounds fine,” agreed Miriam, “but what if someone from the community wants to rent, but there is no space because people from outside are renting office space?”

“When we get to that point I think we can make those decisions. It’d probably depend on the situation, right?” ventured Katie.

“Well, that sounds like a good solution,” said Joe. “If we continue on, the public kitchen is next. This space is meant to be an important space in the community’s life. Suppers will be served here. This is also the central gathering point of the community. It’s close to the entrance with a more public presence in the community.

Next we have the outdoor equipment storage. I believe Gordon Smith will be responsible for taking care of the equipment. What type of equipment are you going to have?”

“I was thinking canoes, kayaks, tents, bikes, camp stoves, sleeping bags, skis, and other stuff. If we share it, then it won’t be so expensive to replace the stuff that wears out, and then people who haven’t done camping or kayaking won’t have to spend a lot of money to find out if they enjoy it. I’m thinking that at the start we’d only have a little bit of stuff and gradually build the inventory up,” said Gordon.
Figure 71-Plan of the outdoor equipment storage

Figure 72-View one of the outdoor equipment storage

Figure 73-View two of the outdoor equipment storage

Figure 74-View three of the outdoor equipment storage
"You are a Ph.D. student at the moment, correct?" asked Francine.

"That's right," said Gordon.

"What happens when you leave? Are we going to be without anyone to run the outdoor equipment storage then?" continued Francine.

"I think," said Miriam jumping in, "pardon me Gordon—this is an example of the people who make up of the community defining what the community is. When a member leaves, that will mark the end of a period of time for the community. We will then need to find a replacement household that could have other interests. This may mean changing the community. The household may decide to switch from an outdoors focus to video and dvd collection. The community will need to discuss the impact on the community and if people are comfortable with the change."

"I'm assuming that this coffee gather space is meant to be a socializing space outside of the kitchen right?" asked Joe.

Joe looked around to see the numerous heads nodding and proceeded with his explanation. "Everyone can notice that there is space at the entrance for laundry, dryers on one side and washers on the other. I know most people hate to take their laundry to a particular place, but you as a community seemed committed to reducing costs and expenses. This is one of the ways that we can reduce both water consumption and encourage socializing.

Figure 75-Cindy Wilson’s house

Figure 76-A private exterior space
"Generally I'm not in favor of making things more difficult for people; however, this is a situation where I believe the benefits will out-weigh the drawbacks. Doing laundry is one of those activities that requires waiting. In a person's house the person would tend to find other tasks to complete while they are waiting. That is not a bad use of the time. However, this is also a time that could be well spent interacting with other people, building the community. Generally this space is meant to be a socializing space which is connected to the music space.

Drinking coffee is a socializing activity, like eating, yet more geared to socializing because the people socializing aren't eating.
Figure 79-Plan of the Coffee and Laundry space

Figure 80-View one of the coffee and laundry space

Figure 81-View two of the coffee and laundry space

Figure 82-View three of the coffee and laundry space
The soundproof panels open up and musicians are able to perform for other members of the community. Also there is the potential for showing movies and other types of activities. Any questions?"

“Yes,” said Cindy, “I’m in charge of the coffee space. Does that mean I need to be in the coffee space anytime anyone wants to use the space?”

“Miriam, maybe you should answer this question,” suggested Joe.

“Cindy, I think you will be able to talk with Wanda and Garcia about the rules you will want to establish for the coffee house space. But I don’t see why you would need to spend all your nights there, as long as people know how to reach you.”
"Good, I was hoping not to be tied down to the space all of the time," said Cindy, relieved.

"Continuing on," said Joe, "we now move onto the shop where I have designed a space with clerestory windows, but not lower windows that could be damaged."
Also you notice that the shop is on the northwest corner of the community since this is the direction the wind comes from, and since the shop can handle cooler temperatures. The shop is an open space that will allow people to work on various projects. The hoist itself is actually moveable, it can be rolled around the shop and even outside if people need to work on vehicles outside."

Next we have the childcare center. This is a service for both the cohousing community and the greater community of Ames. Sandra has indicated that she would like to run the child care center. The revenue from the children from outside the community will serve to subsidize the costs of the children from the community.
Figure 92-Plan of the daycare

Figure 93-View one of the daycare

Figure 94-View two of the daycare

Figure 95-View three of the daycare
Maybe this is a good time for Sandra to talk a little bit about what will be going on in the child care center."

"Thank-you Joe. I'll just explain some of the things that Miriam and I discussed the other night, with Gordon and Francine. We discussed the theme that the child care center could take. Considering the community's focus on natural, environmentally friendly living, we thought the child care center should try to teach these attitudes to our children and the other children who use our child care.

"College Creek Child care Center will become known for teaching children about native Iowa plants, sustainable living, and water-ways. This teaching can be strengthened by the possibilities that the outdoor equipment provides. Children can be taken on camping trips in the area, taken on bike rides along College Creek and various other outdoor activities.

"I believe that this child care center, since it has a unified objective, will work better than a child care center that doesn't have any objective because everything in the child care center will be unified. The activities will all have a common theme, which is one of sustainability."
Brick Diaphragm Walls

"That's all I have at the moment. If you have any questions, talk to me after the meeting and we can discuss this further," said Joe packing up his drawings and diagrams.

At this point Miriam stood up and turned to face the community. "Okay, we'll take a five minute break, during which Joe will set up some more stuff to explain some of the details of the construction of the buildings themselves, for those of you who can stay or are interested enough to stay."

Joe stood up and proceeded to hang additional papers while members of the community discussed the things that they had seen.

T. Lee

"Unlike some other materials used in construction such as steel, aluminum and vinyl, the materials used in masonry are very abundant.

Stone, sand, clay, shale, and water are readily available all over the world and their supply far outweighs the needs of the industry.

The fact that the raw materials for masonry are so abundant makes it possible to put production plants close to both the raw materials, as well as the consumer, greatly reducing the resources required for shipping and transportation. It also means that it is less expensive than the manufacturing of most of the other construction materials." p. 5.6

Jill Stoner

"The traditional party wall is a masonry bearing wall. The width of the row houses, equal to the distance between bearing walls, was determined by the comfortable span for wood-joist floors--about 16 feet." p. 132

Figure 99-The different types of space between neighbors (Jill Stoner p. 129)
No one seemed inclined to get out of his or her seats. It didn't take very long Joe to set up all the materials, and when he was finished he turned to face the community again. "Well, that didn't take very long. However you people didn't need to stay put. I'd have come and got you when I finished setting up.

"I'll now be describing how I plan on building the buildings, if it bores you, let me know and I'll speed up. If you look at this drawing you notice a brick wall. This is called a brick diaphragm wall. I've chosen to use this wall for a number of reasons let me explain them first and then I'll answer your question Steve," said Joe acknowledging Steve's raised hand.

"The brick diaphragm wall has a number of advantages. First of all it resists large wind forces.
It is a very strong wall because of its wide foundation. It is built out of a uniform material which means only a brick mason needs to build the wall, simplifying the construction scheduling. The brick diaphragm wall also opens up the opportunity of sharing a wall space. The space between two houses, since it is thicker than a traditional wall, will allow this space to be shared by the occupants. For example a number of the pipes can be run inside the walls. Also since the wall is really strong because of the two-flange type design, some portions of the wall can be opened up for more space on one side or another of the wall.

W. G. Curtin et al

“Brick diaphragm walls form the structure, cladding and lining in one material, using only one trade carried out by the main contractor and can be insulated to any required level.

At foundation level, the pressures are so low with this form of construction that the use of a nominal strip footing is usually adequate.” p. 7

Figure 102-The brick diaphragm wall with rigid insulation which is water proof.

Figure 103-The movement of air through the brick diaphragm wall
"If you look at the example of Manly and Veenstra households, (Figure 48) you'll notice a walkway which takes advantage of those very ideas I've been talking about. The Manly's wouldn't be able to get to their house if they couldn't slip between Cindy's house and the Manly's.

"The brick diaphragm wall provides more opportunities for ventilation and passive solar heating and cooling as well. If you'll look at this drawing here, people can notice that the windows function as louver's to direct the air either in or out of the house. If you look at the bottom of the wall, you can see a covered walkway next to the building. This serves a couple functions.

Figure 104-A window set into the brick diaphragm wall

Stewart Brand

"It's a waste to do anything for just one reason. Besides serving its immediate purpose, Alexander suggests, each project should serve a larger goal of "healing the whole." And it should prepare the way for a larger and more significant whole." p. 209

Figure 105-A section of the sun space
The function that is connected to the heating and cooling of the houses is the sun space characteristic of the walkway. The walkway during the winter will be enclosed by glass which will get some sun exposure in a number of different areas in the cohousing community. This will heat the air in this space, which will insulate the building from the wind and keep the temperature on the exterior side of the brick walls higher than it could be without such a space. During the summer the glass will be removed, and the space will be shaded most of the summer because of the higher angle of the sun during the summer. Air will pass freely into the sun spaces and the bottom windows in the brick diaphragm walls will take advantage of this cooler air by opening up and allowing this shaded air into the house. The second story window will also serve to cool the building. These windows are double hung and can be pivoted about the center, which will allow them to direct the air in or out of the house.

The brick diaphragm wall will also help with the cooling of the building during the summer. Part of the wall is directly exposed to the summer sun, and this will heat up, heating up the air inside the wall causing it to rise. This will create negative pressure in the wall drawing more air up through the wall and more air from outside into to the house as well. This outside air will be cooler because it is shaded by the sun space. Is everyone still following me?" asked Joe.

People nodded even though a number of them had blank expressions on their faces.

Figure 106-Brick diaphragm wall patterns

Figure 107-View of the Daycare entrance
“Okay I’ll continue, the thing everyone should understand about this is that this is a cheap and environmentally friendly way to cool and heat your buildings. This process will need to be supplemented by mechanical heat and cooling systems which will won’t have to work as hard because of the natural heating and ventilation built into the community’s walls.

**Sun Spaces**

“I mentioned before that the sun spaces serve a number of functions. The first was the heating and cooling nature. Second these spaces, even though they are unheated, can become additional living space. Children can play in these spaces during the winter when they can’t play outside because it’s too cold. Also, while the walkways aren’t very wide, they are additional space to be used.

“The third function of the walkways is one of connecting people in the community. Leaving one’s house to visit another person is usually more difficult if the person needs to put on winter clothing. These spaces will allow a person to walk through spaces protected from the wind, and while cooler, they will be free of ice and snow.

“The last function of the walkways has to do with privacy. The houses are a lot closer than most people are used to living. Adding a layer of glass during the winter will give the houses more privacy because looking through two layers of glass is more difficult than just one. In the summer, the second layer of glass is removed; however, the space next to the walls is shaded.
This keeps a person from looking in because of the contrast between the bright sun and the shaded space. Are there any questions about the walkways/sunspaces, or anything else you can think of?" asked Joe.

"Yes," jumped in Randal, "why are we using brick? That's the only material I can see besides a little bit of wood."

"Good question," responded Joe. "Brick is a good material to use because there local brick plants where we can get ready supplies of brick. Brick is inherently a Midwest building material, because trees don’t grow as quickly in this area. Also, while it takes a lot of energy to make a brick, once the brick is made it will last for a long time. I understand that this community plans on being around for a long time. Also since this is a community and finding money in the future for extensive repair might be difficult, choosing a material that won’t need to be painted or repaired often will be a very good idea.

Stewart Brand p209

The point is to make adjustments to a building in a way that is always future-responsible—open to the emerging whole, hastening a richly mature intricacy. The process embraces error; it is eager to find things that don’t work and to try things that might not work. By failing small, early, and often, it can succeed long and large. And it turns occupants into active learners and shapers rather than passive victims.

Figure 110-View of the community from college creek
Figure 111-View of the shop and northwest corner of the community

"The sun spaces themselves are constructed out of wood. This will allow you to add windows, doors or change the sun space easily as need be. These spaces don't necessarily need to stay how I've designed them. In fact I think they will probably be changed and adapted over the years as the community changes and they perfect the design.

White pine (only pine native to Iowa)

Figure 111-White pine
“Finally, the roof will be made from standing seam metal. These roofs are durable, don't need a lot of maintenance, and won't leach contaminants like gravel or tar into the rainwater. The maintenance of these roofs is very low, and I believe a high level of durability and low maintenance is good in a cohousing community.”

With this Miriam stood up and said, “Well, let's go ahead and build it.”


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