

Cohousing

The Newsletter for Cohousing in Canada

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Send news, stories, ads, humour, reports, letters, pictures, etc. to:

**Patrick Meyer, editor
Cohousing Newsletter
#7, 20543 96 Avenue
Langley, BC, V1M 3W3**

**Tel: 778-298-6835
meyer@windsong.bc.ca**

Greening Cohousing a Step at a Time

**by: Patrick Meyer
WindSong Cohousing
Langley, B.C.**

While WindSong was considered a “green” community when it was completed in 1996, what our society considers “green” has changed considerably.

Since WindSong was designed and built we’ve all come to understand that our present lifestyles need to change a whole lot more if we are to reverse

Cohousing provides the first large step towards sustainable living. There is no replacement to living in community. Living, sharing, cooperating in a group beyond our nuclear families. Taking into account our neighbours in our daily lives and decisions.

WindSong took the next step towards sustainability a few years ago when we commissioned a green retrofit feasibility study. We wanted to know what would be



climate change, reduce the amount of toxins in our environment, and avoid peak oil issues, to name but a few of our challenges. Our choices of how we live need to be re-examined at their foundations.

feasible for us to undertake to reduce our ecological footprint and buffer the impact of peak oil while increasing our quality of life; how we live, what we eat, and the way we work.

(Continued on page 5)

Pacific Gardens Has Its Occupancy Permit!

by: Kathryn Hazel

Pacific Gardens Cohousing
Nanaimo, B.C.

Pacific Gardens Cohousing
Community received its
official occupancy permit

Friday, Sept. 4th,
a day that will be
etched forever in
our memories.

To say we have
been waiting for
this a long time is
an
understatement!

But the wait has
been well worth
it. As one of the
first owners to
move in, I fell in
love almost
immediately with
my new
cohousing home,
despite the
construction
chaos and the
irregular supply
of hot water.

From my living-room I look
out on trees and Mt. Benson,
and hear the sounds of frogs,
ducks, woodpeckers and
crickets. Just beyond my
patio is where our organic
gardens will be, now seeded
with fall rye, and lavender
bushes nestle under my
bedroom window.

Every Thursday night we
have a potluck that is open to
anyone in the larger
community, to get us in

training for those communal
meals we soon hope to start
cooking. The food has been
yummy and nutritious, the
company eclectic and
interesting.

We had our big ribbon-
cutting ceremony on
Tuesday, Sept. 22nd (the
date of the fall equinox).
Nanaimo's mayor, our local
MP, and a host of other



Already we have started the
sharing that is so natural with
the cohousing lifestyle, from
practical items like vacuums
and drying racks to fun things
like DVDs and books.

We're looking forward to bulk-
buying groceries and growing
our own veggies and herbs,
and we've set up a Taste and
Refinement Committee to
help us deal with all the stuff
we won't need any more now
that we're in cohousing!

special guests and friends
helped us celebrate this
important milestone in our
10-year journey.

Be sure to come and visit
when you're on central
Vancouver Island. We have
Open Houses every
weekend from 1-4 pm at
347 Seventh Street in
Nanaimo, and we'd love to
see you and show off our
beautiful home.



GreenSong Hiring Key Consultants

by: Laurie Mace

GreenSong
Toronto, O.N.

After about two years of *wishin', and hopin', and thinkin', and prayin', plannin', and dreamin'* on the part of an initial group of ten, GreenSong was legally created as a business corporation with our first board of directors / shareholders meeting held in May 2008.

Over the following 10 months we:

1. Opened a corporate bank account ,
2. Settled outstanding financial commitments (legal fees) with the initial organizing group,
3. Arrived at a records management protocol,
4. Joined the Canadian Cohousing Network,
5. Secured an internet domain name (www.greensong.ca),
6. Developed a marketing plan,
7. Engaged a project consultant, SHS Inc.,
8. Engaged a designer to develop a corporate logo, letterhead and website,
9. Printed business cards,

10. Launched our website,
11. Began quarterly editions of our newsletter, Key Notes, which now has over 170 subscribers,
12. Developed an orientation strategy for new members, including The GreenSong Book,
13. Held a visioning workshop, facilitated by SHS Inc., to direct the property search,
14. Submitted a seed funding application to CMHC,
15. Held several information sessions with interested individuals,
16. Welcomed our first guest to a board meeting.

In August 2008, GreenSong engaged the services of Ed Starr, a registered professional planner and principal with SHS Consulting Inc. as our project management consultant.

With degrees in both Environmental Studies and Business Administration, Ed has more than 30 years of professional experience in community planning and housing. Over his career, Ed has focused on development consulting, business planning, community consultation, and economic development. A strong

communicator, he has coordinated the development of more than 60 housing projects across Ontario, and provided advice to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the Canadian Forces Housing Agency (Department of National Defence), the National Homelessness Secretariat, the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Ontario Ministry of Education, the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association, the Cooperative Housing Federation, and more than three dozen community-based non-profit housing corporations.

In December 2008, Ed presented the Board with a list of six candidate sites based on criteria developed during our visioning workshop. We are currently engaged in discussions with one property owner who is intrigued with our cohousing vision.

In order to be able to explore specific options with the property owner, GreenSong Inc. secured Charles Simon as our planning and design consultant. Charles Simon is the total package: a practicing architect and planner in Canada since 1967; he is also the only practicing architect / planner to have been granted an honorary membership in the Ontario

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GreenSong continued...

(Continued from page 3)

Association of Landscape Architects. Charles is a pioneer in energy efficient building and environmentally sensitive site planning. His achievements include Canada's first engineered passive solar house and Canada's largest passive solar housing project.

His work has been featured in a variety of publications in Canada, the United States, Japan, Switzerland, England, the Netherlands, Poland and Belgium. He has won numerous design awards, including several prestigious awards for the pioneering Environmental Learning

Centre for the Kitchener-Waterloo YMCA and most recently a Lifetime Achievement Award for Sustainable Building from the Green Building Festival, Toronto 2006.

In November 2007, Charles founded the Eden Mills Carbon Neutral Project. Eden

Mills is aspiring to be the first village in North America to achieve carbon neutrality.

Charles says, "I am delighted to have the opportunity to collaborate with you on this extremely exciting project. I have long been enthusiastic about the concept of cohousing and the particular environmental and social vision of GreenSong resonates with my lifelong work."

In response to the news of Charles' involvement Ed Starr offered, "I echo the Board's sentiment. It will be great

working with Charles in bringing this vision to life."



GreenSong's consultants team left to right: Charles Simon, Ed Starr

CDC *Recreating the Village ... a contemporary approach*
cohousing development consulting

"Providing Development Management and Community Building Services for people who are creating their own communities"

www.cohousingconsulting.ca

Ronaye Matthew

Email: cdc@cohousingconsulting.ca

Phone: 604-570-0742



Become a member of the Canadian Cohousing Network

The Canadian Cohousing Network (CCN) is a registered non-profit organization that promotes the creation of cohousing communities as a model for sustainable development by raising public awareness about cohousing and by bringing people together to form communities.

The most valuable function of the CCN is making connections with people who are interested in living in a cohousing community. The CCN links individuals and cohousing groups together to share resources and make the process of creating a community easier and more economical.

For more information contact:

Western Canada

Canadian Cohousing Network
#27 - 20543 96 Avenue
Langley, BC, V1M 3W3
24hr info: 604-878-3311

Eastern Canada

Canadian Cohousing Network
186 Ridgewood Crescent.
Bolton, ON, L7E 4V6
Tel: 905-857-8738

www.cohousing.ca

WindSong's Green Retrofit continued...

(Continued from page 1)

The community commissioned study revealed more than a dozen changes WindSong could undertake.

While these Green projects could be daunting to an individual, as a community we have started tackling them one at-a-time.

The first and easiest step to take was our lighting retrofit which is set to pay itself off in 2.2 years. The retrofit will save the community \$900 per year while providing brighter lighting levels in our underground parkade.

Our most recent project has been to deal with a quality-of-life issue. Increasing volumes of traffic have caused more noise for our south-atrium homes.

To battle the traffic noise our in-house architect designed a fence which has been built on top of the berm separating our green space from the busy road.

Community members set to work on planning, coordinating, and building a fence made out of old tires. Once finished with landscape cloth and plants the wall will seem as natural as its surrounding green space.

Our next step towards sustainability is the total revamp of our heating systems. Presently each of

our homes is equipped with a gas furnace. They were fairly efficient for the time, but with significant room for improvement now.

We've spent a year reviewing a number of heating systems, all of which make use of heat pumps. Presently we're evaluating the relative costs and benefits of air-to-air, air-to-water, and ground-source heating systems.

While it seems that we're favouring a community-wide system of sorts, the jury isn't in yet on what that will look like. What has become clear though is that it won't cost much more than that we're presently paying to heat our homes (and hot water.) Though the heat pump equipment is more expensive than just replacing our aging furnaces with similar equipment the heat pumps will save us 50 to 60 % of our energy bills.

While our motivation to undertake a green retrofit was to reduce our ecological footprint and become less reliant on non-renewable resources we've found that the benefits don't stop at that. The projects have provided a framework which has allowed us to form a deeper understanding of each other. Though the projects sometimes cause friction they also provides an opportunity for growth.



Canadian Cohousing Communities at a glance

LOCATION GROUP NAME ADDRESS	HOUSEHOLD TOTAL (CURRENT)	CONTACT NAME	WEBSITE PHONE EMAIL	COMMENTS
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BRITISH COLUMBIA

COMPLETED COMMUNITIES

BURNABY, B.C. Cranberry Commons 4272 Albert Street, Burnaby, B.C. V5C 2E8	22 (22)	Ruth Walmsley	www.cranberrycommons.ca (604) 298-9220 ruth@cranberrycommons.ca	Mixed townhouse & apartments. 20 min drive to downtown Van. Parks, schools, rec centre, restaurants, shops & other amenities all in walking distance. Spectacular mountain views!
COURTENAY, B.C. Creekside Commons 2202 Lambert Drive, Courtenay, BC	36 (36)	Pam or Don Munroe	www.creeksidecommons.ca (250) 338-0187 dpmunroe@telus.net	36 duplex-style homes clustered on 9.8 acres within walking distance of downtown Courtenay. Adjacent to a park with salmon stream. 3500 SF common house. Many sustainable features incorporated into the design.
LANGLEY, B.C. WindSong 20543-96th Ave., Langley, B.C. V1M 3W3	34 (34)	Valerie McIntyre	www.windsong.bc.ca (604) 888-3831 valerie333@ windsong.bc.ca	Environmental award-winning townhome development with glass-enclosed pedestrian streets. Nestled on a 6 acre site, with 4 acres of natural salmon creek reserve, organic community gardens, & 5000 sq ft Common House. Visitors & tours welcome.
NANAIMO, B.C. Pacific Gardens PO Box 207 Station A, Nanaimo, B.C. V9R 5K9	25 (25)	Pacific Gardens	www.pacificgardens.ca 250-754-3060 joinus@pacificgardens.ca	4.37 acres with tranquil river setting; 25 condo-style apartment homes; glass-covered atrium, 8000 sq ft central common house, gardens, green building design.
NELSON, B.C. The Middle Road 3140 The Middle Road Nelson, B.C. V1L 6M3	11 (11)	Candie Cumberland	www.cohousing.ca 250-825-9511 candieandray@mac.com	Single-family, owner-built homes on 50 acres over looking Kootenay Lake. Households own their lots plus share in 25 commonly held acres, two acres garden land. Common House is a beautifully renovated barn.
NORTH VANCOUVER Quayside Village 510 Chesterfield Ave., North Vancouver, B.C. V7M 2L9	19 (19)	Quayside Village	www.quaysidevillage. googlepages.com quaysidevillage@gmail.com	Mixed townhouse and apartments. Incredible views of ocean, mountains, and city. Walk to the public market, shops, restaurants, cinemas, parks, and gardens.
ROBERTS CREEK, B.C. Roberts Creek Cohousing 1131 Emery Road, Roberts Creek, B.C. V0N 2W0	31 (31)	Gary Kent	www.robertscreek cohousing.ca (604) 885-2971 garykent@telus.net	Located in the "heart" of Roberts Creek. A mix of single homes & duplexes clustered on 8 acres, with 12 acres preserved as natural habitat. 2840 SF common house plus two converted portables, workshop and multi-purpose room. Mature coniferous trees throughout and salmon creek adjacent to the development.

LOCATION GROUP NAME ADDRESS	HOUSEHOLD TOTAL (CURRENT)	CONTACT NAME	WEBSITE PHONE EMAIL	COMMENTS
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BRITISH COLUMBIA

PROJECTS IN DEVELOPMENT

BOWEN ISLAND, B.C. Belterra Cohousing Carter Rd. Bowen Island, B.C.	27-36	Roger McGillivray or Stephanie Legg	www.belterracohousing.ca 604-947-9486 info@belterracohousing.ca	Belterra is a beautiful 10 acre property within a 15 minute walk of the village of Snug Cove on Bowen Island (a 20 minute ferry ride from West Vancouver). The site has sloping open meadows, forested areas, steeper rocky bluffs with exceptional ocean and mountain views and a year round creek. Our goal is to create an affordable eco-village while
FRASER VALLEY, B.C. Yarrow Ecovillage 42312 Yarrow Central Road, Yarrow, B.C. V2R 5E2	20-30	Gerry Kilgannon	www.yarrowecovillage.ca 604-513-0112 gerryk@windsong.bc.ca	We have secured a 25 acre site which includes 20 acres of organic agricultural land and 5 acres to be developed for housing and on site businesses. Yarrow Ecovillage will be a community that strives to live in harmony within itself, with its neighbours, and with nature. New members
DENMAN ISLAND, B.C. Triple Rock Land Co-operative	15 (10)	Corinne Bjorge	inthesmog@hotmail.com	There will be a cluster of 15 homes on a 90 acre parcel with one common building for group activities. Dwellings will range from 900 to a maximum size of 1500 square feet. Cars will be kept to the outside of the living cluster. Each dwelling will be individually designed with the potential for certain design/construction elements in common. Household water will be from cisterns only. Hydro will be provided to the lot line, with each household deciding whether to be on the grid. Common gardens, orchards and small-scale animal husbandry are planned.

FORMING GROUPS

KELOWNA , B.C. Kelowna Cohousing Community	to be determined	Zena Ryder	groups.yahoo.com/group/ KelCoHo/ 250-868-1473 zenaryder@mac.com	We are creating a mutually supportive community in which we will bring out the best in each of us. We will work to strengthen a spirit of friendliness and respect towards ourselves as individuals, each other, the larger human community, and the natural world. We will share some resources and make decisions by consensus. We value sustainability, affordability, safety and diversity.
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ALBERTA, SASKATCHEWAN, MANITOBA

COMPLETED COMMUNITIES

CALGARY, ALTA. Prairie Sky Cohousing 402 - 30 Avenue N.E. Calgary, A.B.	18 (18)	Prairie Sky	www.prairiesky.ab.ca info@prairiesky.ab.ca	Located in the inner city community of Winston Heights. 2 & 3 bedroom townhouses & apartments, 3200 SF common house central courtyard with community gardens and children's play area.
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LOCATION GROUP NAME ADDRESS	HOUSEHOLD TOTAL (CURRENT)	CONTACT NAME	WEBSITE PHONE EMAIL	COMMENTS
ALBERTA, SASKATCHEWAN, MANITOBA				
FORMING GROUPS				
SASKATOON, S.K. Saskatoon Cohousing Group	20-24	Heather Musgrove	306-653-5912 feminista@shaw.ca	Cohousing for adults aged 55 plus which we hope to locate close to downtown Saskatoon and have considerable green space. The buildings will incorporate significant green technology. Families interested in our project are invited to contact us.
CALGARY, A.B. Whiskey Jack Cohousing	20-30	Jana Vander Kloet	403-945-2725 hiddyho@janavanderkloet.com	We have a strong focus on community-building, inclusiveness and sustainable building options. Well-designed common spaces will complement townhouse and apartment style homes to create the right balance for a higher-density urban environment. Members and committees are
ONTARIO				
COMPLETED COMMUNITIES				
OTTAWA, O.N. Terra Firma Cohousing 166 Drummond St. Ottawa, O.N. K1S 1K4	7(6)	Signy Fridriksson and Steve Fick	(613) 233-8438	Located in the centre of the city and close to the Rideau Canal. Consisting of two three-unit townhouses and a recently build seventh unit and common house. Includes solar hot water, play structures, treehouse, gardens, bicycle storage, composting bins.
FORMING GROUPS				
TORONTO, O.N. GreenSong	25-30	Laurie Mace	www.greensong.ca info@greensong.ca	GreenSong is building an environmentally sensitive cohousing development near Toronto, Ontario, where individuality can flourish within a vibrant, diverse neighbourhood. We plan to create an inclusive, multi-generational community where
QUEBEC				
FORMING GROUPS				
QUEBEC CITY Cohabitat Québec	35 (20)	Hélène Langlois	www.cohabitat.ca relationspubliques@cohabitat.ca (418) 527-4205	Our challenge is to create a living environment that will promote harmony between the individual, the community and the environment, a healthy space where the generations enrich one another and simply feel good. Our only limit... our imagination.
NOVA SCOTIA				
FORMING GROUPS				
SHUBENACADIE Chaswood Green Cohousing & Farm 12943 Hwy. 224 R.R. 2 Shubenacadie, N.S. B0N 2H0	12-20 (5)	Kathryn & Ed Belzer	www.chaswoodcohousing.ca hello@chaswoodcohousing.ca (902) 384-2730	The Chaswood cohousing project is proposed as a rural, multigenerational, environmentally friendly community of persons who choose to live by the values of integrity, simplicity, diversity and equality in homes that balance common ownership with the need for individual privacy. 140 acres.