

Replacing the Corporate Model with a Natural Community

by Lou Hammann

By December 2007, the Hundredfold Farm Community, near Gettysburg PA, should be a multi-generational village of fourteen homes dedicated to energy efficiency and resource conservation. Right now, we own seven certificates of occupancy and four more houses in advance stages of planning. Hundredfold Farm is one of those modest ventures that cannot save the planet by itself, but is an effort in the right direction.

To realize our dream, we had to negotiate with Township supervisors, zoning boards, planning boards, Pennsylvania DEP, County Planning advisors, banks not famous for their imaginations, and, of course, a local rumor mill. As you read on, take time to check out our web site: www.hundredfoldfarm.org. Even then you may not believe the story it tells.

Hundredfold Farm is a co-housing community whose members are dedicated to energy and resource conservation. Currently there are seven families living in modular homes designed for maximum energy efficiency. Within another two months we should have four more homes ready for occupancy. It should not take us much longer to complete the full compliment of fourteen households. When that is done, a project stretching over seven years will be in place—though, we suspect, not even then completely realized.

This intentional community's environmental dedication is best appreciated by observing its two main "technological" features. On the roof of each house is an array of photo voltaic (pv) cells, generating an average of 75% of each home's electricity needs. A solar panel is mounted above the p.v.'s to pre-heat all the water the house requires. Other design features further contribute to energy conversation. The pre-fabricated Superior Walls have a very high "R Value." Most of the floors are dark tile. Windows also have high "R value" as does the "green" siding. Several houses use insulated shades and shutters. The concrete slab on the bottom floor is installed with radiant heating. Two other practical fea-

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The homes of Hundredfold Farm complete with solar panels on their roofs.

photo: Hunredfold Farms

tures are EnergyStar Rated appliances and non-incandescent lighting. And, of course, the orientation of the houses themselves make for maximum solar gain. During a recent cold snap, we set our thermostat at 60 degrees, but our solar-friendly little dwelling maintained a temperature of 65 to 67 degrees.

And then there is our water conservation project! You can see on the website a 30 by 100 foot greenhouse structure. This is the last phase in our water-recycling plan. There are three wells that supply the households with water. Each household dumps ALL of its wastewater—gray and black—into a power sewer that turns it into a slurry that is then pumped to the greenhouse. There it goes through a series of tanks that aerate the slurry and filter it through gravel and plant roots. The water continues its purification and filtration into and through another system of tanks and is then sprayed into a very large gravel bed three feet deep and planted with a dense growth of aquatic plants. Eventually the clean water, zapped with ultraviolet light, is diverted into a parallel plumbing system to be used for flushing bathroom waste—and the process starts again. Any surplus water that is not diverted for household flushing is sent through pipes and spread across the fields to irrigate our Christmas trees and rows of berries!

The community also maintains cooperatively a third of an acre organic garden. We make no compromises with inorganic fertilizer or pesticide in this venture. A local manure supply, a well-tended compost pile, and volunteer labor produce an amazing abundance of fresh vegetables and berries.

Hundredfold Farm is self-sufficient in water and should soon approach self-sufficiency in electricity. Some of us are hopeful that we will install two wind generators at the top end of our 80 acres.

For the most part, members of the community finance the project. If the web site and this account of Hundredfold Farm piques your curiosity, don't hesitate to contact Lou Hammann, Co-Chair of the AfD Council. However difficult it has been to have come this far in our corporation-free, enviro-tech-organic project, I can only say it has produced in many of us a sense of relief: We have stood up against the entropy of nature and our psychological inertia. Even if we have not definitively reversed those processes, for some of us a clear conscience counts for something. We are, after all, quite independent of the predatory influence of "the gangs of America."

Lou Hammann, a retired Professor of Religion and Adjunct Professor of Philosophy, is a the Co-Chair of the Alliance for Democracy National Council.