

Buxton Project to Offer Green Living

By Liz Gotthelf, **Journal Tribune**, Monday, February 23, 2009

As a psychologist, Françoise Paradis knows that many people feel isolated and disenfranchised. That's what led her to propose the Greensward Hamlet, a housing development off of Route 117 with cooperative-style living.

Paradis said she got the idea while at a retreat in France. At the time, she was living in Buxton and decided to create the project on 30 acres of land she owns.

"In a lot of ways, it's a throwback to the way we used to live," said Debra Holloway, director of marketing for Greensward.

Paradis said that she wanted to create a community with a social network that she feels is lost in modern American society.

Paradis grew up in a family of 14, and had relatives with large households on either side.

"We'd just float in and out of each other's homes," she said.

Greensward Hamlet will be a collaborative housing development with common facilities that will be managed by residents.

"This is not a commune," said Holloway.

It is not a shared economy, she said, and everyone owns his or her own unit. Decisions in Greensward Hamlet will be made by consensus, a process that will ensure that everyone's opinions are heard, said Holloway.

The development is designed to have as little impact on the land and environment as possible, said Holloway.

Twenty housing units will be developed on nine acres of land. Five buildings will each contain four living units. Multiunit buildings will be used instead of single unit buildings, because they leave a smaller footprint on the environment, said Paradis.

The hamlet will conserve water through the use of water-efficient showerheads and toilets with dual flush settings, and by collecting rainwater for gardening and landscaping.

The houses will be very energy efficient, said Holloway.

The buildings will be made of concrete, which is highly durable, said Holloway, and the roofing material will be made of recycled rubber.

Homes will have solar and geo-thermal heat, said Holloway. Buildings will be positioned to make the best use of natural lighting and passive solar heating.

Garages will be located outside the cluster of housing, which will encourage walking between the homes, said Holloway.

Each unit will have a private courtyard, and a common yard will be in the center of the housing cluster.

The common grounds will be landscaped with wildflowers, native plants and grass that does not require mowing.

There will be a common house, which will have a large kitchen and dining area that will be used for community dinners, meetings and social events; and other rooms such as an exercise room. Electricity for the common house will be generated by wind and solar power.

The hamlet will also include a dog park, community gardens, and areas to hang clothes to dry.

The remaining 21 acres will be collectively owned by the residents and will have nature trails that can be used by the public, said Holloway.

Units will range in size from one to three bedrooms with an in-law apartment.

One-bedroom units will start at \$280,000. Association fees will cost around \$150 a month, said Paradis, and will cover costs for upkeep and shared amenities, including Internet access.

There would be plenty of room for a horse or chickens, said Holloway, as long as all residents agreed on it.

The project will be built in phases, said Paradis, and she hopes to break ground soon. In order to have a bank support the project, she needs to have, beside herself, four buyers signed on—enough to fill one housing unit. She said she had five people who were ready to commit, and then “the economy fell.” Now, other than herself, she has one committed buyer. Three others of the original five are still interested, she said, and there is interest from other people.

For more information on Greensward Hamlet, go to www.greenswardhamlet.com or contact Paradis at feparadis48@yahoo.com

--Staff Writer Liz Gotthelf can be contacted at 282-1535 ext. 325 or egotthelf@gwi.net