

Greensward Hamlet – Drawing on the strength of community to live sustainably

*By Debra Holloway, **Maine's Little Book**, Winter 2009*

We are living in a time of tremendous change and opportunity. One of those opportunities is to find ways to live sustainably, and with a greater sense of connection to our neighbors and extended families. Cohousing is a collaborative approach to housing and intentional community originating in Denmark in the 1970's. There are over 100 such communities in the United States, with equally as many currently being developed. We invite you to consider a "new" way of living that celebrates living mindfully while nurturing our well-being through deeper connections to each other and the earth.

Greensward Hamlet, Maine's first "Green" cohousing community, is now forming in Buxton, Maine. Nestled on 30 acres of private woods and open space, the project features a total of five multi-family dwellings with four homes each, along with a spacious common house clustered around a heart shaped green space. The homes (to be LEED certified) are designed for beauty as well as the highest standards for energy efficiency recommended by the U.S. Green Building Council including:

- Insulated concrete construction
- Southern orientation to maximize passive solar gain
- Geothermal Heating/Cooling, Radiant floor heat
- Solar Hot Water
- Natural and eco-friendly landscaping
- Energy conserving and non-toxic features throughout
- No fossil fuels used for heating or cooling
- Universal design (to accommodate people with physical limitations, all ages, all sizes)

The "common house", shared by the community will be built to the same high standards and will feature a sun-filled great room with a large stone fireplace, large kitchen, multi-purpose rooms available for home offices, guest rooms, arts/crafts, healing arts, exercise room, children's area and more. This shared space is a comfortable place to come together a few times a week to share a community meal; gather over coffee and a good book; share a game of cards or a movie; lead a workshop or slide show; have a night of games or children's performances; take time for some creative endeavor alone or in a small group; share music; explore different

spiritual practices. The great room offers an ideal space for family celebrations and community events.

Greensward Hamlet features a cluster of 20 homes with garages on the periphery, creating a pedestrian community with walkways that connect the homes with the common house, community gardens, a pond, a labyrinth, fire pit and other landscape features – all laid out on less than ten acres. The remaining 20 wilderness acres offer natural trails and green space abundant with birds and wildlife.

Greensward Hamlet is located just one mile from some 100 acres of historic town park land tucked along the Saco River and a backwater area, providing access to kayaking, canoeing, swimming, fishing, picnicking and miles of scenic walking trails.

The town of Buxton offers both the charm of a rural New England town and all the amenities of a suburban area. It's located just 20 minutes west of Portland, Northern New England's center for arts and culture, as well as offering easy access to an international jetport and Amtrak. Boston is just a two hour drive or train ride south. Maine's beaches and rocky coast are just a few miles away, and mountain destinations are close at hand.

Visionary project founder, Françoise Paradis, Ed.D., observes, "What makes cohousing unique is the idea of living in a shared 'intentional' community that is self-governed using a consensus process for decision making, while maintaining individual homes and privacy. Living in community not only fulfills that longing to feel connected to our larger human family, but it allows us to minimize our impact on the earth. I think this trend toward living in community and sustainably on the earth will become part of our new paradigm for 'living consciously' on the planet in the 21st century. I'm very excited to be co-creating this community with others who share this dream and vision."

For further information or to become involved contact:

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