Troy Gardens
The Accidental Ecovillage
What Do We Do with Our Remaining Urban Green Spaces?
How Can We Harmonize the Goals of Protecting the Environment and Building Affordable Housing?
How Do We Grow Our Own Food in an Urban Setting?
What Happens When Neighborhoods Do Their Own Land Use Planning?
What Can We Do to Build a Deep-Rooted Sense of Community?
Welcome to Troy Gardens
We envision a world where people live and learn together in sustainable communities and where all people have the tools to grow food and steward the environment.
History of Troy Gardens
• 31 acres of state-owned land adjacent to Mendota Mental Health Institute – held as buffer for potential expansion of facilities
• Community gardens run by local anti-poverty agency, Community Action Coalition
• Big grassy field with mowed paths, one of the few places in Madison to walk your dog without a leash
• Not officially a park, but certainly used like one
1995 – Land Declared Surplus

- State government is in need of money, largely due to spending on massive expansion of state corrections system
- Several large parcels of land neighboring MMHI declared surplus – including Troy Gardens – to be sold for no less than current market value
- Troy Gardens appears destined to become a vinyl-clad suburban subdivision
Don’t Mourn – ORGANIZE

• As soon as the news hits – the gardeners and neighbors start meeting in each others’ homes to figure out a way to save the gardens and keep a place to walk their dogs.

• At this point – there is no plan to buy the land – only to stop the state from selling it for as long as possible.

• And then the Northside Planning Council gets involved...
Northside Planning Council

- An umbrella organization for Madison’s Northside made up of neighborhood associations, church groups, business associations, and local elected officials
- NPC community organizer Tim Carlisle helps the community organize to save Troy Gardens – and things really start to get interesting
Finding Allies: UOSF, UW—Madison

**Urban Open Space Foundation**
- conservation land trust
- focus on creating urban green spaces
- potential purchaser of the land
- prairie restoration project enters the picture

**UW—Madison**
- primary leadership from Dept. of Urban and Regional Planning
- urban agriculture enters the picture
- not just community gardens, but an organic CSA farm gets put on the wish list
Madison Area Community Land Trust

- Sol Levin, Executive Director of the MACLT, becomes involved in Troy Gardens.
- Sol’s observation: If people open their minds to putting some affordable housing at Troy Gardens, he believes he can find the money to buy the land.
- When no one else is able to come up with the money – voila – affordable housing becomes part of the plan.
Development Concept Plan – 1998

- Community-designed development concept plan for Troy Gardens adopted by the Madison Common Council in 1998
- Key elements of this plan now include community gardens, 5-acre farm, prairie restoration project, nature trails, and up to 30 units of owner-occupied housing
Getting a Good Deal on the Land

- Support sought and obtained from City of Madison, State of Wisconsin, and from U.S. Rep. Tammy Baldwin (D-Madison) – everybody loves this project
- Dilemma: how to buy the land at a deep discount and still be able to call if a market-rate purchase?
Getting a Good Deal on the Land (part 2)

• The solution – Get the State to agree to a market valuation of the land, subject to the following conditions:
  – a conservation easement on 26 acres
  – a land use restriction agreement on 5 acres requiring at least 20 units of owner-occupied affordable housing

• RESULT: A market valuation of $10,000 an acre
The Power of Two Grandpas

- Despite the presence of dozens of stakeholders, the deal ultimately came down to two grandpas nearing the age of retirement
  - Ed Main, attorney for WI Dept of Admin
  - Sol Levin, Exec Director of MAACL
- Because they knew how to fly this project under the radar, they were able to make it happen
MACLT Buys the Land – 2001

- December 28, 2001: Buys 31 acres comprising Troy Gardens from the State of WI, on behalf of Northside community
- Immediately after purchase, leases 26 acres to the brand-new Friends of Troy Gardens organization
- The same 26 acres are held under a conservation easement by UOSF
- Reserves 5 acres for a future mixed-income housing development
Friends of Troy Gardens (FTG)

- **2001**: Formed specifically to manage and enhance Troy Gardens green spaces
- **2002**: First year for organic CSA farm
- **2003**: Assumes community gardens management; summer youth education programs begin
- **2004**: Sites traditional Hmong garden; farm expands to 44 households
- **2005**: Assumes management of all green spaces; farm expands to 89 households
Urban Open Space Foundation

- **2002**: Work begins on establishment of prairie areas
- **2003**: Volunteer natural areas stewards program started; prairie work continues
- **2004**: Woodland area restoration, stone council ring installed in prairie
- **2005**: Turns over management of all green spaces to FTG; continues to hold conservation easement
Planned Unit Development (PUD)

- Unusual mix of land uses necessitates PUD with custom zoning text
- Getting agreement from stakeholders on all PUD elements extremely time-consuming
- Very complicated project to present to City of Madison planning and engineering staff
- **February 2005:** the Madison Common Council approves Troy Gardens PUD – subject to 47 different conditions of approval (some routine, some thornier)
- **February 2006:** final approval for Troy Gardens PUD by Madison Common Council
A Tour of the Open Spaces of Troy Gardens
Project Site Map

- 5 acres community gardens (320 plots)
- 5 acres CSA Farm
- 5 acres restored prairie
- 5 acres mixed income housing
- Interpretive trail
- Restored woodland
- Hmong herb garden
- Edible landscaping
Sol Levin Memorial Trail

We hope that you enjoy what you see and that you will join us in stewarding this land. The vision for Troy Gardens, like the land itself, belongs to all of us.

“Our mentor, our manipulator, our walking encyclopedia, Sol Levin put everything into place, including people— including me — for Troy Gardens to become a community owned resource that will bloom on Madison’s Northside forevermore. The work Sol began will continue in the hands of people who share his vision for an affordable, abundant city and his respect for participatory democracy. Thanks for everything, Sol.”

Marge Fitts, Friend of Troy Gardens
Troy Community Gardens

- 320 plots
- Plot size 20’ x 20’
- Plot fees are based on people’s income
- 60% of gardeners are Southeast Asian immigrants
- Most gardeners use organic growing methods
Kids’ Gardening Program

- Drawn from neighborhood community centers
- Tend individual plots
- Seed to table education
- School-based garden & nutrition education
Farm and Field Training Program

- Youth aged 14-17
- Earn stipend
- Training in natural areas and prairie maintenance, farming
- Educational field trips
Natural Areas & Prairie Restoration

• Removal of invasives (garlic mustard, reed canary grass)
• Planted with woodland flowers, prairie seed and native species
• Oak savanna (mesic) prairie
• First prairie burn in third year (2006)
• Council ring (stone) in center of prairie
Troy Community Farm

• Certified organic farm, 5 years old
• Community supported agriculture model
  – Pay season fee in January ($400-500)
  – Vegetables, sprouts, herbs, flowers, eggs, cheese, milk
• Locally grown food in season
• 110 shareholders
Troy Gardens
An Accessible Housing Case Study
Version 1.0
Madison Area Community Land Trust
Sustainable Development

• It means thinking in very long-term time horizons -- how will this place work for the current or future residents long into the future.

• It means thinking “early and often” -- from prior to site selection through every step in the development process.
Components of Sustainability

- Environment (micro and macro)
- Durability
- Repair-ability
- Livability
Livability

• Usually we think about this in terms of how the place works for the person who is moving in at their present level of functionality, with no change in their usability needs.
• Instead -- let’s think about livability over the entire lifespan.
• *Livability means never having to move.*
Fair Housing

- Of course -- you can’t put a sign that says no Blacks, Latinos or Gays and Lesbians.
- But if you build a home with 1 or 2 steps going into your front-door, you are sending a message that you don’t care very much about access for people with wheelchairs.
Thinking Universally

• We usually teach about accessibility by referencing city, county, state and federal fair housing laws, as well as the ADA.
• But how are we supposed to think when there is not a law -- where we aren’t required to do anything?
• For example, single family homes have been exempted from accessibility laws - does that mean that we shouldn’t care about it?
Universal Means Everyone Is Included

• Being mindful at all times of all the possible occupants of a home -- at all points in their lifespans -- as well as all their guests -- over the entire lifespan of the structure.

• Once you get the hang of it -- it’s not as hard as you might think.
Key Usability Concepts

• What do we do in our homes?
  – We enter and exit.
  – We go to the bathroom and wash up.
  – We wash our clothes.
  – We eat.
  – We hang out.
  – We sleep.

• It’s not that complicated conceptually.
• It can get complicated in practice -- particularly if you don’t plan well.
Now -- Let’s Put These Concepts Into Action

TROY GARDENS
Madison, WI
Project Site Map

- 5 acres community gardens (320 plots)
- 5 acres CSA Farm
- 5 acres restored prairie
- 5 acres mixed income housing
- Interpretive trail
- Restored woodland
- Hmong herb garden
- Edible landscaping
Legal arrangements

• All land owned by Madison Area Community Land Trust (MACLT) on behalf of the community
• All open spaces and programs managed by Friends of Troy Gardens
• Conservation easement held on open space by Urban Open Space Foundation
• MACLT built the housing
Overall Design Philosophy

1. Maximize community involvement in decision-making process
2. Protect greenspace areas
3. Minimize the impact of motor vehicles and roadways on the site
4. *Maximize accessibility for persons with disabilities*
5. Foster a sense of community for the people living, gardening, and recreating at Troy Gardens
Dave Schaefer

- “Dave was one of the first people who helped me understand the importance of accessible design. All the houses that we are building these days at the land trust are, at minimum, “visitable” by people who use wheelchairs -- and that is because it just wouldn't feel quite right to design a house that Dave couldn't get into. Building an inaccessible house is the same thing as putting a sign out front that says "no wheelchairs allowed" -- or more to the point -- ‘no Schaefer allowed’. (Fall 2004)
Troy Gardens Program
(General Design Criteria 9/1/02)

• **Accessibility**
  • all first levels of units fully accessible
  • pedestrian pathway system fully accessible
  • common house fully accessible
  • parking/drop-off points close to some units to accommodate persons with disabilities (either residents or visitors)
Townhome Specifications

- 30 units total
- Clustered to preserve open space
- 12 one-bedroom and 18 two-bedroom
- All units have barrier-free 1st floor with full bath and bedroom
- Meets or exceeds Energy Star and Green Built Home standards
- Solar hot water and photovoltaic upgrade option.
- Energy recovery ventilators to regulate moisture, circulate air, recycle energy
Based on Cohousing

- Originated in Denmark
- Collaborative living
- Close-knit neighborhood
- Shared common areas
Mixed-Income Housing

• 20 income restricted homes
  – First-time homebuyer at 80% of CMI
  – Subject to resale formula
• 10 market rate homes
  – No restrictions
Pricing for Troy Gardens Homes

• Two-Bedroom Townhomes
  – 1,150 square feet
  – Income-Restricted: $109,500 (8)
  – Market-Rate: $149,500 (3)

• Three-Bedroom Townhomes
  – 1,650 square feet
  – Income-Restricted: $139,500 (12)
  – Market-Rate: $189,500 (7)
## Fundraising Plan

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Join the Madison Area Community Land Trust for a

Troy Gardens Groundbreaking!

Tuesday, March 21st
4:00 pm
Troy Gardens (602 Troy Drive)

Come and celebrate with us as we begin construction on the housing at Troy Gardens. Please break ground with us and then join us for a reception at The Esquire Club
1025 N. Sherman Avenue

This is a B.Y.O.S. groundbreaking: Bring Your Own Shovel and help us break ground!

(Shovels will also be available on site)
Sharene Is Ready To Start Marketing
Installing Solar Panels
September 2006
Our 1st Homeowners (and the guys who built their homes)
One Story
2-Bedroom Homes

State and Federal accessibility laws apply.
Two Story
3-Bedroom Homes

Barrier-Free 1st Floor
All accessibility features voluntary.
Meets Easy Living Home standard.
Latest Facts on Troy Gardens

- Broke ground March 2006
- December 2006: 29 of 30 units had sold.
- January 2007: last building completed.
- Final site work and landscaping will be completed in June 2007.
Accessibility Issue #1

How to provide for ventilation for mechanical systems when first floor is at ground level -- and create a nice window bench at the same time.
Accessibility Issue #2

Stormwater and level entrances. You need to pay attention to grading and landscaping issues. Plus you need to make sure that foundation penetrations are sealed tightly.
Accessibility Issue #3

Everyone needs to be able to take out their trash and recycling.
Accessibility Issue #4

Balance easy access to parking with keeping parking and roadways out of the green spaces.
Accessibility Issue #5

Pay attention to the temporary stuff, because people will be living there while you are still finishing up.
“When I think of projects in Madison that I am most proud of and I think deserve recognition for innovation on a national scale, I think first of Troy Gardens.”

Mayor Dave Cieslewicz
City of Madison
Madison Area Community Land Trust

www.affordablehome.org