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ACT Project

O.U.R. ECOVILLAGE: THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MODEL DEMONSTRATION SUSTAINABLE VILLAGE

FINAL REPORT

DECEMBER 2004

PREPARED BY

O.U.R. COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Shawnigan Lake/Cowichan Valley Regional District, BC

Program Partners:

Federation of Canadian Municipalities
Fédération canadienne des municipalités

CHRA ACHRU

Association canadienne des constructeurs d'habitations
Canadian Home Builders' Association

CMHC SCHL
Canada

PREFACE

The project documented in this report received a grant under the Affordability and Choice Today (ACT) program. ACT is a housing regulatory reform initiative sponsored by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and jointly managed with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (program administrator), the Canadian Home Builders' Association and the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association.

ACT, launched in 1990, encourages housing affordability and choice through regulatory reform. The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements recognized ACT in 1998 as one of the top global best practices for improving the living environment.

Over the years, ACT has created an impressive body of knowledge others can use to facilitate regulatory change in their communities. Projects range from innovative housing forms, secondary suites and streamlined approval procedures to NIMBY, alternative development and renovation standards, and more. ACT projects contribute in many ways to sustainable development. They have also served to enhance working relationships between local governments, the building industry and non-profit organizations.

In summary, ACT promotes regulatory reform through

- its database of solutions, which others may borrow from and adapt freely to meet their needs (see Web site address below).
- grants to local governments, builders, developers, architects, non-profit organizations and others across Canada to help facilitate the development of innovative solutions;
- other means of promoting regulatory solutions, such as workshops that highlight ACT solutions and address specific regulatory barriers.

For more information, visit the ACT Web site at www.actprogram.com, or contact:

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DISCLAIMER

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ACT FINAL REPORT FOR OUR ECOVILLAGE

GENERAL PROJECT OVERVIEW:

O.U.R. (One United Resource) ECOVILLAGE is a sustainable land management project being developed by a group of like-minded citizens who come from varied professional backgrounds including: sustainable land-management design and development, counseling and therapeutic arenas, environmental management and environmental technology consultants, food production/food security work, and ecologically appropriate building and building design. As professionals we have formed an 'intentional community' in the town of Shawnigan Lake, Cowichan Valley Region, British Columbia (outside of Victoria). O.U.R. COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION is a registered Non-Profit organization which is responsible for co-ordination of educational programming both on and offsite of O.U.R. ECOVILLAGE. Additional information is available on O.U.R. website at www.ourecovillage.org.

This project brings together four distinctive features:

- Affordable and sustainable **co-operative housing** which will accommodate a variety of types of families from different socio-economic backgrounds. This is being done through the process of a development permit with the local Regional District and through work with the local building inspectors develop standards for cob construction (sand, clay and straw mixed with water), which is currently outside the National Building Code of Canada (NBC). The combination of this construction material along with strawbale, dry stack stone foundation, earthern floors and a green roof moved all of us involved in the design, construction and inspection process into uncharted territory.

- A **'Permaculture' farm** including integration of the primary components of greenhouses, nut/berry/fruit orchards and animal husbandry.

- An **educational institute** which is developing the entire 25 acres as an 'ecological classroom'. This element of the organization provides educational services to other folks within the wider community [locally and internationally] via consulting support or networking and through provision of workshops and educational forums at other venues.

- Stewardship of the entire 25 acres through **an Environmental Protection Covenant** which is developed and registered on title by the local Regional District, the local Cowichan Community Land Trust (CCLT), and through the provincial land trust, The Land Conservancy (TLC). This will enable the protection of all sensitive eco-systems in the form of wetland and woodland areas. (See attached Summary of Ecovillage Protective Covenant August 2003.)

The development of O.U.R. ECOVILLAGE has focused on a number of regulatory issues related to sustainable land use and sustainable housing. The major work this project has accomplished is in the area of 1) creating a new zone, Rural Residential Comprehensive Development Zone, the first of its kind in Canada and one that permits the combination of land uses described above, also referred to as full-featured sustainable land management design; 2) the development and construction of a performance based model for researching and analyzing cob construction used in tandem with other construction techniques (ie: straw/clay infill, claybrick, and strawbale hybrid construction); 3) the design and construction of permeable road surfaces, alternative wastewater treatment systems (ie: raised reed-bed hybrid system), the creative models for use of greywater, rainwater harvesting and re-investing, all for residential use; and 4) the development of an alternative land trust covenant for environmental protection of the land rather than attempting to covenant the property through conventional means of Regional District covenants.

This project has had overwhelming feedback suggesting the deep gratitude of a wide range of individuals, groups, and organizations who work in areas relating to sustainable development. This feedback has been inspirational internationally but is specifically relevant to Canada.

We have had continuous dialogue with homeowners, project developers, urban and rural planners, engineers, architects and others who feel that they have benefited from the demonstration model which has been created so far at OUR ECOVILLAGE. The outstanding aspect of these conversations is that almost all the folks who have talked with us cannot believe we have been able to help facilitate the regulatory reform and alternative development which has transpired, not to mention that they could not picture doing it themselves. There seems to have been a myth that only those who are located in positions of privilege and power

and/or are an organization with a lot of money can effect social change on such a level with regulatory authorities. A number of folks across North America have now borrowed OUR Master Site Plan, which serves as a model for applying a Sustainable Land Management Design, and related rezoning bylaws to bring to their own local authorities and attempt to create locally significant Sustainable Land Management Designs of their own. The wide range of people who have contacted us in the past two years suggest that O.U.R. ECOVILLAGE has created a template for other legal sustainable land use projects and other housing options. O.U.R. work is accessible to other homeowners, grass-root community groups, project managers, academics and related professionals who wish to create homes and lifestyles which are founded on sustainable principles and are healthy and affordable. In Canada alone, we have been contacted by people involved in at least 40 distinct projects.

This project has been motivated by the almost overwhelming amount of contacts we have from those who are wishing to create some type of sustainable lifestyle for themselves or for a group. Across North America, there have been no real examples of land use allowances which support the development of a "full-featured settlement in which human activities are harmlessly integrated into the natural world in a way that is supportive of healthy human development and can be successfully continued into the indefinite future" (*Ecovillages and Sustainable Communities*, Robert Gilman, 1991). O.U.R. ECOVILLAGE is truly the first fully integrated land use development in keeping with Robert Gillman's full-featured settlement. Examples abound of designs created to develop sustainable communities based on ecovillage-type design but the processes fail because of land use zoning, building codes and other regulatory processes which do not yet include small scale development of demonstration/research alternatives.

METHODOLOGY:

In order to embark on the process of regulatory reform this group of community based, very grass-roots folks had to become closely involved in the development process. It is well known that within the environmentalist movement development is feared and sometimes frowned upon. OUR ECOVILLAGE team realized very early on that in order to implement this project we would need to have the environmentalist community onside with a new perspective of development, and we would have to do some education on what appropriate land

management and development could look like. Further to this, OUR methods needed to include bringing together Government, environmental NGO's, local community (neighbours to businesses), academia and all and any who might bring their voice to the table, perhaps the hardest task of all.

As a start, OUR team put an ad into the media and asked for feedback and ideas from any folks who wished to participate in OUR development work. We also went to the local Cowichan Valley Regional District and talked with them about site design and innovative systems integration for the 25 acre farm property we had purchased. In order to work on a plan involving land use activities, OUR ECOVILLAGE team needed to interact with 11 regulatory authorities (including 3 levels of government, their various departments and Ministries, the Local Fire Marshall, etc). This would perhaps scare off many, but in OUR naiveté we persevered.

In a series of 'visioning vignettes' we worked with over 150 people onsite, and an unrecorded number through email, in order to bring together as many design ideas as possible. In another visioning process, we worked with 28 people onsite and over 80 through email on the housing cluster design. We asked people, "What do you think an Ecovillage is?"; "What do you think Sustainability means?"; and "What should happen on this 25 acre piece of land in order to create a Sustainable Land Management Design?". Respondents gave us a massive amount of information detailing how and why a sustainable development should happen.

This progressed into a phase where Open Houses on-site and community events off-site brought through neighbours, politicians, government and all interested parties in order to share the design of what O.U.R. team proposed for a rezoning to a newly created zone titled a "Rural Residential Comprehensive Development Zone". This was an essential means of educating others and also demystifying any community fears of this type of development being a carry over from the historic stereotype of 'commune', 'cult' or other less than positive images. OUR main focus became 'community building' with everyone we met.

In order to approve the rezoning proposal, OUR team created Public Meetings with the Regional District directors and eventually a Public Hearing in order to document publicly the community process. Concurrent to the rezoning process, OUR development team enlisted

The Land Conservancy of British Columbia and The Cowichan Community Land Trust to co-own the project site in order to facilitate environmental protective covenants which would be in place in perpetuity. Upon final approval of the rezoning, we began the design process for a development permit to begin the construction process. At this point, OUR development was jeopardized by the limitations of the National Building Code of Canada (NBC), which did not cover the construction methods we proposed.

In order to supervise and assess OUR ECOVILLAGE's alternative construction methods, the Chief Building Inspector determined that we would need a full time engineer in order to approve any permitting for construction. As OUR luck would have it we found an engineer 10 minutes down the road, a man who had worked with strawbale construction research many years before. Because of the experimental nature of the design in relation to the building codes, OUR ECOVILLAGE had to focus construction work initially on a demonstration building for research and monitoring by the building authorities. In this phase of the project, we contracted with professionals who deal in areas of alternative energy, alternative waste-water treatment, and water reclamation in order to further design the infrastructure as part of the next phase of housing development onsite (10 houses altogether in the final development). This first building we now refer to as The Climate Change Demonstration Building; it is being monitored by regulatory authorities for 10 years (2003-2013), among them the local building inspection department.

PROJECT RESULTS:

The most significant results from this project are:

- The creation of a Rural Residential Comprehensive Development Zone (as a full-featured human settlement and Sustainable Land Management model).
- The approval of a development permit for a non-conventional building design, and the initial agreement for further approval for innovative infrastructure (hybrid wastewater treatment system, hybrid rainwater harvesting/hydrology system, etc. This development permit enabled us to proceed with the construction and monitoring of the Climate Change Demonstration Building which will be documented by regulatory authorities for 10 years, thus adding to the wider body of knowledge.

- The demonstration building proved the structural integrity of cob construction, as used in combination with the other natural building materials. For the demonstration, post and beam was required as structural back-up. However, the cob construction has performed so well that the engineer has agreed that the remaining houses to be built do not require post and beam for structural purposes.
- The piloting of the first course in Canada to focus on 'hands-on' sustainable development and design work, through 'natural building' construction (titled PLAN-B: Practical Leadership and Natural Building 2003). This course has now been broadened into a proposal for a full private educational institute onsite at OUR ECOVILLAGE. In 2004 Human Resources Development Canada funded a Job Creation Project to help with the development and opening of TOPIA: The Sustainable Learning Community Institute which will facilitate more of these type of courses.
- The development of an Environment Protective Covenant creates an example whereby parcels of land can be secured and maintained in perpetuity for specialized housing/multiple activity land use projects.

Not all of the objectives of this project have been met yet. Not long after the rezoning was completed, the bank called in the mortgage. Because the zoning had changed, they did not feel that they could maintain the mortgage, and they would not work with housing cooperatives of any type. This meant an 8-month delay before we could proceed with developing the ownership model and a move to a Credit Union for a new mortgage. The other major objective which we have not completed is the further construction of all the housing. Because of the experimental nature of the building construction, OUR ECOVILLAGE has had a difficult time securing funding through conventional strategies. In the meantime, OUR ECOVILLAGE has gained a solid reputation as a viable alternative to conventional subdivision planning and is a key example of healthy and affordable housing development.

Major difficulties which had to be overcome in this project included:

- a culture of fear (from the wider community and from many within the regulatory process) towards anything which appeared 'alternative' in nature. This was resolved by researching other examples in different countries around the world and bringing the

data back to regional, provincial and federal authorities in order to negotiate a 'demonstration' status for all of the innovative design and construction work.

- Though we had a diversity of professionals in OUR ECOVILLAGE team, we did not have any background in the legal process of land development. In order to work through this, we accepted the support and donation of many, many hours of professional services from Anderson GreenPlan (Nanaimo, BC), lawyers and related professionals who worked far beyond what most contracted individuals would do. Because of the highly diverse team and the diverse players in the regulatory process it would have been helpful to have an assigned facilitator who could have worked through the resolution of the conflict pieces within this rezoning. In order to bring this element forward OUR team assigned individuals to work not only on the educational elements but also within the community process of managing and celebrating OUR diversity.
- Because the NBC is prescriptive in nature rather than performance based, OUR first building had to be a demonstration building and become a research project unto itself. Though initially this was perceived as a very large difficulty, it actually has become an asset in OUR development. The Climate Change Demonstration Building has received more attention than we could have imagined and has brought natural building into the 'limelight' – which in turn assists in more support. The University of British Columbia Engineering School has just completed a series of seismic tests on a cob construction model, proving the structural integrity of the construction methodology. This year has also brought the construction of a cob 'Popcorn Kiosk' in Stanley Park (Vancouver, BC) which serves hundreds of people per day thus also adding to the promotion of this type of construction.
- The advent of having the Bank call in OUR ECOVILLAGE mortgage appeared as an impossible obstacle to overcome. Through months of negotiation and research with a variety of Credit Unions, the Island Savings Credit Union (Mill Bay, BC) signed on to hold a mortgage at current residential rates. This mortgage is only viable until OUR team completes the research project involving not only the design of a new hybrid ownership model but also alternative finance models, and alternative governance models. Currently O.U.R. COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION is applying for funding to

explore the “F.O.G. – Finance, Ownership and Governance for Rural Live/Work Sustainable Land Management Model”. This funding has been applied for through Canada Mortgage and Housing: External Research Grant Funding. The research is meant to overcome the many barriers and challenges inherent in existing models. OUR hope is to create a hybrid model of best practices from existing models of land trust ownership, non-profit ownership, housing co-ops, producer co-ops, consumer co-ops and so forth, to bring that ownership and governance model forward for creation of a finance package option through Credit Union Central.

- Because of the barriers to this type of alternative construction within the NBC, the construction process had to include performance evaluations at each step of the overall housing design and development. In order to move through the performance evaluations, the development permit process was divided into two separate components on the project site, with Development Permit #1 for the education and infrastructure sector (see Master Site Plan in Appendix 1, darkest grey area), and Development Permit #2 for the lakeside residential sector (Master Site Plan, lightest grey area).
- Because of the educational/demonstration nature of the development work at OUR ECOVILLAGE, a Sustainable Learning Community Institute was developed simultaneously. This has been captured in a documentary entitled ”Developing TOPIA: The School of Sustainable Community Building”, which is available on DVD. (*note: name has been changed to “TOPIA: The Sustainable Learning Community Institute”).

This project has major potential for transference of regulatory changes to other municipalities, with different builders and for different community groups. This type of project becomes best suited to rural areas if a group makes use of the Rural Residential Comprehensive Development Zone, but the framework could easily be re-worked in order to configure its use for urban development frameworks. One of the most valuable relationships established has been with professional planners who are sharing the legal documents from the rezoning process with others. Most notable in this professional group is the Cowichan Valley Regional District Planning Department which is now taking requests from other communities when people need a contact for the regulatory process. The Planning Department is tracking the number of responses and the contact information of these people.

What is desperately needed at this time is some work on the creation of distribution materials that can be shared easily and can help others to understand the process in a simple and meaningful way. The CVRD and OUR ECOVILLAGE have discussed partnering on development of these materials and seeking funding for the same. Another natural connection has been with Smart Growth BC. After facilitating a seminar with one of the founders of Smart Growth BC, it became apparent that each of the principles contained within the Smart Growth BC framework is very well exemplified through the development process at OUR ECOVILLAGE. This also could be an avenue where we seek funding to supply some type of educational materials for distribution. The Smart Growth BC Principles overlaid on OUR ECOVILLAGE development process ties theory and practice together in a useful presentation of sustainable design.

OUR ECOVILLAGE celebrated its fifth anniversary in 2004. OUR development process is being translated into a strategic plan for the next five years. OUR development team will continue to honour any involvement from other professionals and volunteers who wish to participate in this learning process and creative venture. OUR ECOVILLAGE is truly a demonstration sustainable village built….by community, for community, through community!

APPENDIX I:

SITE PLAN & DIAGRAMS

[insert pdfs: App 1 – Master Site Plan, and App 1 – OUR Ecovillage Diagrams]

APPENDIX II:

OUR ECOVILLAGE PROTECTIVE COVENANT

[insert pdf: App II – OUR Ecovillage Protective Covenant]

APPENDIX III:

INTERIM REPORT

OUR ECOVILLAGE: INTERIM REPORT

DECEMBER 2003

Visioning and Design Consultation Process

Attached please find initial conceptual drawing from the Natural Building visioning and design process. This template for all of the natural buildings/residences evolved from the six visioning and design vignettes. At the third and fourth vignettes visioning participants were invited to submit (individually or in teams) there vision for a conceptual design. An architectural team took away all the individual and team submissions, which were produced in the next vignettes, and attempted to amalgamate all ideas and aspects contained within these into one design. This final conceptual design was passed back and forth through all participants and the design team coordinators until an agreement was passed assuring all design issues were addressed. This truly helped to have the work 'owned' by community, through community…for community (including onsite residents, wider community participants, and related professionals).

Another aspect of the design work which needed to be addressed was the personal and professional ethics which individuals brought into the team design process. There was an initial agreement (by all participants involved in the vignette) on a core set of ethics and this list was added to as other participants became part of the visioning work. This list includes:

1. all design work must be diligent in assuring ownership by community (residential and wider community participants). As regulatory authorities came into process we would involve them in this community dynamic.
2. all design work must value the highest standards of quality and sustainable building practices.
3. in the building design and construction processes the team would choose building materials in relation to the 'ecological footprint' and low amounts of 'embodied energy' relevant to each of the various materials. Ie: Concrete has an extremely high ratio of embodied energy and therefore we went to a 'hand stacked dry stone foundation' with the only use of mortar in the plinths supporting each of the posts in the exterior walls.
4. No monster homes! The overall footprint of the village cluster would be minimized by specifying a maximum square footage for the 10 residences (one existing, conventional built house plus 9 new dwellings). The rezoning bylaws include the statement that the maximum footage for all/any buildings (including residences, outbuildings and structures of any sort) shall not exceed 10 percent. Also, the aggregate total number of bedrooms permitted on the parcel is 25 (between the 10 houses).
5. Use alternative energy sources were and if possible (but not retrofit existing buildings yet).
6. Where possible the use of 'renewable resource' building materials would be chosen in the construction process. Ie: straw bales were chosen for the North wall (needing highest insulative qualities) of the homes.

7. All natural building materials would be 'bio-regional'. The straw bales, stone, clay, sand and wood all came from the Cowichan Valley (all within a 40km radius maximum).
8. Principles of 'thermal mass' would be utilized for the purpose of supporting heat retention, cooling and energy saving. The South wall of the homes is designed for full passive solar gain through the use of 'cob' building material for the walls and a wide range of windows and skylights.
9. Design and build to enable 'energy modelling' research and data collection during process and ongoing. Raise funds for research and data collection on building performance (use at least one building to start for demonstration purposes). This data collected should be available to wider community, and on a website, to share with all other home owners/builders and related professionals.
10. 'It takes a community to raise a child'…and it takes a community to create a community. And-in this case it takes a community to have a fully integrated design and building process. The residential housing needs to be built 'by community, through community, for community'. This means every step of the process incorporates as wide a range of folks as possible (including design, funding, education, construction and living in it!).
11. Humbleness….including respect for self, materials and all others involved in the process. The work must be egalitarian in nature and each person comes to the process as a resource.
12. Health and safety. We need to give time to what takes time!
13. Work and life to be intertwined. Holistic process (balance between productivity and wellbeing).
14. Creating a 'learning community' as a foundation for all of the process.
15. Cooperation and community building is as important as the construction process.
16. Community empowerment and capacity building inherent in all aspects.

<u>Design Features; in Particular those Relating to Housing</u>

With the design and construction of the 'demonstration building' OUR ECOVILLAGE has been able to move through a wide range of regulatory challenges and develop a level of credibility and validity related to "Natural Building". Though there are many examples of 'green building' within Canada no one had yet worked with building inspectors, engineers and architects to design, build and monitor any residences which have been built with 'cob' as a building material {cob is a combination of sand, clay, sand and straw mixed with water. Though it contains no other additives it is a material which we are able to use often in place of concrete as long as moisture issues are addressed}. By utilizing a combination of cob, strawbale, dry stack stone foundation, earthen floor and a green roof we moved into uncharted territory – both for builders and for building inspectors. The design and building process became an ongoing 'back and forth' dialogue between the engineers, architects, builders and regulatory authorities in order to collate all known 'best practices' and then put these into the process. This brought forward an act of goodwill by the lead engineer and building inspector to have a first 'demonstration building' monitored for a 5-year period (with annual reviews and reporting). This building was acknowledged as being the model for each of the other

eight residences to be built. The performance monitoring will allow for inspection of the building to be utilized as a residential space. Monitoring during the building process proved that the structural integrity of the foundation, wall and roof construction is sufficient for this type of building technology to be utilized for residential housing purposes. Although the demonstration house has been constructed with post and beam support for the walls, the engineer has now agreed that each of the remaining eight houses to be built does not need this construction technique for structural purposes. In short, if any of the others residence owners wish to have post and beam work incorporated into their homes, they may chose this, but it is no longer considered necessary by the engineer for ensuring the load-bearing capacity and the structural integrity of the cob walls.

As seen on the floor plan of the house this building may serve as a multi-purpose building (similar to Flex Housing ideals). As a home it has been labeled as 'multi-purpose' in order to qualify for the first level of inspection and permitting. As the performance monitoring is demonstrated this can be changed. This was a necessary step in order to create the template for this type of building technology for residential space.

As cob is a building technology that has never been worked with through regulatory processes and been accepted for residential building applications, we were advised to begin the process by applying for the permit as a non-residential space. Though there are various examples of Canadian built and monitored strawbale buildings, living roof designs and various kinds of foundation applications, none have been done in a combination with cob building technology. Most cob construction builders have 'shied away' from the lengthy process of finding an engineer and regulatory authorities who might be willing to work in research and innovative design when there has been little Canadian building code relationship (the properties of thermal mass are not delineated as related to cob construction within the code). There are building codes that contain this information in Germany and New Zealand. Cob construction has been known for hundreds of years, specifically in England, which has a similar climate to ours, and there are examples of it in many countries in the world. Because of these regulatory challenges and barriers it became apparent that a 'demonstration building' (which we also call the **Climate Change Demonstration House**) would need to be built in order to facilitate the creation of a residential building technology template for the other 8 residences at OUR ECOVILLAGE. Now that the building has been approved for permit we are able to share this performance monitoring with all others who wish to build with this type of residential building technology.

Now that the inclusion of cob construction is considered as an acceptable building technology, by building inspectors, an engineer and architect team, there is a plausible example for healthy and affordable residential housing which was not previously available in Canada. Building inspectors from each of the Gulf Islands in BC (how many inspectors/Gulf Islands?) have come for site tours to see the combination of cob technology with strawbale, stone, wood etc.

OUR ECOVILLAGE has received approximately 25 enquires per month asking for information on the regulatory process which has been undertaken.

All other residences built at OUR ECOVILLAGE will follow the same design and building technology format. A 'Sustainability School' has been developed onsite to platform OUR Natural Building process and to share the learning with other folks who wish to acquire personal and professional expertise in this type of residential construction. The school (PLAN-B: Practical Leadership and Natural Building) will support the ongoing development of residential space (both onsite with remaining 8 residences and off site for other home owners). All other holistic land design and permaculture principles incorporated into the design and building process at OUR ECOVILLAGE have become part of the education work that is done onsite. One core principle within permaculture design is to "stack functions" and this is apparent within the design in such aspects as the use of the lake area. Within the Environmental Protection Covenant [the Management Plan is still being developed by the CCLT and TLC due summer of 2004] there is provision for varied uses on the lake including: 1) fire suppression system, 2) food production, 3) recreation, 4) livestock drinking area, 5) a geothermal lake loop, and 6) lake run off into 'swales' to water large orchard. The second residential sector (yellow area on Master Site Plan) is conveniently located next to the lake for less impact related to road access for emergency vehicles/fire trucks and allows for easy monitoring of lake and systems related to lake. As seen on the Master Site Plan there is an access road into the yellow sector but this is only meant to be for delivery or emergency purposes. The road is non-paved and really just a porous surface driveway. Cars will be parked away from the residences and electric carts will be available to use to transport heavier items or folks who have difficulty walking distances. Now that the residential technology has gone through permitting and monitoring approval the design team will work on fundraising for the design and install of an alternative energy power system (combination of solar, wind, geothermal).

<u>How OUR ECOVILLAGE differs from others</u>

The development of a new regional district code (rezoning to Rural Residential Comprehensive Development Zone) has meant that OUR ECOVILLAGE has been to establish a truly 'live/work' holistic sustainable land management design. Initially the rezoning team encountered a great deal of community concern and backlash to OUR application for rezoning. It took a great deal of community development work and education to 'demystify' the old notions of a commune or other examples of lifestyle that were recalled from many decades previous. There were neighbours and even some regulatory officials who expressed fear of 'illegal activities, transients, and youth who might be irresponsible'. OUR ECOVILLAGE team considered these concerns important and rather than dismiss the sentiments as backward thinking and close-minded the team made great efforts to involve such folks in the design work. If someone had a particular concern they were invited for a tour and then if appropriate were invited to work with the design team to provide feedback and monitor the process. This helped to provide a high level of integrity, credibility and build alliances within the community.

Relationships between people, with the land, and within the wider community were considered the paramount focus. Within holistic land design and permaculture principles the inter-relatedness of all things is a core concept.

Beginning with the rezoning process, OUR ECOVILLAGE was told that we would be involved in a 1-2 year process. Initial meetings with local government showed little response towards a possible solution to creating a live/work cooperative and sustainable land ownership design. As OUR team grew and a variety of related professionals (within wider community and within Government) came on board with the process a community dynamic began to gel! At one stage an official from the Provincial Government stepped up and suggested that the CVRD consider the creation of a brand new zone to accommodate all the design features that we had included. With the support and agreement of the Provincial Government the process was expedited substantially. As part of the rezoning conditions OUR ECOVILLAGE agreed that all development work would be done through the monitoring and regulation of the CVRD by way of development permits and building permits. Each step of the way OUR ECOVILLAGE strove to develop a working relationship with each regulatory authority and have them feel a sense of 'ownership', as part of the wider community, in the project. To allow for any challenge to the regulatory reform it was decided that the rezoning sign should remain up for a minimum of 3 months after the initial sign off from the CVRD (and then passed for all and any other signature approval) in case there was to be any regulatory appeal by neighbours, or others, then the regulatory change would have to account for this. The Development Permit serves to oversee any further challenges by neighbours or regulatory authorities as each step will be monitored.

Throughout the development of OUR ECOVILLAGE we have become a member of THE EARTH CHARTER www.earthcharter.org . This has helped to provide a framework for the incorporation of principles of:

1) Respect and Care for the Community of Life
2) Ecological Integrity
3) Social and Economic Justice
4) Democracy, Nonviolence and Peace

The Earth Charter came out of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit and is supported by the United Nations. It was signed for at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris March 2000.

The Earth Charter can be used as: " an education tool, an invitation to individuals, institutions and communities for reflection of ethics/values, a catalyst for multi-sectoral, cross-cultural and interfaith dialogue, a call to action for sustainable way of life, a values framework, an instrument for designing professional codes of conduct and promote accountability, a soft law instrument".

At the completion of this stage OUR ECOVILLAGE has been asked to speak at numerous conferences and forums related to sustainability about OUR rezoning process and the permitting/design process for natural building residential construction. It is OUR hope that we will speak at the BC Land Summit (May 2004) www.bclandsummit.com This conference is created by:

The BC Assoc. of the Appraisal Institute of Canada (BCAAIC)
The BC Institute of Agrologists (BCIA)
The BC Society of Landscape Architects (BCSLA)
The Planning Institute of British Columbia (PIBC)
The Real Estate Institute of BC (REIBC)

By sharing OUR ECOVILLAGE process we hope to help others who are involved with design, residential building and regulatory authority processes that can benefit by the models we have created.

OUR ECOVILLAGE has gained a profile as a 'demonstration sustainable live/work and land management village'. Media and academia make contact on a regular basis in their attempts to share the information of OUR work. The rezoning and residential house design work has directly impacted 4 other farm organizations in the Cowichan Valley (we wish to utilize the new zone and/or house design technology) and many others throughout Canada. Because of the response to this model it would be of assistance to create an information package by which the full range of information and detail could be disseminated to other individuals, groups and regulatory authorities.

APPENDIX IV:

FINAL BUDGET REPORT

[insert MS Excel file: ACT – Financial Report]