The 19 Steps: How People Typically Start a Community

Founders of intentional communities typically do the following things to create their projects. Not all founders do all these things. Some of these steps, or processes, can be simultaneous, or ongoing, or can occur in a different order. Nevertheless, I hope this list gives you a basic idea of what community founders typically do.

(1) Choose the general community location and basic financial structure.

(2) Agree on and write up the group's shared Mission & Purpose.

(3) Choose and practice a fair, participatory method for decision-making and self-governance. *(ongoing).*

(4) Organize and make available to community members all meeting minutes, decisions, policies and agreements. *(ongoing).*

(5) Promote the group's Mission and Aim to others and encourage more people to join. *(ongoing).*

(6) Create and implement a clear, thorough membership process. *(ongoing).*

(7) Learn good communication skills and an effective conflict-resolution process. To reduce conflict, create abundant "community glue" with shared enjoyable activities. *(ongoing).*

(8) Find ways to help people stay accountable to group agreements. *(ongoing)*

(9) Choose site criteria for the property they will buy together; begin the land-search process; choose the property.

(10) Decide how they will own the land together.

(11) Choose a legal entity for co-owning the property.

(12) Research zoning regulations and get a zoning variance if necessary, or possible.

(13) Figure out how to finance the property purchase and development; create a land-payment fund; buy the property.

(14) Determine the internal community finances: how the land-purchase and development costs will be paid, how annual recurring costs will be paid, and what labor requirements will be.

(15) Keep track of community finances and set up a bookkeeping system.

(16) Create a Permaculture-based site plan for how the group will develop the property.

(17) Begin developing land according to the Permaculture-based site plan *(ongoing).*

(18) Organize a work exchange program to help develop physical infrastructure.

(19) Build dwellings and move onto the property *(ongoing).*

The community is not “finished” with Step 19, of course, but continues through time, as an ever-evolving learning process of creating the physical, economic, and social/cultural/spiritual infrastructure. Here are more details about each step or process:

(1) Choose the general community location and basic financial structure. The founders of an intentional community must agree on whether it will be urban, semi-rural, or rural, and its general location, and whether it will be independent-income or income-sharing, or a combination of the two. This should be done first, to save the time and energy of people who might join the group because they like the people and like the purpose for a community but — might want to live somewhere else entirely than the rest of the group does. Or, who might want a completely different kind of economic system: independent-income instead of income- sharing, or the reverse.

(2) Agree on and write up the group’s shared Mission & Aim. This is crucial, as having a shared Mission and Aim establishes right from the start what the community will do, and why.
While a group’s “vision” is how they might like the world to be a better and different place, their “Mission” is the “big picture” of what their community they will specifically be doing to help bring this about. Their Aim is the specific physical & nonphysical things they will do.

It helps to put the Mission and Aim into a short statement: a paragraph, or several paragraphs. One purpose for a Mission and Aim statement is that, like a lens, it helps focus the founders’ energy. It gives them a touchstone to return to when they have conflict in the decision-making process. If they can agree on *what they’re doing* and *why they’re doing it*, they can more easily work out whatever strategy — the “how” — they might use to achieve their goals.

A second purpose for a Mission and Aim statement is to attract additional cofounders and, later, new members. Equally important, a Mission and Aim statement helps deter any potential cofounders or new members who have different intentions or different reasons for living in a community than the founding group. The idea is to attract people who want to do the same thing, and for the same reasons. So a Mission and Aim statement is used when people tell others about their community. It’s written on flyers or brochures they may hand out or post in public places, or featured prominently on their website if they have one. Of course details can be added about the kind of property they’re looking for (or already have), the community members they have so far, and what they hope to accomplish — their goals.

The Mission and Aim statement of my community, Earthaven Ecovillage in North Carolina: "To create a village which is a living laboratory and educational seed bank for a sustainable human future." Earthaven's website also shows these 12 goals, derived from this statement:

1. To catalyze local and global change through learning, teaching, and networking.
2. To shift from wasteful to regenerative use of resources.
3. To use and develop ecologically sound technologies for water, waste, energy, construction, and other essential systems.
4. To develop and support a thriving local economy.
5. To grow, raise, and trade our own food, medicines, and forestry products in an environmentally responsible, bioregional network.
6. To practice fair, participatory, and effective self-governance.
7. To encourage an atmosphere in which diverse spiritual practices, conscious connection to all beings, and progressive social action can thrive.
8. To nurture personal growth, interpersonal understanding, and mutual trust as the foundation for a deeply connected human community.
9. To practice healthy, holistic lifestyles that balance self-care with care for others.
10. To create a culture of celebration, beauty, and pleasure.
11. To use capital and labor resources to provide common infrastructure and meet our collective needs.
12. To promote and ensure the long-term structural integrity of the community.

Here's the Mission and Aim statement of Dancing Rabbit, another ecovillage in the US: "To create a society, the size of a small town or village, made up of individuals and communities of various sizes and social structures, which allows and encourages its members to live sustainably. To encourage this sustainable society to grow to have the size and recognition necessary to have an influence on the global community by example, education, and research." Dancing Rabbit then defines "sustainability" on their website as, "In such a manner that, within the defined area, no resources are consumed faster than their natural replenishment, and the enclosed system can continue indefinitely without degradation of its natural resource base or the standard of living of the people and the rest of the ecosystem within it, and without contributing to the non-sustainability of ecosystems outside.

(3) Choose and practice a fair, participatory method for decision-making and self-governance. Most intentional communities make decisions with all full members having equal say. There usually isn’t a leader or boss or small group of rulers who decide things; rather, the group uses a decision-making method such as consensus, like Earthaven uses, or consensus backed-up by super-majority voting. (In super-majority voting, proposals are discussed and modified by the whole group just in consensus — but when it’s time to decide, they vote. A super-majority of the people present, such as 75%, 80%, 85%, etc. must say *Yes* to pass a proposal.) Recently some communities, including Katywil Cohousing and Lost Valley Educational Center in the US, Sydney Coastal Ecovillage in Australia, and Les Choux Lents Cohousing in France, have begun using Sociocracy (in the US, sometimes called Dynamic Governance), a whole-system governance and decision-making method with a built-in decision- making method. Most communities have a governance process involving periodic whole-group meetings to decide larger matters of policy, approve budgets, and approve new members, and have smaller committees and/or managers to carry out tasks. Committees usually focus on specific areas such as land use, repair and maintenance, clerical and administrative work, agriculture, promotions, visitors, new-member orientation, and so on.

Decision-making and self-governance are ongoing processes which continue throughout the life of the community.

(4) Organize and make accessible to community members all meeting minutes, decisions, policies and agreements. Having clear records about decisions and policies that any community member can look up anytime — in 3-ring binders or online — helps support the governance and decision-making of the community, and helps the group function smoothly. Without records that anyone can look up anytime, there can be conflict as some community members have access to important information but others do not.

Another kind of conflict can occur if agreements and decisions are not written down, or they are written down but can’t be found. When this happens different people are forced to use their memories to remember various community decisions and agreements, and people often tend to remember the same thing quite differently, causing significant conflict. It would be so much easier to simply look it up!

Keeping decisions and policies organized and accessible to everyone is also an ongoing function of community life.

(5) Promote the group's Mission and Aim to others and encourage more people to join. This often involves creating flyers, posters, or brochures, and/or a website that describe the community Mission and Aim, goals, values, and lifestyle: in order to let neighbors, journalists, and others know what the group is doing — and to attract additional members. Sometimes community websites also include information about the group's financial obligations, decision-making method, membership policy, and how people can visit. Promoting the community to others is an ongoing activity.

(6) Create and implement a clear, thorough membership process. Founders of intentional communities must choose new members who thoroughly understand and support their Mission and Aim — the new members want to do what the community intends to do, and for the same reasons (the same "what" and the same "why").

A membership process should be clear — meaning easily understood and available to interested potential members. And it should be thorough — meaning it has criteria for membership, a period of time in which new people live in the community as prospective members (often 6 to 18 months in non-cohousing communities), and a helpful orientation process so they will understand the group's values, lifestyle, activities, culture, financial or labor obligations, and its governance and decision-making method. New people should be willing and able to abide by the group's agreements, willing to be trained in its governance, and generally liked by most people in the group. *Unless* the group is formed specifically to care for people with problems, is best that they don't choose new members with addictions, a history of financial irresponsibility, a criminal record, emotional disturbances which could too-often negatively affect the group, or mental illness. In other words, the membership process ideally is designed to attract healthy people who will wholeheartedly join in the work of the community.

If it is an *independent-income* community (as, for example, all cohousing communities are) with a joining fee or membership fee, annual dues and fees, and/or labor contribution requirements for able-bodied adults, the incoming member, family, or household must be able to afford the required fees and do the required work.

And if it's an *income-sharing* community, the able-bodied adults in the family or household must be able to do the required work.

A clear, thorough membership process is an ongoing feature of community life.

(7) Learn and practice good communication skills and an effective conflict-resolution process. *(Ongoing)* Communities can have conflict between individual members, two or more factions within the group who advocate very different strategies for achieving the same community goal, or advocates two different community values, such as ecological sustainability vs. affordability. For example, some community members might want to buy a larger photovoltaic system or build constructed wetlands; others may not want to spend the money so the community can continue to offer a lower joining fee for new people.

Conflict can be reduced when community members learn and consistently practice effective ways to talk to each other in kindly, open-hearted, transparent ways — often called having "good communication skills." A communication technique I recommend is the Nonviolent Communication process. It helps reduce conflict by using neutral language, focusing on people's feelings and the underlying basic human needs that give rise to those feelings, and making specific, do-able requests when talking about the issue or when requesting changes in one other's behavior.

Ideally the group has an agreed-upon conflict resolution method in place. While communities use many kinds of conflict-resolution methods, I recommend "Restorative Circles," which is closely related to Nonviolent Communication. In Restorative Circles, those involved in a conflict meet with a Restorative Circles facilitator — a kindly, neutral mediator who has met with each party to the dispute ahead of time. Assisted by the facilitator, people involved in the dispute may tell each other what the other person (or people) may have done that they didn't enjoy and/or how it may have created harm for them. They may speak in terms of their feelings and needs, encouraged by the facilitator. Then the facilitator and the group invite each party to the dispute to, if they wish, voluntarily offer an act of reparation, such as fixing something they may have broken, or restoration, which is a more symbolic act, designed demonstrate an intention of good will and restore a sense of harmony between the parties, if possible.

To reduce potential conflict and increase good will, create "community glue" through shared enjoyable activities — shared meals, work parties, games, sports, singing, dancing, playing music, sharing circles, and so on. Experiencing enjoyable activities produces the hormone oxytocin, which generates feelings of trust and gratitude towards the people with whom one experiences the enjoyable activities. The frequent experience of trust and gratitude creates an "immune system" for the group — which they draw on when ill; i.e. having conflict.

(8) Find ways to help community members stay accountable to group agreements. Helping people stay accountable to their agreements helps reduce and prevent conflict. This can occur when a community member doesn't pay the money or work the amount of labor hours everyone owes to the community or doesn't complete the task others are counting on them to complete, or violates other community agreements. Mainstream culture often deals with this kind of infraction by fines and jail terms, but community members typically use more friendly and inclusive methods to remind the person of their responsibilities and induce them to comply with community agreements.

One method involves having people agree ahead of time to remind each other about tasks they've agreed to take on.

Another method involves publicly displaying the record of people's payments or labor hours contributed to the community, so everyone can see who is caught up in payments and labor hours and who is not. This kind of subtle peer pressure tends to induce people to do what they should, as it plays on the common desire to have a good reputation with one's peers.

Another method, "a graduated series of consequences," is sometimes used when it's not just a one-time thing, but someone who chronically violates agreements — not paying community dues, not contributing their required labor hours, or not keeping other community agreements. The graduated series of consequences usually involves four or five steps that the group agrees on ahead of time as a policy to request that the person once again complies with group agreements. The first step may be something as gentle as one person going to talk with the person who's violating the agreements (for example, to ask them if everything is all right, has something happened that others don't know about, do they need help or assistance, and what would they need in order to pay the fees, or contribute the labor, or otherwise comply with agreements). If that doesn't work, the next steps could involve increasingly "public" (within the community) requests for the person to comply, including a small group going to see the person. If that doesn't work, a whole-group meeting may be called to talk about the problem. The last step — the last resort — could be asking the person to leave the community for a period of time (or to leave permanently). Fortunately, when a community uses the "graduated series of consequences" method, usually the person complies after the first or second step.

Helping people stay accountable to group agreements can also be an ongoing activity, depending on the group and how it functions.

***(9) Choose site criteria for the property they will buy together; conduct the land-search process; choose the property*.** After the founders of an intentional community have decided the general area where they'd like to live (Step 1, above), they need to make a list of the characteristics of their ideal property. Earthaven's founders made a list that included many streams and springs, and location in a county free from onerous zoning regulations — and that's exactly what they bought.

The land-search process can take several years. For example, Earthaven's founders spent four years looking at various properties in Western North Carolina before buying their property in 1994. The founders of Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage traveled across the country looking for counties with no zoning regulations or limited regulation, and that's what they found, in a county in the northeastern part of the state of Missouri.

Of course the founders of some community projects don't buy property at all, and so this step and all other steps relating to property purchase don't apply. Some community founders are given property for free. The founders of Kitezh Children's Village in Russia were given former communal farmland by the Russian government after the collapse of the communal farming movement in the former USSR. And while the founders of Konohana Family in Japan purchased several large shared houses in the rural farming area of Fujinomiya, most of their small non-adjacent farming plots are being loaned to them at no charge by their owners, elderly people who can no longer farm.

(10) Decide how they will own the land together. Members of intentional communities can own their shared property in several ways.

They can all own all of the property and grant leases or siteholding agreements to individual members, families, and households for smaller individual homesites or "building footprints." Earthaven owns its property this way.

They can all own some of the property and subdivide the rest of it into individual land parcels or lots, or housing units on individual building footprints, which they sell, with a deed, to individuals, families, or households who join the community. Cohousing communities do this. Crystal Waters in Australia and EcoVillage at Ithaca in the US (a cohousing community) own their properties this way.

The founders can create a land trust with nonprofit ownership, so that the land trust owns the property. The community members help give direction to the land trust by serving on its board of directors, and live on the property, but they don't own it. Findhorn in Scotland, Dancing Rabbit in the US, and Tamera in Portugal have done this.

One person, or a group of people, can own the property and lease homesites or building footprints to individual members, families, or households who join. Port Townsend Ecovillage in the US does it this way.

One person or several individuals can own the property, or several adjacent or nearby properties. And while the properties are legally owned by various individuals, all the property is considered everyone's shared property. Konohana Family in Japan functions this way.

Everyone can rent or lease apartments in an urban neighborhood, and designate one of the apartments as the meeting room or common space. Los Angeles Eco-Village in the US operates like this.

(11) Choose a legal entity for co-owning the property. When a group of people buy land together, they have better liability protection for their individual assets if they buy it through a legal entity they've established, rather than just buying the property as a group of individuals with many names on the deed. Also, they need a legal entity or entities that supports the form of ownership they've chosen (as in Step 10, above). Some communities own their shared ecovillage property through a corporation, a nonprofit corporation, or a co-op form of ownership, depending upon which legal entities are recognized by the Court system in their country. Some communities have a second, nonprofit legal entity for operating their educational program.

(12) Research zoning regulations and get a zoning variance if necessary, or possible. Many cities, towns, or counties (also called districts or regions) have zoning regulations. These regulations dictate "population density" (how many people can live on X number of hectares or acres), how far buildings must be from property lines, and other aspects of inhabiting property in that county, city, town, etc.

In rural areas of some western states in the US, for example, no more than one house can be built on 35 acres; in rural areas of some northeastern states in the US, no more than one house can built for every 100 feet of road frontage. Yet clustering houses close together is important in ecological site planning, and specifically is a part of cohousing site planning. And many people sharing land ownership helps make the property purchase and development more affordable. While not all counties and municipalities have zoning regulations, and not all zoning regulations dictate such low population density, counties and municipalities that do have these regulations work against the values and goals of community founders and could make it much more difficult, if not impossible, to start a community.

So for counties or municipalities with restrictive zoning like this, community founders must request a zoning variance — a waiver from the regulations. Ideally this is done *before* they buy the property. It requires filling out forms to request a zoning variance for the specific property they hope to buy, paying any required processing fees, giving the zoning board a site map and any other documents that show the group's intentions for the property, and attending one or more public hearings where people living in neighboring properties say what they think about the requested variance. The zoning board may grant a variance. They may grant one with certain stipulations (for example, that the community founders must create a public trail or park on their property). Or they may say No to the request. So seeking a zoning variance is not a sure thing. For this reason, two ecovillages in the US, Dancing Rabbit and Earthaven, bought property in rural counties that had no zoning regulations.

***(13) Choose a way to finance the property purchase and development; create a land- payment fund; buy the property**.* Sometimes founders of an intentional community may pay the full purchase price of their property in one lump sum. However, usually community founders pay a down payment of 20 percent or more, and pay the rest in monthly or quarterly payments, with interest, to owner-financers, or to friends who've loaned them money for the property purchase, or, more rarely, to a bank. However, financing for cohousing is an exception: almost all cohousing communities are financed by a bank. But in general, founders raise money from whatever sources they can: their own savings, their savings plus loans from family or friends, a loan from one of their own group members, or from a bank.

Community founders need to raise money for three kinds of funds: (1) the amount of down payment for the property, (2) a fund for making land payments, and (3) a land-development fund. The exception is cohousing, where a bank provides most of these funds. The land-*payment* fund is like a "cushion" or "insurance" fund: they use it to make land payments if they should ever not have enough money from their planned source of annual income, which might be joining fees and site lease fees of incoming members, or income from one or more community-owned businesses, if they have them.

The land-*development* fund is used for the initial development of the property: building roads, bridges, the group's community building or meeting hall, etc.

(14) Determine the internal community finances: how land-purchase and development costs and annual recurring costs will be paid, and labor requirements. Founders of intentional communities need to know the amount of money and labor that will flow into and out of their project, both annually and over the years. This includes the total amount of their one-time expenses over the years, and how they will pay these one-time expenses
It includes the amount of their annual recurring expenses, and how they will pay them.

One-time expenses include land payments (even though they are multiple payments, they are paying off the one-time property purchase), and land development costs (roads, buildings, etc.).

In communities using the *independent-income* model, land payments and property development costs are usually paid with one-time income from joining fees, site lease fees, and/or lot-purchase fees from incoming members. Communities using the *income-sharing* model normally pay these one-time expenses from their common treasury, which typically comes from profits of community-owned businesses.

Recurring annual expenses include repair and maintenance of buildings and land, property taxes, property insurance (liability insurance, fire insurance, etc.), and the cost of utilities if the group purchases any power, water, sewage services, telephone, etc. from local companies or the local town or city.

Communities (such as cohousing communities) using the *independent-income* model generally get funds for these recurring expenses from community members paying annual dues and fees; like a kind of internal "tax" the community creates for itself. Ecovillages using the *income-sharing* model usually pay recurring expenses from their common treasury — which again, typically comes from profits of community-owned businesses, if there are any.

* *Labor contributions.* Often communities — both independent income and income-sharing — require their members to contribute a certain amount of labor per month, per year, or sometimes a total amount of labor hours over a certain number of years.

* *Determining joining fees, etc**.*** Most community founders try to spread the cost of property purchase and development fairly among all members. So first they decide their total number of adult members (or member-households or member families). This is determined by the amount of property the founders acquire, the ecological carrying capacity of the land, any local zoning regulations they may be subject to, and how many people the founders would ideally like to have, given these limitations. This total number of members is divided into the anticipated total cost for property purchase and development, and the result helps determine the joining fee, or site lease fee, and/or cost of buying a lot with a deed. The goal here is fairness and consistency. (In cohousing, however, the "joining fee" is the cost of purchasing an individual housing unit, which includes the cost of the shared property and common house.)

However, to be truly fair, and to honor the founders and earlier members — who do the most work and take the most risk — many communities create a staggered series of joining fees, site lease fees, and/or lot-purchase fees that gradually increase over the years.

This way founders pay the least share of the whole, early members pay slightly more, and so on over the years — so those who join the ecovillage much later pay more than the those who joined earlier. (In cohousing, however, incoming members pay the purchase price of the housing unit, which may have increased, but with falling land costs, also may have decreased.)

Having joining fees, gradually increase each year acknowledges that each year the community is slightly more developed and thus more valuable than it was the year before, both in terms of physical infrastructure (more roads, buildings, etc), and a more developed social/ culture infrastructure.

This also honors the courage of the founders, who pay the least, since they purchased property and began the development process (and often, borrowed money to do it), with no guarantee that the project would succeed. But people who join a few years later are taking less of a risk — as they're joining a community which is much more physically visible and substantial.

(15) Keep track of community finances and set up a bookkeeping system. Once all this has been determined, the community needs an effective bookkeeping system to keep track of one-time expenses and income, as well as recurring expenses and income. Additionally, it needs an effective system for keeping track of people's labor contributions. This bookkeeping is an ongoing process. I recommend including an annual budget line item for frequent trainings for community members in the skills and methods they'll need to manage the community effectively. This can include Permaculture design, natural building, building greywater systems, effective governance and decision-making methods, Nonviolent communication, Restorative Circles, and so on. Communities that offer trainings in needed community skills tend to function far better than communities that don't allocate money for this.

(16) Create a Permaculture-based site plan developing the property. This means using Permaculture design principles, or hiring a Permaculture designer to (1) determine how the land will be used, and (2) create a site plan (map) of the property that shows this development. All communities need a site plan; Permaculture is highly recommended for this.

Permaculture, developed in the mid-1970s by Australian ecologists Bill Mollison and David Holmgren, is a design system for homesites and farms based on the way nature actually functions rather than going against nature, like most commercial housing developers do. Now, Permaculture design has significantly influenced the environmental movement worldwide, including most intentional communities. British Permaculture designer Graham Bell describes Permaculture as, "The conscious design and maintenance of agriculturally productive systems which have the diversity, stability, and resilience of natural ecosystems. It is the harmonious integration of the landscape with people, providing their food, energy, shelter, and other material and non- material needs in a sustainable way."

Permaculture co-founder Bill Mollison says more specifically, "Within a Permaculture designed system (1) wastes become resources, (2) productivity and yields increase, (3) work is minimized, and (4) the environment is restored."

Permaculture design isn't just some activities community members *do,* however. It's actually a basic philosophy of respect. US permaculture designer Bill Wilson calls it "a creative and artful way of living where people and nature are all preserved and enhanced by thoughtful planning, the careful use of resources, and a respectful approach to life." He adds that it's "a design system whereby we find ways of living to allow for permanent cultures to exist, where all humans can live abundantly and well while leaving the planet in better condition than . . . we found it."

So, for raw land, many community founders use permaculture principles to determine where on the property to locate roads, paths, and, if needed, bridges and footbridges; ponds or waterways (if new ones will be dug); woodlands for harvesting firewood or lumber; protected woodlands, wetlands, riparian zones, and/or wildlife trails; homesites; community building or buildings; areas for small businesses or light industry; agricultural areas such as gardens, pasture, orchards, farmland; sacred or ceremonial spaces; and other areas designated for specific uses.

If community founders buy already developed or partially developed land, they can still use permaculture design principles for a site plan to determine all of the above features that may be relevant, as well as any changes to existing structures, roads, sheds, ponds, fields, etc.

(17) Begin developing the property according to the permaculture-based site plan. If the founders bought raw land, this means constructing roads, paths, and buildings. If they purchased already-developed land, it may mean adding new roads, paths, buildings, etc. as well as making any necessary repairs to (or remodeling) existing buildings. For some communities, the property development process can take many years, as members earn the money and find the time and labor to build the physical infrastructure. Often one of the first things community founders build on their property is facilities to house work exchangers. Cohousing communities, however, usually build their buildings and infrastructure all at once, with their construction loan from a bank.

(18) Organize a work exchange program to help develop physical infrastructure. Most ecovillages and other non-cohousing communities with often have a work trade or work exchange program, where people live onsite, often camping in tents, for a few weeks or a few months in order to exchange labor for food and shelter and to experience of community life.

Work exchangers often help with construction, since there is typically so much to build or remodel when the project is new. But work exchangers can also be cooks (cooking for the work exchange crew, or for the whole community), artists who create beauty and art for the community, or people with clerical or bookkeeping skills who help support the administrative aspects of the community. Typically founders provide campsites, tent platforms, or small dormitory rooms, composting toilets, outdoor kitchens, and/or outdoor shower facilities for their work exchangers.

Often work exchange programs continue for years, if not continuously, because communities can always use extra help, and many young people, as well as others, would like the opportunity to experience community life first-hand.

(19) Build dwellings and move onto the property. Part of the development process, of course, is building homes for members. Sometimes the members themselves build their own homes; sometimes they hire other community members with construction skills to build them; sometimes the community itself hires a professional building crew to build everyone's homes, as is done in cohousing. The homes can be small single-family dwellings, duplexes, two-and three-story multi-family residences, or large shared group households. In non-cohousing communities, work exchangers often help with building construction. Sometimes community founders move onto the property and live in tents or other temporary shelters until their homes are built. The home-building process can continue for years, as the membership expands.

Although these are the typical steps or processes intentional communities use to get started, the process of creating a sustainable human settlement is ongoing and continuous, so it never really ends.

This handout is from Diana Leafe Christian's workshop on starting successful new ecovillages and intentional communities. She is author of Creating a Life together: Practical Tools to Grow Ecovillages and Intentional Communities *and* Finding Community: How to Join an Ecovillage or Intentional Community *(New Society Publishers, 2003 and 2007, respectively), and editor/publisher of* Ecovillages *online newsletter (EcovillageNews.org).*

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