

Two Echo Co-Housing is a 27-unit development off Hacker Road in Brunswick, ME. It was conceived by Richard Berman in 1989 and developed over the next decade. To this date it remains the only co-housing project in Maine. For more information, please see their website at www.two-echo.org/. While the development is actually completely in private ownership, the residents are happy to show the Workforce Housing Committee, staff, and other interested parties around the development. Rob Wiener and Katie Clark were involved in Two Echo with Richard Berman from the very beginning, as can be read in the attached news articles, and are willing to be the contact for the Committee. They can show you around as well as answer questions that you might have. They can be reached at 729-1071 (home), or 751-2742 (cell).

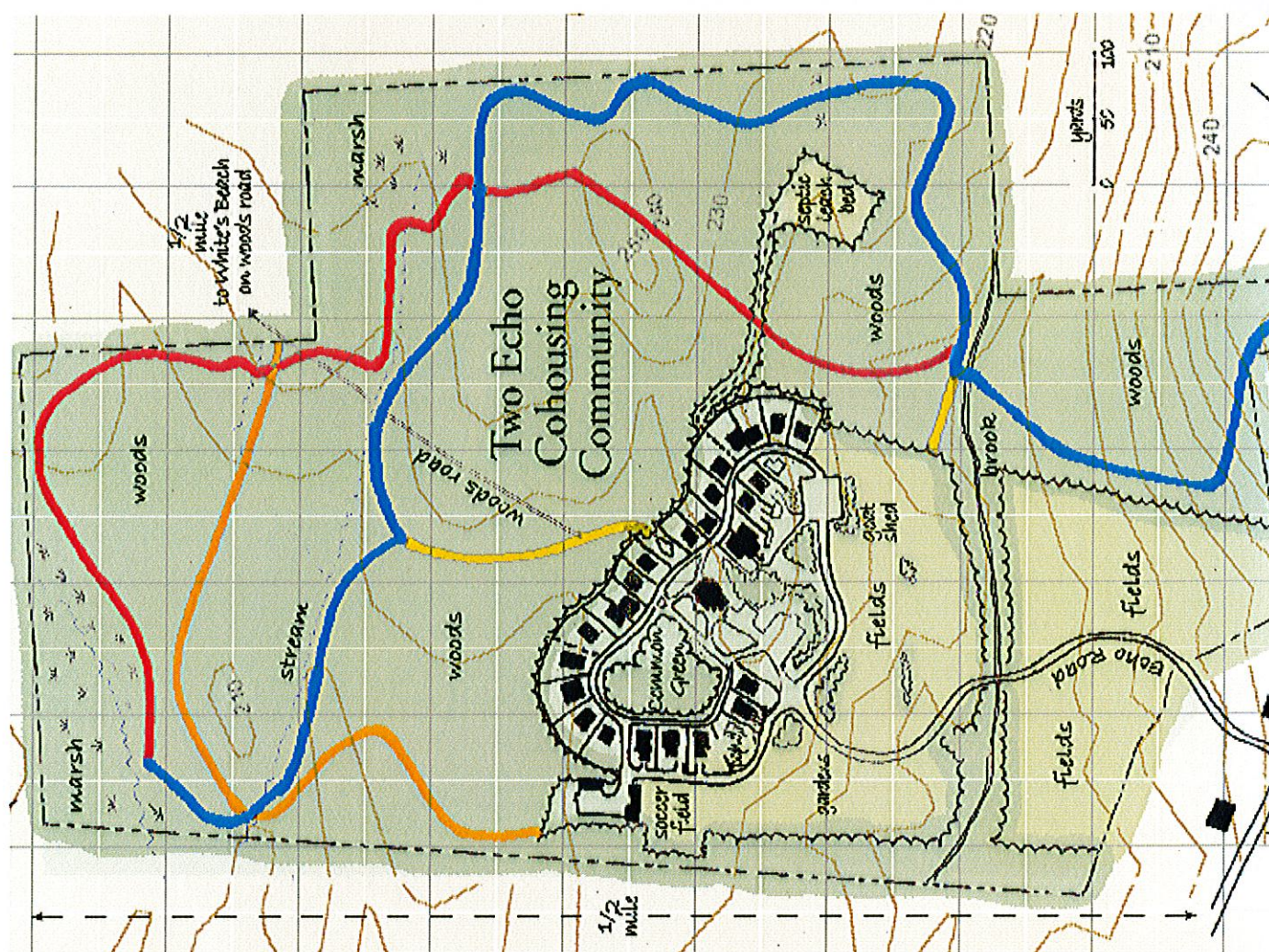
We feel that despite this project's uniqueness it embodies many of the stated principles important to the Town of Falmouth, including:

- **Compact Development/Site Planning.** The units are clustered around the main loop road and most of the 90+ acre site was placed under a conservation easement. A similar approach will be taken on the Woods Road site, which has many sensitive natural areas well worth preserving. A loop road and the intentional separation of parking from certain units are some other site planning similarities, making a tour of Two Echo well worthwhile to get a good idea of what Developers Collaborative might be able to help create on Woods Road.
- **Trail Network.** Like the Developers Collaborative Woods Road proposal, Two Echo has a trail system that not only provides for internal connections and recreational opportunities, but connects to the area's transportation network as well.
- **Affordability.** While there are no long-term affordability covenants, and home values have appreciated significantly since conception and initial build-out, the development was originally conceived, around 1990, as an affordable community with price points in the \$80,000-\$90,000 range. The first homes built, slightly less than a decade later, were in the \$170,000 range.
- **Mix of Housing Types.** Two Echo features both one and two-family homes. Two Echo is thus fairly similar in its mix of housing types as the Phase 2 portion of the Developers Collaborative Woods Road proposal, which features duplexes as a gradual transition to single family homes.
- **Transitions to Abutting Properties.** Development is centrally located on the parcel, giving plenty of privacy to both residents of Two Echo and abutters. A similar approach will be used on Woods Road in Falmouth.
- **Public Input.** Two Echo actually embodies a uniquely high level of public input in that the residents actually were empowered to make most of their own decisions regarding site planning and how the community would be organized. While Woods Road in Falmouth will be in some ways a more conventional community, the type of meaningful public participation for which Richard Berman and Developers Collaborative are singularly known in Maine will also be a major feature of the development process.

- ***Common Land Ownership Model.*** In addition to conventional lot ownership Two Echo features a homeownership association which owns the common land; each resident owns an equal share. A condominium structure is likely for at least Phase 1 of the Developers Collaborative Woods Road plan, and possibly Phase 2 as well. This model has several potential important advantages, especially as regards affordable housing. However, it is important to have an experienced team in place with this model as there are some peculiarities, particularly around financing.
- ***Consideration of Handicapped Needs.*** While there is an intentional separation of the automobile and the unit (also a principle used in Phase 1 of the Developers Collaborative Woods Road Plan), several units were designed with the parking in front in order to promote the type of intergenerational community desired at Two Echo.
- ***Quality.*** While individual lot owners built their own homes, design guidelines were developed to ensure high quality as well as a level of architectural compatibility.
- ***Creative Financing.*** Richard Berman helped to bring together a group of like-minded individuals with a common goal. He then proceeded to structure a most unconventional real estate deal, where he helped them get the necessary financing to build the infrastructure, thus empowering them to fulfill their own vision of what their community should be. Workforce housing in Falmouth will be a public private partnership, a model the principals of Developers Collaborative have used successfully in the past and which requires the a similarly flexible and creative approach



Aerial showing location and site design.



Map of Two Echo showing site layout and trail network.



View from entrance off Hacker Rd. shows most of 24 units hidden within the natural features of the site.



View down Echo Road, showing clustering of units and retention of natural features.



Another view down Echo Road.



A view of Two Echo's housing.



View of community house with garden in front.

Development values community

● The Cumberland County Cohousing Community is a threat to some, but future residents say it regenerates the concept of neighborhood.

By PETER POCHNA
Staff Writer

BRUNSWICK — Robert Wiener, a Portland carpenter, has worked five years to build his dream home. He has struggled, because his dream doesn't include just one home but 27 that cluster cozily in a small, supportive community.

Wiener is part of a group trying to bring a new type of development to Maine. The idea is to break down

the barriers of modern subdivisions that leave people feeling alienated from neighbors and society.

The project has had to overcome many hurdles, such as opposition from residents suspicious of people who would choose to live in a communal environment.

The Brunswick Planning Board this week approved the Cumberland County Cohousing Community, a 27-unit development on 94 acres on Hacker Road. Construction is scheduled to begin this spring.

The project preserves 74 acres as open space, clusters all the homes together, includes a community kitchen and meeting hall, front porches and a pedestrian path, all designed to bring neighbors closer together.

"This isn't for everybody, but it is

HOMES

Continued from Page 1B

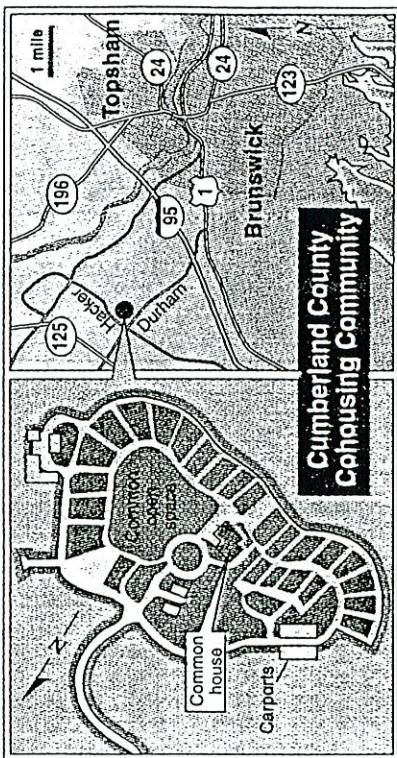
outside the community. The project has angered residents of the area who are concerned the many new homes will spoil the rural character of their neighborhood, and are suspicious about the type of people who will move in next door.

About 100 people signed a petition in the fall aimed at blocking future large developments in the area by making zoning more restrictive. The Town Council opposed the plan, a move that only increased the anger of some neighbors.

"It feels very much like it won't coincide with our community and our lifestyles," said Barbara Manter, who lives across the street from the development. "They are getting their own private little community, and we are losing ours."

Richard Berman, the project developer, said the attitude of the neighborhood is one of many challenges the project has faced.

"There's a lot of misconceptions, from people who look at this and think it's just a bunch of hippies to the reluctance of financial institutions to finance it," Berman said. "But there is a yearning for it, and that's what's causing it to be successful."



Staff art

designed to create more interaction and community support that many people are looking for," Wiener said. "We've gotten away from that sense of community in subdivisions

that are built around the automobile, where people drive into their little garage and their only interaction is a wave to their neighbor."

The concept is part of a cohous-

next to their extended families anymore, are very busy and feel isolated," Wiener said. "They feel they need a support system from their neighbors, and if they need help babysitting or working on their home that they can get it from their neighbors."

Homes in the development are expected to cost between \$110,000 and \$200,000. The \$1.3 million development cost is paying for the land, construction of the community building and improvements such as water and sewer services.

People who buy homes will choose from a number of design options that focus on a New England village theme. They will also

ing movement that originated in Europe and came to the United States in the early 1990s. About 25 cohousing communities have been built in the country, mostly in western states, and about 100 more are in the planning stage.

C The Brunswick project is Maine's first cohousing effort. Another is close to breaking ground in Readfield near Augusta.

Critical to the Brunswick project's appeal is that while a Portland developer is coordinating and financing the \$1.3 million effort, most of the design decisions are being made by the people who will live there.

But while people living in the community may get along well, they might have trouble making friends

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automatically become members of the group that governs the small community and will be expected to participate actively.

Wiener said he expects that the common desire for community support will ensure that people get along well in the development. He said he hopes they also get along with their outside neighbors.

"I feel sympathetic to their concerns, but growth is inevitable, and we are doing this in a more sensitive way to the surrounding environment than 99 percent of the subdivisions that are being put in these days," he said. "We're very excited about what we are creating here."

Aim to build neighborliness into subdivision

Using developers' e-minded buyers

personal driveway for too much longer, is a concept that is supposed to put a little community back in the neighborhood.

Along with four other Portland area families, Wiener and his wife have signed an agreement to buy 103 acres on the Hacker Road near the Durham town line.

The families met for the first time four years ago when a Portland developer first proposed the idea of

building a neighborhood in such a way that the neighbors can't avoid each other.

"Right now I have a very busy workday, and I come home and see my husband and son and that's about it," said Amy Tolk, a Portland businesswoman who hopes the cohousing project will make it easier to get to know the people who live around her.

The project will have 20 homes and, with luck recruiting, 20 families will be hiring a contractor to clear trees and cut roads into what will be known officially as the Cum-

berland County Cohousing Community.

While there's another cohousing community starting up in Readfield, the two in Maine are among only a handful nationwide, Wiener said.

The concept is based on the way Scandinavians actually try to engineer a sense of community into their neighborhoods. While members own their own houses and small yards, they cluster the houses together, pave shared parking lots rather than personal driveways and close roads to routine

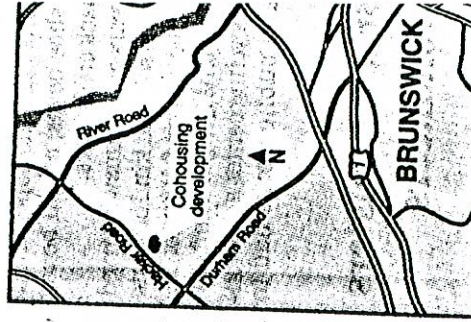
traffic.

The community center at many cohousing neighborhoods is a place where neighbors can meet to share a meal every week or two, and where a daycare service takes care of the kids of working parents.

Although the families involved in the local project have yet to work out the details, their neighborhood could also include a place where everyone shares washers, dryers and a workshop with lawn and power tools.

"We don't have to have 20 lawn-

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COHOUSING

From Page 1

mowers," Wiener said. "We don't have to have 20 snowblowers the way you often see in suburbia."

People who want to join will have to pay about \$50,000 to buy shares in the land. After setting aside 20 or so acres to build on, the rest will be legally designated as woods and fields and development will be banned there. The money will also be used to drill the wells, build the roads and the community center and run the electrical wires.

How much people want to spend on their house is up to them, but there are some guidelines.

While they don't want all the houses to be identical, Wiener said, they don't want any one of them to be so different from the rest that it takes away from the sense of community they're trying to build.

The guidelines were reached by consensus, which is the way neighbors will reach almost all their decisions, Tolk said. Everybody has to agree before any action is taken. Only in extreme cases will they abandon consensus, and even in those instances any action will require a three-quarters majority to pass.

Besides coming up with the cash, people who want to join must attend nine meetings to make sure

they understand it's not just a house they're buying, but a new and different lifestyle as well.

Locally, the first meeting is set for May 6 from 4 to 5:30 p.m. at Bookland in the Cook's Corner Mall.

Tolk said she has noticed the concept seems to appeal to the young and the liberal, parents with small kids and folks who love the outdoors. But the old and the conservative, and the couch potato and the bachelor, are welcome as well.

There's no ideology and no religious or political slant, Wiener said. Cohousing is just a place for people who want to know their

Building a

neighborhood

At Two Echo, the emphasis is not so much on your home as on creating a neighborly community around it. (Just don't try to paint your house bright red.)

By MICHELLE KEARNS
Staff Writer

BRUNSWICK — Jean Lincoln sucks air for courage when she thinks of the day she will give up her big house by the ocean for a commune-like subdivision, close neighbors and the noise of 30 children playing.

She threatens to wear earplugs if they become loud teen-agers. As she waits for her old house to sell in New Hampshire, she falls asleep to the soothing sound of waves hitting the beach.

But during the day she feels like a bean in a boxcar as she rattles through the rooms her parents once shared.

"I can't stay ... and just disintegrate," she said.

She figures she'll live another 20 years and she doesn't want to slow down and grow old by herself.

Lincoln is 65, a retired elementary school teacher, and reassured by the thought of spending the last years of her life surrounded by people who know her.

The members of Two Echo Cohousing have what she thinks she's going to need in her old age: company.

Like residents in other such communities in North America and Europe,

Two Echo residents have built houses next to each other because they want to make friends. They eat dinner together, pick up groceries for one another and can find a quick companion to plant bulbs with.

They also have less privacy and independence. They can see into each other's kitchen windows. They have rules that say dogs can't run off leash near the houses. Their fellow members get to approve what color they paint their houses.

A paved drive off Hacker Road curves through the front pasture of their 92 acres, an old dairy farm called Two Echo. It stops by a pair of parking lots that are the ends of a dirt road loop behind a line of houses, which include the windowed shell of the duplex that will be Lincoln's.

On a recent afternoon, she stood on the planks that will be her floors and showed off the long living room wall where she will put her long feather couch.

From a nearby window she can look out and see her daughter when she walks out of her house across the street.

She has a fond memory of the morning she watched neighbor James Ford walk down the road with his son Ethan

on the boy's first day of kindergarten. Ford seems conservative to her and reminds her of her Republican father.

Lincoln would like it if a few more people her age moved here, but still, these people, some a decade or two younger — intrigue her.

One is a woman who left her home in Holland when she was a girl. She's been in the Navy and has adopted aging dogs she found at the animal shelter where she's volunteered. Her son

PLEASE SEE BUILDING PAGE B5

Lewiston newcomer considers co-housing

By MICHELL KEARNS
Staff Writer

LEWISTON — Kristine Kimball decided to plan a communal neighborhood because nothing else she's tried led her to make enough new friends to replace the family she left in Iowa.

Most of the people who came to the Bates College staff skating party seemed to live far off in border towns, not the city. For a potluck, she put fliers in every door on Bardwell Street, but only six families showed up. The college-sponsored group she joined disbanded after a few months of studying how to live well by spending less.

"We were here for 10 months before we met any families who had time to socialize," said Kimball, who arrived a year ago with her two children and hus-

band, the media studies coordinator for Bates.

So in past months, after reading a magazine article on co-housing, she has done library research on the Danish-style communities, called a real estate agent to find land in Auburn by a river and found three other families interested in the idea.

Space in textile mills

They include Lewiston planner Jim Lysen, who won a fellowship six years ago to study in Sweden and Denmark because he thought the Scandinavian version of communal living might work inside some of the unused space in the city's seven old textile mills.

These places, he says, could be just

PLEASE SEE LEWISTON PAGE B4

VOIC

Forever
shadow
over

I was going to last weekend beloved cop E.B. White tucked it away in mentos from my front cover, I had the date: Nov. 22 I was in the th our teacher, Mr. ing a chapter a d Web" following the story of Wilt wanted it for my and savor durin fore going to sle just a chapter a (and find out wh Wilbur. The susj crazy.

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PLEASE SEE

Building

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fishes for crab in Alaska.

"That's to me quite an interesting package," Lincoln said, continuing her list.

One lived in New York City for years. Another was one of 10 children. A couple has sailed across the Atlantic. Someone else grew up Quaker. Lincoln's son-in-law Rob Wiener has a degree from Yale and his parents were social workers.

He is also her contractor and for the past year, he, her daughter Katie Clark and two grandchildren have been living in one of the community's first houses.

Now nine other houses have families inside, four others are under construction, six more have been sold and eight lots are still on the market.

Clark, an at-home mom, and Wiener, a builder, were among the original group of couples who began planning the co-housing community nine years ago after a developer advertised.

The Danish-style community that began in the 1970s has become popular throughout Scandinavia. The U.S.-based CoHousing Network includes Two Echo in

its national count of about 45 completed communities.

The nearest others are in Massachusetts. Two have been built in Amherst and another is under way. A fourth is in Acton, and in Cambridge a co-housing community has built apartments and townhouses.

"There's a sense that a lot of traditional forms of housing development don't give people community and don't work as well for people's lifestyles," Wiener said.

"It's supposed to make life a little easier. Of course it complicates things too because you have to make decisions with your neighbor."

At Two Echo 16 families have paid \$50,000 to buy an ownership share. The price entitles the buyer to be a voting member of the homeowners association, use the community-owned 90 acres, plant and garden on an eighth-of-an-acre lot they choose and a title to the footprint of land within the lot that their house stands on.

\$130,000 to \$200,000 to build in New England-style clapboard on lots that measure 50 feet wide and 100 feet deep.

About \$9,000 from each sale goes into a fund to build a common house. Their version of this traditional co-housing feature will include guest rooms, a library, a playroom and a kitchen and dining room where community members will take turns making dinner for the group.

"We have yet to decide how often that will happen," Wiener said. Usually communities require members to contribute occasionally to a group meal by either cooking or cleaning.

While common house construction won't begin until all lots are sold, families have been building friendships without it.

As people walk home from the parking lot they run into neighbors who they stop and chat with. Linda Ashe-Ford smiles at how her sons complain that their father does so much talking that it takes too long for him to walk 120 yards home from the car.

"It makes you slow down in a certain way," she said.

Her boys come home to talk about the stream they found and how many frogs they counted in the frog pond. Neighborhood kids came by to see the nest a phoebe bird made on their porch light.

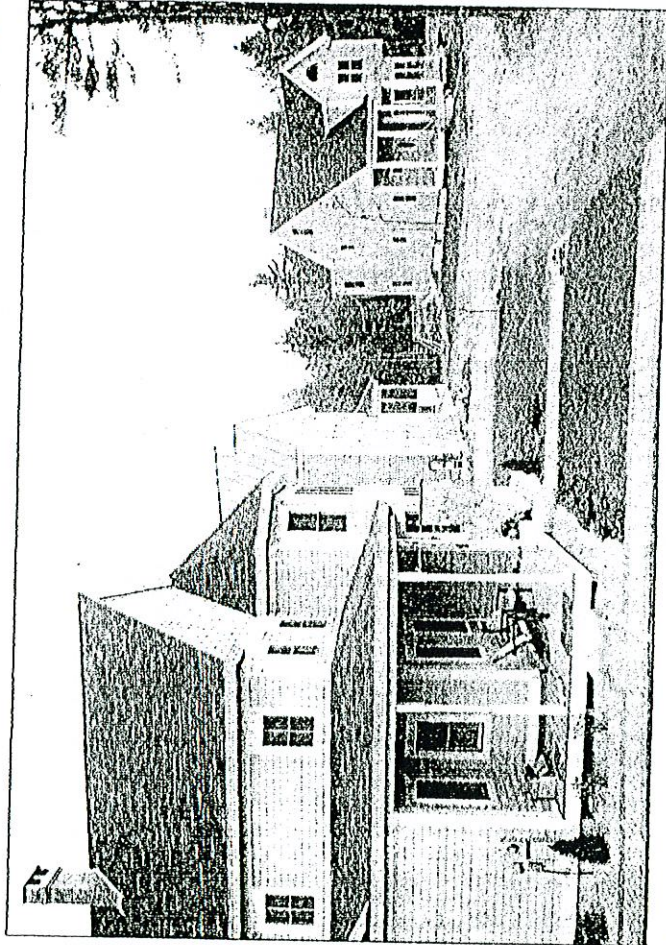
When the factory-made house next door was set on its foundation a crowd gathered on Alison Truesdale's porch.

"So there's everybody out there taking pictures, sitting and they're drinking tea," Ashe-Ford said. "Sometimes stuff just happens."

When she was about to go to the hospital for surgery last month, she was worried about how her son Elijah would get to school. A neighbor who lives down the road promised to have his high-school-aged son come in and wake him up. He has been driving Elijah to school ever since.

"It's just like, no problem, I'm not imposing," she said.

"There are people saying, 'What do you need? Tell us,'" she said.



NEW VILLAGE: Houses in the Two Echo CoHousing Community in Brunswick are designed so that they complement each other.

DARYN SLOVER/STUN JOURNAL

of, 'I will always be a rugged individual.'"

The doctor told Ashe-Ford, a nursery school teacher, she shouldn't do anything strenuous during the weeks she was recovering. People came to bring meals, jars of soup and chicken-noodle casseroles.

"This probably has been one of the most welcoming experiences that I've ever had," said Ashe-Ford as she sat at the kitchen table that looks out over the porch and the road.

"Living in co-housing is like living in a village. It's not like a commune," she said. "Being here is about really being neighbors."

Ashe-Ford is 44, grew up in South Bend, Ind., and moved to Maine because her husband, James, got a job at Unum. They started out in a condominium in Westbrook.

"Over time we lost the ability to know who we were living next door to," she said. "I started thinking, I

don't know anybody here - nobody to have a cup of coffee with."

She wanted to raise their children in the same kind of neighborhood she knew in as a kid.

"I grew up with my sister in your basic middle-class neighborhood," she said. "You know that childhood people talk about in the 1950s? We actually had one."

Ashe-Ford and her husband decided on Two Echo when they went with a friend to an open house two years ago and watched as five adults tried to help a child who had fallen.

Last year, the Fords and four other families chipped in to buy sheep, a donkey and a goat. They have made up a schedule and twice a day they take turns feeding and letting them in and out of the corral.

Ashe-Ford has spent most of her life in cities where streets have sidewalks and she never thought she'd like living in the country.

It's beautiful here in the morn-

ing, she said, when the fog is lifting and she walks with Elijah to the barn. "How often do you get to talk with your 11-year-old son, talk about nothing and talk about life?" she said.

People interested in co-housing are usually interested in conservation, Wiener said. Houses were clustered to leave land undeveloped. Families share. One member wants to buy a community car so families can get by with one instead of two. Five households have chipped in to buy one electric lawn mower.

"I don't feel the need to buy a Cuisinart because we can go next door and borrow Alison's and she doesn't mind," said Wiener.

The group has meetings every two weeks to socialize and decide on group rules. Decisions are made only if everyone agrees.

"We have disagreements. Terrific ones. We just have to work it out," said Lincoln. "It gets harder as the

group gets bigger."

As they searched for consensus, people talked for about six months as they tried to settle on a policy for how brightly houses could be lit.

Some worried too much lighting will obscure the stars. Others thought lights were important because they would make the neighborhood seem more friendly.

To mediate this conflict, the group decided not to impose exacting rules, but to instead describe goals and write a list of recommendations. Lighting should be welcoming, make walking at night safe while avoiding light pollution. Suggested techniques to achieve this include dimmer switches, frosted bulbs and lights that point downward.

Lincoln said she and Alison Truesdale were alone four years ago in their criticism of the plan for arranging the lots - a few would have been below a small hill. Their opposition forced the group to reconfigure.

"Alison and I were black sheep and they didn't like us at all, and now it's obvious that we wouldn't have wanted houses down in the hole," Lincoln said. "It really matters that you have this variety and use it and put up with it."

She is hopeful that the others will agree to let her paint her new duplex a soft, butter yellow - a color that made someone wonder aloud how well it would blend with the muted browns and greens of the other houses.

"It's scary to do this," Lincoln said. "It's not all just easy and it's not meant to be and it's not meant to satisfy everybody's every wish. This whole thing is a process and I'd rather be part of a process than something that's dead in the water."

So she will try to protect trees just as she will try for yellow. She doesn't want too many cut on the house lots.

Some say they want more light in their windows, but Lincoln wants to keep the sound of pines in a slight wind. It would make her happy after leaving her house by the sea if she could lie in her new bedroom at night and hear the breeze rustle.

NEW YORK

New Hampshire



Richard Berman (left), a developer, and David Orbeton inspect a prospective cohousing site in South Portland.

Staff photo by John Partridge
Berman and Orbeton are looking at a site in South Portland that they are considering for a cohousing project. Berman is a developer and Orbeton is a community organizer. They are both interested in creating a new type of housing that combines the benefits of a single-family home with the advantages of a community.

ing" the group.
He says the beauty of

Richard Berman (left), a developer, and David Orbeton inspect a prospective cohousing site in South Portland.

IN SEARCH OF COMMUNITY

One Portland project and two others bring cohousing to Maine

By BRAD LEMLEY
Staff Writer

Kathryn Rossein misses the willing hands and friendly manners of the residents of Peaks Island, where she and her husband lived for nine years.

"You would share tools, haul stuff up from the boats together, say 'Hi,'" says the program manager at Goodwill Industries in Portland. "You touched base."

She and her husband, Michael Diamond, recently moved to Portland's Munjoy Hill — a once-tight neighborhood that, like many, has unraveled in recent decades due to mobile populations and two-career families.

But rather than bemoan their lost community, they

and other Portland residents are planning to build a new one from scratch. They aim to erect a cluster of about 20 homes within a 40-minute commute from Portland, on a site yet to be determined.

It will be a new kind of community called cohousing. While each home will be self-contained, complete with a kitchen and private yard, residents who want to will be able to share dinners in a common house. The common house also will feature laundry facilities, a workshop and child-care space. Gardening and parking spaces will be clustered as well.

The Portland cohousing group is one of three in Maine; others are working in Hallowell and Damascus. These, in turn, are part of about 80 similar efforts under way throughout the nation.

Boosters say cohousing could be a powerful vehicle to help lonely Americans regain the comforting ties of neighborhood friendship and support.

"We have always been apartment dwellers, and missed that sense of community," says Lisa Love, a registered nurse from Windham who, with her husband, Paul Marks, an acupuncturist, is one of eight couples who have officially committed themselves to the group. "I like the people in the group. I think living there will enrich my life."

There is a real hunger for support, for nurturing oneself through nurturing others," says Richard Berman, a Portland real estate developer who is "facilitat-

ing" the group. He says the beauty of cohousing is that it allows both privacy and community. Residents, he says, "can paddle their own canoe all they want. But if they want someone to help them lift the canoe over the rocks, someone will be there to help them."

COHOUSING BEGAN in Denmark in the 1970s. It was intended to remedy the isolation wrought by the modern trend toward smaller, more mobile, two-career families, and it seems to be working: To date, there are more than 250 communities in northern Europe.

Kathryn McCamant and Charles Durrett, architects from Berkeley, Calif., introduced the concept to Americans in their 1983 book "Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves."

While most American communities are still in planning stages, residents began moving into a 26-unit development in Davis, Calif., in October, and several other West Coast projects are under construction.

In Portland, Berman was immediately impressed when he heard of the concept three years ago. Bearded, soft-spoken, a respected real estate developer whose projects include Winslow Commons in Falmouth, Berman is steering his career away from hotel developments and other corporate projects and toward ones that meet "human needs."

Community, he says, is a human need.

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"Residents can paddle their own canoe all they want. But if they want someone to help them lift the canoe over the rocks, someone will be there to help them."

Richard Berman

Staff photo by John Partridge