

ELDERSHIRE DEVELOPMENT COMPANY

Well-being through aging in community

—PROGRAMS—

Eldershire Development Company (EDC) provides consultants and materials that support and assist Eldershire communities that are forming or other communities interested in retrofitting as Eldershire communities. For these emerging communities, EDC assists with such critical areas as the initial exploration of the community concept; the nuts and bolts of forming communities; documentation; and design and planning. For established communities, EDC provides valuable materials and access to experts to aid in the ongoing success of the community. This unique support may include: guidance for developing and implementing lifelong learning programs; training for resident mentors; problem solving and decision making assistance; and networking among Eldershire communities.

EDC's unique package of programs are organic, flexible, and vibrant—growing, adapting, and developing—based on the feedback and experiences of the individual community. In addition to the consultancies, materials, and ongoing trainings, we offer tools to measure the success of Eldershire communities.

The programs EDC offers fall into these categories.

1. Consultancy and materials for developers and groups joining together to create a community
2. Programs and training that support the ongoing operation of an Eldershire Community. These elements also relate to the design and development of each community.

I. DEVELOPING AN ELDERSHIRE COMMUNITY: EDC will offer guidance by:

A. Community Exploration

- Examining the “who, what, when, where, and how” elements of creating an Eldershire Community
- Consulting with the developer and/or prospective residents
- Helping compress the cohousing process from years to months.

See as a guidebook: “Creating a Life Together: Practical Tools to Grow an Ecovillage or Intentional Community” (New Society, 2003) or “Senior Cohousing” by Charles Durrett, (Habitat Press, 2006)

B. Nuts and Bolts

Advising and assisting with site selection, initial design aspects, zoning, utilities, organizational aspects, financing, and selecting consultants

C. Documentation

Providing drafts and models of the various documents needed to form and govern the community

D. Design and Plans

Making appropriate recommendations and referrals, through our relationships with designers and architects, while helping ensure the community developers retain control.

II. ONGOING OPERATIONS AND PROGRAMMING

Each of these programs is being developed with experts in the particular field who will serve as trainers for those opting to be resident mentors. They also will serve as backup informational sources and will bring mentors together for periodic meetings and training.

A. Empowerment

A 3-hour Empowerment Workshop will be available, which will include a 4-day Empowerment Facilitator's training for mentors (in-house trainers). Ongoing workshops will be offered in subjects that seem to generate the most interest with residents. One-on-one mentoring will be available as well. The initial training will be done by Arthur Rashap, Certified Empowerment Trainer. See www.empowermentinstitute.net. Materials, workbooks, and CDs for the full training program and a CD of the 3-hour "Introduction to Empowerment" program will be available.

B. Well-Being

In this dynamic health and wellness program, Eldershire residents will be able to access a variety of interactive health and wellness materials via a closed circuit internet program. Two resident volunteer "wellness mentors" from the community will receive special training, periodic updates, and have access to resources and specialists. Before implementation begins, an introductory presentation will provide residents with information about the program, which will foster their "buy-in" and encourage participation. An electronic newsletter with ideas, updates, and community forum will be generated to go along with the periodic community newsletter. A health resource book such as "Informed AdvantAGE" would be a valuable tool and could be made available to each member of the community. Consultants include the The Workcare Group in Charlottesville, Virginia, George Pfeiffer, President. See: www.workcaregroup.com. For more information and an expanded definition of well-being, see below.

C. Lifelong Learning

Rather than signaling the end of lifelong work, Elderhood can be translated into bright new beginnings and exciting new possibilities for personal growth. Residents will have the opportunity to design courses in subjects they would like to learn or teach. Interaction with area institutions of higher learning is planned. Based on their interests and abilities, residents will be able to access educators, artists, writers, spiritual teachers or others, to teach and work in the community. An artist-in-residence program may evolve from such an engagement. EDC will act as a facilitator to help create these workshops and programs among existing Eldershire Communities, the surrounding local communities, and throughout the entire Eldershire network.

D. Sustainability and Environmental Stewardship

Beginning with the earliest design processes and extending into the day-to-day lives of the residents, Eldershire Communities will support sustainability and environmental

stewardship. This could manifest in the form of recycling guidelines, vehicle use, building material regulations, water use, and so on, as decided by the community members. EDC builds on the model expressed by the *Livable Neighborhood Program*, which was developed by the Empowerment Institute. Its materials and training protocols easily can be adapted to suit Eldershire Community needs. Community members can then engage the surrounding communities by modeling successful sustainability and stewardship in action and by assisting and consulting with local residents and leaders who may wish to follow this example (See Civic Engagement, below).

E. Spirituality

Spirituality is different than religion, although religions are based on spiritual aspects. It is “the human quest for personal meaning and mutually fulfilling relationships among people, the non-human environment, and, for some, God.” (See attached chart, “Later Life Spirituality in the Elderspirit Community”). It is our experience that examining “why we are here” is a very important aspect of achieving well-being. Qualified, experienced individuals will bring valuable materials and will provide training for the Eldershire Community members who wish to act as community spirituality mentors.

F. Civic Engagement

Eldershire Communities can be likened to a cell that has very permeable walls. Things that nourish it flow easily and smoothly into the community. At the same time, things that nourish the surrounding cells (communities) flow readily out of the community. This may be contrasted to those “gated communities” that are pretty well “self-contained”—where there is little flow in or out. Civic engagement is a key element in this two way flow—and it is a part of how members of the Eldershire Community are encouraged and supported to both take a full role in their own governance (“nourishment”) as well as how they contribute from their talent, experience, learning, time, and energy to the greater good. Civic engagement can take many forms, from individual volunteerism to organizational involvement to electoral participation. Eldershire Communities will embrace this process through individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern. It can include efforts to address an issue directly, work with others in a community to solve a problem, or interact with the institutions of representative democracy. Civic engagement could include a range of activities such as working in a soup kitchen, serving on a neighborhood association, modeling environmental stewardship, or writing a letter to an elected official or voting.

G. Self-governance

Perhaps nothing can sour all the hard and wonderful work that goes into creating a viable community than conflict among neighbors or meetings that produce intense discord. Developing a governing structure that truly works for all is an art form. Having trained facilitators as part of this process is critical to the success of a community. Basic documents that reflect the true underlying spirit and goals of the members of the community are also building blocks for fostering mutual respect and

avoiding undue conflict. EDC recommends a modified consensus decision-making system, where all are heard and respected and where the underlying values of the community—it's Constitution—forms the basis for settling any conflict.

H. Caring for others

When each resident of an Eldershire Community makes the commitment to be a good neighbor, each resident gets a community full of good neighbors! Translating this into action involves living the *Golden Rule*. There are many things good neighbors can do to help each other—to provide care and caring. Whether it is picking up a quart of milk, feeding the dog or gold fish, driving a neighbor to an appointment, or offering a caring reminder, the commitment to care and caring can and will create a new way of living together—a new way with deep roots in the past. EDC's training and materials help the community and its residents to define roles, expectations, and policies relating to good neighboring. The process by which outside caregivers can be used when needed within the community also will be developed with community residents. Residents will explore and arrange for ways to care for those who may need more help than can be achieved within the community.

I. Networking

“Let's find out how others have dealt with this problem.” “We'd love to do a workshop in Boca Raton, Santa Fe, Kalamazoo, Grand Isle, New Orleans (fill in the blank).” “Gee, a home exchange would be great—we'd get to meet new people. Our communities can show off a bit and get new energy.” These are just a few of the ideas and opportunities that networking among communities can create. EDC will act as a clearing house among participating communities and their members to help create exchanges of information, workshops, trainings, home exchanges, and an “in-house” timeshare type of operation.

J. Being Known

Telling your own story and listening to the fascinating tales of someone else's life is important for developing mutual respect and understanding. This way of getting to know each other—communicating through stories and histories—is the way people have developed friendships, understanding, and respect throughout history. EDC will provide individuals who have developed ways to encourage people to share these stories and histories. The vital aspect of keeping and building on one's identity is preserved and respected by using a variety of facilitators (both internal and external), .

K. Sales and Resales

The rules, regulations, governing documents, structure, and necessary intimacy (consensus and style of decision making) of an Eldershire Community could create some concerns and potential problems for those seeking to purchase a home there. EDC will assist developers and community-forming groups in navigating the potential difficulties associated with initial admissions to the community as well as with resales.

Well-Being

“Old age” need not be a slow crawl toward decline and despair, but instead, a chance to joyously soar to new heights of human growth and awareness.

To this end, Eldershire Communities strive to:

- provide environments that foster community rather than loneliness
- create meaningful activity rather than boredom, and
- facilitate self-reliance rather than helplessness.

The goals of the current facility-based, long-term care system are simply to mitigate the decline of aging. This system fails all of us. We need a metamorphosis—a marked change in the nature, function, appearance, or condition of a thing: especially a transformation that is not easily reversible. If we acknowledge that old age is simply another stage of human growth and development and therefore reject the institutional model of care, then well-being flows from a person-directed model of care—the well-being of elders, their families and friends, other members of the immediate community, and the greater community.

The programs, trainings, design aspects, networking, and expertise that Eldershire Development Company brings to the creation and on-going operation of communities are designed to foster all the elements of well-being.

What then is well-being? It is the path to a life worth living. There are seven primary domains of well-being:

- 1. Identity:** being well-known; having personhood; individuality; wholeness; having a history. One’s own history, life and feelings of self are essential components of well-being. Without this, we cease to exist.
- 2. Growth:** development; enrichment; unfolding; expanding; evolving. Elders have every opportunity to learn and grow.
- 3. Autonomy:** liberty; self-governance; self-determination; immunity from the arbitrary exercise of authority; choice; freedom; to be one’s own person, to be respected for one’s ability to decide for one’s self, to be in control of one’s life, absorbing the costs and benefits of one’s own choices.
- 4. Security:** freedom from doubt, anxiety, or fear. To be safe, certain, assured, have privacy, dignity, and respect. The security of home and family, freedom from fear and anxiety must be satisfied before we can grow toward self-actualization.
- 5. Connectedness:** alive; belonging; engaged; involved; not detached; connected to the past, present, and future; connected to personal possessions; connected to the place; connected to nature.
- 6. Meaning:** significance; heart; hope; import; value; purpose; reflection; sacred. An Eldershire Community infuses meaning into every corner, every act, and every relationship.

7. **Joy:** happiness; pleasure; delight; contentment; enjoyment. Joy is a short, simple word describing the highest possibility of human life.

* Team members were lead by:

Nancy Fox, Executive Director, The Eden Alternative and Arthur Rashap, J.D., LL.M., now with Eldershire Development Company, Ltd.

Other members included:

LaVrene Norton, MSW, Executive Leader, Action Pact

Sandy Ransom, RN, MSHP, Director, Long Term Care Institute. Texas State University

Vivian Tellis-Nayak, Ph.D., My Innerview

Dawn Brostsoki, Beverly Enterprises

Mary Tellis-Nayak, RN, Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities

Joseph Angelelli, Ph.D., Pioneer Network

Suellen Beatty, BAN, MSN, Chief Executive Officer, Sherbrooke Community and Region XVII Eden Coordinator (Western Canada)

Leslie A. Grant, Ph.D., Associate Professor and Director, Center for Aging Services, University of Minnesota

Susan Dean, MSW, The Eden Alternative

William H. Thomas, M.D., The Eden Alternative