

NOTES FROM 10/17/07 MEETING ABOUT NATURE EDUCATION CENTER

CARS/PARKING/TRAFFIC

❖ Concerns

- How to accommodate all the cars of people using the Center;
- Adequate accessible parking spaces;
- how are people going to get to the Center – current pedestrian paths to Center flow through south quad? The shortest paths lead either through the grass or directly in front of homes.
- how to accommodate parking for all the people who come to community gardener annual sign-up meeting (70 – 100 people), and other seasonal gatherings for FTG (such as Savor the Summer)?
- safety for kids if lots of people from the outside are using the building – in particular vehicle traffic;
- Where will staff people using the office space park their cars? (5 FTG employees and 2 – 3 MACLT employees)?

❖ Possible solutions

- Parking along Troy Drive (and don't block access to mail boxes on south side of the street)
- We have a history of accommodating cars for larger seasonable events with parking on Troy Drive (Savor the Summer)
- Can use spots in gardens parking lot for the Center
- Install new paths so people can get to Center without having to walk through courtyards
- Can still use the library for some larger indoor events
- People can carpool and/or take the bus who come to the Center for special events
- Many of the people who would be using the Center are already at Troy Gardens, and would not impose additional parking burdens (homeowners, FTG staff, gardeners, neighbors, etc);
- Some FTG employees already live at Troy Gardens, and therefore won't be a parking burden
- Homeowner parking areas are pretty empty Mon – Friday during the day – so staff parking should not be a problem.

OFFICE SPACE AT CENTER

❖ Concerns

- If staff of FTG grows – will there still be room for everyone to fit?
- This building started off focusing on nature and community – office space feels like an appendage that doesn't fit;
- Is having office space a good philosophical fit with Troy Gardens? How does it change the way the Center feels?
- Original vision for Troy Gardens was gardens and cohousing with its own common house – which in turn was expanded into a nature education center. Does adding office space do justice to the original vision of Troy

Gardens? Maybe the answer is yes, maybe no – but in any event, it would be good to have more discussion about this.

❖ **Possible Solutions**

- Having offices will mean that the building is used during the daytime – as the other users of the building will be primarily focused on evenings and weekends. This makes for efficient use of the building – since it is heated 24 hours a day no matter who is using it.
- More discussion.

STORAGE

❖ **Concerns**

- 3-car garage sized building not big enough to accommodate everyone's bikes.
- There are a lot of things that homeowners need to store, such as:
 - ❖ Bikes
 - ❖ Canoes/kayaks
 - ❖ Wheelbarrows
 - ❖ Gardening stuff
 - ❖ Other common stuff
- FTG/community gardeners have storage needs as well:
 - ❖ Rototillers, lawn mowers, weed wackers
- Can FTG replace the warm weather basement storage it currently has at MMHI?

❖ **Possible Solutions**

- FTG has access to oodles of cheap storage already at MMHI. There is also the possibility of storing canoes/kayaks there. And it just may not be possible to build indoor storage for canoes/kayaks on site – because it would require such a large space.
- Whatever storage space we have should be designed to be usable.
- Is it possible to incorporate more storage into the plan for the Center?
- FTG can share all its equipment with the homeowners. Everyone on the property could share equipment (as long as we maintain it properly).
- FTG has
 - ❖ 8 wheelbarrows
 - ❖ 3 rototillers
 - ❖ 3 mowers
 - ❖ 2 weed wackers
 - ❖ stored in a common facility that we can all share
- FTG is hoping to build a barn someday – which could be a place for some/all of this equipment – which highlights the need for FTG to think about its own storage needs.
- Homeowners could use bicycle lockers to store bicycles.
 - ❖ Compact storage
 - ❖ Could be located in more than one place on the property

USING THE BUILDING

❖ Concerns

- How are TGCA, FTG and MACLT all going to co-exist in the space.
- How will homeowners be able to have spontaneous gatherings – including meals, children playing together, adults hanging out – without having to reserve the space in advance?
- Can there be some space(s) within the Center that are reserved for homeowner use?
- Who will coordinate scheduling of the shared spaces in the Center?
- How will the building be maintained?
- Living room is too small for the homeowners to have gatherings. Ideally they would like a space for the purpose of non-reservable space – where they could hang-out, eat spontaneous meals, play a game, hold a meeting, etc.)
- Is the kids playroom just for homeowners?
- Where are we going to put 50 winter coats/pairs of mittens/hats?

❖ Possible Solutions

- Designate the living room for the homeowners use.
- Make the large multipurpose room more cozy – give it a homey feel, less echo-y, less hollow sounding – it shouldn't just be for big meetings.
- Putting a fireplace in the multipurpose room would make it feel more homey.
- Putting a divider in the multipurpose room will enable Center to accommodate more than 1 group at a time.
- We can hang lots of things on the wall.

SCHEDULING

❖ Concerns

- Who will have priority for using different spaces in the Center?
- Who will coordinate the scheduling?

❖ Possible Solutions

- Should have someone do scheduling who does it as part of their job (ie paid to do it).

BALANCING THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE

❖ Observations

- There seems to be a theme – what is the difference between public and private space? Troy Gardens has been striking a balance between public and private spaces in other ways. My garden plot is a profoundly personal and private space – set in a community garden. This is just another part of the balancing act we've been doing at Troy Gardens for a long time.
- I'm very excited about this private/public thing – creating synergies around sharing storage with FTG, parking for office space during the day when parking spaces are not being used – the idea of using all sorts of spaces collaboratively and efficiently – parking, storage, the Center.

Having four groups brings new ideas that we wouldn't have thought of otherwise.

- It is easy to say that my needs are this or that. If we want a big common house of our own – we can do that by increasing each of our condo dues by \$100 per month. Collaboration helps keep it affordable – by working together we can make it more affordable for everyone involved.
- This is not just a condo association – this is cohousing – and a common house is a very important part of what it means to be a cohousing community. There are many cohousing groups in the US and abroad – and the one main commonality amongst them is that they all have common houses. It is the place where we can gather together and be a community. Whatever we do, we need to keep sight of this.
- We need to remember that there are some people living at Troy Gardens with very low incomes – living on SSI, food stamps – and we need to be aware of how important affordability issues are to these folks, who can't always speak for themselves.