
Community Center Options for Troy Gardens

Prepared for: Friends of Troy Gardens and TG Cohousing Community

Prepared by: MACLT Delegation

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Introduction: At the first three-way meeting of MACLT, FTG and TG Cohousing in June, each group identified its goals for and concerns about the proposed building project at Troy Gardens. At our meetings on July 7th and 21st, MACLT's delegation reviewed the goals and concerns of both FTG and TG Cohousing. Keeping them in mind, we sifted through the different options for a community building at Troy Gardens. As a result of these discussions, it has become clear to us that some of the options for the Community Agriculture Center are simply not going to garner agreement among the three delegations. As a result, MACLT is suggesting that they be taken off the table, for the following reasons:

- The present location for a larger multipurpose building is strongly opposed by the TG Cohousing Community;
- The location on Troy Drive to the east of the vehicle entrance is problematic for that building because (a) of stormwater issues, and (b) it would force a severely elongated (and therefore potentially unworkable) building;
- The location on Troy Drive to the west of the vehicle entrance is most promising, but it would still take away land from the community gardens;
- Off-street parking for all options could be problematic;
- The MACLT delegation is very concerned about the amount of funds that MACLT would need to raise in order to construct this building, which comes at a time when MACLT has other pressing financial needs.

In response to the goals and concerns identified by FTG and TG Cohousing at our July 1st meeting, the MACLT delegation is now proposing a return to a design that was presented to prospective homebuyers back in early 2006, when people were first deciding whether they wanted to live at Troy Gardens. This is the floor plan we developed in 2003, which included a large multipurpose room, a kitchen, a playroom/living room, a field office for FTG, and two bathrooms.

This document will flesh out (as much as we can with the information we have at hand) a proposal for a Troy Gardens community center that is an adaptation of this 2003 design. We will present the floor plan and elevations at our meeting on August 6th (we are still in the process of preparing them).

OPTION #1 – ADAPTATION OF 2003 DESIGN

An early design for the common house dating from 2003 shows a square building (approx. 50' x 50' for a total of 2,500 square feet). This is sufficient space to accommodate a large multipurpose room, kitchen, playroom for kids, small field office space for FTG, 2 bathrooms, and a mechanical room. This building would be for the use of FTG and TG Cohousing, and MACLT would not have office space in the building. The details of this proposal are as follows:

1. **Interior:** The space would be subdivided into the following components:
 - a. Multi-purpose room large enough for community-wide potlucks;
 - b. Kitchen (with appliances) that can open up for cooking demonstrations, and that can be closed off so noise won't travel to other rooms;
 - c. Playroom for kids that could also serve as a living room for informal gatherings;
 - d. Two bathrooms (with one located near an exterior door, so it can be accessed when the building is closed);
 - e. Field office for FTG, which can accommodate one or two desks and room for filing cabinets/storage shelves.

Interior furnishing would not be provided (i.e. window coverings, furniture).

2. **Exterior:** Fiber-cement board siding and dimensional shingles, to match the townhomes. Connecting walkways to housing site and community gardens parking lot. Minimal landscaping, with a focus on addressing any remaining stormwater issues impacting the areas behind units 514 – 518.
3. **Construction:** Slab-on-grade construction, with an acid-washed concrete floor. Beams in the ceiling would avoid the need for interior load-bearing walls. We would adapt the specifications from the Troy Gardens housing project, with a goal of making this a very energy efficient building using conventional construction practices.
4. **Mechanical Systems:** High efficiency furnace and high SEER AC, tankless hot water system, forced air system (air handling system required by commercial code).

5. **Overall Budget:** We do not have firm information on the overall budget at this time. However, we have set a preliminary “cost-per-square-foot” goal of \$100/SF, which would yield an overall cost of \$250,000 for a 2,500 SF building. At this point, we are estimating “soft costs” (legal, architectural, survey, developer fee, etc) at \$30/SF, for an additional \$75,000. Overall, this guesstimate would put the overall budget for the building at \$325,000.
6. **Fundraising:** Based on the feasibility analysis conducted by MACLT staff in the spring of 2008, MACLT is concerned that we would not be successful in raising additional funds for a building of this type with narrowed scope of users – in particular a building where approximately 50% of the use would be reserved for a private entity (TG Cohousing) that is not a 501(c)(3) organization. Taking into account these concerns, MACLT would commit funds raised to date toward the building (approximately \$257,000, of which approximately \$42,000 has already been spent). MACLT would obtain a 10-year mortgage to cover the remaining hard and soft costs for the building, which at present we estimate to be an additional \$75,000. TG Cohousing and FTG would collaborate on fundraising to cover additional costs related to interior finishes (window treatments, furniture, etc) and additional landscaping work. And if TG Cohousing and FTG want to do fundraising for the building itself, that would lower the mortgage amount – which in turn would lower the monthly rent.
7. **Managing the Building:** TG Cohousing and FTG would work together on this, jointly determining the schedule, jointly determining interior finishing, and other matters. TG Cohousing and FTG could also decide to rent out the building to other groups, in order to generate income to help cover rent paid to MACLT.
8. **Rent:** MACLT would rent the building to FTG or TG Cohousing (or both as joint-tenants)¹, and charge a rent amount sufficient to cover the following estimated costs: (a) mortgage principal and interest (\$840/mo), (b) insurance (\$60/mo), and (c) maintenance reserve fund (\$100/mo). At present, our rough estimate of the monthly rent amount is \$1,000 per month. However, the final figure may be different based on (a) property tax assessment for the building (if any), (b) final construction costs, (c) precise calculation of the amount needed for monthly maintenance reserve, and (d) getting a quote for insurance.²

¹ It may be necessary to rent the building to FTG, because their 501c3 status may enable us to keep the building off the tax rolls, which in turn would decrease the rent for the building.

² Once the mortgage is paid off, rent would be adjusted to reflect the decreased costs associated with MACLT’s ownership of the building.

OPTION #2 – NO BUILDING AT THIS TIME

There are two circumstances (at a minimum) where MACLT would not do a building project at Troy Gardens at this time. One is in the event that any of the existing funders rescinded their commitment to the project. The second is in the event that MACLT, TG Cohousing, and FTG are not able to come to agreement on a building and fundraising plan for the project that also meets the standards identified in the funding commitments made to date by the WI Department of Natural Resources, the Veridian Homes Foundation, and the Madison Community Foundation.

We recently received word from the Madison Community Foundation (MCF) that they need to know by September 15, 2008, whether we are going to reach agreement on a building project for Troy Gardens. If we are able to reach agreement by that deadline, their \$75,000 in funding stays in the project. In the event that we are not able to reach agreement, then they have asked MACLT to return all funds committed to the project, and to reapply for funding in the future.

The loss of funding from MCF would mean that MACLT would no longer be able to move forward with the development of this project at this time. MCF was our lead funder for the project, and their support has been critical to leveraging other funds for this project. If MCF rescinds their grant, it also exposes MACLT to the possibility of having to return MCF funds that we have already expended (approximately \$19,000 to date), which in turn could create a serious financial issue for MACLT.

This means that it is in the interests of FTG, TG Cohousing and MACLT to move quickly to reach agreement on a plan for this building, so that we can protect the funding that has already been committed to this project.