



# KEY NOTES

July 2009

## The survey results are in

GreenSong is pleased to report that 56 people responded to our recent survey that was offered to those of you who expressed an interest in our cohousing development and joined our email list.

The primary purpose of the survey was to gauge the level of interest in living in a cohousing community in the Orangeville, Ontario, area. We have recently begun discussions regarding a possible location, and it is encouraging to learn that a definite “yes” was expressed by 25 respondents, and a “maybe” by 17. The 25 keen contributors also answered the following questions.

*Q. When would you be interested in or able to purchase a cohousing unit in the Orangeville area?*

Immediately	5
Within the next 2-3 yrs.	12
Within the next 3-5 yrs.	5

*Q. Understanding that most cohousing units are priced at market value or marginally higher, which size of dwelling would you be seeking?*

500-1,000 sq.ft.	8
1,001-1,200 sq.ft.	7
1,201-1,600 sq.ft.	1
1,601-1,800 sq.ft.	4

*Q. Again, understanding that most cohousing units are priced at market value or marginally higher, which price range best matches what you would be looking for in a cohousing dwelling unit?*

\$200,000-\$250,000	14
\$250,001-\$300,000	6
\$350,001-\$400,000	3

Other areas of interest noted by the recent survey participants included an ecologically sound development, self-sufficiency, water-treatment facilities, enjoyment by children, hiking trails, basement workshop space, and an arts centre.

“Do what you can – and the task will rest lightly in your hand, so lightly that you will be able to look forward to the more difficult tests which may be awaiting you.”

Dag Hammarskjöld, *Markings*

## Our project management consultant

In August 2008, GreenSong engaged the services of Ed Starr, a registered professional planner and principal with SHS Consulting Inc., as our project management consultant. With degrees in environmental studies and business administration, Ed has more than thirty years of professional experience in community planning and housing. Over his career, he has focused on development consulting, business planning, community consultation, and economic development. A strong communicator, Ed has coordinated the development of more than sixty housing projects across Ontario.

Also a frequent policy advisor to senior levels of government, Ed has been consulted by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the Canadian Forces Housing Agency (Department of National Defence), the National

Homelessness Secretariat, the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Ontario Ministry of Education, the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association, the Cooperative Housing Federation, and more than three dozen community-based non-profit housing corporations.



Charles Simon and Ed Starr

## Our planning and design consultant

GreenSong Inc. is also extremely pleased to have recently secured Charles Simon as our planning and design consultant. Charles Simon is the total package: a practising architect and planner in Canada since 1967. He is also the only practising architect/planner to have been granted an honorary membership in the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects. Charles is a pioneer in energy-efficient building and environmentally sensitive site planning. His achievements include Canada's first engineered passive solar house and Canada's largest passive solar housing project.

Charles's interdisciplinary training and experience has led to a range of community and urban design projects. These

include master plans for new towns, universities, resorts, residential communities, and rural villages. The design of housing environments remains an abiding interest, whether large or small, high or low budget, new construction or renovation.

His work has been featured in a variety of publications in Canada, the United States, Japan, Switzerland, England, the Netherlands, Poland, and Belgium. Charles has won numerous design awards, including several prestigious awards for the pioneering Environmental Learning Centre for the Kitchener-Waterloo YMCA and, most recently, a Lifetime Achievement Award for Sustainable Building from the Green Building Festival, Toronto 2006.

In November 2007, Charles founded the Eden Mills Carbon Neutral Project. Eden Mills is aspiring to be the first village in North America to achieve carbon neutrality.

[www.goingcarbonneutral.ca](http://www.goingcarbonneutral.ca)

Charles says, "I am delighted to have the opportunity to collaborate with you on this extremely exciting project. I have long been enthusiastic about the concept of cohousing, and the particular environmental and social vision of GreenSong resonates with my lifelong work." In response to the news of Charles's involvement, Ed Starr offered, "I echo the board's sentiment. It will be great working with Charles in bringing this vision to life."



*The search begins – some founding members of GreenSong on site.*

## President's annual report, 2008–2009

On May 7, 2008, after about two years of *wishin', and hopin', and thinkin', and prayin', plannin', and dreamin'* on the part of an initial organizing group of ten individuals, GreenSong was legally created as a business corporation.

Although GreenSong remains dedicated to the principle of inclusiveness in every sense, as a business corporation, only shareholders are empowered to direct the decisions of the corporation.

Our first board of directors/ shareholders meeting was held on May 15, 2008, at which time shares to the corporation were formally issued, directors acclaimed, and corporate officers elected.

The following summarizes our activities over the subsequent ten months:

- Opened a corporate bank account
- Settled outstanding financial commitments (legal fees) with the initial organizing group
- Arrived at a records management protocol
- Joined the Canadian Cohousing Network
- Secured a domain name
- Developed a marketing plan
- Engaged a project consultant, SHS Inc.
- Engaged a designer to develop a corporate logo, letterhead and website
- Printed business cards
- Launched our website
- Began quarterly editions of our newsletter, *Key Notes*, which now has over 170 subscribers
- Developed an orientation strategy for new members, including the GreenSong Book

- Held a visioning workshop, facilitated by SHS Inc., to direct the property search
- Submitted a seed funding application to CMHC
- Held several information sessions with interested individuals
- Welcomed our first guest to a board meeting.

Since the visioning workshop with SHS in July, our consultant, Ed Starr, conducted a broad search for property, meeting our cost, size, and location criteria.

In December, Ed returned to the Board with a list of six candidate sites and was directed to pursue the three most promising areas: in Orangeville, Brampton, and King City. Due in part to world-wide economic uncertainties, there was limited response from the landowners and developers associated with these properties over the following two months.

Nevertheless, SHS Inc. has reiterated their commitment to complete the scope of work outlined in their June 2008 proposal to us within the original fee quoted, regardless of the time and effort required.

The past year has shown us that we are well poised to move once a suitable property is found and that there is a remarkable level of interest in our progress.

## Marketing and Communications Committee report

It was a year of intensive activity in the arena of marketing and communications.

The new board moved quickly to select a design company and create a visual branding and website for the community as a primary recruitment tool.

With the visual branding decided – a logo and corporate colour – a domain name was registered, a host selected, and a website launched at [www.greensong.ca](http://www.greensong.ca). Content includes “Steps to Membership.” There is a hotlink on the site to our special GreenSong email box at [info@greensong.ca](mailto:info@greensong.ca).

Board members participated in a work session to develop a marketing plan. A membership manual, *The GreenSong Book*, was prepared.

Individual board members received quantities of the generic GreenSong business card to promote the community and drive people to our website for more information.

An electronic newsletter, called *Key Notes*, was launched. Three issues were created by newsletter editor Angela Wingfield and distributed between July 2008 and January 2009. Within a year, there is already an electronic list of about 170 people signed up for distribution.

GreenSong got national publicity within the cohousing community across the country with placement of a front-page story, written by Robert McAlpine, in the Spring 2009 issue of the newsletter of the Canadian Cohousing Network.

The community also joined the Canadian Cohousing Network, the registered non-profit organization that promotes the creation of cohousing communities as a model for sustainable development by raising public awareness about cohousing and by bringing people together to form communities. As a result of our membership, GreenSong is profiled on the CCN website, with a hotlink to our website and email address. GreenSong is one of the two official cohousing communities in Ontario.

A detailed tour of the Eco-Village at Ithaca resulted in an

informative slide presentation to GreenSong’s board.

From our website, there have been a number of serious inquiries about joining the community: people interested enough to meet for a couple of hours over a coffee to find out more details. Peggi Mace manages the GreenSong email box and answers all inquiries and handles the initial meetings.

Links to general cohousing articles in the media are distributed regularly to board members.

Initial inquiries were made about arrangements for holding a public information session for all those interested in our project. However, since the majority of very interested people have said that the location is a primary factor in making a decision to join or not, it was decided to hold off until there are more details of the proposed site location.

“Trees and stones,  
Just as they are, –  
The summer drawing-room.”

Haiku by Torin

### Front page news!

The following article by GreenSong founding member Robert McAlpine appeared on the front page of the Canadian Cohousing Network’s Spring 2009 newsletter.

#### *GreenSong Reaches Legal Status*

The members of GreenSong Inc. are pleased to announce that the cohousing dream we have held for many years now has a foundation both in the organizational dynamic and its legal and financial underpinnings. Any who have built an intentional community know

how important is the vision and how essential it is to have the highest level of professionalism in all the stages of the project. And so we have endeavoured to hold to the highest ideals of community and the most professional execution of the structure.

Our project is driven by high ideals. Those of us who are involved know the value of community and aspire to create one that is suitable for the modern age. We want the social connection of the village with the cultural benefits of the metropolis. We know it can be done and we have already travelled some distance in that direction.

Visits to cohousing communities in Boston (Massachusetts), Alton (Ontario), and Ann Arbor (Michigan) have yielded first-hand impressions of how such communities look, cost, and feel. Laura Fitch, the architect who gave us the tour of Pioneer Valley in Massachusetts, was particularly helpful and most encouraging, inspiring us to see how our community ideal actually works. We saw a community that we could all happily live in!

One of our first workshops, on consensus decision making, was conducted by Christine Forsythe, a professional trainer. She showed us that it was acceptable to disagree! And we learned to listen to each other to actually hear what was being said. The results have been invaluable in bringing to all our meetings a synergy and, most of all, a level of agreement that is remarkable.

We hired one of Canada’s foremost experts on cohousing, Ronaye Matthew from British Columbia who lives in an intentional community and is now professionally engaged in developing other such entities, to conduct a two-day workshop for us as well as an open

session for the public, which was very well attended. Once again it was extremely encouraging, and the financial involvement and commitments took on an added precision, a most helpful tool in our further planning.

A major foundational stone was laid in place last year with the finalization of a business incorporation and legal financial agreement that specifies the terms and conditions of full membership in GreenSong Inc. At this point in time, seven individuals have invested in GreenSong and are welcoming new members as we move ahead with finding the land, engaging a developer, and hiring an architect. We also have over 150 subscribers to our email newsletter, monitoring our progress.

One of the developers in Ann Arbor told us that as we move forward, we should be prepared for grace to appear, and here in Ontario we met a man named Ed Starr who appears to be such a gift. Ed Starr is President of SHS Consulting, and his extensive work in Ontario with provincial and federal agencies in organizing the development of social housing provides us with an established veteran to help guide us through the myriad of decisions that lie ahead. We have engaged his services to provide an interim business report, head up the land search, and help prepare a business plan for the development.

As the land search progresses, we are open for new members and will be meeting many interested

individuals over the coming months. Our search area is within 1½ hours' drive of Toronto's GTA. Interested parties are encouraged to read our website, [www.greensong.ca](http://www.greensong.ca) and contact us via email at [info@greensong.ca](mailto:info@greensong.ca).

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## **GreenSong Inc.**

### *Officers*

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