

OUTLINE
for the establishment of

SPICE

SIMPLE PERMACULTURE INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT

An intentional community in Washington DC

a project of



Version 1.0

June 2008



Ecolocity DC, P. O. Box 3183, Washington DC 20010-0183

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SPICE¹ is an initiative of Ecolocity DC to provide opportunities for the examination and development of holistic approaches to development in the areas of human potential and ecology. It proposes to establish a living community to demonstrate those ideas which have application to problem-solving as it relates to the individual in urban settlements, the wider community, and the global environment.

AIM

To effect change by the practice of permaculture and to educate by experience and example.

OBJECTIVES

- To create a community called **SPICE** in which individuals are spiritually nourished and empowered to live in harmony with self, others, and the environment.
- To generate a new climate of thinking by optimal teaching and learning, tapping into the unlimited potential of the human mind.
- To develop and demonstrate non-polluting, sustainable, technologically appropriate methods of housing, energy systems and horticulture for maximum self-sufficiency.
- To foster the growth and development of integrated economic activities which are appropriate, community-based, non-exploitative and not powered by fossil fuels.

SITE

Ecolocity DC seeks to acquire access to property and facilities in the District of Columbia by donation, long-term-lease at pepper-corn rental, grant or usufruct. Acreage should be adequate and suitable for establishing a working farm. Habitable structures would be desirable but not essential; any will be retrofitted according to green architecture and natural building methods along with new purpose-built structures. Ready access to public mass transit is desirable.

METHODS

¹ Working title

- 1 Psycho-spiritual practices of prayer, attunement, contemplation, mindfulness and meditation integrated in daily life.
- 2 Ethic of cooperation, compassion and non-violence; governance by consensus.
- 3 Experiential learning by involvement, participation, and sharing in interdisciplinary and multisensory programmes.
- 4 Attainment and maintenance of personal and community wellness through alternative and preventative medicine, psycho-physical therapy, nutrition, and holistic practices.
- 5 Social and economic integration with surrounding communities.
- 6 Organic farming, including apiculture, myciculture and viticulture; food processing storage and distribution, including brewing, fermenting, solar-drying; catering and food service.
- 7 Development and utilization of alternative energy systems leading to self-sufficiency and non-dependence on fossil fuels.
- 8 Development of natural, environmentally-friendly, low-cost housing.
- 9 Performing and visual arts, landscaping, architectural restoration and conservation of cultural assets.
- 10 Guest programs, workshops, seminars, conferences and community outreach.
- 11 Community-based and integrated, non-exploitative economic activities, and the introduction of alternative economic systems such as Local Employment and Trade System (LETS) or Community Exchange System (CES).

FUNDING

SPICE will be funded initially by subscription, donation, governmental and philanthropic aid. Income from programs and activities will thereafter provide some degree of self-sufficiency, with a large percentage derived from the sale of produce, nutraceuticals and handicraft.

OVERVIEW

A to-be-duly-incorporated non-profit organization, Ecolocity DC seeks to establish an intentional community in which to realize the goals and objectives for which the entity is being formed as outlined in its Memorandum of Association. Members of the corporation will meet regularly to share insights and information, develop skills and techniques, and network with other interested groups and individuals towards the realization of a balanced and integrative way of life in harmony with each other and the environment.

The emergent principles demand concrete action to evolve from the plane of theory and conjecture to manifestation, both as substantive proof and as demonstration to the wider community of an alternative way of successful living.

The primary purpose of the proposed community therefore is education, that is, as a center for learning life skills. Transformation of the whole person through experiential learning is the means to transform the world. Traditional and incumbent institutions and approaches have created more problems than solutions with regard to hunger, poverty, oppression and environmental abuse. By means of heightened consciousness, sensitivity training and other techniques at the frontiers of human awareness, we can effect real change at the personal level in values and behavior. When multiplied, broadcast and resonated, these become the social, political and, ultimately, the global norm. In the planetary village that the world is fast becoming, this is timely and critical.

The name of the community is to be **SPICE** (an acronym for Simple Permaculture Intentional Community Environment), as it is a conscious, sincere and deliberate attempt to create a sustainable community firmly grounded in the urban environment utilizing natural principles.

The founding members are people who are committed to making the vision of a better world a reality to the extent of devoting their time, energy and resources to the collective good.

Open-mindedness, a willingness to learn and to serve, and an enthusiasm for new horizons are the only requirements for participation. Each person who interacts with the community at any level must know that he or she can make a difference, whether living within the community, or experiencing it and returning to enrich the wider world.

The rapid changes taking place in today's world demand that we make ourselves anew by a leap of consciousness. Peak oil, global warming, climate change, financial meltdown, food shortages and the housing crisis have come together in a perfect storm presenting the opportunity to make better

choices. The change has to begin here; the change must begin now. The longest journey begins with one step. For us, **SPICE** is that step.

AIM

The aim of **SPICE** is to demonstrate the inherent potential in all people to live fulfilling, harmonious and constructive lives as an alternative to the competitive and exploitative existence that generally prevails. Most problems that confront us are of our own making; it is for us to devise the solutions. Man, as the self-conscious factor of the earth, has been largely responsible for damage to the nervous system which threatens the entire planetary body. When we learn to operate from a higher level of pure intention, we give expression to the best in us, we become more attuned to the forces of nature and we resume our role in the symbiosis that is life.

The coincidence of global warming, peak oil, food shortages, environmental and social degradation demands drastic measures carried out with urgency and pointed efficiency. An intentional community whose members self-select will commit to a common vision and work with a sense of purpose and dedication to achieving it.

Intentional communities and eco-villages have tended to locate themselves in previously undeveloped or under-developed rural areas, increasing carbon footprint and cutting themselves off from existing communities. What they do is important and necessary but done in splendid isolation. The majority of the world's population lives in urban areas which contain underutilized resources and already degraded spaces. Our approach could be considered to be **greentrification**, the alternative to gentrification which tends to displace existing residents.

We can learn from what has been done in Transition towns but much will be exploratory, ad hoc and experimental in creating an urban model that other cities can follow. For this reason, research, documentation, analysis, publication and dissemination are critical aspects of the project.

OBJECTIVES

To create a community

whose members and guests are nourished through the practice of various spiritual disciplines, through communion and fellowship, and through increased awareness of the oneness and sanctity of all life. While no particular religion or belief system will be promoted, spiritual practices of prayer,

attunement, contemplation and meditation will be integrated in daily life. A non-denominational sanctuary will be the focal point of the community though participation is discretionary. The sanctity and oneness of all life will be emphasized, increasing faith, trust and compassion.

To empower each participant

by developing full self-awareness and self-acceptance, recognizing his/her individuality while being integrated in the whole. Each member will learn at their own pace the lessons they need from their work and their interactions with others. No hierarchical structure will dictate to anyone, each person being responsible to and for themselves and the commitments they have made. Group activities will be guided by *focalizers* who will hold responsibility without authority which resides in the group as decisions will be made by consensus.

To encourage preventative and alternative medicine

and the practice of natural healing methods, therapies and diets based on the premise that body, mind and spirit are one and whole. The wellness of community members and others will be maintained by:

- **psychoneuroimmunological** and other methods of alternative and preventative healing
- **psychophysical** therapies and techniques such as hatha yoga, tai ch'i chuan, breathwork, acupuncture, shiatsu and reiki
- **vegetarian** diet and herbal therapy

To develop and utilize non-polluting methods and materials

for energy-generation, housing and production, leading from dependence on fossil fuels to reliance on renewable resources. While electricity will be derived from the public system initially, the intention is to develop solar, wind and other alternative systems of energy generation to achieve self-sufficiency and further, a net surplus to contribute to the national grid. In this way, total dependence on fossil fuels will be eliminated, lessening carbon dioxide output. Used and discarded materials, equipment and merchandise will be salvaged, recycled, rehabilitated and sold.

To grow fruits, vegetables, flowers and nutraceuticals

using organic farming methods, for subsistence as well as for income. Intensive, but poly-cultural as opposed to mono-cultural, biodynamic farming methods will produce year-round supplies from open plots as well as from disused factory buildings, for example, converted into greenhouses. Mushrooms and mycelia culture will provide edible and medicinal fungi, and along with microorganisms, used to restore toxic brown fields. The cultivation of nutraceuticals such as ginseng and *echinacea purpurea*, native to the area, will support the wellbeing of members and provide a high-value income stream. The farm is intended to become a model for other communities to learn about cooperation with natural forces and organic methods of fertilization and pest control. Distribution will be through local stores,

restaurants and farmers' markets.

To transform the built environment

by design and construction of accommodation and facilities that are functional, comfortable and within our means to sustain and maintain, using locally available skills and materials as far as possible. Our prime assets will be imagination and innovation along with voluntary labor, donated and recycled materials. A mix of single family dwellings, cluster housing and hostel facilities with communal areas, will provide a wide choice for residents in an integrated, well laid-out, landscaped setting. The community will be permanent home to many, and therefore any sense of uniformity, rigidity and institutionality is to be avoided. The architecture will be organic in feel, incorporating the natural flow of the sites and providing appropriate settings for the flowering of the human spirit.

Foreclosures have left many properties vacant or abandoned. Many schools, hospitals and public facilities have been closed and subject to deterioration and vandalization. Our program could turn these around to innovative and productive use, while being cognizant of conservation and restoration issues. Refurbishing and retrofitting will be chosen over teardown. The facades of typical DC row-houses, for example, could be maintained even though converted into high density units. Common facilities or cultivable areas can be developed in the rear, taking in additional space afforded by existing alleys. Automobile access would be restricted to peripheral parking and loading areas.

The integrity of topographic and geophysical features will be maintained as far as possible with maximum available areas reverted to green space with native species. Particular attention will be paid to drainage patterns, wetland and riverine environments.

To offer greentrification

as an alternative to gentrification which tends to displace existing residents, encouraging and assisting homeowners in upgrading and retrofitting their homes to be zero-carbon. Aging-in-place for the elderly and immobile would be supported by health and social workers delivering services to their homes, working out of decentralized facilities based in the community. Disaffected youth and the jobless would be trained in green-collar work and support services, the demand for which will increase and not likely outsourced. The social impact of these programs will benefit populations far beyond the confines of SPICE.

To foster the growth and development of integrated economic activities

within and without the community that are appropriate, community-based and mutually supportive, allowing the creative and entrepreneurial spirit to devise new solutions, even in economic practice itself. Economic activities related to the objectives of SPICE will be undertaken and developed with all

income devoted to the maintenance and expansion of the community. Some of these activities may grow to become independent business entities associated with the community. LETS or CES will be introduced for internal transactions as well as for those with associated members and others who elect to do so. This advanced exchange system places control of the local economy in the hands of locals by a mutual credit/debit arrangement using "green dollars". It minimizes the effects of local unemployment, devaluation and inflation, and restores dignity to manual labor and service.

Job creation will be concomitant to this: New jobs will be created as there will be a demand for old skills such as sheep-shearing, spinning, dyeing and weaving, bee-keeping, brewing and bottling, canning and food preservation, animal husbandry and veterinary, wheeled vehicle construction and maintenance, building construction, restoration and maintenance, landscaping and plant propagation, etc. New skills required will be retrofitting existing structures, green roofing, water conservation, treatment and recycling, solid waste cycling, materials testing and analysis, micro-climate modification, manpower- and horsepower-based logistics, etc. Social services in support of health care delivery, child care, geriatric care offer many opportunities augmented by wellness therapies and cottage industries based on recycled and plant materials.

MEMBERSHIP

Participation in the community will be on several levels:

- a Full members who will reside at **SPICE** will provide management, administration and service in all departments. They will be paid a small monthly allowance.
- b Resident members may conduct independent practices and businesses in the community or elsewhere, contribute financially and participate in all community activity.
- c Associate members will live outside the community but contribute their time, effort and substance and participate in its programs.
- d Provisional members will be expected to live and work in community for an agreed period leading to acceptance as full members.
- e Family membership is encouraged as we will have a village to raise children in an affirmative, supportive, safe, non-toxic environment.
- f Long and short-term programs will be available for guests who will live and work alongside members. Rates will be structured on a sliding scale, determined by ability to pay. A bursary program will assist those with financial restraints.
- g Conferences, seminars, workshops, retreats and exchange programs will be offered throughout the year. An annual program will be published and circulated in advance. Individual consultation, counseling and therapy sessions by appointment and public

speakers will be available on request.

FUNDING

SPICE will seek funding in the first instance to establish accommodation for 30 people - 20 resident members and 10 paying guests; rudimentary administrative and farm infrastructure; and land preparation and planting material. This funding will be ceded/seeded by:

- 1 Member pledges
- 2 Individual and corporate donations
- 3 Grants and interest-free loans
- 4 Donor agencies and philanthropic organizations
- 5 Bequests

Thereafter, income will be derived as well from:

- 1 Guest programs, seminars, workshops, counseling and therapy
- 2 Sale of fresh, preserved and solar-dried produce, plants and flowers
- 3 Vegan whole food restaurant and bakery
- 4 Direct and mail-order sale of books, videos and recordings
- 5 Publishing
- 6 Art and craft
- 7 Sale of recycled materials and merchandise

Together these activities should not only ensure the community's financial viability but should also generate enough surplus to expand the productive base for both local and regional markets.

Self-organizing sufficiency and growth with equilibrium are fundamental processes of any successful organism such as **SPICE** is intended to be. It will be a microcosm of the society of which it is a part, but ultimately of the Gaian macrocosm which gives it life. As a human experiment, though not entirely original, it gains validity as a living laboratory and model, which when effective, will find much wider application. Ecology and economics both have the same root in the Greek word *oikos*, house; that in which we live.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

No idea is born full-grown but is generated and inspired by thoughts that went before. We acknowledge our indebtedness to the Master Teachers of the world, to the writers, thinkers and visionaries who have inspired us; to the Findhorn Community in Scotland from whose example we learn; to communities across the world who are living this idea; and to our members for their courage in giving their vision form.

To join the conversation <http://ecocity.ning.com>

To be notified of meetings <http://intentionalcomm.meetup.com/210/>

To contact us ecocitydc@gmail.com

Larry Chang

June 2008

Please circulate widely.

Copyright 2008