

DUCKPOND

Members of the Parrish-McKune family relax on the front porch of their Duckpond home with the Kallman-Groff family. From left, Matilda Parrish, 5, James Parrish, 3, Sarah McKune, Henry Parrish, 1, J. Parrish, Beckett Kallman, 6, Heath Kallman, 3, Lauren Groff and Clay Kallman.

THE POWER of the friends *next door*

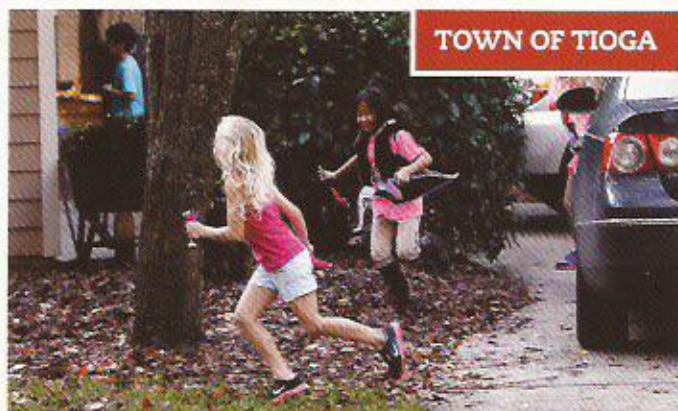
Move over Facebook: More and more Gainesvillians are looking for true connections through the neighborhoods they choose

BY DIANA TONNESSEN

WHEN NOVELIST Lauren Groff and her husband moved to Gainesville in 2006, she wanted to live in a neighborhood that was a lot like her hometown, Cooperstown, in upstate New York. Groff, who describes Cooperstown as a “tiny little village,” was enamored with her hometown’s history, some of which became fodder for her first novel, “The Monsters of Templeton.”

Groff wanted a neighborhood that was most like a village. Her husband, Clay Kallman, who grew up in Gainesville and owns and manages student housing near campus, believes in sustainable, compact, walkable cities. The Duckpond neighborhood in the city’s Northeast Historic District, fit the bill.

Groff says she rarely drives anywhere because everything she needs is within walking distance of her home. Over the years, and with the arrival of the couple’s two sons, Beckett, 6 and Heath, 3, the neighborhood has



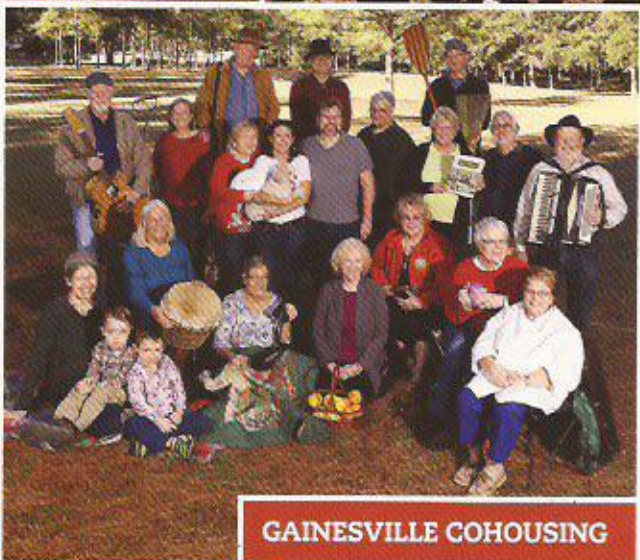
TOWN OF TIOGA



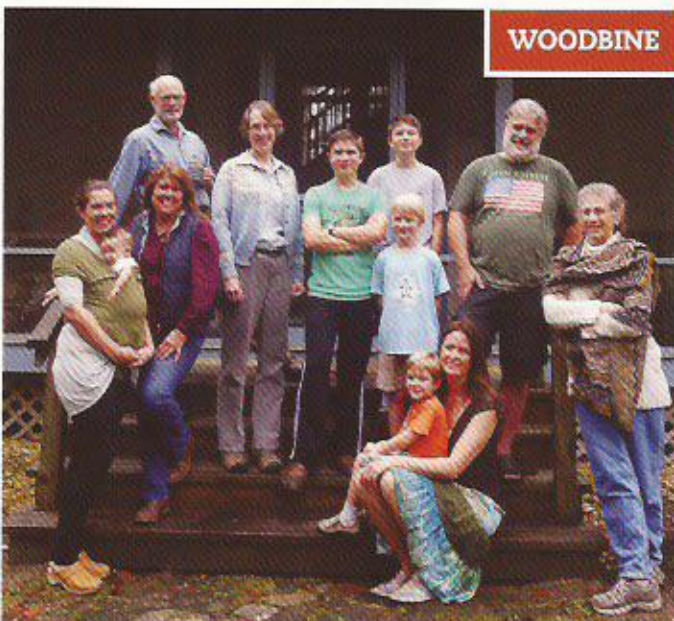
OAK HAMMOCK

SIX COMMUNITIES THAT CONNECT

Learn how the residents of these neighborhoods form lasting ties, page 52



GAINESVILLE COHOUSING



WOODBINE



PORTERS

become so much more than a convenient and pretty place to live.

“Within a three-block radius we have 10 families with kids, and I know that if I need to go anywhere, I could just drop my kids off with any of them,” she says.

“People look out for one another,” she says. “We’re really building a true community in a beautiful way.”

Groff and her husband are among a growing number of people in Gainesville and across the nation who are looking for neighborhoods that impart a sense of community. In Gainesville, they’re finding the social connections they crave all over town, from a new cohousing community planned in Northwest Gainesville, to a return to traditional neighborhoods like the Duckpond, to “New Urbanist” communities inspired by the old, such as Town of Tioga, to intentional, communally-owned neighborhoods like Woodbine, to retirement communities such as Oak Hammock.

In this age of social media, which enables us to interact and “like” people online with the click of the mouse, more and more people are looking for something far deeper — the kind of connection you can only forge with people you live among.

Burt Kempner, 67, a filmmaker, and his wife, Gale, 70, a psychiatrist, jumped at the chance to join the new cohousing community now forming in Gainesville. The idea behind cohousing communities, which have been springing up around the country, is to recreate the kind of social network

“In 2011, for the first time in nearly a hundred years, the rate of urban population growth outpaced suburban growth, reversing a trend that held steady for every decade since the invention of the automobile.”

and safety net that extended families once provided. Residents live in and own their homes, which are built around a jointly-owned common house that is used for everything from business meetings, socials, child care, recreational activities and even weekly community meals.

The Kempners, along with 14 other families, plan to break ground later this year on a 24-home cohousing community on a 4.75-acre lot just west of Northwest 43rd Street and 16th Avenue.

“It’s a proven way to create community where none has existed before, especially in an era when it’s not uncommon for families to live very far apart.”

John Scanzoni is a sociologist at the University of Florida whose book, “Designing Families: The Search for Self and Community in the Information Age,” explores cohousing from a sociological standpoint. Scanzoni, who is not a member of the Gainesville cohousing community, says these types of communities are especially beneficial to families with young children because of the safety net they provide.

Though it’s not without its challenges, Scanzoni says. “While many of us may desire to live in a close-knit community, the big question is, how much of a connection do you want to have? Getting too connected is why people left their relatives in the first place.”

The cohousing community is just one way Americans — and Gainesvillians — are dealing with some of the core problems associated with suburban living, problems that journalist Leigh Gallagher points out in her 2013 book, “The End of the Suburbs.” Gallagher describes the suburbs as we know them today as well-intentioned solutions to the post-World War II housing shortage. And they developed right alongside America’s love affair with the automobile. In fact, some critics argue that the suburbs were designed more for cars and commuting than for the people who live in them.

“But in solving one problem — the severe postwar housing shortage — we unwittingly created some others,” Gallagher writes in a recent *Time* magazine article. Those include isolated, single-class communities far away from town, punishing commutes, a lack of cultural amenities nearby, sprawl and McMansions.

The 2008 housing crisis was a tipping point.

The suburbs were hardest hit, Gallagher points out. But she contends that the housing crisis simply hastened a trend that already had been quietly gaining momentum: an exodus out of the suburbs and back to the cities.

“In 2011, for the first time in nearly a hundred years, the rate of urban population growth outpaced suburban growth, reversing a trend that held steady for every decade since the invention of the automobile.”

Even Gallagher concedes that this reversal of fortunes and exodus from many suburbs isn’t likely to spell the end of them all. She points to changes in the design of new neighborhoods, including the trend known as “New Urbanism,” that incorporates mixed-use residential areas with a variety of housing sizes, styles and prices, narrow, tree-lined streets, wide, walkable sidewalks, and a town center that residents can walk or bike to within a few minutes.

In Gainesville, people are reconnecting with their neighbors and creating more intimate, environmentally-

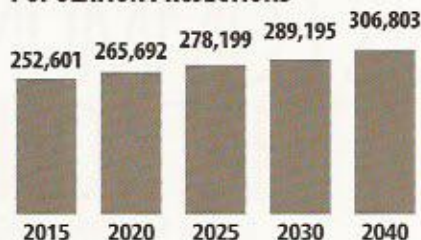
BY THE NUMBERS

Alachua County housing market, including the effects of the 2008 housing crisis and the market’s recovery.

ALACHUA COUNTY POPULATION IN 2013: 248,004

(In 2013, Alachua County was the 23rd most populous of Florida’s 67 counties.)

POPULATION PROJECTIONS



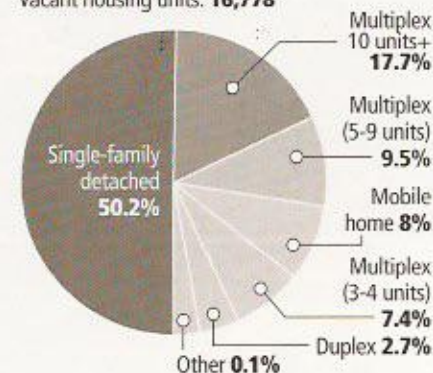
HOUSEHOLDS IN ALACHUA COUNTY, 2013: 101,720

MEDIAN AGE (2013)



TYPES OF HOUSING IN ALACHUA COUNTY, 2013

TOTAL HOUSING UNITS: 112,821
 Occupied housing units: 96,043
 Vacant housing units: 16,778



MOBILE HOMES/CONDOMINIUMS, 2012

LICENSED MANUFACTURED HOUSING PARKS: 13 (2,352 LOTS)

LICENSED CONDOMINIUM DEVELOPMENTS*: 141 (7,828 UNITS)

*Of these, 49 properties with 3,664 units were converted from rental to condo.

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau and Florida Housing Data Clearinghouse, UF Shimbreg Center for Housing Studies

HOMEOWNERSHIP RATE, 2013

ALACHUA COUNTY: **55.1%**

FLORIDA: **67.6%**

**Alachua County homeownership rate is the second lowest among the state's 67 counties.*

OWN/RENT, 2013

OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS: **96,043**

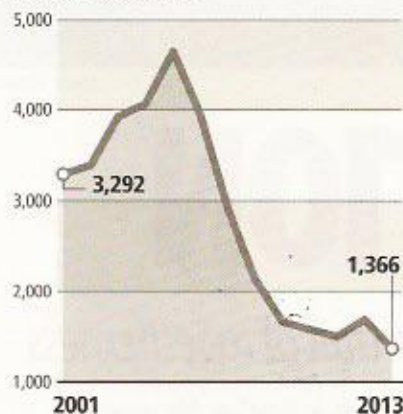
OWNER-OCCUPIED: **52,002**

RENTER-OCCUPIED: **44,041**

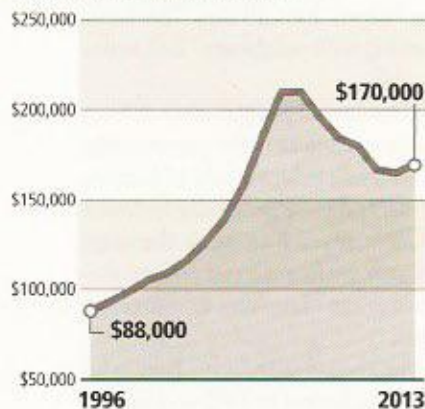
YEAR STRUCTURE BUILT IN ALACHUA COUNTY



SINGLE-FAMILY HOME SALES IN ALACHUA COUNTY



MEDIAN PRICE OF SINGLE-FAMILY HOME IN ALACHUA COUNTY



Some empty-nesters are downsizing to smaller, upscale homes in vibrant, intergenerational communities.

friendly, sustainable communities in a number of ways. Some are moving to older, traditional neighborhoods like the Duckpond, where houses of all shapes, sizes and ages are built close together, the streets have sidewalks, and shops, restaurants, businesses and entertainment are just a short walk away.

"It's not a monoculture, like the suburbs," says Melanie Barr, a long-time resident of the Duckpond.

Others are opting to live in new neighborhoods, such as Town of Tioga and Haile Plantation Village Center, which, like the traditional neighborhoods they were modeled after, provide homes, apartments and condominiums within walking distance of a village center.

"If you meet your neighbor by beating him to the next red light [in your car], then you're going to have a different society from one where you meet your neighbor walking by your front porch," says Luis Diaz, a developer who also lives in the Duckpond, and whose experiences there inspired his vision for the development of Town of Tioga.

Still others, such as the residents of Woodbine, deep in the woods of Southeast Gainesville, have created a neighborhood in which they share ownership of some of the property.

Some empty-nesters are downsizing to smaller, upscale homes in vibrant, intergenerational communities. And many retirees are discovering new life in communities such as Oak Hammock, which provides a wealth of enriching cultural and educational opportunities for its residents, along with assisted living, when needed.

Janice Arinson is aging in place in the "Andrews house," a historic

home in the Duckpond built in 1936 by Dr. Edwin Andrews. Dr. Andrews was a beloved physician and one-time mayor of Gainesville. When he retired in 1966 and moved back to Cedar Key, Arinson purchased the house from him. She has lived there ever since, raising her three children in the neighborhood. Her two grandsons, Joey, 23, and James, 21, live there with her now.

"People would ask me where I lived and I would say, 'The Andrews house,'" Arinson recalls. "Everyone knew exactly where that was." Arinson says that was back when Gainesville was a lot smaller, and "everywhere you went, you knew someone and someone knew you."

Although the city surrounding the Duckpond has changed significantly over the years, Arinson says it's still a wonderful, walkable neighborhood.

"New friends in the Regents Park condos are pleased that they can walk to the Matheson Museum, to the Thomas Center, to the library, to a fitness center, to small specialty shops, to the downtown plaza, to numerous eateries."

And there's one thing that hasn't changed after all this time: "Neighbors watch out for each other and are inclusive without being intrusive."

Lauren Groff says she, too, loves the central location of her family's historic home in the Duckpond.

"I go to the coffee shop, I go to the gym, we walk to the Thomas Center and the Hippodrome, and anywhere downtown," Groff says of the proximity of her home to downtown Gainesville's shops, restaurants, nightclubs and cultural amenities.

She even walks her six-year-old son, Beckett, to P.K. Yonge Developmental Research School, where he is in the first grade.

But what makes the neighborhood feel most like home to her are the regular Sunday afternoon gatherings of neighborhood families at Roper Park, where everyone sits on blankets and shares picnic lunches for three or four hours while the kids play soccer.

"That's the kind of community I was looking for." *B*



When city budget cuts eliminated the holiday horse-and-carriage tours of the Duckpond, the neighborhood association took over management of the popular event.

MATT STAMBY

Steeped in **TRADITION**

For today's Duckpond residents, the neighborhood is a portrait of togetherness

BY DIANA TENNESSEN

LIKE THE HISTORIC HOMES THAT grace its streets, the Duckpond neighborhood in Northeast Gainesville has stood the test of time. Tucked away behind the northeast corner of Main Street and University Avenue, the city's oldest neighborhood was established in 1870. Many of the nearly 300 historic homes in the Duckpond reflect architectural styles from the 1880s through the 1930s, when they were built.

"We liked the Duckpond initially because we like old houses," says Gary McGill, professor and associate dean in the Warrington College of Business Administration at UF. "But we stayed because we made lifelong good friends in the neighborhood and we enjoy the diversity of the place."

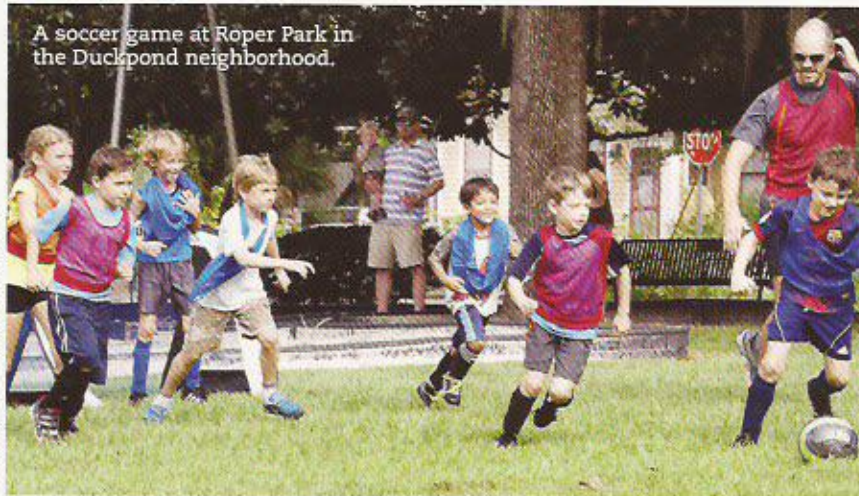
McGill and his wife, Laura, both in their late 50s, moved to the Duckpond in 1986. They've lived in four different houses in the neighborhood during their 29-year tenure there. Many of their friendships were forged simply by walking the neighborhood, "usually with dogs in tow," McGill says. "We learn a lot from stopping and chatting with neighbors." Sidewalks and front porches help, he adds.

Melanie Barr, the current Duckpond Neighborhood Association president and a longtime resident of the community, says she was attracted to the area's eclectic mix of homes, picturesque, tree-lined streets, and close proximity to downtown Gainesville and the University of Florida — the same characteristics that have drawn everyone from college students to university presidents to poet laureates to retirees to the Duckpond over the years.

"It's not a monoculture, like the suburbs," says Barr, who bought her first house in the Duckpond in 1982 and moved

A soccer game at Roper Park in the Duckpond neighborhood.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ANI COLLIER



"I go to the coffee shop, I go to the gym, we walk to the Thomas Center and the Hippodrome, and anywhere downtown," Groff says of the proximity of her home to downtown Gainesville's shops, restaurants, nightclubs and cultural amenities.



MATT STAMEY

Duckpond Neighborhood Association president Melanie Barr, center, speaks during a board meeting.

to the neighborhood in 1988.

Barr says the Duckpond Neighborhood Association (DNA), now in its 25th year, helps bring people in the neighborhood together. The association formed after the School Board decided to close the Duckpond's neighborhood school, Kirby-Smith, and convert the building to offices.

Randy Wells, a city commissioner who lives in the Duckpond and a past president of the DNA, says that although "it was a real heartbreak" for the neighborhood to lose Kirby-Smith, it hasn't deterred families with school-age children from moving into the Duckpond — including his own family. Wells and his wife, Ondine, have two children.

"In any neighborhood, schools are a concern," he says, "but people here have found many good solutions for their kids." Wells says there are 13 schools around the community, including nearby public schools with some of the top magnet programs in the county.

The DNA, which is open to renters as well as homeowners, holds business meetings four times a year, publishes a newsletter and maintains a website and Facebook page for residents. The DNA also hosts neighborhood socials, such

as an annual spring picnic, and during elections it organizes candidate forums.

A few years back, when budget cuts threatened to put an end to the city-sponsored holiday horse-and-carriage rides through the neighborhood during the annual tree-lighting ceremony at the Thomas Center, the neighborhood association rallied to save them. Now, the city organizes the events inside the Thomas Center and the DNA organizes the carriage rides, charging participants a small fee to cover the rental of the horse and carriage.

Author Lauren Groff says she and her husband, Clay Kallman, love the neighborhood's central location.

She even walks her 6-year-old son, Beckett, to P.K. Yonge Developmental Research School, where he is in the first grade.

Melanie Barr says she rarely drives.


"My car is three and a half years old and has a little over 20,000 miles on it," Barr says. And that includes trips to Miami, Tarpon Springs, Orlando and Tallahassee. Her husband's truck is 18 years old and has just 73,000 miles on it.

Groff admits that there are a few trade-offs that come with the territory. For instance, because many of the older homes are built so close together, "We don't have a large backyard or a pool or anything," she says. "But we don't have to do yard work!"

And while she loves the intergenerational mix of residents, sometimes the neighborhood's vibrancy spills over to the wee hours of the morning in the form of pounding music.

"We deal with it," she says. "That's all part of living in a compact neighborhood."

McGill says the neighborhood has a history of rallying behind causes. In fact, when what is now the Thomas Center was slated for destruction in the 1970s to be replaced by apartments, the neighborhood pulled together to save the building and create the "Northeast Historic District," listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

"This resulted in lots of activity in renovating old houses and reviving the neighborhood," McGill says. "And the Thomas Center and Gardens have become a jewel of both the neighborhood and the city." 



Families gather in one of several community playgrounds in the Town of Tioga neighborhood.

FILE PHOTO

Building COMMUNITY

BY DIANA TONNESSEN

WHEN GINA AND PHILIP Ferrara moved to Gainesville from New York City seven years ago, they couldn't resist settling in Town of Tioga.

"We were drawn to Tioga's urban feel, such as the close proximity of homes, the community space, and the walking distance to the town center shops and restaurants," says Gina Ferrara, a "gymnastics mom" and mother of three: Sable, 7, Ruby Simone, 6, and Joel, 4. Ferrara and her husband, Philip, both in their 30s, own LIBERTYAIR Air Conditioning and Heating.

Town of Tioga, developed by Luis Diaz 16 years ago, was conceived to be an example of New Urbanism, a mixed-use neighborhood designed to foster increased connections among its residents. New Urbanism, also known as Traditional Neighborhood Design, draws many of its design elements from older, more traditional neighborhoods like

Town of Tioga was designed to help people get to know their neighbors



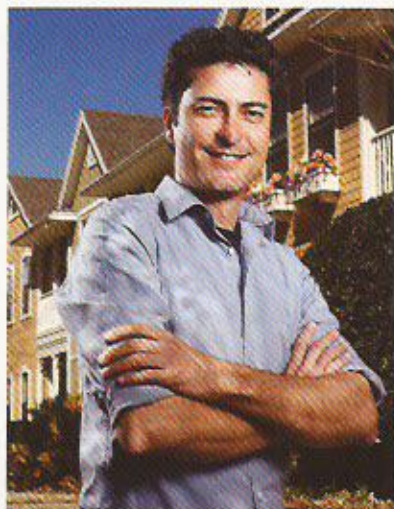
Philip and Gina Ferrara with their children, from left, Ruby Simone, 6, Joel, 4 and Sable, 7.

PHILIP MARCEL PHOTOGRAPHY



MATT STAMEY

Town of Tioga was designed to foster social interaction. Sidewalks are a foot wider than standard-issue sidewalks so that two people can walk side-by-side instead of single file. Streets are narrower than those in most post-World War II suburbs to help slow down traffic, making it safer for pedestrians.



DOUG FINGER

Luis Diaz, developer of Town of Tioga.

Gainesville's Duckpond: The neighborhood features a mix of architectural styles and home sizes; houses, many of which have front porches, are built close together; parks and greenspaces abound; narrow streets and side-of-the-street parking help to reduce the speed of cars driving through the neighborhood; and sidewalks enable residents to walk instead of drive to nearby shops and restaurants.

"We don't need to go far or outside of Tioga to carry on daily activities," Gina says. Tioga Town Center's shops, restaurants and professional offices are a short walk from the Ferraras' home. Town of Tioga has playgrounds, a community pool, a beautiful tree-lined esplanade and a community center that regularly hosts potluck dinners and other neighborhood activities. During the summer months, Tioga Town Center hosts a Friday evening movie night, where families can enjoy G-rated movies under the stars. There's also a weekly farmers market, where neighbors can shop for fresh, locally grown produce.

The Ferraras also like the neighborhood's hometown feel—especially when they bump into friends and neighbors in the town center's shops, restaurants and doctors' offices. Gina Ferrara says the benefit of having neighbors close by is that they often work out together in each other's garage gyms, meet at the playground or pool in the summer, or simply drop by for an impromptu visit.

Andy and Marilyn Gray moved to Town of Tioga from South Florida in 2006, when their daughter, a UF graduate, decided to settle in Gainesville. Andy, 66, is retired from Motorola and Haven Hospice. Marilyn, 64, was a teacher and now is a calligrapher and book artist.

"We knew about Tioga and very much liked Tioga's concept of New Urbanism," Marilyn Gray says. "We liked the promenade and community areas and the front porches."

The couple also enjoy the intergenerational aspects of the

neighborhood. "The homeowners are a diverse group, and we enjoy having many children around."

If Town of Tioga leaves the impression that someone has simply recreated a modern-day version of Gainesville's oldest neighborhood, the Duckpond, on the other side of town, it's no accident. Diaz lives in the Duckpond, and Town of Tioga was inspired by his love of the Duckpond's eclectic mix of homes, its pedestrian-friendly, tree-lined streets, its greenspaces and its close proximity to downtown Gainesville's shops, restaurants, theaters and nightclubs.

As Diaz designed Town of Tioga, he and his business partners, which included his father, meticulously researched every detail that could improve the quality of life and enhance social interaction among residents. For instance, Diaz' sidewalks are a foot wider than standard-issue sidewalks so that two people can walk side-by-side instead of single file. Streets are narrower than those in most post-World War II suburbs to help slow down traffic, making it safer for pedestrians. Garages are located behind the house instead of in front of it, so that front porches can be closer to the sidewalk, and neighbors can more easily strike up a conversation with each other. Even Tioga's community swimming pool was designed to help foster social connections.

"Where do people gather in the pool?" Diaz asks. "They gather on the steps." So instead of constructing a pool with one set of steps, Tioga's pool has steps in all four corners.

The community garden also serves as a popular gathering place for residents. "They can grow [a garden] in their backyard," Diaz says, "But they gather [at the community garden] and trade ideas for what to plant."

Diaz says there's a lot more Town of Tioga on tap for the future.

"We have nearly 300 more acres to develop," he says.

The county recently approved construction phases 14 and 15, which will add another 47 homes to the neighborhood's 328 homes. Plans are underway for Tioga Village, a small mixed-use shopping center fronting Southwest Eighth Avenue that will be similar to Haile Plantation's village center, along with an additional recreational area and pool. He's also working on designs for attached housing for empty nesters wishing to downsize.

"I think people who decide to move into Tioga have the idea about friendliness and that is a contributing factor," Gray says.

Diaz couldn't agree more: "In a lot of communities, you're selling the house," Diaz says. "But here, we sell the community first." 🐾



Members of Gainesville Cohousing on the property where they plan to build a 24-home community.

MATT STAMEY

Sharing lawnmowers (and lives) TOGETHER

Gainesville's new cohousing community is designed to be environmentally sustainable and people-friendly

BY DIANA TONNESSEN

FOR THE PAST 20 YEARS, GAINESVILLE physician Mary Aplin has dreamed of living in a community like the ones she remembers from her childhood. Although her family moved every couple of years while her father served in the military, Aplin says the communities she lived in as a child were “real communities, where people borrowed flour from each other and I knew the kids next door.”

So when Aplin first heard about plans to start a cohousing community in Gainesville back in 1994, she fell in love with the idea of living in a neighborhood that was designed to encourage social interaction while at the same time preserving individual privacy and going easy

on the environment.

Aplin says that while the people in her neighborhood behind Westside Park are plenty friendly, everyone is so busy that they rarely see each other.

"You have to make a point of running into each other," says Aplin, an oncologist who works at the VA Medical Center. It doesn't help that there are no sidewalks, the homes are built on big lots with expansive front yards, and most of the homes have no front porches, she says.

Brooks Nelson, a chemist at UF Health Shands and one of the early proponents of cohousing in Gainesville, says cohousing communities are intentional communities that combine aspects of communal living with separate private housing. Cohousing communities are not communes, where everything, including income, is shared by the group. And unlike condominiums, where residents own individual units in a building that's owned and operated by a corporation, cohousing communities are owned and managed by the residents themselves.

Residents own and live in their own homes, which include a full kitchen, bathrooms, a

Now the Gainesville cohousing community appears to be poised for success: The group has purchased a 4.75-acre parcel of land near the Boys and Girls Club in Northwest Gainesville. They hope to break ground within six to nine months and have the first of the 24 homes completed in another six to nine months.

living room and bedrooms. The homes are clustered around a common house, which has a kitchen, dining area, mail room, game room, laundry facilities, a swimming pool and even a couple of guest suites.

Nelson says the common house is the lifeblood of the community, serving as a regular gathering place for community meals, weekly business meetings, social gatherings, child care and more.

"They're kind of like extensions of people's living rooms," he says.

Nelson, who first read about cohousing as a college student in the early 1990s, spearheaded two earlier efforts to build a cohousing community in town. Both fell apart, partly due to a lack of resources and capital to buy the land and build the houses,

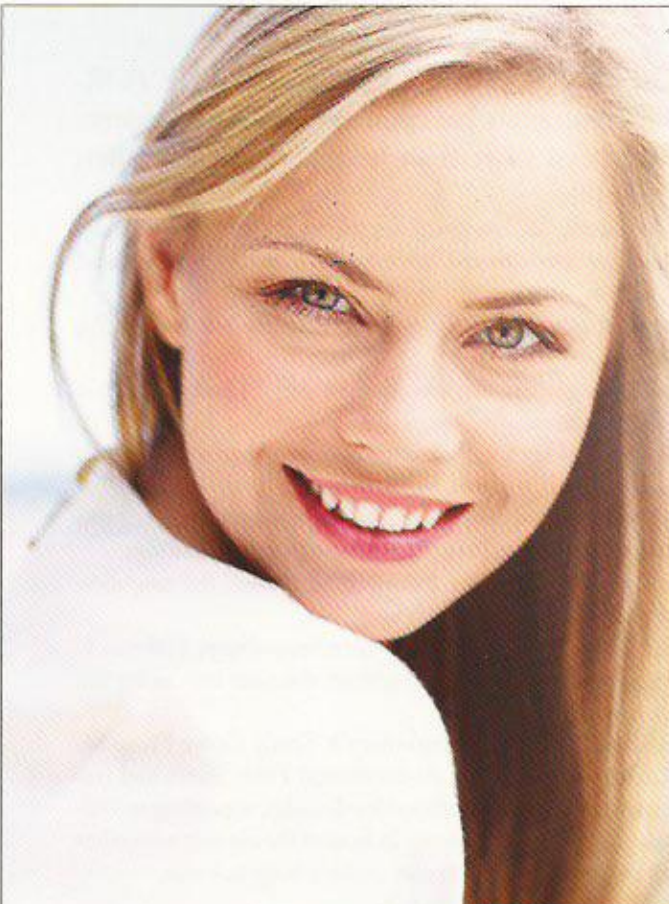
and partly due to the way the group vote was structured—by consensus.

"So if anyone said no, that was the end of the vote," Nelson says.

When Nelson's wife encouraged him to try again in 2013, "the first thing we did was change the vote," Nelson says. A consensus is still required, but if something fails, it can be overruled with a two-thirds plus one vote. The group also requires joining members to make a financial commitment to the project.

Aplin says the Gainesville group has benefited tremendously from consulting with members of existing cohousing developments and from the services of the River Phoenix Center for Peacebuilding, which

Continued on Page 110 >>



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COHOUSING

Continued from Page 61

has helped with group process and conflict management.

"We don't all have to be friends," Aplin says. "But we all need to be able to work together. I'm so glad others came before us."

Now the Gainesville cohousing community appears to be poised for success: The group has purchased a 4.75-acre parcel of land near the Boys and Girls Club in Northwest Gainesville. They also hired an architect, Andrew Kaplan, who has developed schematics and plans for the 24-home community. After Kaplan was hired on, he and his wife liked the idea so much that they decided to join.

Homes range in size from 750 to 1,740 square feet and are priced from \$125,000-\$210,000.

"The homes tend to be a little smaller because you'll need less," Nelson says. Many homeowners decide to forego having a guestroom in the house because the common house has guest suites for visitors. Residents also opt for smaller kitchens and other living areas in their individual homes because the common house is used so extensively.

The group now is waiting for the city to approve the building plan and clear the way for construction. They hope to break ground within six to nine months and have the first of the 24 homes completed in another six to nine months.

The community, which started with just four people in 2013, has grown to 15 families.

"We have nine units left," says Kaplan, "which is pretty good for pre-selling a development in Gainesville." They hope to bring on board a few younger families with children.

Although Gainesville's cohousing community will be the first of its kind in Florida,

the concept is nothing new. It was brought to the United States from Denmark in the late 1970s by an American couple, who built the nation's first cohousing community in California. Currently, there are more than 100 cohousing communities registered in the United States.

The architectural design of the community—and the houses themselves—are meant to foster social interaction. The homes are built facing inward along a pedestrian-friendly street that circles the common house. Cars are parked around the perimeter of the community both to increase safety and encourage walking. Each home has a front porch and a kitchen that faces the street to encourage social interaction with passers-by. The living areas of the home and another porch are at the back of the house to ensure privacy.

Aplin says one benefit of cohousing communities is that residents can pool their resources, thereby saving time, energy, money and reducing the neighborhood's impact on the environment.

"I live on a street where there are 50 houses and 50 lawnmowers and 50 leaf-blowers," Aplin says of her current neighborhood. "It's kind of a waste of materials." A typical cohousing community may have just one lawnmower, and everybody pitches in to maintain the property, she adds.

Kaplan says there probably won't be much grass to cut, though. They're working with master gardeners to develop Florida-friendly landscaping using drought resistant and native vegetation that will require little maintenance.

Plans are in the works for a community garden where residents can grow vegetables, as well.

"It's a lot like the village of yore," Nelson says. ☞

WOODBINE

Continued from Page 55

others helps get the work done." Sommer recalls neighbors helping neighbors build structures, move into their new residences, learn to garden and more.

"Land communities are the best way to maximize resources, protect land, grow food, and conserve energy. Communities are also the perfect place to combine needs of young and old," she explains.

That sense of community extends beyond the individual to provide for the greater good — and to share skill sets.

"We identify things that could make our community better, and then we work together to make it happen," Monroe says. "That could be a trail and bridge across a stream, or a wood workshop."

While neighbors in Woodbine grow their own vegetables

and fruits, and cultivate herb gardens, they are by no means living "off the grid." They still have amenities such as electricity, garbage collection and sewage. Mail is delivered to their boxes on the main road.

"It takes communication, however — meetings, emails, conversations at the mailbox. We all have to want to work together, but that's why we live here," Monroe adds.

As of today, Woodbine has eight residences (with two more households not quite ready to build on their land). These neighbors know each other perhaps more than others in traditional suburban neighborhoods. Many of them work together or in similar fields; some have simply become friends over time.

"We know each other. We have meals together on occasion. We contact each other when we need something," Monroe says. ☞

{GIVING BACK}

ROTARY CLUB

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disease, but her left leg was always smaller than her right as a result.

And later in life, Spain's mother suffered post-polio syndrome and had to use leg braces and crutches.

Although we are polio-free in the U.S., Spain says the commitment of Rotarians is astounding.

"Gainesville is such a giving community," says the co-founder of Spain Construction (now Spain & Cooper Homes, LLC.), which she and her husband, Tom, founded in 1972.

"I think a lot of us who have lived here a long time just think every community is like our community — that is not true."

Most Rotary communities have the same mantra — service above self — which is evident in the dedication of members who travel the world to end crises.

"They see a need to go out, they do it. Most Rotarians don't take any credit for what they do," she says.

For Spain, giving back was something that began in childhood. She grew up on a dairy farm in Palmetto and says her main contact with the world was by helping others.

"You can work really hard and make a lot of money, but it doesn't give you a heart... (or the) satisfaction of being a human being," she says. "If you don't share your talents and knowledge with other people, I think you lead a very shallow life."

Spain says she will be devoted to a couple organizations for the rest of her life, and one of them is Rotary.

"Some people get together and do a lot of good work, but they're putting Band-Aids on things and maintaining things ... Rotary changes lives," she says. ☞