

Jackson Meadow in Marine on St. Croix:

Building a Sustainable Community

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February 2000

Jackson Meadow, a housing development in of Marine on St. Croix, incorporates many aspects of sustainability. The development is unique, and perhaps a model for others to follow. Similarly, the community process that led to the development, is one from which others can learn. Faced with a development proposal that would have dramatically changed the community, the City Council instituted a moratorium on development while the community came to agreement on the housing development process and updated their plans and ordinances.

The City

Marine on St. Croix, located 12 miles north of Stillwater and less than a 30-minute drive from the Twin Cities, is the oldest white settlement in Minnesota. Its location, nestled alongside the St. Croix river with diverse slopes, ravines and level areas filled with a wide array of elm, oak, willow, spruce, pine and various other evergreens and shrubs, makes it easy to see why it has long been settled - first by the Sioux and Chippewa, and then by Scandinavian and Swedish immigrants.

Marine was named in 1839 with the opening of its first industry, the sawmill, which used the river as a power source. Marine grew as a busy lumber town through the 1870s, and later was settled for agricultural reasons, as well as for a summer getaway once the railroads from the Twin Cities became more convenient. Almost all of the buildings still standing in downtown Marine today were constructed during the boom of the lumber years; the Marine on St. Croix Historic District is currently registered with the National Register of Historic Places, and the mill site is owned by the Minnesota Historical Society.

Today, over 160 years later, Marine still feels like a small village, tucked away in time, and history remains extremely important to residents. The small town even has its own museum, the Stone House Museum, located in the former township hall. The historic downtown is filled with quaint shops, including an ice cream parlor, a general store and a café, and the village square boasts a gazebo. The nearby river, creeks and waterfalls - tucked just

a hop skip and jump away from downtown - offer walking paths as well as camping and fishing sites.

The city is also located close to both the Rose Warner Nature Center, a 700 acre wildlife reserve, and William O'Brien State Park, where cross-country skiing and biking (the park's bike trail actually ends at Marine Elementary School) are popular. The area boasts a large diversity of wildlife, native plants and grasses, which are ecologically and aesthetically



Downtown Marine on St. Croix

important to the area.

Marine on St. Croix remains a blend of long-time and newer residents who have traded city living for the peace, quiet and solitude Marine offers. For many residents, Marine provides a place of escape. "Marine is a place where you can be avant-garde, or you can be kind of off-the-wall and weird, and you're left alone, you're not made to conform," said Marine resident and self-employed architect Tod Drescher. "I think the permission to be different is a neat aspect of this town."

Such a diverse mix of residents allows for more culture than you'd expect from a town the size of Marine. Richard Abret, a local artist, started

Marine's first art fair 22 years ago. The art fair continues today as a community event, and the profits go to support the volunteer fire department and rescue squad.

Though Highway 95 runs through town, a passerby is most likely to notice the beautiful landscapes, open spaces and quaint historic, rural feel. The highway is a clue that even though Marine may seem like a world tucked away, it is no by means completely isolated. That highway takes residents off to be educated - the citizens of Marine make up a fairly intellectual, artistic crowd - and also takes many residents on a daily commute to jobs outside of Marine.

A good portion of income in Marine comes from commuters, many of whom make the daily drive to the metro area. It's quite common in Marine families for one spouse to commute into the cities while the other spouse either finds work in Marine, works out of the home, or serves as the primary caretaker of children. Although it's rare to find a Marine family where both partners work in Marine, advancing technology allows more and more people to work from Marine, many even from their homes, making the technological cottage a growing trend.

Garrison Keillor is just one celebrity who has lived there, perhaps because of the village's similarities to his imagined Lake Wobegon. In fact, it's so much like that romanticized rural town many dream of, it was used for scenes in

movies including *Grumpier Old Men* and *Beautiful Girls*. Though Hollywood may have cast Marine on St. Croix as the idyllic small town, the fact that it comes pretty close is due to the people that make up Marine and their commitment to their community.

Working Together

Marine has its own school that serves grades K-6. Marine agreed to join with Stillwater's school district in 1953, providing they could always have their own, local elementary school. Citizen action has ensured that it's kept going, even with its small class sizes. New residents, particularly families with children, are doubly appreciated in the hopes they will help ensure the continuation of the local elementary school.

Marine's citizens also demonstrate a strong spirit of volunteerism. They run a volunteer fire department, and provide the volunteer ambulance squad that serves all of New Scandia township. The planning commission and the mayor are also volunteer positions. "And I don't know how long that's going to last," said Drescher. "It's amazing, what people contribute. We're one of the last communities in the 7-county metro area that's all volunteer. We hope new residents will share that volunteer spirit."

Due to its strong heritage, many residents (particularly those who are third-generation descendants of the pioneering families that settled the area) would prefer not to leave when



it's time to give up their homes. Previously, older residents were forced to move away to senior housing in neighboring communities, in many instances leaving the only home they'd known their entire lives. To prevent this, the city sold a piece of land that was city property to developer Harold Teasdale for one dollar, allowing him to develop affordable, life-cycle housing for seniors. This development, named the Stugas, consists of 10 duplexes, for a total of 20 units that can house 40 people.

Picture Marine

In October 1998 the planning commission began Picture Marine, a project in which the planning commission provided 12 cameras to a diverse mixture of Marine citizens. These citizens were charged with the task of photographing the things about Marine that they valued and that they would like to see preserved, as well as the things they would like to see changed or improved. In addition, they wrote both their positive and negative comments of each of their pictures. The photographs and comments were put up for display at Town Hall and later at a city meeting in November 1998, where citizens engaged in a discussion of how they would like to see their town in the years to come.

Common themes that emerged were: the beauty of landscape and public, open spaces; Marine's rural and small town feel; a concern for over-development; appreciation for the historic nature of downtown, the architecture of buildings, and the central community gathering point; Marine's quiet, safety, slow pace of life, and pedestrian-friendliness; and the need for affordable housing.

The First Development Proposal

When Marine resident Ron Jackson looked toward retiring and moving to Arizona, he decided to develop his 135 acres of farmland. He located a developer from Blaine, they made

an agreement to sell the land - contingent on the developer obtaining a permit.

Tod Drescher heard of this sudden development, and decided to attend the next planning meeting to find out more. At this point, Drescher was one of few Marine residents aware that Ron Jackson's property was for sale. Only the developer, the eight member planning commission and the mayor were in attendance in these early meetings.

At the meeting, Drescher saw the plan for the 32-house development, which looked to him like nothing but suburban sprawl, full of what he terms "big McMansions." The development was automobile-oriented with excessive roads and isolated, oversized residences. Drescher, who previously worked at the Wilder Foundation's 2,000 acre environmental learning center as on-site architect and environmental educator, possesses the combination of a long-standing love of nature, "a dislike of ugly things," a background in architecture and development, and a sharp eye. He and his office mate, had read about developments in Portland, Oregon and on the East Coast, "where they're compressed, and where the farm, rural character is so precious that they don't want to lose it."

He listened to the developer speak for two evenings about how he would work with the community, but when Drescher looked at the drawings, as an architect, he could tell they were not at all like the character of Marine.

Drescher went to work immediately: Tom Warth, who lives adjacent to Jackson's property, took him up in a helicopter, where Drescher took aerial slides of the whole piece of property - in part to demonstrate to Marine the large size of the piece of land in question. From these photos, Drescher came up with a design where the same 32 houses were arranged along the woods, instead of spread out all over the property. In Drescher's design, the

woods and other scenic areas were preserved. Drescher showed up at the next meeting armed with pictures of his "cluster alternative" approach to development, as well as books, a video, and a slide show by Randall Arndt, a nationally-known landscape architect and author. He showed these to the planning commission, the mayor, and the few citizens at the meeting.

At this point, the citizens of Marine found out exactly how much the developer was willing to work with the community - and as it turns out, he didn't want to make any changes, regardless of what the community wanted. When additional concerns were voiced about a road the developer had that ran right in front of one Marine resident's house, and also some dangerous surveying that was in close proximity to the railroad tracks, the developer didn't want to budge on any of those issues - even though the majority of Marine citizens didn't approve.

"Really, I think it was just a matter of common sense," said Drescher. "Any 6th grader could have come up with a better plan than that developer. But at the same time, the developer didn't come up with the plan, he gave it to some surveyor who probably visited the land once, and then went onto his computer and chopped it up to maximize the house lots, to maximize the profits, and follow the rules. So you can't really blame the developers, they're following what the rulebook says you're supposed to do. So for us, changing those rules is so important."

After Drescher showed up with his alternative design, the planning commission meetings were much more populated: there were at times over 50 people in their small room, the most people they'd had at a planning commission meeting in 10 years. Word spread mainly through word of mouth, and Marine citizens showed up in droves. At these meetings, the support from the townspeople was strong. For the most part, people did not want a typical

suburban Woodbury-type development that failed to take into account the rural, historic character of their town and that failed to preserve open space.

Though Drescher's action was vital, he believes that the planning commission, particularly those passionate about development and preservation issues would have most likely derailed the first developers' plans without his help. He does believe that he had things easier: "I could say whatever I wanted, because I wasn't representing anyone but myself." Besides being self-employed, he wasn't held back legally, as the planning commission was, from suggesting an alternative design. Once he brought the alternative design in, the commission could comment on it and things were started.

Once it seemed obvious that the developer's plans and the wishes of the residents were drastically different, the city council immediately passed a moratorium to have time to stop and consider before things progressed too far. The developer, who wanted to push forward, sued the city, claiming he already had his foot in the door and the city couldn't stop him. Marine residents were not intimidated: with their city's character at stake, they decided to play hardball, pointing out that the developer hadn't technically given them everything he needed to in order to file a preliminary plat. The case went to court (the city used their city attorney and their mayor, who is also an attorney, for representation) and the city won on all 20 points. After the court case, the developer went away - interestingly, to Lake Elmo, where he designed a cluster development.

Writing a New Code

The residents of Marine were relieved they were able to stop the development, but they realized that if any other developer came in and did get all their paperwork done in time, the



town wouldn't be able to stop them. Instead of taking time to celebrate, they immediately went to work.

Marine, like many other communities in Minnesota, was at this time operating with zoning laws from the 1970s. The idea had been that a farmer should be able to sell off some of his land to his sons and daughters to build their own houses - never thinking they'd sell the whole farm to sprawling developments. "And now they're selling the whole farm. And we've got these old laws that were never designed for that," said Drescher. In order to give them time to get new zoning laws passed, the planning commission of Marine worked to get another six-month moratorium, and then a 30-day moratorium. These zoning laws made Marine the first city in the state of Minnesota to mandate cluster housing for anyone developing 3 houses or more. This order mandates that half of the land be kept as open space - and that this open space be of high-quality. The houses must be built on the other half, in such a way as to create a community neighborhood.

The codes Marine developed took about a year of weekly meetings, during which time the

planning commission undertook a large amount of research. Coen + Stumpf, landscape architects and planners, also assisted with the planning process. Drescher, Roger Tomten (Tomten Environmental Design), another architect who lived in town at the time, as well as other concerned citizens, worked alongside the planning commission and the mayor. To facilitate the process, they also hired NW Consultants to help with the codes.

The mayor of Marine, who also happened to be an attorney who had done conservation easements for a utility company, was able to lend his extensive background knowledge to citizens who initially wondered if a conservation easement was worth the effort.

Drescher and Tomten brought books on cluster housing and smart growth to the meetings, and got permission to use some of those concepts in Marine's codes. Drescher and Tomten also assisted with the graphics and some of the ideas, as well as the final review, but Drescher credits the planning commission with doing "a ton of work - they're such an intelligent, highly-trained group of people; it was really great teamwork." Following advice from Nielson's chapter on ordinances, they illustrated the codes. Thus Marine's codes both show and say what they do and do not want. The code also states that if clarification is needed or required that the planning commission may interpret it, which gives power back to the planning commission.

Altogether, they protected the land in three ways. First, they placed a conservation easement on the deed, which is permanent. Second, they placed a covenant for the development that explains how the out-lots are to be used, where houses can and cannot be placed, and the type of land use acceptable for different parts of land. The development agreement, or covenant, is good in Minnesota for thirty years, and the only way the land use could be changed would be with a unanimous vote. Third, the city passed the zoning

ordinances that reflect their commitment to preservation of open space. These ordinances could, of course, be changed with changing elections. But Marine citizens hope that all three measures together ensure that Jackson Meadow will never be further developed.

The Second Development Proposal

Meanwhile, the developer building the senior housing units in Marine, Harold Teasdale, and his co-developer Bob Durfey, were watching and listening. Teasdale, open to progressive-thinking new projects, was willing to work with the community of Marine, and so he offered his services to the project. Teasdale and Durfey developed and presented their cluster-housing plan, which was eventually accepted as the new development, named Jackson Meadow. Their plan took care to preserve the best land as open, public space and to design the homes in order to form a sense of community. Jackson Meadow actually exceeded the 50 percent mandated open space, preserving over 70 percent of the site as open space.

One of the community's main concerns when constructing a new development was to retain the small-town atmosphere while preserving the surrounding environment. Open space, community, and history were areas the community decided upon as the foundations that the development must be built around. Teasdale and Durfey tried hard to keep these ideas in mind and sought advice from Marine



citizens while developing the project.

The whole process from blueprints to groundbreaking was not, to say the least, an easy one. In working with citizens, local government, and a planning commission, over forty meetings were held to work out differences and formulate a finished product that was agreed upon by all. People voiced what they wanted as a community, and the developers listened. Throughout these meetings, questions and concerns were presented and with everyone's voices and inputs, the community grew even stronger together.

Once the city began to examine Ron Jackson's land and how it should be developed, it seemed logical to begin to look at the adjacent lands that could potentially be similarly developed in the future. Looking at the big picture early on allowed them to view a large area of land as a totality, rather than taking each small piece, scattered, as it may come up for development. "Really creative things happened," said Drescher.

In order to preserve a greater amount of land, four adjacent property owners agreed to combine all of their properties into one larger development. Each property owner still owns their entire property, but they sold all of their house rights, except one, to the developer of Jackson Meadow. This way, everyone wins: the property owners will be able to sell their 40 or so acres with one house for something like half a million dollars, and the residents of Jackson Meadow will have the view of the preserved, open space surrounding them. The surrounding lands are now under conservation easements, so they will never be further developed. This ensures that Jackson Meadow's approximately 50 acres, containing preserved open meadows and wooded hills that overlook the St. Croix River Valley, are surrounded by over 250 acres of land that are protected from ever being developed.

Another adjacent property owner who decided to sell his property worked with a Minnesota Department of Natural Resources program and the developers of Jackson Meadow to turn his land into a city park. The house rights from this property were also incorporated into Jackson Meadow.

This park was named "The Hollow," and the City of Marine purchased its 53-acres of land, which contains large white pine wooded areas, with a grant from the DNR and a donation from Harold Teasdale. The land is legally protected by law from any type of destruction or developmental so that all future generations may experience and enjoy the natural beauty.

Additional assistance throughout the process came from the Minnesota Land Trust, who helped establish conservation easements to meet open-space requirements. The Office of Environmental Assistance partially funded the wetland waste management system and an observation deck, signs about the project sustainability, and printed informational materials to educate about and promote sustainable development.

The Hollow, the open space in Jackson Meadow, William O'Brien State Park, a 100-acre preserve that came out of a development from 10 years ago, and land owned by the Science Museum of Minnesota all combine to create a green belt all around Marine. This green belt serves as a buffer zone from urban sprawl.

After over two years of meetings, adjustments, legalities, and hard work, ground was finally broken in October of 1998. As of fall 2000, there were around 6 houses that were lived in, another 2 models, and 2 under construction that were near completion.

Jackson Meadows

After all of the work by the citizens, government, and developers, Jackson Meadow's design was finally completed in accordance with community wishes. First and foremost, the development was designed as a cluster housing project. This type of housing was vitally needed to maximize land space and bring the members of the community closer to each other. Most of today's suburban land areas are designed in a "cookie cutter" pattern, often making interaction with neighbors difficult.

Since community was one of the qualities desired, Jackson Meadow placed about half the houses in an old-fashioned town grid with lot sizes averaging about one third of an acre. The other lots range from one half to two acres, and are the more "rural" part of the development. The actual formation of the community is modeled after the whole city of Marine, explained Teasdale, with the looping road symbolizing the St. Croix River that is so vital to the community's history and tradition.

Special Features of the Development

The houses themselves are specifically designed to meet the original and current design and history of the town itself. Home size generated lots of discussion. The largest home is approximately 3000 square feet, which is the average size of a standard new suburb home today. The architects omitted unnecessary space, thereby using fewer materials.

All of the homes in Jackson Meadow must adhere to numerous ordinances created to keep the ideals of the development in focus. A few examples of this are that all siding must be cedar or an approved equal, all roofs must be of metal construction, all garages must be unattached, all fences must be picket, and no visible TV antennas or dishes greater than 24

inches are permitted.

One of the main reasons behind the detached garages is to give residences even more opportunities to come in contact with neighbors. Any method of strengthening community ties has been maximized in the design and planning of the houses. All homes



have porches where owners can relax and come in contact with other members of the community who are out on their porches or who walk by on the trails.

Unlike typical housing projects, the developers set aside the best land for communal use and built an extensive trail system that stretches for more than five miles. The developers decided that the trail system should be open to all Marine citizens, even those that don't reside in Jackson Meadow. Houses are positioned so that the fronts are facing each other, with a green walkway separating properties. People are encouraged to walk whenever possible, reducing the use of automobiles and their emissions. The trails are connected to the downtown area of Marine and also William O'Brien State Park and Tanglewood Preserve. The town's elementary school is just a ten-minute walk on the system. The paths are not paved, but constructed of gravel that is more compatible with the natural surroundings. The walkways are oriented towards a central green area called the commons, a center area to be enjoyed by all.

Constructed Wetland Sewage Treatment

In striving to be a sustainable development, the community's handling of sewage wastewater was approached differently. In a typical housing development, each home has its own septic system. Standard septic tanks remove only forty to fifty percent of the pollutants from the water. These tanks do not effectively remove phosphorous, nitrogen, nitrates, or pathogens. The dilution of nitrate itself in groundwater is necessary to meet drinking water standards. When enough of this polluted water enters the ground, the soil cannot accept it and the drainfield fails, releasing untreated wastewater to the surface. This is obviously a great health risk, and the only solution is to build an entirely new drainfield in a new location. With the way that Jackson Meadow is designed, a traditional septic system would eventually load the lower region with septic waste and pose huge problems for the development as a whole.

Landscape architect Shane Coen pointed out that the consolidation of septic systems is critical in preserving open space - the way the lots are positioned doesn't allow room for each lot to have its own drainfield. The constructed wetland treatment system allows the houses to be clustered and a greater amount of open space to be preserved. The constructed system also removes naturally more pollutants than the standard. Bacteria removal in this method targets 99 percent and deposits much cleaner water to the groundwater.

In this system, the water is first delivered to a treatment cell, which is a lined shallow basin lined with an impermeable membrane and pea-sized gravel. The roots of wetland plants in the pool permeate the entire gravel layer. The plants and bacteria purify water that enters the basin. A control structure ensures the water level stays below the surface of the gravel,

preventing the presence of nuisance organisms. After the treatment, the water flows to the wetland infiltration cell, which is similar to the treatment cell but lacks the synthetic liner. Additional treatment in the gravel bed removes even more pollutants. The purified water seeps back into the natural water table.

Although the costs of constructing this method of treatment may be more than the standard



system, the long run costs will be much lower because of minimal maintenance and a lessened chance of failure. By using nature's means, the water is naturally purified and returned to the earth in a cleaner form. The elimination of individual septic tanks reduces the expensive infrastructure of these systems. Because this whole process occurs underground, the residents will not even notice that their water is being purified under their open centerpiece of land.

Natural Drainage

Jackson Meadow's special design allows for another water disposal method that is nature-friendly and recognizes sustainability. With the absence of curbs and gutters along the roads, the water naturally flows to the grassy depressions in the development where it filters back into the earth.

Roads are constructed in a concave fashion with the center of the road 2.5 percent lower than the side. This allows the storm water to flow to the depression somewhat like a river would flow to the sea. These "inverted crown streets" as they are called are narrower than a traditional suburban street and require twenty-

five percent less pavement.

Wetland grasses are anchored in these depression areas to assist in the absorption process. This method of natural filtration is much more ecological and efficient than standard storm water systems.

Standard systems consist of a whole sewer system where the water is collected and

diverted to some other specified location. The whole system of sewers and gutters are not nearly as economically efficient. Not only is this costly infrastructure avoided, but Jackson Meadow's approach supplies water for native greenery in the open space of the development.

House Design

The houses themselves are also designed with many simple yet effective ways to improve efficiency and sustainability. The homes are designed first to be modest in size, eliminating unnecessary space. All are positioned so they maximize the total amount of natural sunlight available. The windows are constructed to eliminate all condensation and escaping heat in the winter or cool air in the summer.

The homes must be painted white, reducing any absorptive heat while retaining the image of the community most desired. All appliances, with heating and cooling systems included, are new energy efficient models. All of the roofs are standard metal construction that lasts for many years longer than traditional shingle roofs. Although some of these characteristics may seem simple and obvious, explained Teasdale, they greatly improve efficiency while keeping the atmosphere of the community intact.

The architect of these original homes is David Salmela who is well known for his intricate detail and styles of traditional and Scandinavian homes. He is the only architect designing the homes in Jackson Meadow, which is a quite different than traditional developments.

Success

The major success was, of course, the preservation of the land, and the rural character of Marine on St. Croix. "And that the best parts of that part of town were preserved as open space - not only for the sake of humans, but for animals, and the other creatures that inhabit the earth," said Drescher. In addition, there is also a community that will be created in the Jackson Meadow development.

The community - once more people have moved into the houses - will meet yearly to decide how some of the pieces of property around them will be used and managed. For example, they can decide if they'll allow kids to have a campfire on a certain piece of the land, or if branches should be pruned on another part of the land.

They also had success in moving the road that the first developer had proposed run in front of one Marine resident's home. In addition, the citizens of Marine also succeeded in creating a permanent green belt around Marine, linking up the green belt in the south part of town and the north part of town through the western corridor.

Challenges

Of course, not everyone was happy when citizens began to protest the first developer's proposal. Drescher estimates that at one time there may have been up to 25% of the population that was upset because they thought that they were trying to take something away from Ron Jackson. Though word of mouth was effective in getting people to the first meetings, uninformed rumors also spread among people

who hadn't yet attended. Without hearing the whole scenario, they spread the story that people were trying to prevent Ron Jackson from developing his own land. Which, Drescher explains, was not what they were trying to do; only to get him to develop it in a different way.

People that thought that individual property owners' rights should be more important than the "long-range community vision village thinking" - it came down to a question of individual versus communal. But working together as a community and talking things through as a community helped everyone come together and realize that the character of their town was at stake.

Since the first developer was forced to leave, Jackson did have a delay of one year to receive his money, but in the meantime he was able to sell his farmland for \$400,000, so he was still able to retire to Arizona. Once the situation was more fully understood by Marine citizens, most approved of the cluster development.

Jackson, on the other hand, was quite upset for a few years, which Drescher says did cause a rift in town. In retrospect, Drescher says Jackson is quite happy with the way things turned out. "He got his money, and, a very progressive development, and the place even got named after him; the other guy was going to name it Oak Knoll Estates or something like that."

Another challenge is that the houses ended up being so expensive that they're upper-class housing only, out of reach not only for low-income but also middle-income people as well. Drescher worries that since they are more expensive than they'd anticipated that it will give Marine a reputation of being an elite community.

Affordable Housing

The affordable housing in Marine was previously made up of older homes from the 1800s that rented or sold for a low cost because of their old age and smaller size. Recently, however, these home have been purchased, remodeled and increased in size. In addition, affordable apartments in the upstairs of buildings in downtown Marine have been converted to offices, as more professionals seek to escape the commute to the city. Coupled with skyrocketing land values in the area, due to proximity to the St. Croix river and nearby development pressures of the expanding metro area, this leaves working class - as well as lower to middle-class - people with few affordable housing options in the community. Some people wished that affordable housing was included in Jackson Meadow; unfortunately, they failed.

Drescher believes there may be even more pressure on the affordable housing Marine has left, since no offices are allowed in Jackson Meadow. He believes there may be a lot of "technological cottages" in Jackson Meadow, but he also believes many will want to get out of their homes to work, and would prefer to have a small office in downtown Marine. On one hand, this is good, because it cuts down on commuting, but on the other hand, it's bad because it's displacing the affordable housing. And even with the Stugas, there is still a need for additional senior housing, housing for younger people, and housing for lower-income people.

One reason the developer didn't include any affordable housing in the development is it's not economically beneficial. Teasdale did offer to include them if he could get those houses as bonus, or free, lots. When Teasdale worked on the Studgas, the reason he was able to do so was because the city subsidized the land. Another reason that affordable housing wasn't included is the planning commission and other

involved citizens were feeling overwhelmed - what had initially started as a 32-house development had turned into 63 homes (with the extra house rights from neighboring lots).

A lot of very creative ideas were proposed along the way, but unfortunately, none of them were actualized. Teasdale had suggested having a building in the middle with office spaces, a community gathering hall, and affordable apartments above that. But the many Marine residents felt that there were already going to be enough houses and enough people moving in with the 63 houses.

Others, particularly older residents, felt that they should keep downtown Marine as the central business district, and feared splitting the town in half. Drescher and others felt that having small businesses such as a flower shop, a day care, with offices for lawyers, architects or accountants, perhaps even a small market, church or coffee shop, would help make the community. "That's what makes communities, having someplace to walk to, some central meeting points," he said. "Marine works so well because it's so pedestrian-friendly. You park, and you can hit groceries, bank, gas station, coffee shop, café, all those things. A lot of towns don't have that."

Drescher believes that help from the state and/or federal government that subsidizes affordable housing may have helped. "And I know there are programs for that. But even so, the next thing is, once you've got the funding in place, then you've got to convince the neighbors not to freak out. You know, that, 'we don't want those people moving in here.'"

He pointed to a development of around 350 houses just west of Stillwater that was slated to include "mother-in-law" style apartments in the development. The developer agreed, the city agreed, but the family that was selling the land put their foot down, and it never happened. "It was so weird," said Drescher. "I mean, they're



leaving, so you wouldn't think they'd care. And I don't know what their specific reason was, but it was a kind of this, oh, we don't want those people here, we only want upper-class people." Drescher told of national conferences he's attended where the focus is on diversity and mixed zoning. "The zoning shouldn't be sterilized into all these different zones, but we should mix it back up. That's what made our cities interesting in the first place."

Drescher also feels they could have done a better job of creating a community. His original drawings showed a community ball field, a community garden, a community gazebo, and other places to gather. But he points out that such things could easily be added later. "People could use their association money, collect the money, and build a treehouse or build a gazebo. There are soccer and baseball diamonds in the covenants up there that can be added later."

Architecture

Since one architect was selected to do all of the houses in Jackson Meadow, all of the houses look very similar. Currently, many in Marine are unsatisfied with this. Most don't dislike the houses, but merely the repetition; it seems odd to many people, and unattractive.

The reason this architecture went through without the approval of Marine citizens was because the planning commission had not

wanted to make comments about architecture and style - essentially, they felt they did not have the right to tell people if their houses are ugly or not.

The architect's goal was to capture the look of Marine - and admittedly, the steep roof, white house, farm house look does capture the style and history of Marine. And, as Drescher points out, in Marine you don't see many similar houses; rather, there is a good mixture of styles. Everyone agrees that the houses in Jackson Meadow are very well built, and with very quality materials, but the repetition of having 63 houses all alike and all near each other feels, to many Marine residents, like a company town.

The challenge now may be to make Jackson Meadow feel like a part of the larger community, to make it feel more small-town than suburban. However, there are those who do like them, as the houses are slowly selling. "And," Drescher points out, "there is a small percentage of the public that really likes that all-white architecture, so it'll just develop a little slower, which is all just fine with town. Most people in town don't want to see all the houses go up quickly. So it's actually working out all right because of that."

Drescher believes that one way Jackson Meadow will begin to feel like a part of the community is through the school and the kids. The first time Drescher himself went up to one of the new houses was to drop his son off at a birthday party. "Though the children weren't at any of the meetings and didn't get to speak out, interestingly they're actually the ones that come back and link us together," said Drescher.

The Future

Transportation is one issue that Marine may be faced with in the future. May township is concerned that people who live in Jackson Meadow will want to cut down a nearby gravel road to get to county 4, rather than taking the tunnel. The township wants to keep the road gravel, rather than paving it, to discourage people from driving on it. However, it is more dangerous to drive on gravel, and thus traffic management may be an issue.

Also, after all the houses are built, there will be 20% more people in town. Dealing with a growing population may prove challenging to the small town.

Words of Advice

When asked to give advice to others that may encounter similar situations, Drescher immediately recalled "The power of a drawing. I'm an architect, but I think that's why we succeeded. We didn't just show up and talk, and complain, and it all evaporates, and some people were there and some people weren't, and then you come to the next meeting and you hash it all out again, and then the developer says his thing... and then you're all starting over every meeting. When we did a drawing, we did a drawing that was a positive, optimistic, better solution. We put it on the wall, everybody could see it, a 12-year-old could understand it, and it stayed pinned on the wall for the whole month. And every week, when they came to the meeting, the drawing was still there. And it was very hard for that developer, he didn't even try to say, my drawing's better than your drawing. Drawings are very honest, and they're worth 10,000 words."

Drescher credits "moving fast" with their success. Also just coming to meetings and if you think something can be done a better way, do some research and find what's out there, what's best for your city or township, and bring

the ideas to the next meeting.

Conclusion

The brochure for Jackson Meadow tells a story that captures the atmosphere and mindset of both the development and town. "In the mid-1950's, the Marine village council suggested removing a mature elm tree that impeded pedestrian traffic on Main Street. Marine residents protested: 'Nobody is in such a hurry that he can't walk around an elm tree.' Today Jackson Meadow, a new neighborhood within the village of Marine on St. Croix, shares this attitude by maintaining a commitment to preserving the heritage and value of the place." (Pamphlet p. 18) Jackson Meadow truly has worked towards community sustainable development.

For More Information

- Jackson Meadows, <http://www.jacksonmeadow.com>
- Harold Teasdale, http://www.jacksonmeadow.com/design_team/design_index.htm
- Tod Drescher, 651-433-5600, Email: tdddjd@aol.com
- Marine on St. Croix, <http://www.uwrf.edu/scvrta/marine.html>

Although Marine on St. Croix has many challenges ahead, their demonstrated ability to work together as a community and their strong value of their community's positive aspects - its rural feel, its open space - should ensure that they will work hard together to meet these challenges. In the meantime, the Jackson Meadow development serves as yet another symbol of their community's perseverance and character.