

# Permaculture in Practice

## *Homewise is where the heart is*

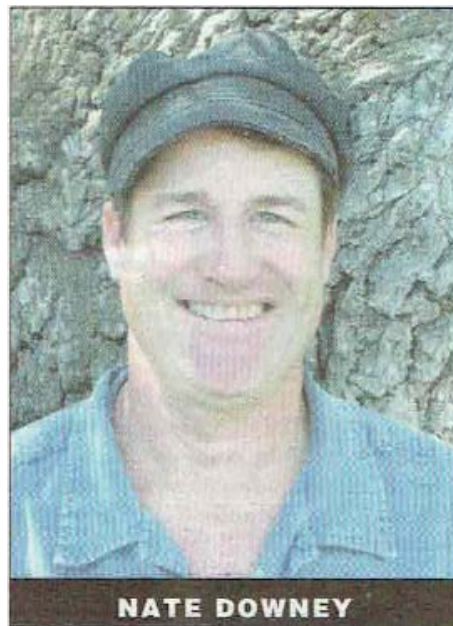
Last May *The New Mexican* printed a lead article about a proposed Homewise development on the Eastside. Some Not-In-My-Backyarders (NIMBYs) were joining forces with the usual Development-Over-My-Murdered-Body Yokels (DOMMBYs). They were carping about the potential loss of the last unspoiled Santa Fe “gateway” at I-25 and Old Pecos Trail.

With all due respect to those who want Santa Fe’s first impression to be a gated, golf-happy compound, most tourists would probably prefer to see an affordable community with bike trails, open space, water harvesting, solar heat, sky lights, live/work units, and a housing-density that tends to leaven neighborliness. More importantly, our priorities should not be aimed at the initial opinions of our guests. Most Santa Feans believe we still live in a town with a long and strong tradition of caring. Since the second ethic of permaculture is “care for people,” I beseech these NIMBYs and DOMMBYs to stop wasting city staff’s time along the barren banks of our local stretch of superhighway — ironically cut and paved at a time of almost unbridled homeownership in this country.

The Homewise project features clustered development, an excellent alternative to urban sprawl. Also known as New Urbanism, their development pattern lowers per-unit infrastructure costs by reducing price tags on the installation and maintenance of roads and bridges as well as water, electric, gas, cable, and telephone lines.

On a per-person cost-basis, clustering also reduces the tax monies needed for garbage pick-up and public safety services, while it promotes a healthier population and cleaner environment by providing bike lanes and sidewalks. In addition, the development is likely to remunerate neighboring property owners by bringing in more school-age kids to the Eastside where there has been much debate about closing small schools (which tend to raise property values).

But the most wonderful aspect of the proposed Homewise project is its affordability. According to executive director Mike Loftin, some one- and two-bedroom units will sell below \$100,000. As I let you go back and reread that last sentence,



let’s just say that Homewise needs to be supported loudly and clearly by anyone who truly cares for people.

On Aug. 8 we will find out where the Santa Fe City Council stands. Will it encourage this carbon-conscious development? Will it prove its support for affordable housing? Will it promote development that costs less per capita for the city to maintain? Or will it fall for the superficial arguments of a few? Please let your city councilors and the mayor know ASAP where you stand and plan to attend the Wednesday meeting. Remember, NIMBYs and DOMMBYs won’t sit back languidly now that they think they’ve gained momentum in the press.

One silly, yet significant, salvo fired at Homewise Inc.’s proposed development was an accusation that the property in question is “topographically challenged.” Unfortunately, folks hiding under this clever carapace haven’t been to the site with a copy of the current plan. It’s true that the land straddles a deep arroyo, but all of the building sites are planned for the gently sloping mesas. The only real “challenge” will be to build a road just like hundreds of others all over this state

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