

## Non-Fiction Reading Activity for The Giver: Are Utopias Possible?

**Objective:** I can identify and understand main ideas in a text in order to draw new conclusions.

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Student exceeds minimums of detail, analysis, or connections to show critical comprehension of text(s).	Based on summary, comparison, and text-based conclusions, student comprehends nonfiction text(s).	Student does not fully or consistently answer questions in a way that demonstrates comprehension.	Student work does not show evidence of text comprehension.

Jonas's community lives by strict sets of rules in an attempt to avoid pain and conflict. However, these limits come at a cost: knowledge, emotion, color, and love are abandoned. As a result, Jonas begins to question his freedom and craves a different life for himself and his loved ones.

The Council of Elders is not the first body of leaders to attempt a utopia on earth. Groups have been seceding, immigrating, and separating from governments all over the world for many years. (Some would even argue that the United States and democracy in general are utopian experiments.) Today, we will read about these utopias to ask whether or not utopias are possible. Complete each step of this activity to develop a critical understanding of utopias!

### Step 1: Read & Comprehend Your Article

Article Title	Summary of Ideas	Text-Specific Question
1. <u>The Seeds of Their Own Destruction</u>		What does the article suggest about the relationship between rules and productivity?
2. <u>The Amish Lifestyle</u>		What is the relationship between their beliefs and their rules?
3. <u>4 Utopian Communities that Didn't Pan Out</u>		Why didn't (most of) these communities work out?
4. <u>Want to Escape the Modern World? 9 'Utopias' That Really Exist</u>		Why do you think a majority of these communities are isolated?

5. <u>Austin's Utopian Homeless Village is Becoming a Reality</u>		What is the goal of the village? Will they succeed in achieving it?
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**Step 2: Fill in the Blanks with Classmates!** Get the answers to the other rows from your peers.

**Step 3: Compare, Contrast, and Draw Conclusions**

Question	Answer	Source (Article #)
Why did most of these utopias start?		
What lifestyle characteristics do most of them have in common?		
What were the characteristics of the comparatively successful ones?		
What were the characteristics of the unsuccessful ones?		
What specific problems caused the unsuccessful ones to fail?		



## “Why Utopias Fail”

[http://www.forbes.com/2008/04/10/why-utopias-fail-oped-utopia08-cx\\_mh\\_0410hodak.html](http://www.forbes.com/2008/04/10/why-utopias-fail-oped-utopia08-cx_mh_0410hodak.html)

Paradise once existed, so we're told, in Eden, Arcadia or Shambhala. Paradise will again be ours in the afterlife if we reach Heaven, Valhalla or the Happy Hunting Grounds. Unfortunately, paradise in the present has always been elusive. Not for lack of trying. Utopian experiments have been attempted at every step in the march of civilization. Why haven't any of them succeeded?

For one thing, the bar is constantly being raised. Life in a modest American town today would have been the envy of the Middle Ages. But such a community, with its technology, infrastructure or freedoms, could never have come into being in the Middle Ages; and if it somehow magically appeared, it would have promptly been sacked. For most of history, this raised a significant obstacle to utopia. Any land of milk and honey automatically attracted swords and muskets.

The New World changed that. Small groups could organize civilized communities based on any peculiar theory, with little concern for conquering hordes. All they had to do was be economically and socially viable. This new opportunity spawned a flood of utopian experiments, beginning with the first colonists.

Most schoolchildren know that the Mayflower pilgrims came to America to escape the persecution they encountered in Europe. A more obscure fact was that the Plymouth Colony was originally organized as a communal society, with an equal sharing of the fruits of everyone's labor. At least, that was the plan. Their governor, William Bradford, documented how this degenerated over the next two years into “injustice,” “indignity” and “a kind of slavery.” Productivity was shot, and the community starved. Bradford wisely placed the blame not on the flaws of his people, but on the system their society had chosen. They abandoned communal ownership and, lo and behold, the fields sprouted with life. As Bradford writes:

“They had very good success, for it made all hands very industrious, so as much more corn was planted than otherwise would have been. The women now went willingly into the field, and took their little ones with them to set corn. . . . By this time harvest was come, and instead of famine, now God gave them plenty, and the faces of things were changed, to the rejoicing of the hearts of many.”

Hundreds of utopian experiments followed Plymouth—religious and secular, communist and individualistic, radical and moderate. But all had to make impossible sacrifices in the service of their ideals. The Shakers and Harmonists were very successful economically, and bound tightly in a common spirituality. However, their way of keeping a lid on worldly desires was to practice celibacy. Now, anyone who has raised children knows what a resource drain they can be, and would not be surprised that communities without offspring could get ahead financially. Nevertheless, the celibate life had only so much appeal, and these sects eventually died off.

Many religious societies declined or disbanded after the loss of their founder. Others, such as the Perfectionists of Oneida who practiced group marriage, or the entrepreneurial Inspirationists at

Amana, eventually gave up communal living, spun off their commercial interests and began assimilating into the surrounding communities.

Secular societies fared even worse, many of them repeating the lessons of Plymouth. Josiah Warren, a member of the celebrated New Harmony commune that collapsed under collectivist strains, went on to found societies based on a decidedly more individualistic premise, including utopia in Ohio and Modern Times on Long Island. While economically successful, boundaries between the true believers and their neighbors dissolved over time. Today, the hamlet of Brentwood, N.Y., where Modern Times used to be, looks like the rest of its Long Island surroundings—pleasant enough, but no utopia.

The long series of failed experiments yields some interesting lessons. The first is that internal power grabs are even more poisonous to utopian dreams than external threats. The gold standard of utopian leadership, the benevolent prince or philosopher king, is inherently unstable. Solomon, Marcus Aurelius and Suleiman the Magnificent failed utterly to provide successors with anything like their talents.

The competition for succession invariably favors not the wise, but the ruthless. This is especially dangerous in communistic societies. Where selfishness is a sin or a crime, everyone is guilty; you don't want your antagonists gaining the authority to sit in judgment. Democracy provides a more stable succession mechanism, but it is inherently factionalist. Even in Mormon Utah, a utopian experiment that fared better than most, there are factions out of power who are unhappy with things.

A second lesson is that ideals are constraints, and the more constraints one tries to impose, the less viable the community will be. It's hard enough for a private company—an organization focused *exclusively* on economic success—to survive intact for multiple generations. Add to that special utopian claims on the firm by the employees and you can see how tough the odds are. The best bet is to run utopia as a business, which is exactly what many communities concluded.

Finally, if you're going to suppress your members' worldly desires, you need a mechanism for self-selection. Several religious sects, like the Old Order Amish, have successfully stifled material interests over multiple generations. Their people are happy because they don't require much stuff. But they know that everyone can't be kept in the fold. Anabaptist communities who believe that only adults can be meaningfully baptized provide this safety valve. The 10% of Amish who don't stay allow the other 90% to maintain their culture.

While many people believe that utopias are doomed to failure because of human nature, it's much more useful to approach utopia as the ultimate governance challenge. The U.S., itself, was a far more successful experiment because of that approach, expressed in James Madison's view that, "If men were angels, no government would be necessary."

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# The Amish Lifestyle

<http://www.amishcountry.org/explore-the-area/area-history/the-amish-lifestyle/>

## The Amish Lifestyle

**Simplicity, a Way of Life** — A faith that dictates foregoing modern amenities, including electricity, automobiles and telephones, guides the Amish. This simple way of life is derived from teachings in the Bible and the Amish desire for an autonomous community.

**Military Service** — Following the biblical teaching of “love thy neighbor,” the Amish faith forbids violence and active military service.

**Amish and Mennonite** — As offshoots of the Anabaptist faith, the Amish and Mennonite groups are closely related. In general, Mennonites condone a more liberal lifestyle, which includes some modern amenities such as electricity and automobiles.

**Amish Attire** — The Amish dress simply with only basic ornamentation. Men’s trousers use buttons rather than zippers. Amish women sew their family’s clothing from solid-color fabric, often in shades of blue. Young girls can wear pastel-colored dresses and, like Amish women, wear bonnets. Adult men can grow beards, but no mustaches (a centuries-old prohibition traced to mustached men in the European military). Only married Amish women wear aprons, and they can wear white aprons for church services.

**Photography** — All forms and methods of photography are strictly forbidden. The Amish can’t pose for photographs nor use cameras to capture images. The Amish believe photographs lead to pride, which threatens the importance of the “community” by emphasizing individualism and calling attention to individuals.

**Education** — Formal education ends with the eighth grade. After that, Amish boys begin an apprenticeship to learn a trade; girls learn the skills necessary to maintain a home.

**Work** — The Amish are adept farmers, and the majority of Northern Indiana’s Amish live on farms. Today, however, few Amish men are full-time farmers. To support their large families, most work in factories, artisan workshops or cottage businesses. Adolescent Amish girls and women often work in retail businesses or restaurants.

**Home and Family** — The home is the center of Amish life. Amish families host every event and gathering in their homes, from church services to funerals and weddings. Generally, Amish homes are uncluttered and furnished simply. Amish women take pride in their housekeeping, cooking and providing clothes and the staples of everyday life for their families. Many Amish homes include additions or small detached dwellings called dawdy houses, where family members such as grandparents live. In summer and fall, bountiful vegetable and flower gardens add splashes of color to the usually white buildings on Amish farmsteads.

**Courtship and Marriage** — When Amish boys turn 16, they receive a courting buggy for transportation to chaperoned social gatherings, where courtships often begin. During courtship, Amish boys escort eligible girls to church services, singing programs and other Amish events. Couples marry for life, and weddings often are major celebrations, including up to 500 guests. The Amish wedding day begins at 9 a.m. with the singing of hymns. A full sermon and the exchange of marriage vows follow. The wedding day concludes with a huge potluck meal.

**Taxes and Insurance** — The Amish pay state, federal and county taxes. Typically, they refuse Social Security benefits. Their faith dictates that the Amish community cares for its elderly. This self-supporting principle also eliminates the need for health insurance.

**Healthcare** — While Amish families often try alternative treatments, they will seek the services of doctors and modern hospitals when necessary.

**Population Trends** — Northern Indiana's Amish population doubles about every 20 years, primarily due to the large size of Amish families, which often include 10 or more children.

# 4 Utopian Communities That Didn't Pan Out

<http://mentalfloss.com/article/23297/4-utopian-communities-didnt-pan-out>

Every once in a while, a proud little community will sprout up just to let the world know how Utopia should be run. With chins raised almost as high as ideals, the community marches forth to be an example of perfection. But in most cases, all that harmonious marching gets tripped up pretty quickly. Here are four "perfect" communities that whizzed and sputtered thanks to human nature.

## 1. Brook Farm (or, Ripley's Follow Me or Not)

Perhaps the best-known utopian community in America, Brook Farm was founded in 1841 in West Roxbury, Massachusetts, by George and Sophia Ripley. The commune was built on a 200-acre farm with four buildings and centered on the ideals of radical social reform and self-reliance. For free tuition in the community school and one year's worth of room and board, the residents were asked to complete 300 days of labor by either farming, working in the manufacturing shops, performing domestic chores or grounds maintenance, or planning the community's recreation projects. The community prospered in 1842"1843 and was visited by numerous dignitaries and utopian writers.

**However, Ripley joined the unpopular Fourierism movement, which meant that soon the young people (out of a "sense of honor" o o e r or ere r ro s cleaning stables, and slaughtering the animals.** This caused many residents, especially the younger ones, to leave. Things went downhill from there. The community was hit by an outbreak of smallpox followed by fire and finally collapsed in 1847.

## 2. Fruitlands: A Utopian Community (for Six Months Anyway)

After visiting Brook Farm and finding it almost too worldly by their standards, Bronson Alcott (the father of Louisa May) and Charles Lane founded the Fruitlands Commune in June 1843, in Harvard, Massachusetts.

Structured around the British reformist model, the commune's members were against the ownership of property, were political anarchists, believed in free love, and were vegetarians. **The group of 11 adults and a small number of children were forbidden to eat meat or use any animal products such as honey, wool, beeswax, or manure. They were also not allowed to use animals for labor and only planted produce that grew up out of the soil so as not to disturb worms and other organisms living in the soil.**

Many in the group of residents saw manual labor as spiritually inhibiting and soon it became evident that the commune could not provide enough food to sustain its members. The strict diet of grains and fruits left many in the group malnourished and sick. Given this situation, many of the members left and the community collapsed in January 1844.



### 3. The Shakers

Officially known as the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, the Shakers were founded in Manchester, England, in 1747. As a group of dissenting Quakers under the charismatic leadership of Mother Ann Lee, the Shakers came to America in 1774.

Like most reformist movements of the time, the Shakers were agriculturally based, and believed in common ownership of all property and the confession of sins. Unlike most of the other groups, the Shakers practiced celibacy, or the lack of procreation. Membership came via converts or by adopting children. Shaker families consisted of "brothers" and "sisters" who lived in gender-segregated communal homes of up to 100 individuals. **During the required Sunday community meetings it was not uncommon for members to break into a spontaneous dance, thus giving them the Shaker label.**

As pacifists they were exempted from military service and became the United States' first conscientious objectors during the Civil War. Currently, however, there isn't a whole lot of Shaking going on. As the younger members left the community, converts quit coming, and the older ones died off, many of the communities were forced to close. Of the original 19 communities, most had closed by the early 1900s.

### 4. Pullman's Capitalist Utopia

Located 15 miles south of Chicago, the town of Pullman was founded in the 1880s by George Pullman (of luxury railway car fame) as a utopian community based on the notion that capitalism was the best way to meet all material and spiritual needs. **According to Pullman's creed, the community was built to provide Pullman's employees with a place where they could exercise proper moral values and where each resident had to adhere to the strict tenets of capitalism under the direction and leadership of Pullman.** The community was run on a for-profit basis—the town had to return a profit of 7% annually. This was done by giving the employees two paychecks, one for rent, which was automatically turned back in to Pullman, and one for everything else. Interestingly, the utopian community had very rigid social class barriers, with the management and skilled workers living in stately homes and the unskilled laborers living in tenements. The experiment lasted longer than many of the other settlements, but ultimately failed. Pullman began demanding more and more rent to offset company losses, while union sentiment grew among the employee residents.

# Want To Escape The Modern World? 9 'Utopias' That Really Exist

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/08/21/utopias\\_n\\_3768023.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/08/21/utopias_n_3768023.html)

The idea of the "utopian" community has a long, storied history (and a largely unsuccessful one at that), from the fictional island dreamed up by Sir Thomas More to present-day attempts to build the perfect urban ecosystem. And even though the perfect society has eluded us, that hasn't stopped people from trying. Seekers attempting to leave behind the conventions and restrictions of traditional society have created self-sustaining communities ranging from groups of tofu-making hippies in rural Virginia to expatriates living in treehouses in the Costa Rican rainforest (and yes, there is a community called Yogaville).

"The criticism of utopia is that it's impossible to achieve perfection, so why try?" J.C. Hallman, author of "In Utopia," told Salon in 2010. "But the impossibility of perfection does not absolve us from the path of pursuing a more perfect union."

Is it just cities people are trying to escape? Fed up with society as it is? **Check out these nine fascinating case studies in alternative modes of living, spanning from the Arizona Desert to the Korean coast.**

In 1971, a group of 300 flower children and free-thinkers left San Francisco to blaze a trail out east, settling in rural Tennessee to become the founders of what is now America's oldest hippie commune.

The Farm, located just outside Summertown, Tennessee, is still around to this day, and was the subject of the 2012 documentary "American Commune." Now composed of roughly 200 members, the vegetarian intentional community was founded on -- and still lives by -- their core values of nonviolence and respect for the environment.

Green Bank, West Virginia is a safe haven away from the reach of technology where the "electrosensitive" can come to escape the digital world. The small town is located in a U.S. National Radio Quiet Zone, a 13,000-square-mile area where electromagnetic radiation (yes, that includes WiFi and cell phone signals) is banned so as not to disturb the National Radio Astronomy Observatory. About 150 people have moved to Green Bank and created a community for the precise purpose of escaping radiation, which they believe is harmful to their health.

## The Farm, Lewis County, Tennessee

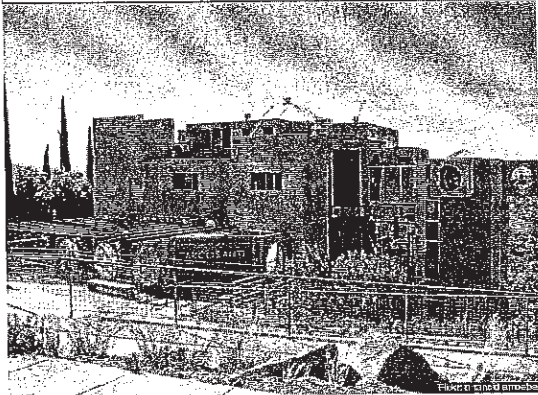


## Green Bank, West Virginia



"Life isn't perfect here. There's no grocery store, no restaurants, no hospital nearby," a resident of the town recently told Slate. "But here, at least, I'm healthy. I can do things. I'm not in bed with a headache all the time."

### Arcosanti, Arizona



The "urban laboratory" that is Arcosanti was first created in the 1970s in the Arizona desert 70 miles north of Phoenix as a social experiment of sorts, and it's still standing to this day. Citizens of Arcosanti collaborate in creating and selling their signature product, ceramic and bronze wind bells, according to The New York Times.

ecology.

The roughly 50 inhabitants of the community ("arconauts") continue living out founder Paolo Soleri's idea of "arcology" -- architecture fused with

### Finca Bellavista Sustainable Treehouse Community, Costa Rica



Finca Bellavista is probably the closest that real life can get to Swiss Family Robinson. The sustainable treehouse community is comprised of more than 25 elevated structures, as well as a base camp community center, located deep in the Costa Rica rainforest more than a mile and a half from the nearest town. Its typical resident is a laid-back, environmentally conscious American

expatriate, according to founders Erica and Matt Hogan, who started building Finca in 2006.

"In general, people [who live here] want a simpler lifestyle," Hogan told Business Insider. "They want a life less ordinary. They're usually very green, environmentally-conscious and want to live off the grid."

### Twin Oaks, Virginia



Founded in 1967, the intentional community of Twin Oaks is one of the most successful of that era. The small commune is situated on 450 acres of land in Louisa, Virginia and is famous for its tofu. Approximately 100 residents live in the community now, which consists of seven group houses along with a gathering area, swimming hole, graveyard, soy production facility, several greenhouses, and more.

"Of the thousands of similar communal experiments forged throughout the '60s and '70s, Twin Oaks is one of only a handful to have survived," Cluster Magazine wrote in a recent profile, "as other utopian experiments collapsed under the pressure of self-sustainability and interpersonal drama."

## New Songdo City, Korea



Whereas most of these communities are a throwback to a simpler time, New Songdo City on the South Korean coast is an ambitious new community project that couldn't be more futuristic-looking. Scheduled for completion in 2015, New Songdon will be located on Incheon Bay, and will include city-wide WiFi integration and will be highly environmentally friendly. The city will be built from scratch, like Dubai or Abu Dhabi.

"They're promising full technological integration," Hallman told Salon. "Lamps and tables and cars and everything will be computerized and on a network. You won't even need a BlackBerry or a laptop."

## Yogaville, Buckingham, Virginia



Virginia's [Satchidananda Ashram](#) and the surrounding community is known as Yogaville, a space where people of diverse backgrounds have come together to live the yogic lifestyle. The holistic community was founded by Sri Swami Satchidananda, a spiritual leader who aspired to share his message of peace with like-minded others.

As the community's website [describes itself](#), "We came from various places. We have various tastes, various temperaments, various faces, various beliefs, but we are living here as one family, helping each other."

## The Ecovillage at Ithaca, New York



Created in 1996, [Ithaca's Ecovillage](#) is a sustainable intentional community and education center which describes itself as an "alternative model for suburban living which provides a satisfying, healthy, socially rich lifestyle, while minimizing ecological impact." It currently has two 30-home co-housing neighborhoods, named "Frog" and "Song," with plans to build a third (the forthcoming "Tree"), as well as community gardens and organic farms.

## Polestar Yoga Community, Big Island, Hawaii



A cooperative yoga and meditation community located on Hawaii's Big Island around 30 miles south of the city of Hilo, Polestar was founded on the teachings of Paramhansa Yogananda, author of the best-selling 1946 spiritual manifesto "Autobiography of a Yogi." The community lives by its core value of karma yoga (selfless service) and essential purpose of "deepening the spirit."

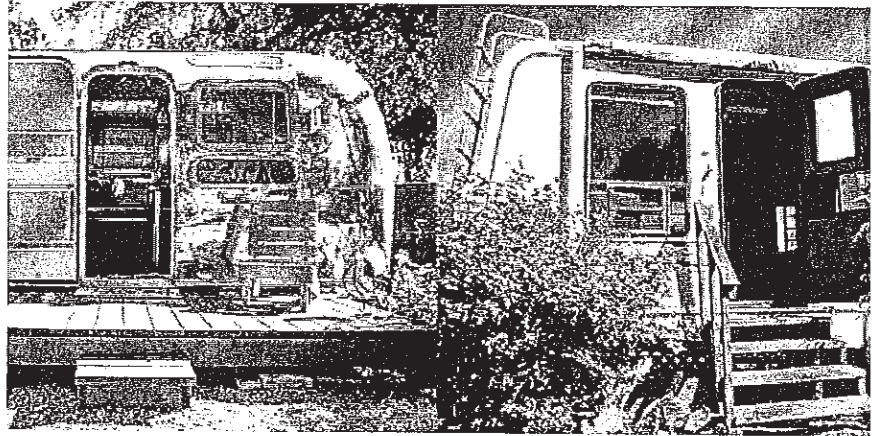
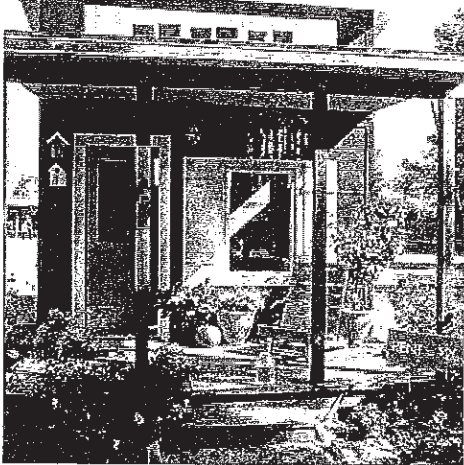
Polestar consists of a small core community of permanent residents, but also welcomes guests to visit and stay on its 20 beautiful acres, enjoying the yoga temple, spiritual library, orchards and organic gardens. One guest described it as "a strong environment for spiritual transformation."

## Austin's Utopian Homeless Village Is Becoming A Reality

Austin's 27-acre Community First Village will eventually house 250 formerly homeless and disabled people. Can they build a real "hobo's paradise"?

posted on May 7, 2014, at 12:45 p.m.  
Summer Anne Burton

Mobile Loaves & Fishes, a social justice ministry, has been planning their new homeless community in on 27 acres in East Austin.



The village is still being built right now, but even just the development feels like a sunny mini paradise, hiding right off the road on the east side of Austin, Texas.

**The new community will feature homes — RVs, tiny cabins, and teepees — for 250 formerly homeless for rent as low as \$90.**

Nate Schlueter, the director of the organization's ROADS Micro-Enterprise program, explained that paying your rent is the first rule of the community. Community First isn't just a "housing project," it's a "**homing project**," and central to that is the sense of real ownership the community will have by being financially responsible for their homes. But Mobile Loaves & Fishes will help the community find ways to pay that rent and earn extra money, through employment opportunities both on-site and off and help with applying for disability benefits.



**Ellis was homeless for six years before January, when he moved into his own RV with the help of the organization. He plans to move the RV to the Community First Village as soon as residents can move in.**

He's already working on the land, doing gardening and maintenance projects. He explained that when he was homeless, his full-time job was "**getting food, staying warm, and staying away from the police.**" Now, he works five days a week at the village and on other

projects, and around 45 friends attended his housewarming party in January.

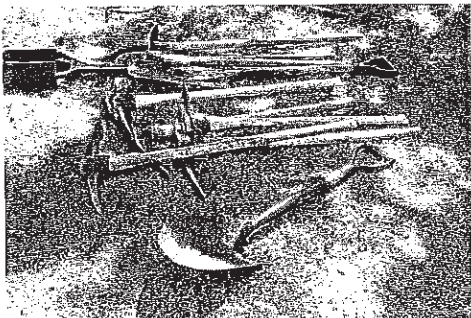
**The community will also home a permaculture food forest and gardens, chickens, goats, rabbits, a woodworking and RV repair workshop, a bed and breakfast, outdoor cooking areas, a pond full of catfish, and an outdoor movie screen for community gatherings.**



Heidi Sloan, the director of the program's Animal Husbandry Program, says caring for animals helps people learn to be givers. They didn't want the work of tending to the dozens of chickens on site, to feel like drudgery, so **the chicken pen and coop is cheerful, colorful, and bright.** The coop was built by a group of women and girls from the National Charity League, who worked with a crew of homeless future residents to paint and personalize the space.

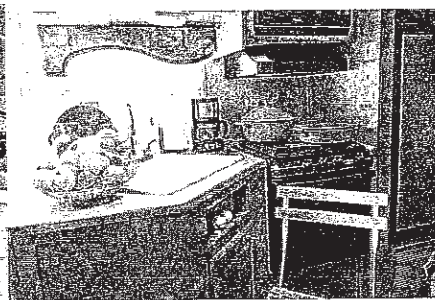
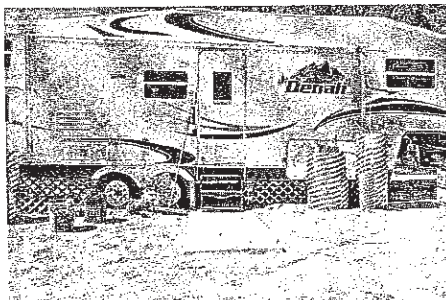
Sloan's goal is to make their chicken coop part of Austin's Funky Chicken Coop Tour.

**Even the tools at the development site are brightly painted and happy looking.**



When asked whether the project would be able to sustain enthusiasm years after opening, the Mobile Loaves & Fishes staff remarked that **"when you build beautiful environments, people want to be there and it's sustainable."** One of the goals of the community is to make it an enviably delightful place by any standard, not just "nice for a homeless shelter." Some of the staff is even planning on living on site, and it's easy to see the appeal when you're surrounded by gardens, clucking chickens, and sunny tiny homes.

**The homes at the village include mobile homes, tiny houses (the frames are shipped from Poland and can supposedly be built in around 8 hours!), and tents.**

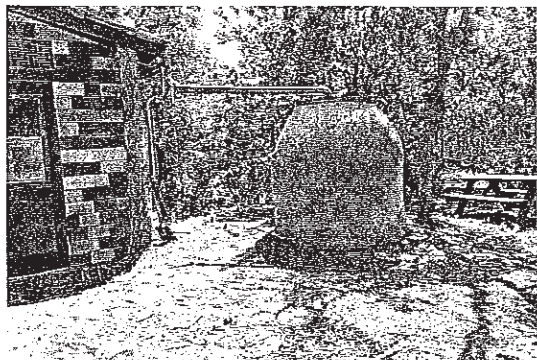


This mobile home is decked out as a demonstration. This would house a single homeless person and cost \$325, a month. But the program includes ample employment opportunities — for example, **there will be fruit trees lining the property and that harvest could be used to make jams and jellies that could be sold at local farmer's markets.**

The plan is also for the village to be a gathering place for Austin's wider community to come together and form relationships with the chronically homeless.

The group is already having Saturday morning volunteer breakfasts. Their cook, Dennis, recently lived in an apartment, but moved back into a creek bed near the property because **he missed his connection to nature**. He hopes to move into the village once it is open. He now cooks for a group of volunteers and homeless on the weekends, and sometimes the group invites bands to come out and play as well.

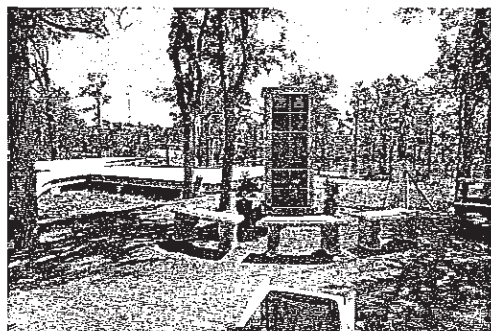
The community is already getting involved — there are several Eagle Scout projects on the site including this Thai jar rainwater collection tank.



And a giant chessboard! The group hopes to empower volunteers to make real connections with the chronically homeless, who don't often have friendships outside the homeless community. **At the community farm, volunteers will be taught and led by formerly homeless staffers.** Recently, one homeless worker led a third grade field trip on a tour through the site.

On the other hand, the community itself will be gated and require registration. As Schlueter explained, the homeless are much more vulnerable to violent crime than they are likely to perpetrate it, and he said there was a palatable sense of relief in the community when it was explained that they would be protected at the village.

There is also a memorial garden being built on the site to remember members of the community that have died.



Schlueter explained that while the homeless community is tight-knit on the street, often when someone dies they are denied closure. Families often get involved for the first time in years and the memorial services and grave sites aren't reachable for homeless friends. **This garden will provide a place to mourn and remember.**

Larry Williams was a vibrant and beloved part of the Mobile Loaves & Fishes homeless community. **He wanted to be the first resident of the Community First Village, and in his way he was.** He passed away in November 2013, but this memorial tribute to him will have a permanent place on the site.

The song "Big Rock Candy Mountain" describes a "hobo paradise" where "hens lay soft-boiled eggs" and "the farmers' trees are full of fruit."



The song also describes streams of whiskey and cigarette trees, but it still feels like an apt metaphor for what Mobile Loaves & Fishes is trying to do. I showed up to the village with a lot of questions — would it be accessible to downtown Austin? Yes, there's a bus stop nearby and the city is considering moving the stop to the entrance. Would enthusiasm be sustainable? They believe that the combination of community gathering,



employment opportunities, and permaculture gardens will make this a place that people want to be for years to come. Will the homeless be happy and want to stay there? It's true that sometimes the chronically homeless "choose" homelessness despite receiving disability or having enough employment to qualify for low-income housing. However, often the reason they find themselves gravitating back to the streets is due to the closeness to the land and the community they have there. Community First Village is emphasizing those qualities in their development rather than focusing solely on getting a roof over people's heads.

Most importantly: **Could they have dogs? Yes, as long as they aren't huge.**

The village just doesn't feel like it's a shelter for tragic people of some other class. It would be an incredibly lovely home for *anyone*, and many of the community's principles are ones we could all use more of: living sustainably, and close to nature and animals, and spending time with those you love.

