

SELF-SUSTAINING
COMMUNITY

Inman couple seeks backing

By Bob Montgomery
bob.montgomery@shj.com

Wendy and Aaron McCarty of Inman believe the lifestyle many of us enjoy today could be completely upended if a major disruption ever occurred in the energy grid.

They dream of building a self-sustaining eco-village, complete with energy-efficient geodome structures, vegetable gardens and bamboo stands, and self-made clothing and goods.

They hope to partner with local schools to teach students the dying trades of blacksmithing, candlemaking, looming and more, she said.

"We're hoping this will bring in tourism – breathe new life into the community, and jobs," said Wendy McCarty, an artist and photographer.

The couple has sought the support of local leaders, and needs about \$1 million and a 100-acre property with a running stream to get the sustainability park project off the ground.

They've gotten moral support. Now comes the hard part – raising the funds and finding the right piece of property.

"It would be great to have this in Inman," said Tom Plemmons of the Inman Area Chamber of Commerce. "I am proud they have tentatively selected Inman as a host site. I hope to help them turn this into a reality. The hard thing is turning from paper to reality. It takes a lot of hard work."

The McCartys hosted a barbecue last week in Saluda, N.C., which was attended by local officials as well as the president of SUN (Sustaining Universal Needs) Foundation, the nonprofit that is working with the McCartys.

SUN's mission is "to assist people and the society in general in transitioning off the fossil-fuel based economy that currently is winding down around us," according to John Litter, president.

The gathering was attended by Inman council members Ray Rogers and Ginger

ECO-VILLAGE

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Morrow McGuire and chamber members Plemmons, Bessie Fisher and Cliff Newmark. Also attending was Missy House, a representative with U.S. Rep. Trey Gowdy of Spartanburg.

Litter estimated it will cost \$1 million to get the eco-village up and running, with more funding needed later as it grows.

Fisher, an experienced grant writer for Inman, said she could help by exploring grant funds.

Rogers said he was impressed by the proposal Wendy McCarty delivered to council earlier this summer, and he's found a real estate agent to help her look for available land. "I'm amazed they selected Inman as a prototype," he said. "I'm glad she selected Inman to do it."

Newmark said he believes the McCartys could succeed in drawing more business and tourism to Inman. "I'm certainly open to ideas," said Newmark. "I'm excited because Wendy is so excited. Her enthusiasm is so infectious. I want to learn more."

The McCartys think communities should start becoming self-sufficient – free of fossil fuels and powered by the sun, wind and water, and able to grow their own food and make their own goods.

"We aren't preppers," said Aaron, a professional landscaper, referring to doomsday survivalists who build underground shelters stocked with canned food and guns. "And we're not hippies."

Residents would produce their own food, including meat and vegetables, cider, bread, cheese and butter. They could

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–Tom Plemmons

even generate income by producing enough to sell.

"It will be as self-sustaining as possible," he said.

The farm would not be totally devoid of modern conveniences. It will have electricity – generated by sun, wind and water – and plumbing.

In fact, the inside of a geodome home can be built with all the amenities found in any other new house.

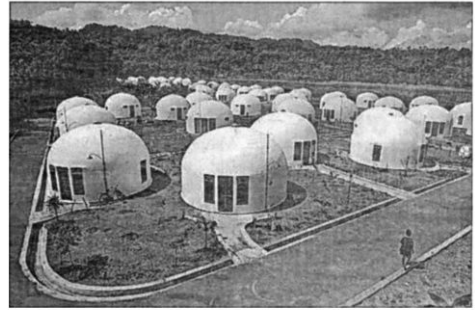
"Even the Amish are dependent on many industrially produced farm implements and tools, as well as industrially produced milled lumber," Wendy McCarty said.

Plemmons said the idea of a self-sufficient community isn't new to Inman. In the years before automobiles, residents had to be self-sufficient, he said.

"The family farm has been a tradition in the Inman area," he said. "In the early days you had to be self-sufficient."

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Geodesic domes that serve as small houses are a feature of the sustainability farm/park envisioned by Wendy and Aaron McCarty of Inman. SUBMITTED PHOTOS/WENDY MCCARTY



Aaron McCarty, a landscaper, envisions a sustainability farm and park near Inman that would include gardens producing fresh vegetables.



Ayden McCarty, 6, helps his father Aaron McCarty. The Inman family is hoping to be among the first to develop a sustainability farm and park.