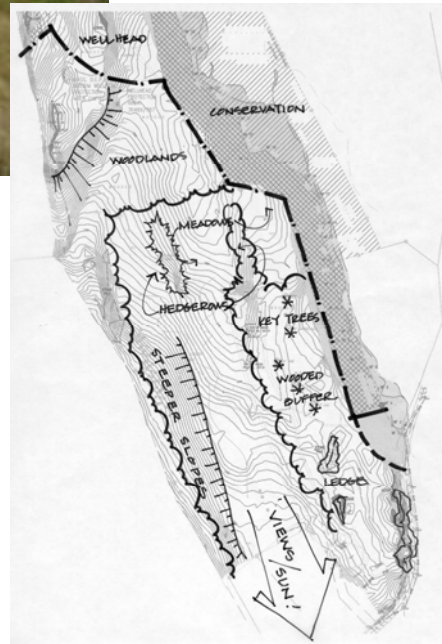
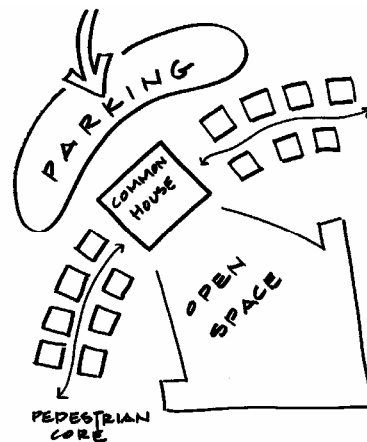


Gently sloping, south facing meadows surrounded by rich woodlands provide a sense of spaciousness and privacy. However, steeper slopes, bedrock, and conservation restrictions protecting wetlands and wellhead limit the buildable areas.



Walt helped the clients visualize alternative layouts for each community, based on cohousing principles of tightly clustered homes around a pedestrian core, leading to the common house. Architect Laura Fitch is at left.



Sawyer Hill Co-Housing

Berlin, MA

Master Plan completed 2006

Walter Cudnohufsky Associates, Inc
Ashfield, MA

with

Kraus-Fitch Architects

Office of Michael Rosenfeld, Architects

Goldsmith, Prest & Ringwall, Engineers

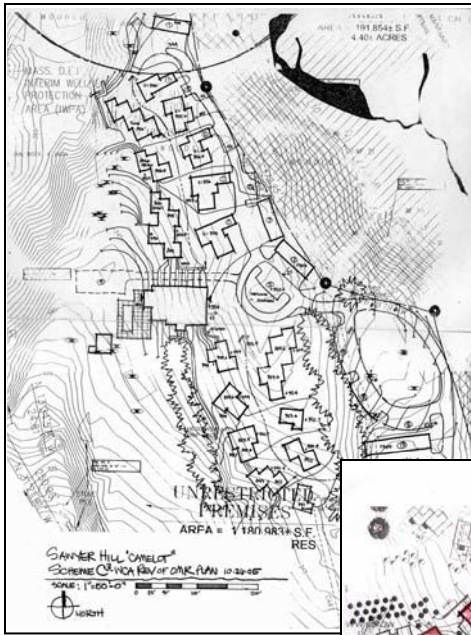
With the prohibitive cost of land in eastern Massachusetts, two co-housing communities combined resources to purchase a former nursery on 64 acres of land in the Town of Berlin. The two communities – evocatively named Mosaic and Camelot – had hired separate architects, but needed a single site plan that would make efficient use of the land, respect the separate identities of the two groups, respect the conservation restrictions held by the Sudbury Valley Trustees, and pass municipal review under Massachusetts General Law Chapter 40B Comprehensive Permit provisions.

Working collaboratively with sizable team of architects, engineers, attorneys, and development consultants, as well as two actively involved client committees, WCA facilitated meetings to establish programmatic priorities, assessed the property, and revised earlier layouts to better fit the site.

What had initially appeared to be a spacious site quickly showed its constraints: ledge, surface and groundwater, wellhead protection, and conservation restrictions limited the buildable areas.

Working with the site:

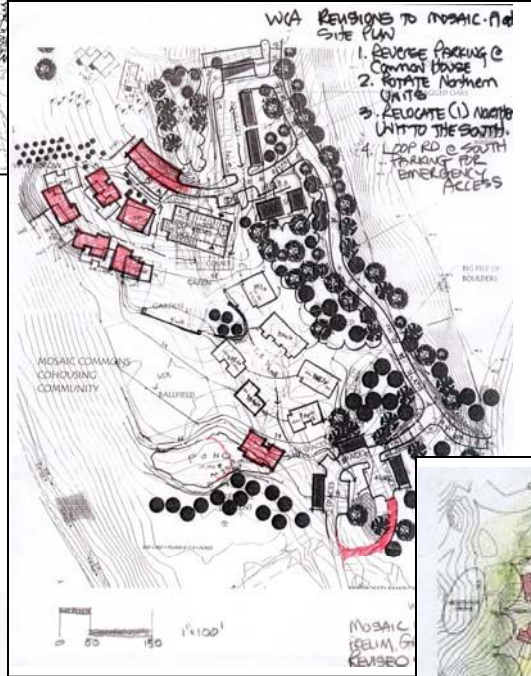
The site plan needed to fit 68 units of housing and two common houses into the site, using the change in elevation to provide two-level access where possible and maximizing solar orientation. Peripheral parking for 160 vehicles avoided key trees and other natural features, with grading replicating existing drainage patterns as much as practical. Every effort was made to minimize site disturbance, reduce impervious surfaces, and keeping a compact footprint for the entire development.



Refining the plan:

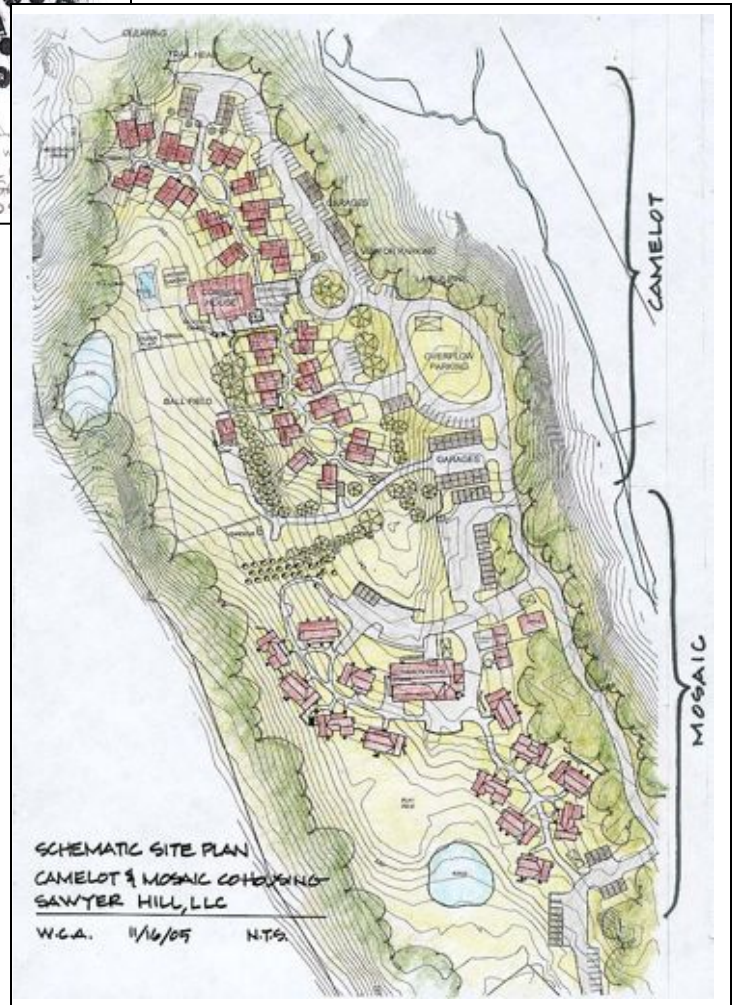
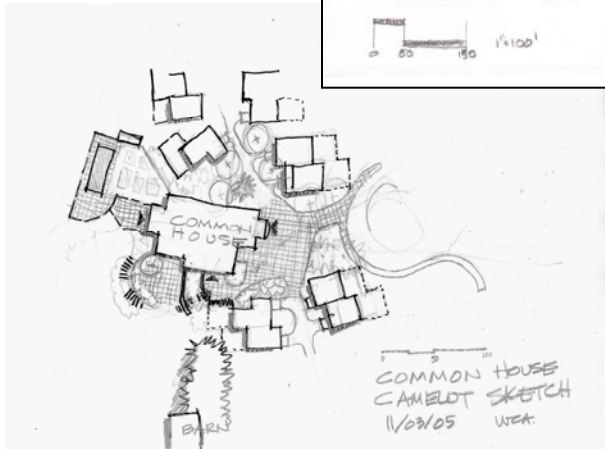
Since each community had its own priorities and site challenges, WCA worked separately on each neighborhood, fine-tuning the grading and alignment of buildings while ensuring the two halves of the project would meld seamlessly. Larger site issues – such as emergency access, stormwater management, overflow parking, and pedestrian links – required careful negotiation not only among the future residents, but with permitting authorities.

Final products included grading, planting and lighting plans, as well as recommendations that helped facilitate the 40B approval process.



Lessons learned:

Given the complex and multi-faceted constellation of clients and consultants, it was essential that the intentions and priorities of each group be clearly articulated. Only then could good decisions be made. Public education – of client as well as community – is critical to achieving smart growth ideals.



Our favorite quote: Early in the process, a spokesperson for one community objected to a revision to their initial site plan, stating “You are solving problems we don’t think we have.” The more we thought about it, the more that seemed to articulate the type of perception that landscape architects bring to such complex site planning projects as this.