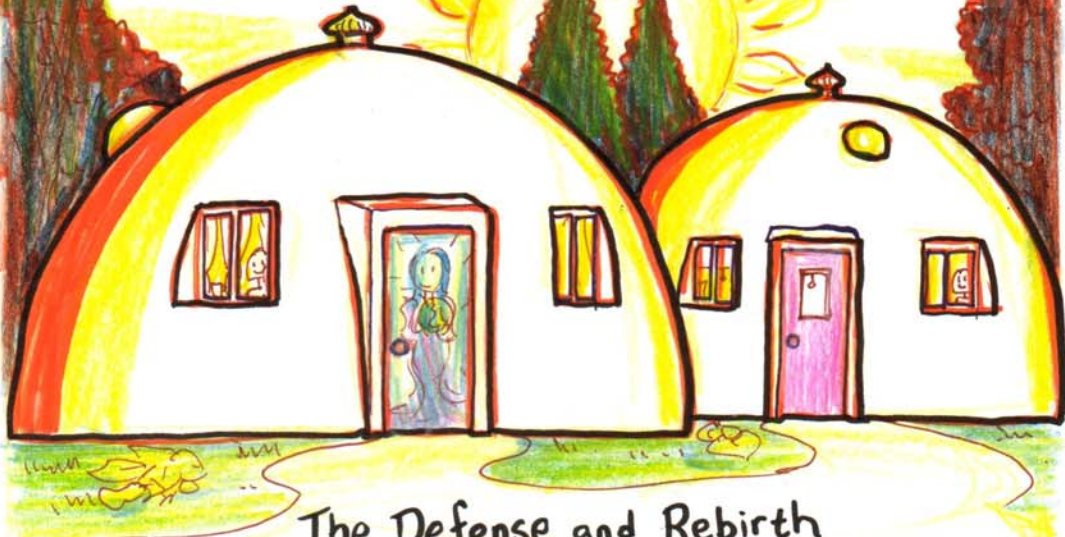


# Save the Domes!



The Defense and Rebirth  
of the Baggin's End Co-op in Davis, California



Story & Art by Alfred DEC. 2011 - JAN 2012

Save the Domes!



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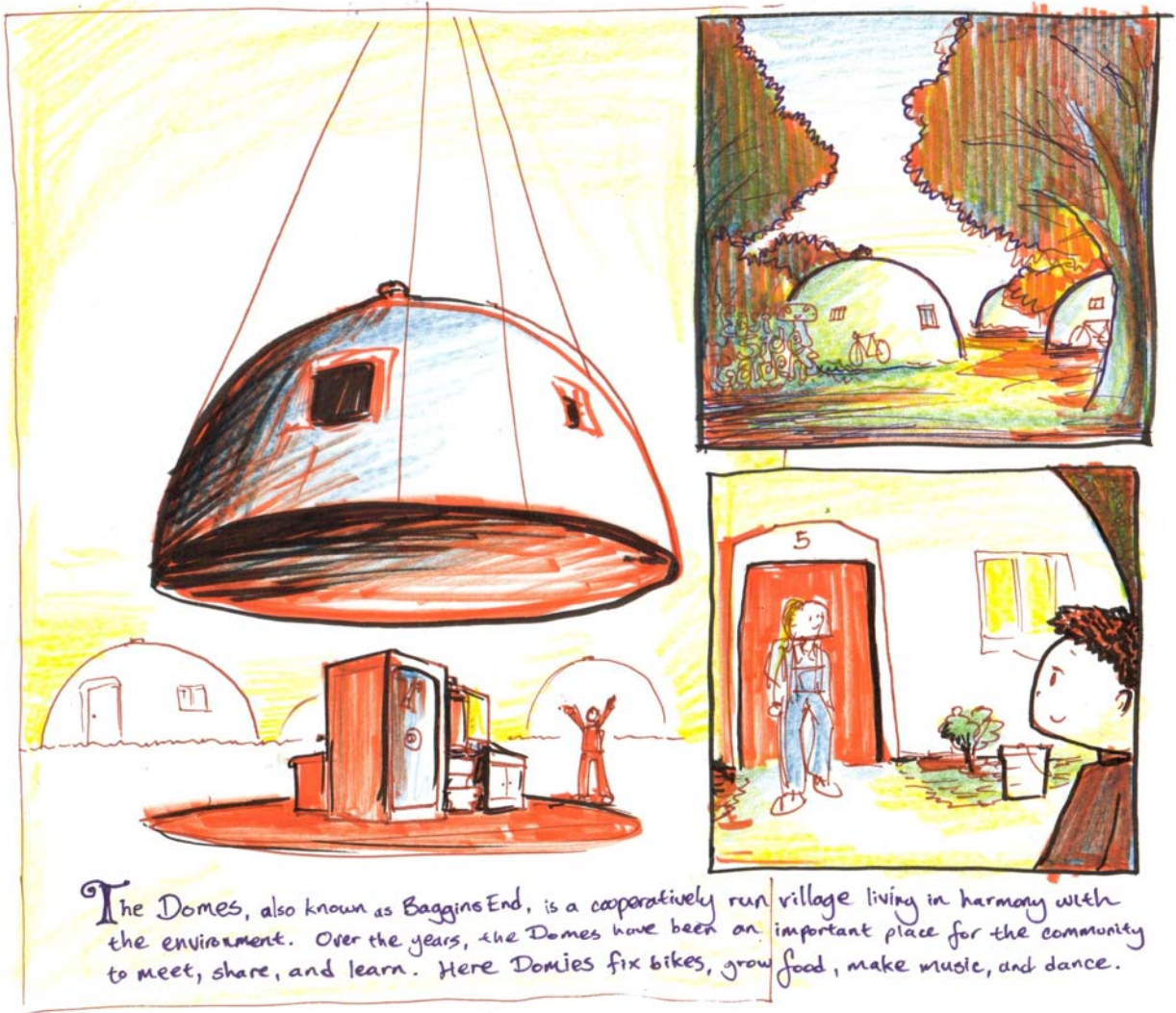
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January 2012





## What is a Dome?



There are 14 Domes at Baggins End, numbered 2 through 14.

Who are the Domies?



Domies come in a wide range of shapes and sizes. As students at the nearby university, they learn how to save the world by making it a more sustainable place. As leaders of many movements, Domies have started other communities, made bicycling yet more popular and easy in their city, and founded organic farms. As people Domies are friendly, welcoming, and love to work together.





THIS STORY IS DEDICATED TO  
EVERYONE WHO HELPED SAVE THE DOMES,  
AND TO THOSE IN LAND STRUGGLES,  
REFORM MOVEMENTS AND RESISTANCES  
THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

TOGETHER WE ARE UNSTOPPABLE!

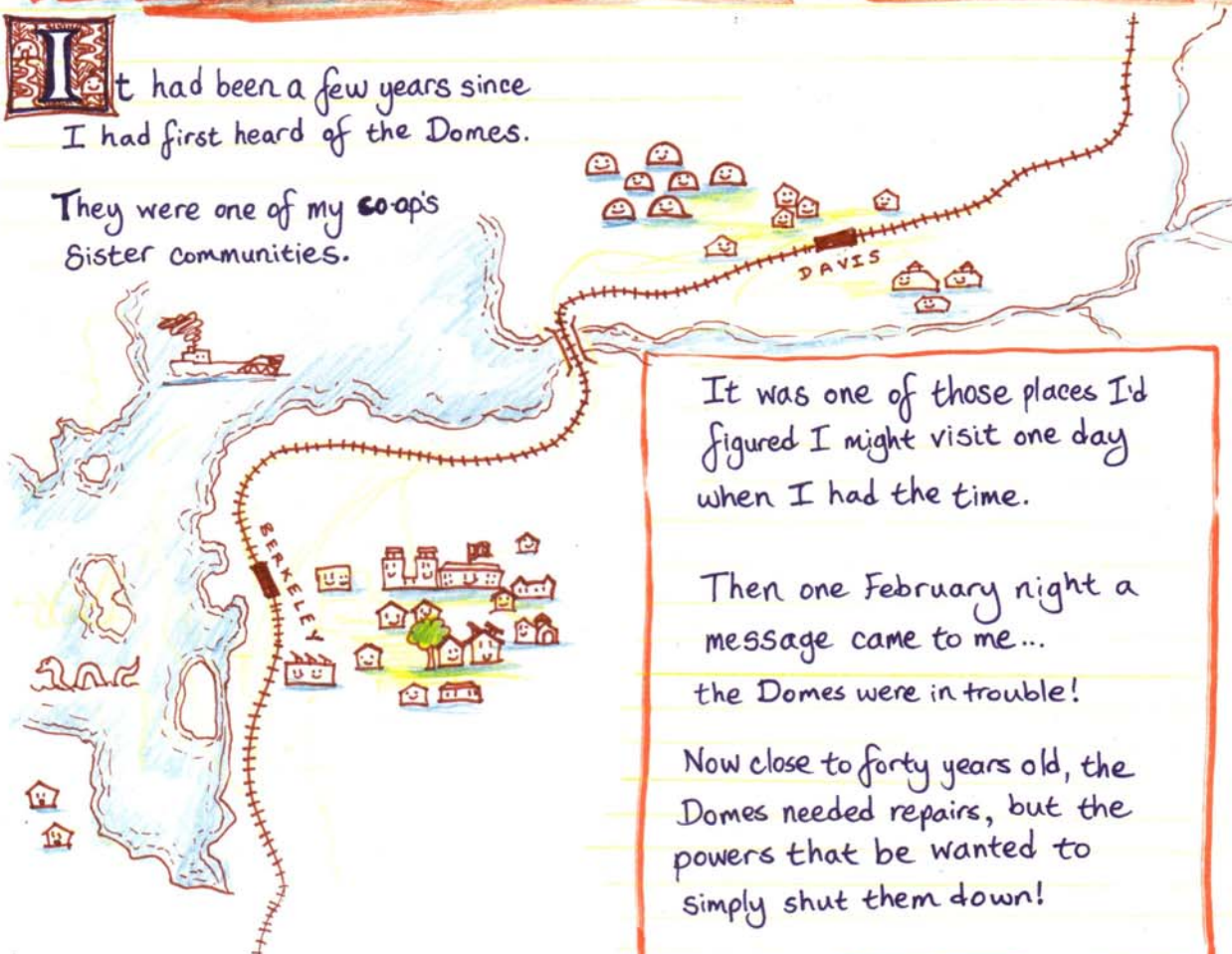


CALIFORNIA, 2011



**L**et had been a few years since  
I had first heard of the Domes.

They were one of my co-op's  
Sister Communities.

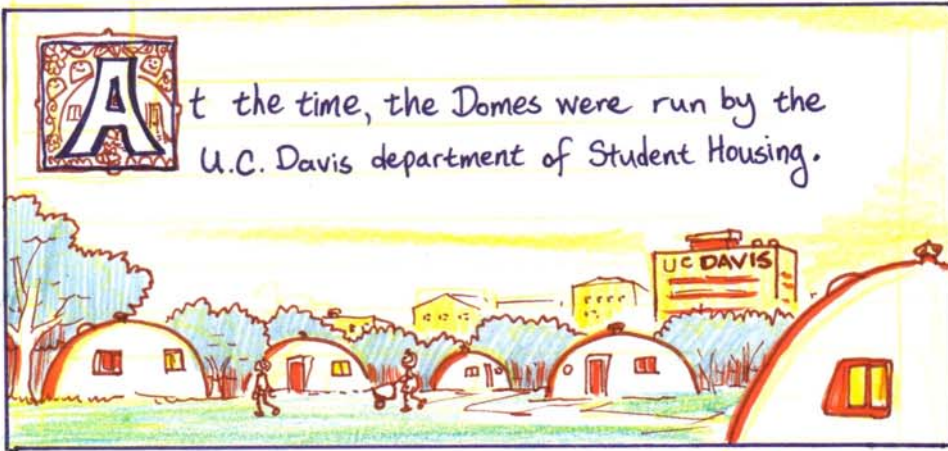


It was one of those places I'd  
figured I might visit one day  
when I had the time.

Then one February night a  
message came to me...  
the Domes were in trouble!

Now close to forty years old, the  
Domes needed repairs, but the  
powers that be wanted to  
simply shut them down!





At the time, the Domes were run by the U.C. Davis department of Student Housing.

The Domes, like the Dorms, sit on the UC campus and house students.

But the similarity ends there. The

Domes are a co-op,

where residents - called Domies - share meals, gardens, chickens, and chores. They also govern themselves, with

different Domies in charge of things like planning activities, growing food, or

conflict resolution. Every two weeks, all the Domies meet at council to make decisions using consensus, where ideas are discussed and adjusted until everyone is in agreement. This prevents tyranny of the majority.



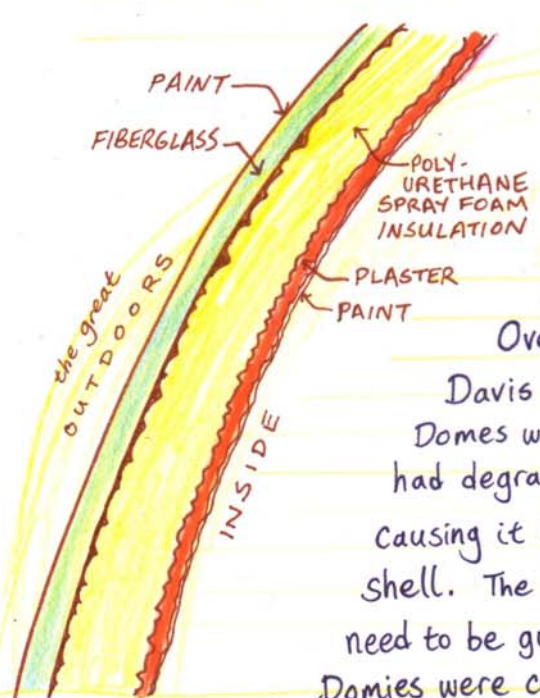
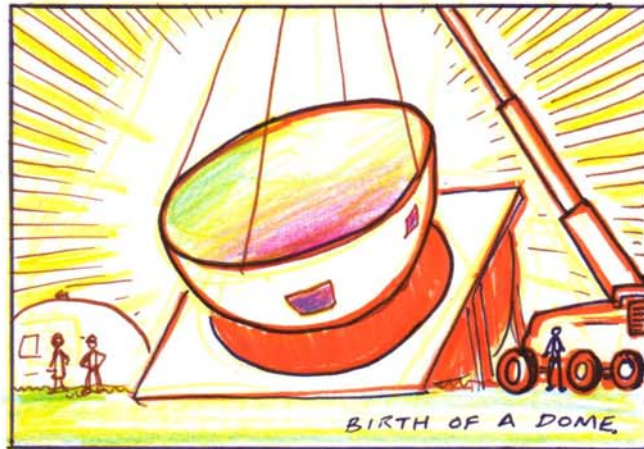


**B**ack in 1972, the university was growing and all the new students needed places to live.

Fourteen domes were built to provide an affordable alternative to ordinary dorms.

The fiberglass domes were cast in one piece, then lifted - each weighs just 1,000 pounds - and placed over prefabricated plumbing cores. Insulation, lofts, and windows were then installed.

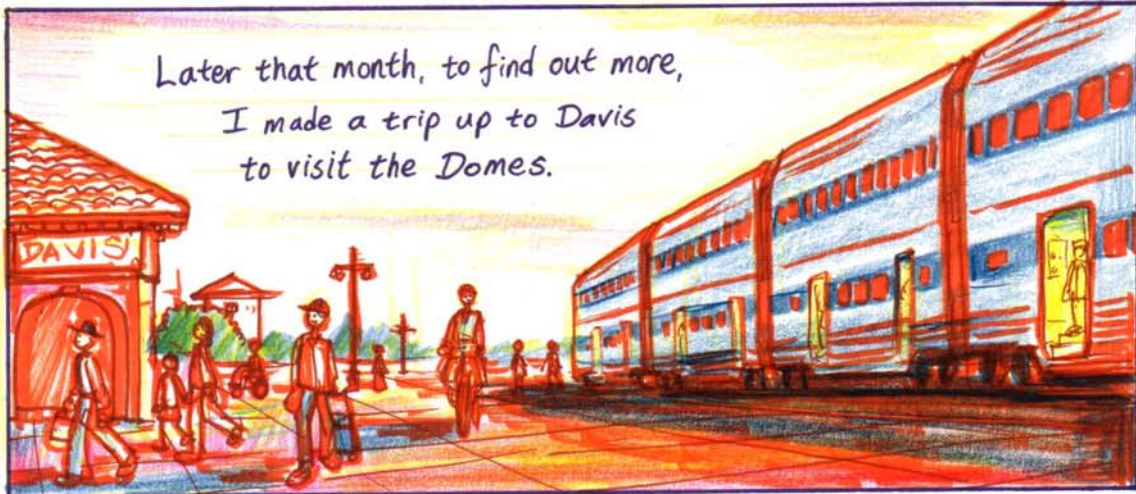
Students - the first generation of Domies - did most of the construction work, and also planted gardens around the Domes.



Over the years, the hot Davis sun - some of the Domes were once painted dark colors - had degraded the foam insulation, causing it to peel off the fiberglass shell. The university thought it would all need to be gutted and replaced. But the Domies were confident that patch repairs would be enough.







**A**t the Domes I found a welcoming and well-organized community. Previously, Domies had started and run organic gardens, taught fellow students sustainable living, and created bike collectives.

Now, they organized friends and former residents, and negotiated with the university to make a business plan to pay for the repair and continued use of the Domes.





The domes themselves were in great shape. Other than a few areas of old foam, very few things needed fixing even after forty years.

In fact, due to their shape, domes are the strongest of structures and can easily withstand earthquakes and hurricanes.

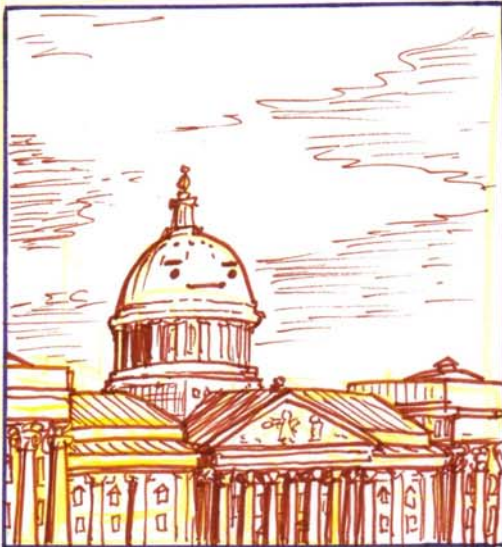
ORDINARY BUILDING:  
weak spot where beams and columns meet at right angles.



DOMES:  
forces evenly distributed over entire dome.



THERE IS A REASON THAT  
NUCLEAR REACTORS LIVE  
UNDER DOMES!



Domes have long symbolized democratic government, and these domes were no exception. However, while most domes tower above cities, perched atop prominent buildings, these domes are homes people live in, among gardens of food and beneath towering trees.





## Save the Domes!

**D**omies first asked sustainability-minded professors about moving the Domes from Student Housing, which didn't want to run the Domes, to an academic department. This was an existing long term plan for the space.

**ONLY**  
**1 6 2 DAYS**  
TO THE END  
if you don't help  
**SAVE THE DOMES!**



However, the gears of the university turn quite slowly, and with just half a year left in their leases, the Domies needed a backup plan to ensure the continuity of their community. And so the Domies sought assistance from another co-op in Davis, the Solar Community Housing Association. (S.C.H.A.)

**F**ounded in 1979 by former student co-ops, SCHA owns and runs three co-ops in Davis, providing affordable housing to around 25 members.



Recently, SCHA had saved two historic houses, moved them across town, and renovated them into a new co-op housing eight people.

Unlike U.C., which figured if one dome had problems, all were near the end of their life, S.C.H.A. believed in repair and reuse.





UC had estimated it would cost a million dollars to fix the fourteen domes and make the site and a couple of domes wheelchair accessible. SCHA, with their experience rehabbing buildings and network of volunteers, estimated they could do it for less than a tenth of that.

At their estimate, saving the Domes was not only financially feasible, but would also earn SCHA some money during the course of the proposed five-year lease.



Makes one wonder what could be done about student fees if UC was run by co-ops...



I returned to my home co-op, the Berkeley Student Cooperative. Guided by the Rochdale Principles of Cooperation, among which is cooperation between cooperatives, we decided that as the nation's largest student co-op, we could help SCHA save the Domes.



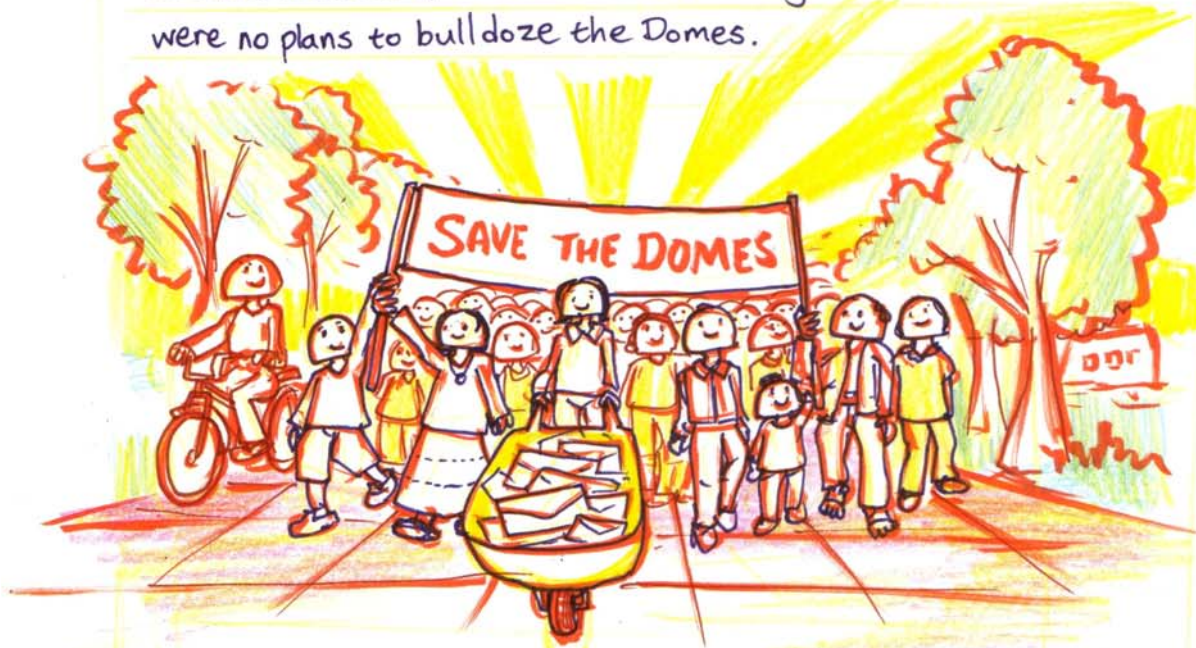
In March, four Domies came to our Board of Directors to present their plan and ask for a grant of \$10,000. We decided to give them \$20,000. I ended up going back with the Domies to Davis that night to celebrate.





Meanwhile, Domies continued to raise money from friends and former Domies, and also wrote to the University, urging them to adopt the SCHA plan to save the Domes. A local band, Orange Morning, wrote songs and released an album called "Save the Domes."

In May, dozens paraded and delivered letters of support to UC administrators, who assured a cheering crowd that there were no plans to bulldoze the Domes.



Although the Domies still had to move out in August, by then, negotiations were well under way. First, agreements were reached to continue use of the community yurt and gardens. In October, SCHA signed an agreement with UC to renovate the Domes, the first step towards SCHA leasing and running the Domes.





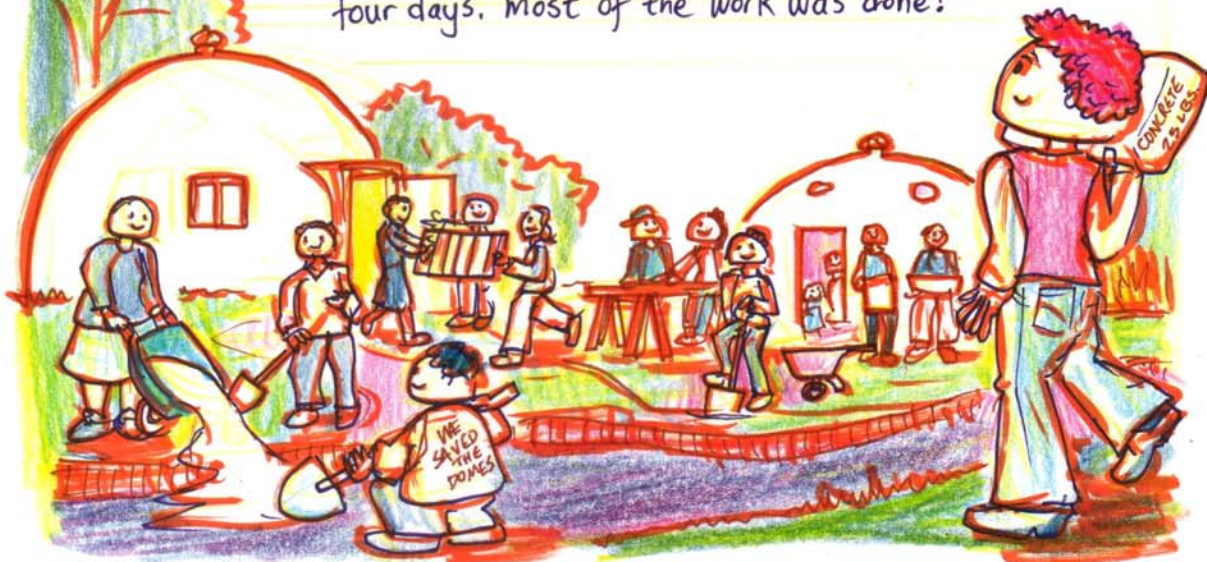
Throughout the time, community work parties were held, where Domies and volunteers built railings, patched foam, cleared paths, and cleaned up dark scary places.

These parties culminated in a 4-day Community Build event the first weekend of November.



**H**undreds took part in Community Build.

Some poured concrete. Some made food. Some provided childcare. Some painted walls...or was it ceilings? Some played music. By the end of the four days, most of the work was done!

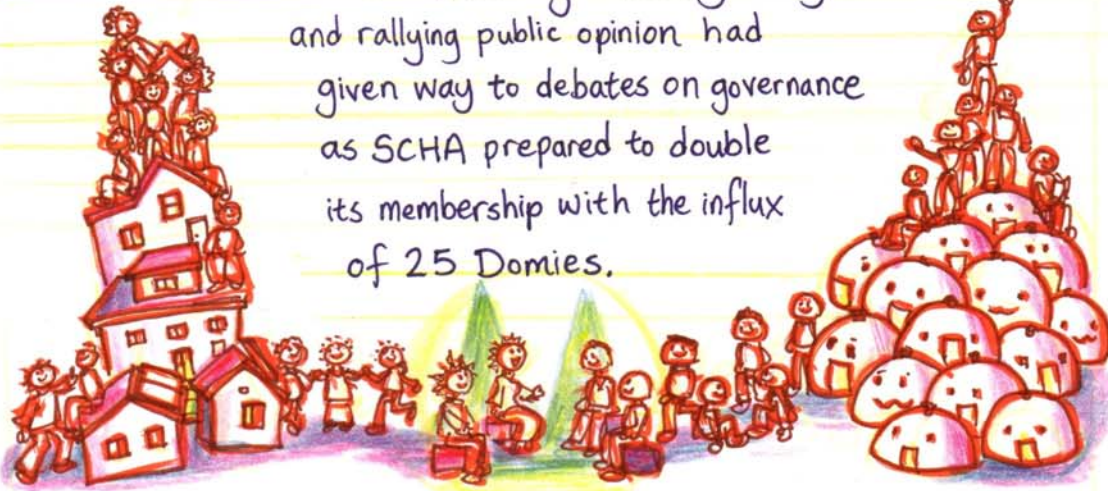




**B**y then, the Domes ground lease was close to being finalized, there were just a few things left to paint, and new Domies had been selected to live in the first group of Domes to be reopened.



The earlier meetings on raising money and rallying public opinion had given way to debates on governance as SCHA prepared to double its membership with the influx of 25 Domies.

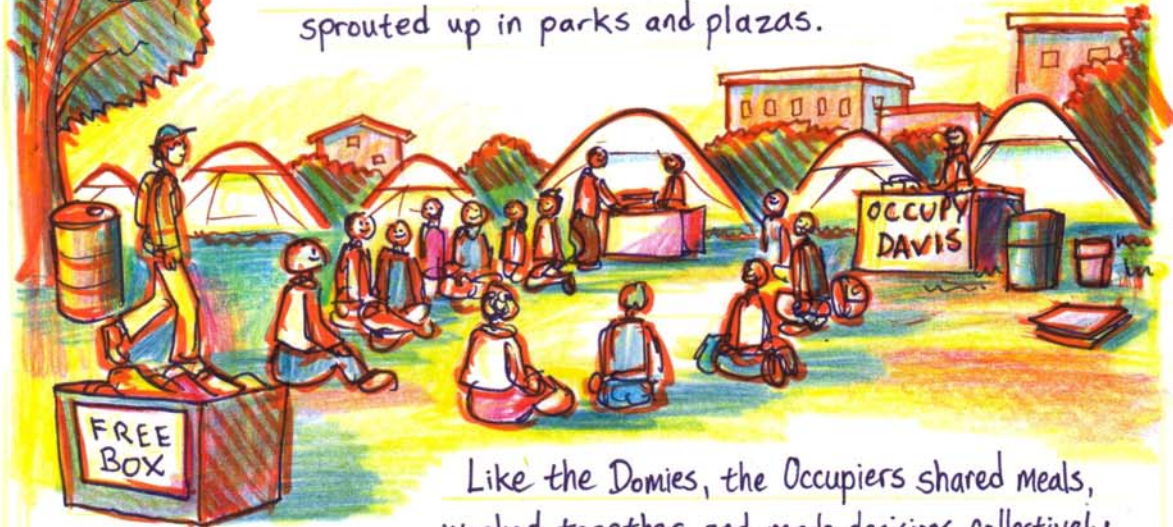


Old Domies who had graduated were busy doing what Domies do best: making the world a better and more sustainable place.





Meanwhile, in Davis and elsewhere around the world, hundreds of Dome-like communities sprouted up in parks and plazas.



Like the Domies, the Occupiers shared meals, worked together, and made decisions collectively.

Domies past and future were of course on the front lines, and some were among those pepper sprayed by UC Davis police.



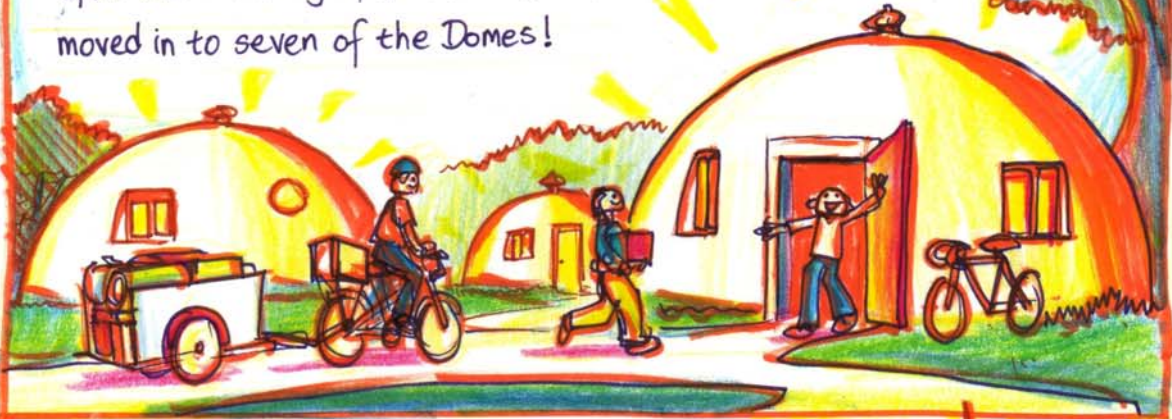
The movement only grew. Across the economy, cooperativity was on the rise.

Thousands moved money from banks to credit unions, where members, rather than the 1%, elect the Board of Directors and share in any surplus earnings.





**L**ate December, SCHA signed the Domes ground lease with the University. Inspections were finalized in the following several days. Finally, in January, a year after the crisis began, fourteen new Domies moved in to seven of the Domes!



There remained work to be done to get the other seven domes online, and much more to do elsewhere in the world:

empty oversized houses to turn into co-op housing, oppressive institutions to democratize, fossil fuel addictions to overcome.

The Domies were ready.

ONWARDS! TO A BEAUTIFUL NEW BEGINNING!





a couple of Domes!

  
❁ Special Thanks ❁

The Domies  
Solar Community Housing Association  
[www.schadavis.org](http://www.schadavis.org)

Community Built Association

The California Aggie

KDVS

The Sacramento Bee

Orange Morning

The Davis Enterprise

The Davis Voice

Berkeley Student Cooperative

Spaghetti Night

Friends of Baggins End

The Domes Documentary

UC Davis Real Estate Services

UCD Sustainable Living & Learning  
Task Force

...and many others...

and of course, all of  
our supporters & volunteers...  
together, we saw this through!



inside a Dome kitchen!



New Wheelchair Accessible Pathways!

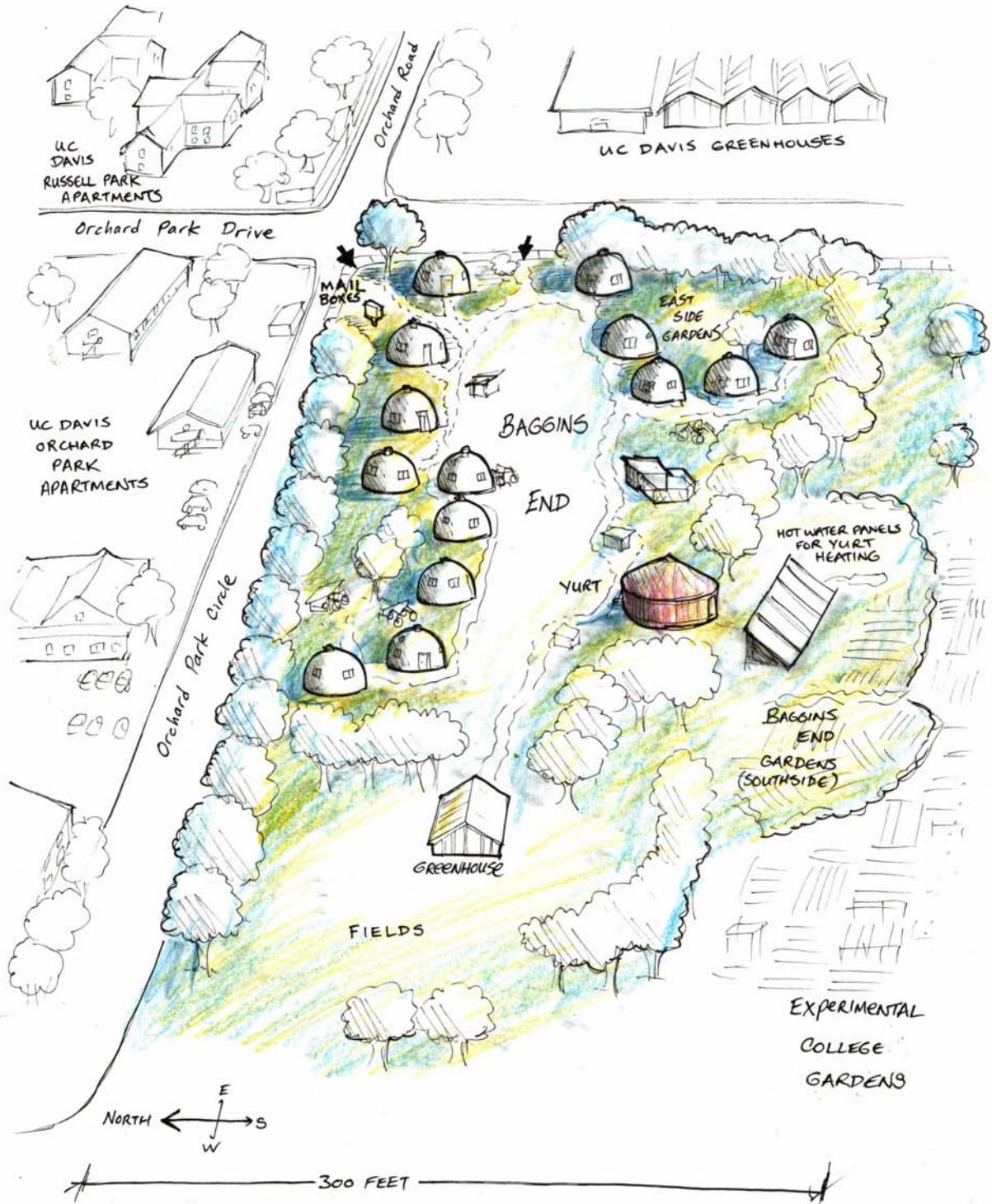
 

2012 JANUARY 7



# Baggins End Site Plan

2-14 Baggins End, Davis, CA 95616





## Dome Facts

Built: 1972  
 Number of domes: 14  
 Residents per dome: 2  
 Architects: Ron Swenson & John Hernikl of EcoSystems  
 Built by: UC Davis students

Exterior: Fiberglass shell with spray foam insulation.  
 Interior: Painted plaster walls and ceiling.  
 Freestanding wood frame platform with plywood floors and walls.

Heating: All electric  
 Water: Connected to UC Davis water and sewer mains.  
 Utilities buried underground in trenches leading to road.

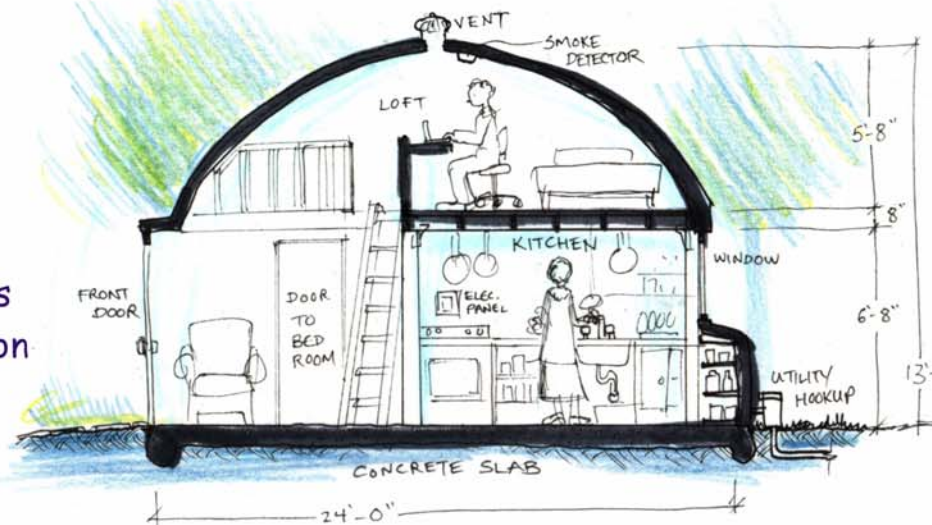
Floor Plan



note:  
 the floor plan of each dome varies somewhat. Lofts and bedrooms vary in size.

One dome has an enlarged wheelchair accessible bathroom.

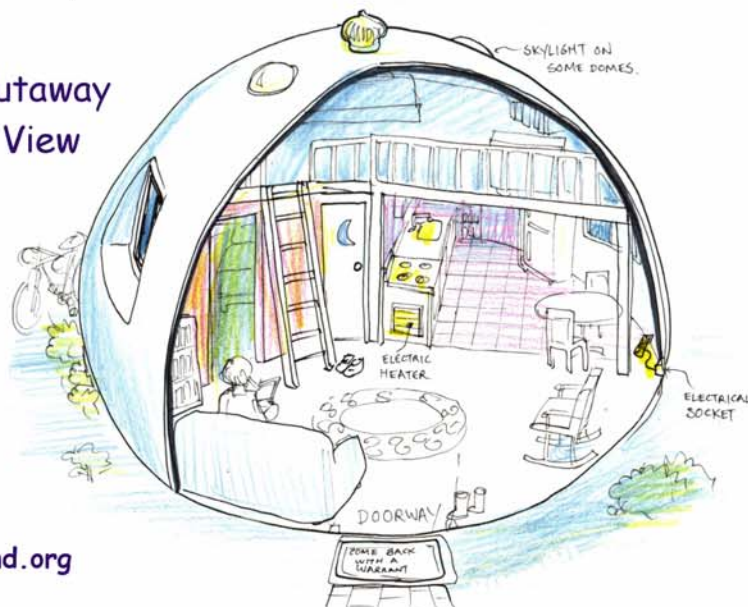
Cross Section



Weight of shell without foam: ~1,000 pounds.

Originally the Domes were each a different color. They are now all white. This helps keep them cool in the summer.

Cutaway View



### What kind of dome is it?

The Domes are not geodesic domes. Geodesic domes are made up of many triangular sections, whereas The Domes are cast from a single piece of fiberglass.

Domes website: [www.bagginsend.org](http://www.bagginsend.org)