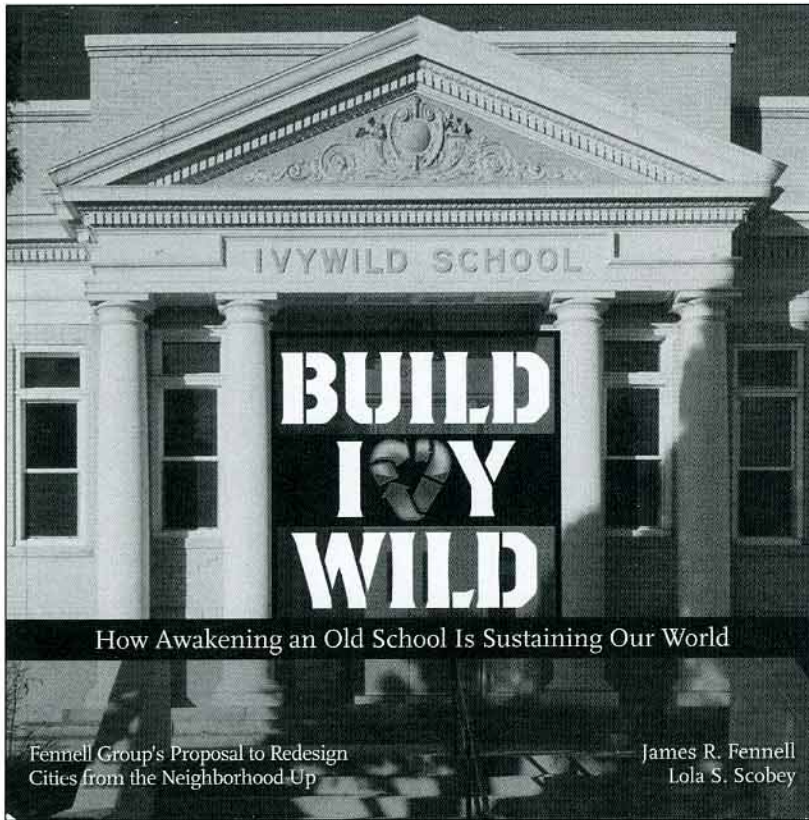


BOOK REVIEW

BUILD IVYWILD: HOW AWAKENING AN OLD SCHOOL IS SUSTAINING OUR WORLD

By James R. Fennell and Lola S. Scobey

Reviewed by Miriam Shane



with others in their neighborhood to increase efficiencies and profits, to be healthier and to feel happier”, states Fennell and Scobey in their published proposal, *Build Ivywild, How Awakening an Old School is Sustaining Our World*. Symbiosis may be defined as two or more dissimilar elements coexisting, especially to the mutual benefit of one another. This process is one that evolves over a very long period of time in nature, but Jim Fennell, who has been working with his design concept since his early days as an architect, recognizes how it can and should be used in building practices locally to effect global change for the better. He proposes a three-pronged approach to include functional, environmental and cultural symbiosis.

The Ivywild District concept grows organically out of cultural symbiosis by creating a place for people to interact socially. A community is so much more than just the place for production and acquisition of goods and services. It is a place where individuals and families gain identity and solidarity. It is here they find security in numbers of like-minded individuals as well as the sustenance necessary for everyday living. Ivywild School has been the

Something exciting is taking place in a quiet neighborhood on the south end of Colorado Springs. The old Ivywild School, which closed its doors in 2009 after nearly a century, is reopening in hopes of revitalizing a community and invigorating a global perspective. In 2010 the team of Bristol, Coleman and Fennell were granted the sale of the building to repurpose, recycle and reuse the site to be the center of community activity for the Ivywild neighborhood. When completed, it will house the Bristol Brewery, the Old School Bakery, and Fennel Group, an architectural design firm. But this is only the beginning, not just of this project but hopefully as a design concept for all communities. The regeneration of the Ivywild school is a multi-phase construction project that will continue to evolve over a ten year period. The evolution of this space is fitting because it mirrors the guiding principle of symbiosis put forth by Jim Fennell and his design team.

“A symbiosis district is made up of a unique blend of strong, passionate individuals who freely choose cooperation

landmark of this neighborhood for 92 years, consequently, the partners involved went to create lengths to ensure that the community would embrace this project before considering the application for building permits. They invited the neighbors to a discussion of the proposed project to get their input. Almost all were in favor of the Ivywild project and saw the value of the symbiosis concept. Only some were distressed that the building was no longer operating as a school or that the art on the walls of the building that included their children’s or grandchildren’s handprints would be destroyed. (Those precious imprints will remain!). The whole project was made easier for the team to get approval not only from the neighbors but from the city because of the long standing success of the Bristol Brewing Company (Mike Bristol) and the Blue Star Restaurant (Joe Coleman), whose operating spaces were designed by Fennell Group.

Functionally, with Bristol Brewing at its core, the Ivywild project will create a closed-loop system where each part of

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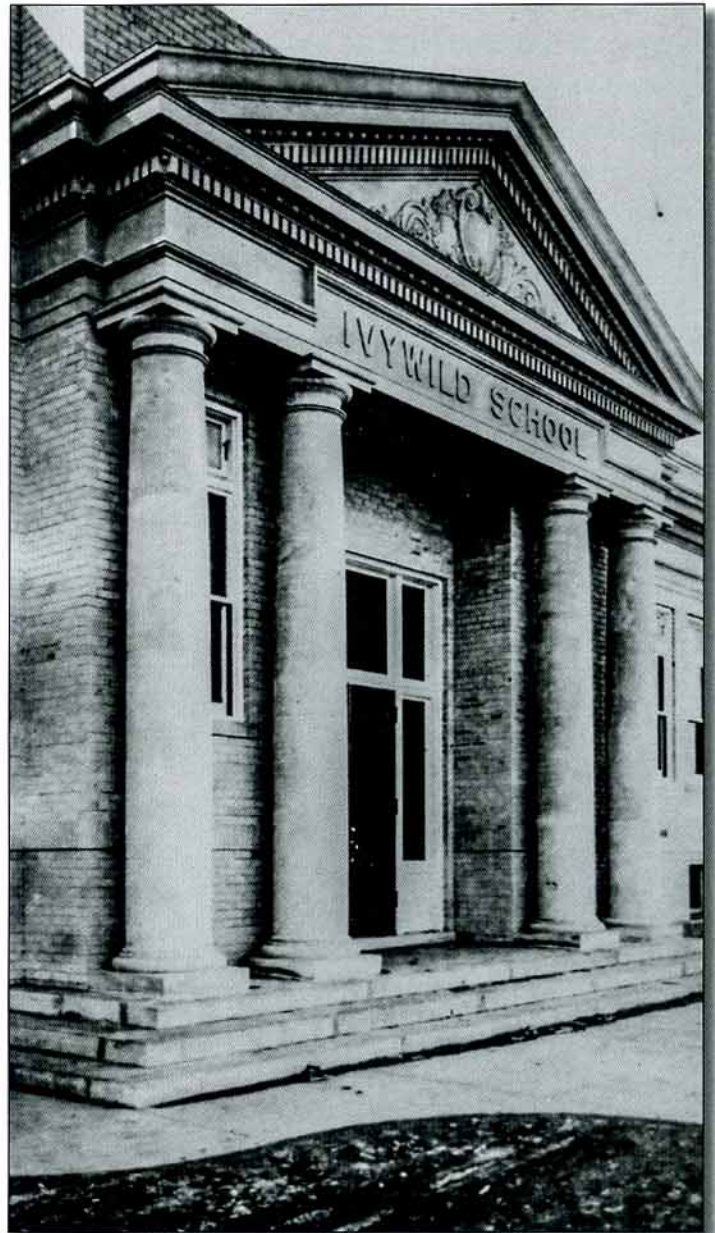
the project uses the byproducts of one another as needed and where applicable. Think of a terrarium that never needs to be watered once the elements of plants, soil and water are established and using the sun as a freely available energy source. By this example, the heat produced by the fermentation process of brewing beer will heat the building (or at least supplement the cost of heating), the grey water from this process will water the gardens and greenhouse plants. Reclaiming rinse water for the gardens is an example of functional symbiosis where there is a minimal impact on natural systems (don't have to use more water), maximizes renewable resources (grey water is recycled into the water table) and eliminates the need for energy from off-site sources (don't need to use city electricity to pump more water). Only a couple of the functional or economic expenditures for Ivywild operations are addressed in this way as is the reuse of building materials found in the old school itself. Fewer items need to be purchased or procured off-site thereby saving costs.

Environmental symbiosis looks at the building within the landscape to utilize the topography, the track of the sun and seasonal rain fall, all of which Fennell refers to as listening to Earth Languages. Fennell borrows this concept from the native people of this land who understood the necessity of recognizing everything from the effects on the environment caused by the changing of the seasons or a prolonged drought if they were to survive. Fennell has designed additions that will improve the efficiency of the building which not only reduces working costs but perhaps creates an unregistered harmony for the occupants. Designers, given the opportunity, often create their spaces to enhance or inspire our connections with nature. The Fennell Group also addressed the microclimate or local weather conditions of the foothills community of the Cheyenne Mountain region within the context of environmental symbiosis. Although the school is oriented on a north-south axis, large new windows take advantage of the southern exposure that is available to heat the thermal mass of cement that makes up most of the school and the greenhouse that will exist on the south end of the building. Right now, there is a large glass enclosure that holds the brewery tanks on the north side of the building. Since the production of beer generates its own heat, creating a structure on the northern exposure insulates the colder side of the building.

But why even consider the repurposing of an old school building, why bother with what the neighbors think, why put forth some much time and effort in the first place? The answer comes from Jim Fennell in a letter to his daughter, Lyssa, at the beginning of the proposal. He writes simply "When you build something, make sure that it does not

block the sun or the rain or make your garden feel sick. Build to make your garden grow!" In a world that is increasingly disassociating itself from the processes of the earth and from the relationships that give our lives meaning in the name of progress and profit, Fennell, Bristol and Coleman have chosen to give back by example. They proclaim, through the building of the Ivywild District that viable options for functional, environmental and cultural success exists for business at the local level and will contribute to global health. The dividends are huge: a healthier, happier and thereby richer community, city and planet for all, now and for future generations. ✨

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Entrance to the Ivywild School c. 1918 courtesy of the Starsmore Center for Local History, Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum