

# MANITOU ARBOR ECOVILLAGE FAQs

## Your Frequently Asked Questions Answered

### What is Manitou Arbor Ecovillage?

Manitou Arbor Ecovillage (MAEV) is an EcoSpiritual village in the process of forming. We are dedicated to caring for People and the Earth by living and demonstrating a sustainable culture appropriate to our southwest Michigan bioregion.

Our village of 44 residences—33 green detached single family homes or duplex units and 11 attached green apartments—will be small enough for each of us relate and interact with each other so that we each can have an effective voice.

MAEV will be sustainable; utilization of renewable sources of energy, recycling of wastes as resources, and use of earth-friendly, energy efficient techniques using local builders, materials, and suppliers, will be standard. We will incorporate passive solar architecture and landscaping to maximize energy as efficiently and as naturally as possible. Our goals of energy efficiency, a small footprint, and low maintenance costs will guide us as we work with, rather than against nature, to keep our human population and activities within the carrying capacity of our natural environment.

While we envision some sharing of responsibilities and resources, MAEV is not a commune, and most of us will be employed outside the village. When fully mature, MAEV will be a settlement that provides residences, food, commerce, leisure, social, and spiritual needs.

As an intentional community, you as a MAEV resident can expect to have greater social interaction, compared to other groups of houses or apartments. MAEV promotes no particular religious tradition while respecting each other's personal spirituality.

Our common spiritual vision is expressed in the [Manitou Arbor Ecovillage Covenant](#).

### Where will MAEV be located?

The land, located in Comstock, Michigan on East Main Street, between 28th and 30th streets, is currently part of Nazareth Farms, owned by the Congregation of St. Joseph, (formerly the Sisters of St. Joseph of Nazareth, Michigan).

The property is a beautiful site of 270 acres, with many acres of mature woods and 20 acres of young trees planted in 1993. We anticipate preserving this part of the property as a natural "re-creation" area in order to continue to support the existing diverse wildlife community (deer, wild turkey, coyote, fox, pheasant, and many species of birds and wildflowers). Wooded paths lead to you to Schoonover Lake and take you through a mixture of hardwood and conifer trees. A hermitage or two might be hidden here to facilitate retreats and quiet communing with nature.

There are also more than 100 acres of agricultural fields and eight farm buildings in good condition. Our residential units, community center, gardens and commons will occupy some of this land, as well as some of our alternative energy generation, water treatment and waste recycling systems. However, the majority of this part of the property will be dedicated to resident's organic (and perhaps biodynamic) agricultural pursuits.

We anticipate establishing a community supported agriculture (CSA) program, giving our residents the opportunity to raise organic, free-ranging chickens and a variety of other animals that will interact positively with each other and with the entire natural and human community. Appropriate agricultural enterprises are now being researched—we are looking at activities which do not require excessive human or mechanical energy, and that will fit within an overall permaculture design.

Our neighbors to the east include a series of greenhouse operations. Neighbors to the southwest include a family residence, and to the northwest, a new condominium development. Across the lake and north of us are individual residences but houses can't be seen from our property. Across the road, to the south, is a large field, still farmed by a local farmer.

### When will MAEV built?

We estimate groundbreaking in Spring 2011. To date, we have:

- Rezoned the land for our purposes
- Obtained the legal description for our development (site condominium)
- Hired a project manager, architect, and legal consultant to guide us through the project
- Incorporated in a Limited Liability Corporation (LLC), which will serve as our practical face to the economic world
- Completed the architectural design plan for the community building
- Completed the architectural design plan for the eleven attached residences (25% of the total residences)
- Completed the MAEV Resident handbook
- Twelve core members who have made the contributions necessary to cover our infrastructure costs to date
- Developed and are refining a Planned Unit Residential Development (PURD), which will be submitted to Comstock in the near future

As new members join our group, committed occupancy will reach critical economic mass. At that point, we will be ready to approach banks and expect mortgages and construction to quickly follow.

### How much will it cost to live in Manitou Arbor?

This depends on what sort of home you want to build, and how you would build it. For example, a self-built, modest strawbale home will cost far less than a larger, builder-built structure. You could then make an estimate of the cost of your own home, and that would be a known element in your budget.

The current estimated pay-in cost for each of the projected 44 resident-partnerships is \$80K. This per household amount will pay for the community building and infrastructure mortgage. However; one of the main goals of Manitou Arbor Ecovillage is to make our community affordable, therefore the MAEV Development LLC and Future Resident Organizing Group (FROG) are actively working hard to find ways to reduce the current estimated pay-in cost. This cost includes choice of site (based upon availability), full access to the community center, as well as part ownership of MAEV's 40 acres.

## What are benefits of living in MAEV?

- A diverse and tolerant community, inclusive of all who share our covenantal vision.
- A healthier lifestyle. Buildings will utilize materials and paints that assure indoor air quality. Use of certain chemical pesticides will be prohibited by reason of their potential for contaminating our air, soil, and groundwater, not to mention the resulting harmful effects to the health of animals, birds, and humans. Plenty of opportunities and places for outdoor activities, social interaction, and meditative reflection.
- The perfect setting to build the attractive, energy-efficient, low maintenance “green” home of your dreams, supported by a community of neighbors doing the same.
- Our village will be pedestrian, family and child friendly. MAEV will be a great place to raise a healthy family. And, perhaps, to home school?
- You will have access to the community center, which includes a community kitchen, dining area, meditation room, library, meeting rooms, craft room and laundry. Future plans include a shared greenhouse, root cellar, storage area for bikes, kayaks, and related recreational equipment, a bark park, and a workshop.
- We offer 11 accessible apartment-style units, attached to the community center. We also plan to make a portion of the property’s trails accessible.
- Each of us will have the opportunity to participate in and enjoy the harvest of community-supported agriculture (CSA), the raising of organic and free-range chickens and a variety of other animals, organic gardening and farming, and related cottage industries.
- You can enjoy trails with access to an area that is a home for a diverse bird and wildlife community in a mature forest of hardwoods and conifers with a creek, and a wooded path leading to Schoonover Lake.
- MAEV offers simpler living a peaceful setting that is close to nature, yet minutes from Kalamazoo, and all of its cultural, educational, and recreational opportunities
- Privacy. Although our community will be interdependent, we all are desirous of privacy and will be respectful of each other’s need for privacy.
- Neighbors whose environmental values you share, and who will be there to lend a helping hand when you need them.
- There will be ample opportunities to shape your values-based community, as MAEV will be owner (you) developed, and managed by residents (you).

## Will I have to give up any conveniences to live in MAEV?

We encourage green practices such as carpooling and reduce, reuse, and recycle. The village will have access to typical conveniences, including cable, Internet, and city water. All residences will have composting toilets.

## What is an EcoSpiritual community?

People define “EcoSpirituality” many ways. Here is what it means to us:

Manitou Arbor promotes no particular religious tradition, and we respect each other’s personal spirituality. We believe that people of different faiths can come together to live, to neighbor, and to celebrate. Each of us recognizes that nature offers opportunity for profound spiritual experiences, personal growth and healing, and an awareness of wholeness and holiness in all of existence.

We believe that experiencing nature can open us up to a greater appreciation of our connection to all things, and provide an encouragement to right living. A significant characteristic of our village community will be the acknowledgement of this spiritual side of our world and ourselves, and the living application of that belief in our community's vision, decision-making, and celebrations.

As members of an EcoSpiritual community, we aspire to honor the sacred in all that is, and live responsible lives of justice and compassion. Precisely where all this will take us, we don't yet know, but we believe this is the path towards right living.

## Why the name “Manitou Arbor?”

“Manitou” is the term for Spirit among the peoples of the Three Fires Confederacy (Anishanbe), which include the Odawa, Potawatomi and Ojibway nations who were rooted in this place for thousands of years. The word Manitou expresses our desire to honor and recognize the native peoples whose land this once was. The concept Manitou involved the inter-relationship of humanity and nature, spirit and matter, the individual and the cosmos. The teaching involved wisdom, love, respect, bravery, honesty, humility and truth—as principles to guide the people in caring for the earth and each other.

“Arbor” means tree. The image of the tree of life is an archetypal symbol found in many cultures, with much rich symbolism and myth connected with it. In Native American tradition, the idea is that the Creator planted a Sacred Tree under which all people were to gather to find healing, power, wisdom and security. The roots of the tree spread deep into the body of Mother Earth (a symbol of spiritual depth) and its branches reach upward like hands praying to Father Sky. The fruits of the tree are the good things the Creator had given to people: teaching the path to love, compassion, generosity, patience, wisdom, justice, courage, respect and humility.

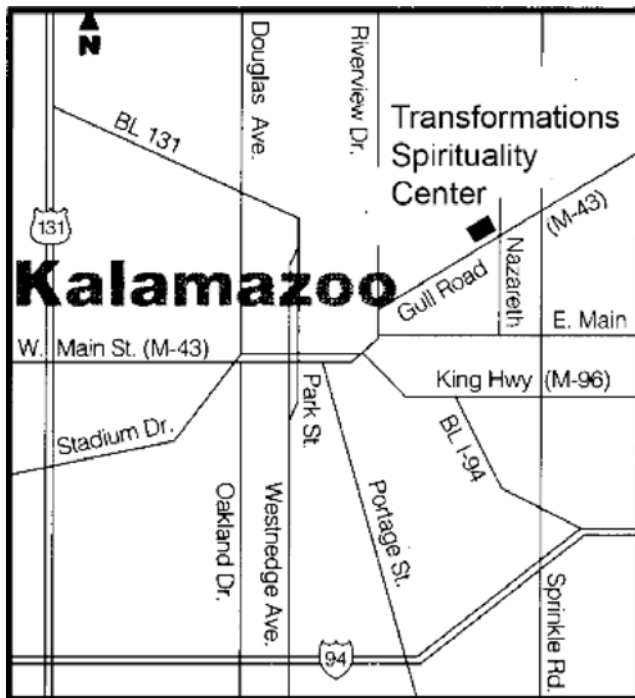
The life of the tree is the life of the people—if they destroy it or turn away from it they will lose their power and become sick, they will cease to dream dreams and see visions, they will be unable to tell the truth and deal with each other honestly, they will forget how to survive on their own land... these things would come to pass but the tree would never die because a day would come when the people would awaken and again would seek the tree.

## Are you interested in joining Manitou Arbor Ecovillage?

Orientations are held monthly on a Saturday at 1pm. At Orientation, we will give you a history of this project, the vision that inspires it and where we are at in putting the Ecovillage on the ground. If the weather permits, we will visit the 270-acre farm where the Ecovillage will be located. This Orientation is for anyone interested in our Ecovillage effort and especially for those who might like to become part of this group effort. For the next Orientation date, or to reserve a spot at our next Orientation, please call 1-800-354-0382 and leave a message, or email us at [mail@manitouarbor.org](mailto:mail@manitouarbor.org).

Orientations are held at the Environmental Studies Office of Sr. Ginny Jones, at Nazareth, MI, 3427 Gull Road (M43) on the East side of Kalamazoo (1.5 miles East of Borgess Hospital, 1 mile West of the Gull Road & Sprinkle Road interchange) on the campus of the Sisters of St. Joseph and inside the "Transformations: SSJ Spirituality Center." Come in the entrance off Gull Road. It is lined with large 100-year-old conifers. The "Transformations" building will be on your left and is clearly marked.

Upcoming Autumn Orientation Dates:  
October 25<sup>th</sup>, November 8<sup>th</sup>, December 6<sup>th</sup>



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