Vision: A world in which people actively care for each other and the planet.

Mission: We provide transformative learning experiences for growing healthy, just and sustainable communities both locally and globally. We support and draw from a variety of practical and visionary resources, especially the living, learning community of EcoVillage.
With all its pulsing vitality and new growth, late spring is my favorite season. It’s hard to believe the sheer concentration of life force: Peony bushes, crawling with ants that seem to nudge the flowers open, produce huge, dark-pink blossoms that smell like roses; grapevines on my south-facing trellis are growing six inches a day; and while something is eating my peas, the tomatoes are already flowering. Everything is so alive!

Our community is in the midst of vibrant growth as well. As one resident in her 70s put it, "You can’t live here and not learn." It’s true. As a pioneering community doing its best to address key social and environmental issues, EcoVillage Ithaca has plenty going on. The bubbling energy of change is not all easy, but when it works well, it can be exhilarating.

In the last six months, we completed the construction of TREE, our third neighborhood, making EcoVillage Ithaca, with 100 homes, the largest cohousing community in the world, and one of the greenest housing developments in the country. It is a perfect setting for our popular Net Zero Energy Building workshops. In the past year, we’ve helped train 58 architects, engineers and green builders to create buildings that produce more energy than they consume.

On the social side, TREE has recently adopted Dynamic Governance, a new form of very efficient and participatory governance. Meanwhile, the Village is paying attention to the "Elephant in the Room": how can we age gracefully in place in community, helping our neighbors with long-term care, without creating undue burdens on residents? Through our educational arm, Learn@EcoVillage Ithaca, we are supporting both these endeavors, as well as developing a 5-Year Strategic Plan to help guide our growing programs.

People are paying attention. This year we’ve had major news stories in National Geographic, PBS online and Bloomberg Businessweek, as well as Swiss and French magazines. As part of national and international movements for positive change, EcoVillage Ithaca continues to play a role in sending out new tendrils of growth.

Liz Walker, Director, Learn@EcoVillage
Shaping the Future by Reaching Those Who Will Create It: Students, Professors, Researchers

Over the past year, we’ve worked with students of all ages, from elementary school groups to graduate students. We’ve hosted 241 students for anywhere from two-hour tours ("dips"), to half- or full-day workshops ("dunks"), to five-day immersion experiences ("dives"). It is quite common for at least one student from each group to remark, "When I grow up, I want to come back and live here."
Training Professionals in Green Building Design

Beginning just a year ago, we crossed an important threshold in our educational programs. Working with state and local partners, we are now offering professional-level trainings to architects, green builders, community developers and planners.

“EcoVillage is an excellent place to see firsthand the topics covered at this seminar.”
—Net Zero Workshop participant

Architects and Builders:

In early May we held the third of three highly successful workshops this year called "What It Takes: How to Achieve Net Zero Energy in New Buildings.” Working in partnership with Taitem Engineering, and with co-sponsoring by the U.S. Green Building Council, we attracted 58 professionals over the course of the three workshops. Architects earned 14 Learning Units from the AIA, and LEED professionals were able to earn 14 GBCI CE hours for attending the workshop. Next Net Zero Workshop: October 31 and November 1, 2016.

Our 90-minute workshop "Net Zero Success Story: EcoVillage Ithaca, Fundamentals and Strategies of Net Zero Building" attracted 40 participants at the Multi-family Performance Program conference by NYSERDA on October 26, 2015. It led to some good networking, including attracting University of Michigan graduate student Adriane Wolfe to do some research on energy use in EVI's first neighborhood.

TREEd Neighborhood Green Features:

TREEd homes meet the highest building standards in the world:
- All LEED Platinum
- Seven are certified Passive House
- Three are “Net Zero” (they produce more energy than they consume for all energy needs)
- TREEd has achieved Net Zero Energy Ready designation from the Department of Energy.

Planners, Local Government Officials:

Korean East Travel Tours brought South Korean city planners and local government officials on two different tours, in August and November. The 33 planners were touring sustainable cities in the U.S., looking for good examples to bring home. They were excited to see so many different sustainability features at EVI, including integration of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farms. Some of them commented that they would bring this idea back home.
Growing Sustainable Communities — for People and the Planet

One of the most exciting parts of our work is to provide inspiration and support for other groups that want to start (or have already started) their own sustainable communities—whether they seek community on a neighborhood scale, as a new cohousing community or as a budding ecovillage. Sometimes this involves giving tours and consulting with visiting community organizers. Sometimes whole groups come for a day or an EcoVillage Experience Weekend, with workshops that are tailored to their needs. And sometimes we are asked to share the essence of our community through contributing to books or exhibits. Our 25 years of hard-won experience can really help beginning groups to get started in the right direction!

We stress ten principles:

1. Green building, promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy
2. Densely clustered housing
3. Low resource use
4. Strong social ties
5. Local food production
6. On-site businesses
7. Extensive composting, recycling and re-use
8. Affordable and accessible units
9. Open space preservation
10. Hands-on education

Sharing Inspiration:

LEARN was invited by the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) to share photos and stories about EVI as part of an exhibit and slideshows for the Paris Climate Talks, from November 30 to December 11. We were one of 24 ecovillages represented from around the world.

GEN has also invited us to be one of two dozen ecovillages from around the world to be featured in an Ecovillage Design Book, to be published in 2017.

Liz Walker was invited to write the Preface to Filipino doctor Wenifredo Maglana's book on a blueprint for creating an ecovillage in an endangered national protected area, Mainit Park, in the Philippines, to be published later this year.

Consulting with Forming Groups:

In the past year, we have met with organizers of nine ecovillages and/or cohousing neighborhoods from:

- The U.S.: Flower City Cohousing in Rochester, NY; forming cohousing groups in Saugerties, NY, and Oberlin, OH; Tiny House Collective in Kansas City; and a forming ecovillage in New Orleans,
- Canada: a budding ecovillage in the Waterloo Region, and one from Peterborough, Ontario, and
- Australia: Narara Ecovillage near Sydney, and a potential ecovillage near Melbourne.

It's exciting to share our "lessons learned" knowledge with these groups, and to hear about their innovative projects.

“We believe that ecovillages and intentional communities are the midwives of a new earth. We are living proof of this possibility and so we can tell a different story of the future.”

—Global Ecovillage Network
Spreading the Word

As global environmental, economic and social crises escalate, public interest in practical, positive solutions is intensifying. Because EVI demonstrates cutting-edge practices in everything from sustainable community development to green building, local food production, land use planning, and much more, it generates so much media coverage that it is hard to keep up with requests from journalists who know a good story when they see it.

New Documentaries:

- **EcoVillage at Ithaca: A Community Life** (8 min.), a 2016 documentary by Zacc Charvolin, a 19-year-old resident of EcoVillage, who is studying film at the local community college.

Recent Magazine Articles:

- **National Geographic**, December 22, 2015, “How These Communities Save Energy—and Time for What Matters,” by Christina Nunez. This popular article was picked up by the NY Times Syndicate, and about 20 other online news sources published it, including eScienceNews, Cohousing.org, the Global Ecovillage Network, the Urban Land Institute and many others.

  A survey embedded in the article posed the question, “Would you ever live in an ecovillage?” A whopping 77% of the 1,851 respondents said, “Yes, I like the idea.” Another 15% said, “Maybe, someday.” That’s 92% of the survey takers who responded positively to the concepts presented: living lightly on the planet while cultivating community.


- **PBS Online Magazine, Next Avenue**, August 10, 2015, “Green Retirement Communities Are Sprouting,” by Beth Baker. EcoVillage Ithaca was highlighted as one of several communities.

“The rhythms of EcoVillage Ithaca echo those of any small upstate New York town. On a recent weekday morning, three home-schooled boys whiz by on bikes. A woman adds topsoil to raised beds of spinach and kale, rejoicing that the plants survived the winter.

“But this isn’t just another sprawling residential development. EcoVillage is a planned co-housing community whose 240 residents share kitchens, car rides, and a commitment to sustainable living.”

—From the article in Bloomberg Businessweek
LEARN has planted the seed, and it is sprouting in the TREE neighborhood!

Over the past few years Learn@EcoVillage Ithaca has been helping the EVI community expand its understanding of how cohousing communities might organize and govern themselves more efficiently, more transparently and more kindly. Spearheaded by TREE resident Luigi Morelli and a small number of other residents, LEARN has brought visitors to the village to talk about “Dynamic Governance” (DG, also known as “Sociocracy”) and encouraged residents to take an online course in DG.

This culminated in a LEARN-sponsored three-day workshop, November 6-8, that attracted 43 participants, including 24 EVI residents and members of six other cohousing groups from Maine to Ohio. Jerry Koch-Gonzalez, the dynamic presenter from Pioneer Valley Cohousing in Amherst, MA, has continued to guide and mentor the TREE neighborhood.

The partnership between the neighborhood and LEARN has blossomed. A core group of residents spent three months crafting a proposal for piloting this new governance system, in April 2016 the TREE neighborhood approved the proposal, and in mid-June 2016 the eighteen-month pilot in “dynamic governance” launched.

DG involves changes both in structure and in processes. TREE’s multiple committees are now grouped into four decision-making Work Circles:

- PALS (plants, animals, and land/water stewards)
- Buildings & Grounds
- Neighborhood Life
- Administration

Each of the Work Circles has decision-making power in its sphere of responsibility and ensures that work gets done. With this power comes the responsibility for keeping the neighborhood informed about important imminent issues and decisions, and for making an effort to consider all perspectives as it crafts its final decisions.

A Coordinating Circle, composed of a leader and delegate from each work circle, coordinates, archives and communicates to the total membership the activities and decisions of the Work Circles.

The most comprehensive circle, composed of all TREE members and named the TREE Circle, makes decisions on major issues (such as significant/permanent changes to their community’s built environment, to their governance structure or to their financial, residential or legal responsibilities). It also meets for “community conversations” in order for the Work Circles to get broader input from TREE members. And TREE anticipates joining together for celebrations and getting to know each other better through storytelling, games, and other informal events.

Circle meetings and decision making are guided by dynamic governance process guidelines in:

- elections for filling roles,
- producing proposals that are reviewed at specified points in time and can be readily revised, and
- decision making that uses objections to improve proposals and that tests consent by “good enough for now and safe enough to try.”

Over the eighteen months, TREE will evaluate the pilot, refine the structures and processes as needed, and finally decide whether to continue with the structures and processes of dynamic governance, modify them, or return to TREE’s former mode of governance.

Mark Piechota, leader of the DG Team, said, “TREE is thankful to LEARN for ‘planting the seed’ and inspiring us to undertake this adventure.”

Learn@EcoVillage Ithaca Financial Summary, July 2015—June 2016

Income Total - $83,316

- Individual Donations: $27,111
- Bequests: $22,217
- Grants & Foundations: $9,294
- Other (book sales, guest stays): $2,599
- Tours (Private & Grp): $4,081
- Workshops: $14,321

Expense Total - $84,748

- Operating Expenses: $3,189
- Program Expenses: $2,845
- Payroll and Benefits: $61,077
- Contracted Services: $10,469
- CTA Fee: $5,942
- Miscellaneous Fees: $1,226

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To Donate:
Inspired? It’s easy to make tax-deductible donations by credit card or check.
One-time, monthly or quarterly donations to Learn@EcoVillage Ithaca help us to reduce administration costs and assure long-term funding. Donate online at http://ecovillageithaca.org/learn-at-ecovillage-ithaca/donate/, or send a check to our street address (left). Thank for your support!

Donors
Learn@EcoVillage Ithaca wishes to thank those who have generously donated to our educational efforts during our last fiscal year

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We also want to acknowledge EVI residents for their enormous contributions. They provide a powerful example of living more lightly on the earth, volunteer as tour guides and teachers, and welcome visitors. Residents also pay an annual membership fee. We couldn’t do it without you!