

# OAK AVENUE TRUST

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## Developing an Eco-village at 51 Oak Avenue, Linbro Park

### Concept Note

The trustees of the Oak Avenue Trust are proposing the collaborative design, construction and occupation of an **inclusive, inter-generational and ecological co-housing initiative** at 51 Oak Avenue, Linbro Park.

### Location & Features

The property of 51 Oak Avenue is located in the green country suburb of Linbro Park, Gauteng. Comprising approximately 1 Ha of land, it is currently zoned agricultural and has a very low density of development with dense vegetation. It is situated close to major transport routes (N3; R25) in an area that is set to undergo intensive development and upgrading. A variety of sustainability features are being developed, including a rainwater harvesting pool, swales, greywater systems, solar water heaters, a wastewater bio-filter, and a small food and herb garden. This settlement will allow residents from across the social and economic spectrum to live an ecological lifestyle in a tranquil countryside setting while being able to participate in the urban economy and culture of the vibrant African metropolis of Johannesburg.



### A green lifestyle community

The **development** is to have the following **features**:

- *Co-ownership, participatory management and consensual decision-making according to cooperative principles (See appendix 1).*
- *Continuous productive open spaces and ecoscaping to maintain and enhance the natural, green character of the property and contribute to food and energy sovereignty*
- *Ecological and social design to facilitate the development of a sustainable, largely self-reliant and inclusive community while ensuring that all residents enjoy adequate privacy*
- *Sustainable infrastructure for the provision and management of renewable energy (pv, wind, biogas, gasifier, solar water heating), water (rainwater & run-off harvesting, greywater filtration & re-use) and waste (composting, eco-sanitation) services that are largely grid-independent or tied to recycling schemes.*
- *Natural building technologies – using locally-available natural resources wherever feasible, the development of the site will have a low carbon footprint and*

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beneficial environmental and social impact

- *Web connectivity* – we envisage a high degree of internet integration that will enable residents to earn livelihoods based on e-commerce, web-hosting, database management, and other forms of tele-work that will reduce commuting.

The trustees are looking for interested parties who would invest in the establishment of such a development. Different levels of involvement are possible, based on different residence and usage rights pertaining to the ecosystem services provided by the development:

- **Garden Allotment:** Membership entitles use of garden for the cultivation of vegetables and herbs, as well as usage rights for communal water.
- **Eco - basic residence and usage:** Membership contribution and regular monthly levies entitle members to reside in a private living unit, which consists of a one-room apartment with a built-in kitchen and ablution facilities. A central courtyard is shared with a cluster of 3-5 similar apartments. Usage rights of common land for recreation, cultivation and small animal husbandry are included. **Units: 5-7**
- **Green family – private apartment residence and usage:** A membership contribution and regular monthly levies entitle a household or small family to reside in a private 2-bedroom apartment with kitchen and bathroom facilities, a verandah, and a small private garden plot. The apartments are clustered around a common courtyard. Usage rights of common land for recreation, cultivation and small animal husbandry are included. **Units: 3-5**
- **Eco-Stand – free-standing eco-dwelling and usage:** A deposit and regular monthly levies entitle members to reside in a small 3-bedroom homestead with bathroom, kitchen, living room, patio, and a small private garden plot. Usage rights of common land for recreation, cultivation and small animal husbandry are included. **Units: 2-3**
- **Eco-investor – capital investment partners:** A group of ethical capital investors / property developers could provide venture capital to develop the property and reap ongoing dividends derived from levies.

## Eligibility

Suitable members would have the following attributes:

- resident members are human beings over 18 years of age
- committed to socially inclusive, democratic values
- committed to an ecological lifestyle
- dynamic, creative and pragmatic
- professionals engaged in ethical livelihoods
- financially independent and productive

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## Additional income-generating activities/facilities

- *The Dojo* - Training & meditation centre
- *Daycare Centre & Kids' Educational Garden*
- *Die Werkstatt* - Crafting workshop (woodwork/welding)
- *Cafe/bakery* – producing wood-fired healthy bread, pizza and muffins as well as coffee and a selection of herb teas
- *Nursery* – producing indigenous shrubs, trees; herbs; vegetable seedlings for sale
- *IT & Web-based livelihoods* - web hosting, website design, programming, graphic design

## Proposed legal structure

- **Property** is held by the Oak Avenue Trust; additional trustees to be elected by the administrative body.
- Decisions (including the sale/exchange of shareholdings; usage of commonage areas; resolution of disputes; adoption of new residents) are reached by members in consultation and majority consensus.
- **Administrative Body – Some Options:**
  - **Non-profit Body Corporate:** Levies are collected, funds administered and projects implemented by a Section 21 company constituted as an association of residents and stakeholders. The Section 21 has a 25-year lease on the property with Oak Avenue Trust. The section 21 is administered by elected members of residents' association. Members hold shares and representation in pty/ltd proportionate to funds invested. By residing at the Oak Trust Ecovillage, membership in this association is granted; special membership is also granted to non-resident members during the construction phase. The association holds regular meetings to discuss relevant issues and elect members to administrative and other portfolios.
  - **Co-operative:** A housing cooperative is constituted in terms of the Cooperatives Act of 2005. Levies are collected, funds administered and projects implemented by the cooperative's elected board of directors. Each dwelling unit is allocated a number of shares in accordance with its size and quality. Members have residence rights based on a given dwelling unit. The relationship with the Oak Avenue Trust is defined by a long-term contract encompassing lease, development, and administration.

## Membership Contributions and Levies

Membership is granted on receipt of a registration fee and membership contribution, a set percentage of which is to be paid as a once-off deposit, the balance to be paid in monthly rates. Once resident, each member is bound by a contractual commitment to pay a monthly levy in return for services, usage and residence rights. Failure to pay the agreed levies may result in the revision of this party's residence rights and membership by the residents' association/board of directors.

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Levies are to be used as follows:

- compensate administrative & legal costs of deeds revision & rezoning,
- cover assessment rates, taxes
- pay for bulk services,
- contribute towards the amortisation of capital costs
- pay lease to the oak trust mortgage costs
- fund maintenance and ongoing project development

Where deemed appropriate and useful by the administrative body, services can be rendered to the administrative body in lieu of levies/membership contribution as a form of **sweat equity**, at rates deemed appropriate by the residents' association. Sweat equity may also be rendered in the form of specialised professional services provided to establish the Eco-Village (e.g. town planning submissions; architectural design; engineering; natural building; landscaping).

## **Call for expression of interest**

The current trustees and residents hereby invite interested parties to submit a formal expression of interest so that we may convene a seed-meeting of potential stakeholders. This meeting would serve to introduce interested parties to each other, discuss the proposed development with a view to expanding/amending it, consider legal implications, discuss financing options and generate an outline of practical steps to be taken to begin the development process. If you have received this concept note, it is because one of our current members feels that you meet the criteria outlined above and that you may have an interest in becoming involved. If you know of others who may be interested and who may resonate with the ideas outlined above, please forward us their contact details. In the interests of confidentiality and selectivity, please do not circulate this concept note without consent of the Oak Avenue Trust.

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## Appendix 1

### International Co-operative Alliance (ICA)

#### Co-operative Principles Sheet

Statement on the Co-operative Identity

##### Definition:

A co-operative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically- controlled enterprise.

##### Values:

Co-operatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.

##### Principles

The co-operative principles are guidelines by which co-operatives put their values into practice.

##### 1st Principle: Voluntary and Open Membership

Co-operatives are voluntary organisations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.

##### 2nd Principle: Democratic Member Control

Co-operatives are democratic organisations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. Men and women serving as elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary co-operatives members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote) and co-operatives at other levels are also organised in a democratic manner.

##### 3rd Principle: Member Economic Participation

Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their co-operative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the co-operative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on

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capital subscribed as a condition of membership.

Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing their co-operative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the co-operative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

## **4th Principle: Autonomy and Independence**

Co-operatives are autonomous, self-help organisations controlled by their members. If they enter to agreements with other organisations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their co-operative autonomy.

## **5th Principle: Education, Training and Information**

Co-operatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their co-operatives. They inform the general public - particularly young people and opinion leaders - about the nature and benefits of co-operation.

## **6th Principle: Co-operation among Co-operatives**

Co-operatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the co-operative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.

## **7th Principle: Concern for Community**

Co-operatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members.

Source : ICA News, No. 5/6, 1995.