

WINTER 2018

COMMUNITY HOMESTEADING

EARTHEN HEART (A LEAN RURAL ALTERNATIVE)

Community Homesteads are based on a shared vision that seeks to radically simplify and improve our lives; by consuming less while producing more (food, energy, entertainment, etc.) we reduce our income needs and limit expenses while creating thriving community. Individuals can remain connected to outside careers and cities as suits them so long as community needs and commitments are met.

Short Term Goal: To focus on **production for use over production for market** in order to build our collective resilience, health and happiness.

Long Term Vision: A world where our food, energy and entertainment needs are generated primarily from within our immediate surroundings with surplus being sent to the global market; thus flipping the ratio from what currently exists by using micro-social enterprise as the conduit.

Setting (global): Our eARTH has many vibrant cities undergoing social, economic and ecological changes. We are now “greening” cities to clean up our collective mess. Urban Agriculture is, in many ways, integral to inner city and global resiliency but will never cover all food, energy, textile and resource needs within cities. Optimizing synergies within rural-urban resource exchanges is fundamental to improving our collective planetary footprint. **Earthen Heart** in rural Midwest USA has been hosting visitors from all over there globe and working to create a sustainable rural model that is fluid but easily replicated.

Setting (local): Here in SouthWest Michigan (SWMI) we can easily grow many types of food and medicine: fruit, berries, garlic, onions, potatoes, greens, yarrow, mullein, asparagus, etc. Regionally appropriate energy sources include: wood, geothermal, solar, wind, solar thermal, etc. The most prevalent building material is wood. Fibers include wool and yucca leaves. Culturally in SWMI we have a thriving music scene including: folk, jam bands, punk, jazz, classical and many small to mid-sized theaters, cafes, bookstores, thrift and vintage shops. Lake Michigan offers glorious beaches and there are countless nearby natural areas to explore.

PRODUCE MORE - CONSUME LESS

Community Homesteads offer low impact/high quality rural living and offer solutions to many social, economic and ecological challenges:

- Offer young adults options beyond debt, military and rat-race.
- Offer elders a place to age in loving sustainable communities.
- Preserve agricultural land from mega-farms.
- Address rampant debt culture and minimum wage slavery.
- Preserve small farms by returning to homesteading focus.
- Address global interest in raising food, eating and living healthy.
- Increase awareness of relationship between lifestyle and health.
- Balance socio-economic disparity by making simple life appealing.

Participants:

- **Residents** to live and work in a low-impact/high quality community.
- **Investors** to purchase land and create land trusts (or other model).
- **Legal team** to create organizational structure and membership rules.
- **Research team** to conduct surveys of existing communities and landholders and potential partners and members.

Short Term - 5 Year Goal: To shift existing single family rural properties into *Community Homesteads* based on shared vision of members and landholders. Build a core team, share knowledge, host fundraising/crowdfunding events, find and allocate resources.

Community Homesteads must generate modest income for basic operating expenses (real estate taxes, utilities, maintenance, etc.) through a "market based" offerings to the larger outside community. Members can generate additional income through further effort inside and outside the homestead.

Community Homesteads can be formed with a specific demographic or market focus: as an urban-rural retreat, educational center, a hub for value added food producers, a plant medicine production and processing center, a spiritual retreat, an inter-generational living center, an Eco-Bed and Breakfast, an agri-tourism and u-pick destination, an artist-in-residence center, etc.

WANT LESS - BE MORE

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