



Builder Affirmation

MaTovu was founded in 2018 as an inclusive Jewish space in St. Louis City that fosters connection by enriching our community's spiritual, cultural, and social life. MaTovu has been led by a small volunteer board of directors who helped guide the organization through its first five years. The *MaTovu Cooperative* is a new decision-making structure launching in 2024 that will help build a deeper, more supportive community by centering community-driven decision making and opening how MaTovu uses its space and crafts its programming.

In cooperatives, members have a stake in how decisions are made and how the impacts of those decisions are experienced. For MaTovu, implementing a cooperative model means shifting how our community co-creates and shares responsibility for the organization/community (while maintaining our 501(c)(3) status). We refer to those who join the MaTovu Cooperative as “Builders,” referencing our active approach to the collaborative work/“building” ahead.

In order to create a strong shared community, MaTovu asks that Builders contribute time and effort to help MaTovu thrive. In the future, Builders may also be asked to contribute financial resources; this will be determined collectively during the Cooperative's first year. Understanding that each person may contribute to the Cooperative differently, this *Builder Affirmation* seeks to ensure that everyone joining together in this effort can enter with the same understanding of how we will work together through shared commitments to our growing community.

This document is different from the *MaTovu Cooperative Handbook*, which we will co-develop and approve with Builders in 2024 and will specify how we work together, including shared decision-making processes, in more detail. This Builder Affirmation is designed to ensure that everyone enters the Cooperative with the same commitment to the overall mission and vision of the organization, including shared agreements that ensure we can continue to foster a welcoming, safe, and thriving community.

Who Can Become a MaTovu Cooperative Builder?

The short answer: anyone above b'nai mitzvah age (12 or 13 years old) who actively participates in our community, meaning contributing to a shared activity that positively contributes to the operations, sustainability, and/or engagement of our community.

MaTovu is and will remain an inclusive Jewish organization guided by Jewish values and a Jewish identity — though these values also lead us to be radically inclusive. For those who consider themselves Jewish, MaTovu aims to welcome to all practices, perspectives, and traditions that aim to be egalitarian and recognize Jewish pluralism. MaTovu's primary aim is to build a community in, for, and about St. Louis — centering the Yiddish concept of *doikayt*, or “hereness,” that also grounds our participation in the City

and our engagement with all of our neighbors (Jewish and not Jewish). MaTovu will approach difficult conversations by remaining explicitly open to all perspectives that approach even serious disagreements with respect, kindness, and a focus on shared humanity — maintaining a welcoming space for our whole community, including those people who feel sidelined in other Jewish spaces.

MaTovu works to be radically open to all who share our community values, including the LGBTQIA+ community and across racial/ethnic identities. For those who do not consider themselves Jewish, you are more than welcome to become a MaTovu Builder! We know that this sort of open, communal, cooperative space is hard to find anywhere in St. Louis; MaTovu is excited for “fellow travelers” who are not Jewish to join our community and build the Cooperative together.

Purpose and Function of the MaTovu Cooperative

The MaTovu Cooperative works to foster Shared Space, Shared Decision-Making, and a Shared Community among Builders. These functions are described in more detail below:

Shared Decision-Making	Shared Community	Shared Space
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Stake and vote in MaTovu program and community building decisions ● Visibility and input into board governance/finances ● Actively participate in standing committees + issue-based committees ● Help define MaTovu’s approach to key issues across our community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Regular informal community and social events by/for Builders ● Input into community programs and events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ability to use space for private events for free (at least once per year) ● Free or discounted access to paid programming
<p style="text-align: center;">Supported by MaTovu’s Board of Directors, who will continue to hold:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fiduciary oversight, nonprofit compliance, and legal responsibility for the organization ● Primary relationships with major financial supporters ● Staff hiring, management, supervision, and evaluation 		

Each of these items is meant as a foundational starting point for the MaTovu Cooperative; more will be added to this list over time, and more specificity around shared decision-making processes will be outlined and approved in the MaTovu Cooperative Handbook during the Cooperative’s first year.

Builders will not become legally responsible for the finances of the organization or liability for the MaTovu building when joining the Cooperative. MaTovu’s Board of Directors will continue to hold legal and fiduciary responsibility for the organization as a 501c3 nonprofit, though we will ensure that Builders

are able to inform Board decisions and that the Board's decision-making processes are transparent and accessible to all Builders. This distinction is critical as the Cooperative builds out its own operational agreements in the Cooperative Handbook and explores how a larger body of Builders can effectively engage with MaTovu's core operational components. Changes to this structure can be explored and adopted over time as the Cooperative evolves, including modifications to MaTovu's legal by-laws. Builders will also have the opportunity to fill board vacancies.

As part of its operational duties, the MaTovu board will also remain responsible for staff supervision and evaluation (with feedback from Builders as appropriate). MaTovu board members and staff members will also become Builders and will have an equal (not weighted) voice/vote for making programming and community-building decisions that are under the purview of Builders.

Shared decisions across MaTovu Builders will be made either at Quarterly Builders Meetings or in sub-committees with specified decision-making power. MaTovu anticipates organizing a Program Committee, Community Committee, Sustainability + Fundraising Committee, and Conflict Resolution Committee as standing committees shortly after the Cooperative's launch. We will also create shorter-term, ad hoc committees to deal with specified Cooperative needs (e.g., soundproofing the MaTovu space) as needed.

Role and Commitments of MaTovu Builders

To achieve our goal of co-creating a deeper, more representative, and more sustainable MaTovu community, Builders are asked to contribute the following to the MaTovu Cooperative:

1. **Contributing an average of 2 hours a month of activities that support MaTovu.** Examples: committee meetings/work, supporting logistics for a program, building maintenance, logistics, fundraising, etc. Attending a community program as an attendee does not count toward this commitment, nor does attending a quarterly Builder meeting. Builders will connect with opportunities to fulfill this commitment by joining a committee and/or working with MaTovu staff to identify helpful ways to plug in.
2. **Contributing effort and/or financial resources to help MaTovu raise the funds it needs to thrive.** Builders commit to making a meaningful contribution to MaTovu's fundraising efforts, whether that's contributing funds, helping with a fundraising campaign, thanking donors, etc. Everyone's contribution toward MaTovu's sustainability will be equally valued.

Note: During the first year of the Cooperative, the Fundraising + Sustainability Committee will lead a process for collective decision-making around whether Builders should have more defined financial commitments moving forward.

3. **Attendance at quarterly All Builder meetings.** We strongly encourage in-person attendance at these meetings to build shared community and practice shared decision-making, though MaTovu will also provide a way to contribute asynchronous feedback to inform these meetings whenever possible. While we are committed to making sure that those who are not able to attend in-person meetings are able to participate in MaTovu decision-making processes, MaTovu does not currently have the right set-up or technology to make these meetings hybrid.
4. **Attendance at MaTovu's community programs as a participant if you are interested and able.** Builders play an active role in MaTovu's community; we encourage Builders to participate in the programs that spark your interest (and help us design programs that best meet your needs).

To remain a Builder in good standing, these commitments must be honored. Builders will track and self-report their own contributions toward these commitments each quarter.

Cooperative Shared Agreements

Joining the MaTovu Cooperative allows all Builders to co-create a welcome, dynamic, and thriving community together. This shift into more collaborative decision-making means that Builders' priorities, values, and ideas will become more visible and communal. Most of the time, we anticipate that these important discussions will lead to stronger relationships and better decisions about MaTovu and its work; sometimes, however, they will also surface meaningful disagreement and conflict across Builders.

The MaTovu Cooperative seeks to balance the perspectives and priorities of each individual with making shared decisions focused on the common good, aiming to produce the best outcomes for our community as a whole. This approach is rooted in Jewish tradition, which asserts that each of us is created *b'tselem elohim*, made in the image of the divine (Bereshit 1:27), and that we must not separate ourselves from our community (Pirkei Avot, 2:4).

The following are the MaTovu Cooperative's Shared Agreements, adopted by all who sign this Affirmation Form and become Builders:

1. Builders acknowledge that MaTovu is a nonprofit organization with a mission to be "an inclusive Jewish space in St. Louis City that fosters connection by enriching our community's spiritual, cultural, and social life." The MaTovu Cooperative's activities will continue to further that mission and adhere to the requirements of being a 501(c)(3) organization.
2. Recognizing that there will be diversity in how Builders are able to contribute their effort and resources toward sustaining the Cooperative, Builders agree to take on the roles and commitments outlined in this document.
3. Builders will work to center the dignity of each person in the Cooperative as we build community together and navigate shared decision-making processes. This means communicating with openness, respect, and honesty.

4. Builders recognize that their individual view may not always be adopted by the group during shared decision-making processes.
5. Builders will take care not to share information that has been named as confidential outside of the Cooperative.
6. If conflict arises or misconduct occurs, including if a Builder is not abiding by these Shared Agreements, the issue will go to the Conflict Mediation Committee to determine next steps. The Conflict Mediation Committee will draw on principles of restorative justice in its work (see: law.wisc.edu/fjr/rjp/justice.html), though reserves the right to ask a Builder to leave the Cooperative.
7. Builders will abide by the existing MaTovu Code of Conduct that has been in place since 2019 (see: matovustl.org/rentals)
8. Builders acknowledge that the MaTovu Cooperative is a new/emerging structure that will continue to evolve over time through the engagement of the Builders in partnership with MaTovu's board of directors.

Signature/Affirmation

Each individual Builder should sign and submit an Affirmation Form, even if multiple household members join at once. This Builder Affirmation should be signed and submitted annually to renew each Builder's involvement in the Cooperative. Additions or Changes to the Builder Affirmation may be made by the MaTovu Cooperative, which also may require Builders to sign a revised Affirmation Form.

By signing below*, I agree to abide by the Shared Agreements and principles outlined in this Affirmation.

Name: _____

Date: _____

* Prospective Builders can also formally agree to abide by these shared agreements/principles by completing the Builder Application Form here (bit.ly/becomeabuilder), though we wanted to provide a space for a real/digital signature if preferred.