



Prospective Builder FAQs & Helpful Info

Spring 2024

What are MaTovu's mission, vision, hopes, and dreams?

MaTovu is an inclusive Jewish space in St. Louis City that fosters connection by enriching our community's spiritual, cultural, and social life.

Many Jewish and Jewish-connected people struggle to find Jewish community spaces that feel values-aligned, comfortable, and stimulating. The group of people who founded MaTovu in 2018 did so with the hope of expanding opportunities for people to engage in creative Jewish life in the urban core of the St. Louis region. We've worked to create a vibrant Jewish space that creatively reflects the fullness of Jewish identity, including and beyond traditional ritual observance. We are thrilled to have recently celebrated our 5th anniversary (which you can read more about at: thestl.com/community/a-welcoming-space/). As we imagine our next five years and beyond, we're proud to build on the foundation we've laid and co-create even more opportunities to bring people together to learn, explore, celebrate, grieve, collaborate, and connect.

Why are we launching a cooperative model?

- To build a deeper, more supportive community. Our renewed structure will elevate a focus on relationship-building, trust, and mutuality to meet this moment's challenges of loneliness, disconnection, and ecological crisis.
- To center community-driven decision-making. We want decision-making at MaTovu to be more inclusive, expansive, and reflective of our community by giving decision-making voice to a broader group of core constituents.
- To change how the work of MaTovu gets done. We want to include more people in the work of running MaTovu who are excited to be a part of it, which will both build community and support long-term sustainability. We need more hands to realize our full potential.

What have been MaTovu's successes over the last 5 years?

Since MaTovu opened in 2018, we've hosted over 175 events that have brought 5,000 people through our physical doors and into our zoom rooms (this number is duplicated, meaning it includes repeat visitors). We've collaborated with many organizations from within the Jewish community and throughout the broader community and raised over \$300,000 to support our work. We've created a thriving community based on the passion and skill of a small group of dedicated volunteers and received a grant

to hire part-time staff support in 2023. There is so much possibility and potential in MaTovu’s future, which we’re thrilled to open to more in our community through this cooperative model!

How has MaTovu been operating up until this point?

- Our Board of Directors oversees MaTovu’s finances, fundraising, policies, building management, evaluation/community input, and staff supervision. Current board members are Abby Bennett, Shira Berkowitz, Katie Garland, Barbara Levin, Nava Kantor, Russel Neiss, Paul Sorenson, and Andrew Warshauer. The term of the board as it is currently organized will run until May 2025, at which point we plan to hold elections to add some new members to the board – ideally from within the community of Builders — as well as more clearly define how the board and Builders relate to each other.
- Our Program Committee creates and implements our community programs. It’s currently chaired by Mia Salamone and Abby Bennett.
- Our part-time staff person, Charlie Meyers, connects with community members and supports both the Board and the Program Committee in fulfilling their tasks, working behind the scenes to manage program and fundraising logistics.

MaTovu regularly invites formal and informal feedback and input from our community. Our most recent formal request for feedback was our 2024 Community Survey, the [results of which](#) we shared out on our email list. Our new Cooperative model should provide much more robust and regular feedback from our community about what they want to see and how successfully MaTovu is responding.

How does MaTovu support itself? What are its major expenses?

Here is a high-level overview of MaTovu’s 2023 actual budget:

Revenue	
Foundation Giving	\$64,300
Individual Giving	\$24,697
Grants	\$6,000
Rental Income	\$400
Total Revenue	\$95,397

Expenses	
Staffing	\$34,682
Consulting	\$8,351
Rent	\$33,600
Utilities	\$4,541
Building Maintenance	\$2,305
Program Expenses	\$7,795
Accounting	\$2,702
Insurance	\$1,770
Other Expenses	\$3,169
Total Expenses	\$98,915

- In 2023, MaTovu spent slightly more (\$3,517) than it took in, though these expenses were balanced by the previous year’s surplus funding/reserves.
- MaTovu’s revenue has continued to grow, including an increase from around \$63,000 in 2021 to over \$95,000 in 2023. We are deeply appreciative of everyone who has helped MaTovu sustain and grow its work to date!
- Foundation Giving primarily reflects ongoing support from the St. Louis Jewish Federation, including an annual Community Investment of around \$30,000 and short-term funds to increase our operational capacity (up to \$20,000 a year until 2026). MaTovu submits an annual application as well as evaluation reporting (informed by program attendance, community survey, etc.) to maintain these funds.
- MaTovu also regularly applies for other grant funding, ranging from small awards of \$3,000 to larger awards of \$15,000. We continue to explore and expand grant funding for MaTovu.
- MaTovu also asks for donations from individuals, typically during a year-end campaign in December. In 2023, 54 individuals contributed to MaTovu, which yielded about \$24,697.
- MaTovu frequently charges program fees, often at a sliding scale, to support our organization. The building can also be rented by outside organizations and individuals for private events. MaTovu is exploring how to increase both rental and program income within our mission and with our current capacity (as well as ensure the building can remain clean and usable with increased activity).

MaTovu's board will continue to share financial information and updates with Builders so our community has a deeper understanding of the resources needed to sustain our work, including shared decision making around how to best balance and grow funding streams.

Who owns MaTovu's building?

- MaTovu was renovated in 2017 by UIC, a local developer which has developed housing and commercial property across the surrounding neighborhood. MaTovu has been renting its space from UIC since it opened in 2018.
- While renting has some advantages from a risk and repair cost standpoint, MaTovu's board is currently exploring what it may look like to purchase the building from UIC in the future. This includes gathering information around a potential purchase price, loan details, down payment needs, inspections, and liability/insurance.
- MaTovu's board will keep Builders up-to-date about this process and what it may mean for MaTovu's long-term ability to grow and expand its community within its current space.
- Regardless of who owns the building, Builders are anticipated to be able to use the building for at least one private event each year (as specified in the Builder Affirmation) after July 1, 2024 with a signed rental agreement, which will specify terms of use even if no money is charged for rental. MaTovu's board is currently working on building use policies that will be shared with Builders by June 2024.

What will this change about MaTovu's programming?

MaTovu will continue to offer a wide range of community programming open to all who want to attend, whether or not participants are Builders. Over time, we expect that this new structure will expand the type and variety of programming MaTovu offers given that more people will be involved in co-creating our program and community priorities.

How will the MaTovu Cooperative make decisions?

As a starting point, MaTovu is exploring the tenets of sociocracy (sociocracyforall.org/sociocracy/) as a collective decision-making model. However, most decisions about how we make decisions will be made as a Cooperative during its first year — we're excited to co-create this with you!

Okay, I'm ready to sign up! How do I join the co-op?

It's quite easy! Please review the *MaTovu Builder Affirmation* and, if you agree to abide by the Shared Agreements and principles outlined in the Affirmation, please complete the *Builder Application Form* at bit.ly/becomeabuilder. If you have any other questions, please reach out to Charlie Meyers at charlie@matovustl.org and we'll get back to you as soon as we can!