

About Earthaven Agreements

Draft 4/16/08

1. How does Earthaven make agreements?

Earthaven's agreements occur in two ways: individual decisions made by Council (either in Council meetings or through committees) over the years, and items within Earthaven community documents. These documents include the ReMembership Covenant, Land Use and Common Rights Agreement (LUCRA), Site Lease Agreement, and others.

Decisions are described in Council Minutes, located in notebooks of Council Minutes by year, and in the Index of Council Decisions, kept in the Council Hall. The notebook of Earthaven community documents is also kept in the Council Hall.

2. Do I have to abide by them? Yes. Earthaven members and non-member residents are expected to abide by all the decisions previously made by Earthaven Council, including all the items within Earthaven community documents, even if they haven't yet read these decisions and documents or don't personally agree with them.

3. Do I have to abide by them even when I didn't attend the Council Meeting in which the decision was made?

Yes. It's also assumed that if, after becoming an Earthaven member, people don't attend a Council meeting and participate in the decision-making process, or don't read committee minutes and offer any concerns about a committee decision within three weeks of the committee's minutes being posted, they still must abide by these decisions. This is true even if they haven't yet read them or don't personally agree with them.

4. Why does it matter that I abide by community agreements?

"Years ago I knew a couple who read the philosophical material of a certain community and were appalled by it," writes Kat Kinkade, cofounder of Twin Oaks Community in the 2000 *Communities Directory*. "They didn't agree with the published community tenets and didn't like the tone of the material either. However, they happened to meet someone from the group who was highly personable. So, they visited and found the entire group to be friendly, charming, and warm. My friends figured actions speak louder than words. They decided to ignore the declared goals of the community, believing instead that day-to-day behavior of the people they were getting to know and enjoy. They joined up.

“But as the months of their membership progressed, my friends found themselves more and more at odds with the founding members of the community. Everybody was warm and courteous, but their goals weren't compatible. Serious internal dissension grew, which saw my friends in conflict with the original leaders over issues of community direction. Eventually the new couple left, and so did some other members, who were disillusioned by the bad feelings generated by the philosophical struggle.”

“This left the group weak, angry, and exhausted. It was a community tragedy, and not an uncommon one. I say, before joining an intentional community, read and believe the community documents. The chances are good that the published goals and values of every community are deeply respected by many community members, even though the behavior of some members may give consistent impressions to the contrary.”

5. What if I don't like an agreement and want to change it?

Anyone can express any disagreement with, and perhaps change, existing Earthaven decisions or Earthaven community documents. Here's how:

(1) Draft a proposal to change something (perhaps with help from one or more Earthaven members).

(2) Ask an Earthaven committee to consider this proposal.

(3) If the committee agrees, it may either make a decision itself (subject to the three-week posting period) or refer the proposal to Council. If the proposal is passed, it will replace the previous agreement and things will be changed. If the proposal doesn't pass, the member or non-member resident is expected to live with the existing agreements. Or perhaps try again later with a new proposal.

(4) If no committee will consider your proposal, your next recourse is to take it to Agenda Planners and ask them to schedule it as an agenda item for a future Council. They'd do this only if they consider your proposal reasonable and relevant, however.