

Making Ripples

Northwest Arkansas Eco Villages Part One: Urban

by Amanda Bancroft

Readers Ask:

"Are there eco villages or sustainable communities (rural or urban) in the Northwest Arkansas area?"

Yes, but it's complicated: communities can change fluidly, and their degree of true sustainability will vary greatly. First, check the online directories to get an idea about what's out there – not only in Northwest Arkansas, but the world! The broader your geographic range, the more compatible options you'll find on websites such as the Fellowship for Intentional Community (<http://www.ic.org>) and the Global EcoVillage Network (<http://gen.ecovillage.org>).

For NWAR urban communities, the process is more straightforward. If you're hoping to live without a car close to amenities, an urban sustainable home or apartment community might be your dream come true! Look for certifications such as Green Globes or the U.S. Building Council's LEED Certification, but don't discredit smaller, non-certified homes and buildings – doing a little to help the environment is better than doing nothing.

Most of the following apartment communities exist because of the Specialized Real Estate Group, best known for their work on **Eco Modern Flats** in Fayetteville, which has achieved the highest level of certification awarded by the USGBC: Platinum (the first in the state). It utilizes solar hot water, native landscaping, rainwater harvesting, a green roof, high efficiency heat and air, and much more.

Sterling Frisco at West Avenue and Maple Street in Fayetteville is seeking a Silver USGBC certification. The facility includes luxury amenities along with features like EnergyStar windows and appliances, low VOC paints, covered bicycle racks, onsite recycling, and more. New apartment complexes such as **Eco Downtown**, planned for the parking lot due south of the University Baptist Church, and **Harvey's Hill** and **The Cardinal** on West Center (both set to open next year) will aim for LEED certification, too, according to Jeremy Hudson of Specialized Real Estate.

Lafayette Gregg Apartments and **Lafayette Street Apartments** have taken energy and water efficiency measures including EnergyStar appliances, LED parking lot lighting, CFL exterior lighting, and WaterSense aerator faucets, among other things.

There are also sustainable rental houses. According to Stephan Pollard of Trem | Wel Energy, LLC, "Beginning a year-and-a-half ago, Trem | Wel began assembling a portfolio of existing housing stock. As the houses are acquired, they are given makeovers that include but are not limited to energy and water retrofits, exceeding the City of Fayetteville's recently adopted energy code for new construction! EnergyStar appliances and windows and WaterSense-labeled fixtures are used throughout. Each house is also made Level II-Ready for convenient charging of

both Electric Vehicles and Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles.” All of these homes are located in the U District and marketed by **Bel Air Sapphire - Smarter Rental Homes**.

For an introduction to the types of communities that exist and why a person might choose to live in one, check out Making Ripples: *Why Eco Villages?* (June 2013 issue). And to learn about rural sustainable communities in NWAR, check back next week for part two!

Ripples is a 100% solar-hosted website that includes a blog, newspaper column, resources and services for individuals and non-profit organizations. Read more on this topic and others at www.RipplesBlog.org.