



Amabel Pocket Neighborhood 619 Five Mile Drive Ithaca, NY



The Amabel Pocket Neighborhood project will provide 30 single-family homes on a gorgeous piece of land close to downtown Ithaca, the beautiful Cayuga Lake, Buttermilk Falls State park, the Ithaca Farmers' Market, Greenstar grocery, shopping, restaurants, and many other destinations reachable by walking, bike, canoe, or kayak. The houses are arranged to allow private enjoyment of the site's exquisite natural beauty while simultaneously creating opportunities for interactions among residents and visitors. Growing and enjoying food, solar-energy production, and community-building practices are also key components of this cutting-edge neighborhood.

The Amabel project is a venture of New Earth Living (NEL) LLC, a real-estate development company founded by Susan Cosentini. New Earth Living previously built the highly successful Aurora Street Pocket Neighborhood in the City of Ithaca.

The Mission of New Earth Living

New Earth Living creates vibrant neighborhoods that connect people to one another and our shared earth, providing spaces for trust, purpose, play, and ease. The Amabel Pocket Neighborhood is one of those places. Amabel addresses the need for low-carbon living, healthy and delicious food, energy and resource renewal, and meaningful social connections. To this end, New Earth Living will build 30 fee-simple homes on individual parcels to create a neighborhood that fulfills a need for privacy and tranquility along with supportive, enlivening relationships; conserves natural resources; reduces greenhouse gases; and produces food.

Neighborhood Features

The Amabel Pocket Neighborhood will offer

- A beautiful park-like setting, one flat mile from downtown Ithaca
- An ideal location on the future Black Diamond pedestrian and bike trail, leading to four local NYS parks, Cayuga Lake, local grocery stores, downtown, the Ithaca Farmers' Market, Cass Park, and more
- The Cayuga Lake inlet, adjacent to the site, allowing canoe or kayak travel to many of the above-named locations
- Large, mature trees and an open meadow on the inlet and Coy Glen natural area
- Rapid-draining alluvial soil composition perfectly suited to residential development
- A classic old barn for garden, bike, and canoe storage
- Homes carefully designed for quality of life, energy efficiency, and solar-power production
- Stained concrete exterior walls—a rich, substantial, stucco-like finish without maintenance headaches, designed to highlight the site's natural beauty
- Simple, clean interior finishes, with some customization by owners
- Ground-floor master suite option
- Optional carports and storage
- Large, private yards and open areas for yard games, sunbathing, and other forms of play and connection
- Large, central courtyard for organic community gardens and edible landscaping
- Fire-circle enclosure and a future pavilion for dining, gathering, and playing games
- Intra-neighborhood Web connection for communication, car and resource sharing, and more
- A thoughtful, engaging processes for governance, community building, and resiliency

Life at Amabel: Community, Privacy, Sustainability

As defined by architect Ross Chapin, pocket neighborhoods are clustered groups of neighboring houses or apartments gathered around a shared open space—a courtyard, a pedestrian street, a series of joined backyards, or a reclaimed alley—that has a clear sense of territory and shared stewardship. The neighborhoods can be urban, suburban, or rural.

In these settings neighbors can easily know one another, empty nesters and single householders with far-flung families can find friendship or a helping hand, and children can interact with non-parental adults who offer support and guidance. With clearly defined boundaries from the street entrances to private front yards, the shared outdoor spaces at the neighborhoods' center are a key element. Residents take part in the care and oversight of this common space, thereby enhancing quality of life by ensuring safety and a sense of security.

Privacy is also a key ingredient of pocket neighborhoods, and Amabel is no exception. Flanked by mature trees, the house, and an optional vegetative fence, each back or side yard will be a sanctuary to quietly enjoy the site's amazing beauty or to host private gatherings. Front yards will have layers of personal space between the shared commons and the front door: a border of perennial plantings, the private front yard, and a covered porch large enough to serve as an outdoor room. Within the houses the layering continues, with active spaces oriented toward the commons and private spaces located further back and above. To ensure privacy between neighbors, the cottages "nest" together: The "open" side of one house faces the "closed" side of the next.

A culture of sustainability and resource-use reduction will be integral to Amabel. The homes will be built to achieve ultra airtight, net-zero energy efficiency, with roof solar exposure maximized for photovoltaic energy production. With the use of all-electric appliances, devices, and heat sources, the utility bill for each household that chooses to install solar panels is designed to net out annually at zero. Edible landscaping and water collection at each of the houses will be encouraged, and a large central courtyard for a community garden will be provided and defined. The location of Amabel further decreases greenhouse-gas emissions by reducing the need for a car and, consequently, vehicle miles traveled.

The Amabel vision considers communication and connection among people to be as much a part of a vibrant, sustainable future as powerful, tangible advances are. For this reason, the neighborhood design includes both physical and social structures.

Even though we naturally form tribes and groups, people wonder, "Can I really have playful, judgment-free relationships with my neighbors? Can we easily resolve the problems that may arise?" These are valid concerns: Care, respect, and trust do not simply happen. It is no coincidence that "community" and "communication" share the same root: "commun." To "commune" means "to be in a state of intimate sensitivity and receptivity."

To that end, Amabel will include The Listening Workshop, a communication course that Cosentini has taught for over five years at Ithaca College and once a month at Ithaca Community Childcare. The workshop's distinct approach to communication provides powerful access to strong bonds of care, respect, and trust. Instead of listening through our typical filters of judgment, problem solving, questions, advice, or the classic "my similar story or experience," Cosentini suggests that we listen by imagining what it might be like to be the speaker, seeing what they are seeing, and giving them ample time to talk about what really matters to them. This way of listening allows us to respond based on other people's experience instead of simply our own perspectives.

In addition to active listening, an engaging people-centered process called Amabel Connection will make getting to know one another on a deep and supportive level fun and easy. The process will begin with resident-only interactive pages on the Amabel website. The next steps will include in-person gatherings, dinners, hikes, gardening, and engaging, playful workshops. By the time residents move in, they will have discovered what their neighbors really care about. After move-in, residents will co-create the core values of Amabel along with systems and practices that, over time, will support strong bonds of trust, play, and ease.

For the care and maintenance of the road and water/sewer systems, residents will be members of a homeowners association. The brilliant new collaborative organizational method called Dynamic Governance, coupled with active listening, will be the primary governance and decision-making tools.

