

The Book of Commons

[Abridged version for public website, last updated 6/18/22]

We come together to nurture self, neighbors,
neighborhood
and earth.

We want to love more; to do good,
accept others
and give generously.

We practice our core beliefs by living simply and responsibly
and give life to our dreams by trusting consensus,
recognizing that harmony is
individuality and community in balance.

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Dear new commoner,

Welcome to our exciting, ever-evolving cohousing community life at East Lake Commons! We are glad you have decided to become part of ELC.

We hope you will soon feel at home and begin to enjoy the benefits and joys of community living. We look forward to getting acquainted as you add your unique contributions to our shared community pool of skills, talents, and resources. You will soon be contacted by a “buddy” who can answer your questions about how the community works and show you around. In the meantime, please feel free to ask anyone anything as you get settled in.

I. The Basics - Values, Vision & Vibes

CORE VALUES AND CULTURE

East Lake Commons is the fruit of many hours of individual and collective effort by its current and past members.

You may be familiar with co-housing, a type of intentional community which is designed to balance personal privacy with living among people who know and care about one another. As a self-managed enterprise, East Lake Commons expects that each resident will make time to help with community work, attend meetings, serve on committees and otherwise take part in the life of the community. For more information, see our web page at <http://eastlakecommons.org/>.

East Lake Commons has six core principles:

- 1) Community: We want to know, interact, and enjoy living here with our neighbors.
- 2) Affordability: We strive to keep ELC affordable to people of limited means. We try to keep our Homeowner Association assessments low by sharing community work, upkeep and maintenance of our common resources.
- 3) Consensus: A decision-making process which is inclusive of dissent, where all points of view are considered.
- 4) Diversity: We value our differences and learn from each other.
- 5) Sustainability: Conservation + regeneration + stewardship.
- 6) Visitability: Homes and our Common House are easily accessible to residents and visitors who use wheelchairs, walkers or have other forms of mobility impairment.

VISION

The residents of East Lake Commons Ecovillage plan to live together with careful and intentional focus. We aim for a continually evolving high quality of life for each resident, high quality of interaction with one another, and ecologically responsible, harmonious relations with our natural environment. We also intend to interact positively with, serve, and benefit from the larger community around us.

We intend the buildings and site to be developed in ways that promote social mingling, safe spaces for children to play, human movement in preference to automobiles, inclusion of disabled people in homes and outdoor spaces, and visual beauty and harmony. Buildings will be constructed and processes developed that are ecologically sound, using materials, energy, water, air, waste, soil and other resources in environment-friendly ways.

We aim toward efficient use not only of natural resources, machines and materials but also of people's skills, energy and time.

We agree to govern ourselves democratically, using consensus to make decisions. We take seriously each other's needs and wants and at the same time expect and help each person to balance his or her individual agenda with what seems best for the community. Kindness, consideration, respect, openness, honesty, neighborliness, and nonviolence are our intended ways to treat and communicate with each other. When conflicts arise, we work for direct, open, nonviolent resolution.

We respect solitude and privacy. We respect both vegetarians and omnivores. We honor and nurture children. We maximize people's ability to live in our community if they have or develop disability, by planning for systems which facilitate various levels of assistance. We encourage living options, such as rental, that are affordable to people with lower incomes. Within the umbrella of sharing the above goals, agreements and intentions, we seek and welcome diversity of race, culture, gender, age, class, physical or mental ability, sexual orientation, religion, etc. We are open to forming new views and practices that further understanding and fairness.

We strongly discourage ownership of guns, and agree to only moderate use of alcohol and no illegal drugs in common spaces. We hope to develop economic alternatives such as sharing tools, encouraging home-based businesses, and developing satisfying activities that reduce reliance on paid outside entertainment. We intend to create a space and system whereby meals are shared on a regular basis. We want to create a community where more psychic energy is generated than drained, and where fun and celebration happen regularly.

COMMUNITY GOALS

(Editorial Note: The origin of this document is shrouded in ELC antiquity, circa 1997-98. Although it is not a perfect statement of the community's current goals, we present it in original form as an early vision by one of the community's prime movers.)

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East Lake Commons EcoVillage is a planned pedestrian village, urban garden and wildlife preserve whose purpose is to provide a living educational community and environmental model that can benefit the surrounding community as well as be used as a planning model for future developments. Key components include:

- Intentional Community/Cohousing: optimize shared resources and community interdependency through smaller private houses with common houses and common land, cooperative child and after-school care, villagewide bulk purchase and storage, mutual assistance in small businesses, recreational amenities, and optional shared meals; optimize social interaction potential through site design; develop decision-making and community management skills; create outreach to the neighboring community.
- Pedestrian Orientation: park cars at the periphery of the site to minimize auto intrusion; develop cooperative transportation for trips outside the village; reduce dependency on the automobile by meeting as many needs as possible within the village; optimize electronic communication access for residents to the greater community.

- Mixed Income: provide a mix of housing opportunities, balancing middle and upper income housing with affordable housing.
- Accessibility: include in each unit and common house at least one no-step entrance and one accessible bathroom on the same floor to ensure 100% "visitability" for the physically disabled.
- Land Conservation: use offsetting density zoning to reduce sprawl; cluster buildings into a pedestrian-oriented village, while preserving and connecting green spaces for gardens and wildlife habitat.
- Urban Gardens: set up a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) as an urban educational model, including organic gardens, orchards, greenhouses, bee keeping, etc.; produce seasonal foodstuffs for the immediate community.
- Wildlife Habitat: include wildlife corridors on site and promote protected extensions of the corridor off site along waterways; enhance wildlife diversity.
- Environmental Site Systems: pursue storm water purification -- construct bio-dynamic filter system for purifying on- and offsite storm water before releasing back into the creek; model awareness of watershed impact.
- Environmental Building Systems: use common houses as a model for sustainable building; utilize renewable and healthy materials, passive and active solar heating and cooling applications, energy conservation applications, gray water and other waste recycling systems.
- Community Outreach: provide classroom for children's educational programs and meeting space for other non-profit and neighborhood groups.

WHAT IS COHOUSING?

Cohousing is a type of collaborative housing that attempts to overcome the alienation of modern subdivisions in which neighbors don't know each other and have no sense of community. It is characterized by self-sufficient private dwellings with their own kitchens, living rooms, dining rooms, etc., but also has extensive common facilities.

Cohousing communities usually are intentional neighborhoods designed and managed by the residents, who are consciously committed to living as a community. The physical design itself facilitates social contact. The typical cohousing community has 20 to 30 single-family homes along a pedestrian street or clustered around a courtyard. Residents of cohousing communities often have several optional group meals in the common building each week.

This type of housing began in Denmark in the late 1960s, and spread to North America in the late 1980s. More than a hundred cohousing communities are now completed or in development across the United States and Canada.

The Main Characteristics of Cohousing

1. PARTICIPATORY PROCESS. Future residents participate in the design of the community so that it meets their needs. Some cohousing communities are initiated or driven by

a developer, which may actually make it easier for more future residents to participate. However, a well-designed, pedestrian-oriented community without resident participation in the planning may be "cohousing-inspired," but it is not a cohousing community.

2. **NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN.** The physical layout and orientation of the buildings (the site plan) encourages a sense of community. For example, the private residences are clustered on the site leaving more shared open space, the dwellings typically face each other across a pedestrian street or courtyard, and/or cars are parked on the periphery. The common house is often visible from the front door of every dwelling. But more important than any of these specifics is the intent to create a strong sense of community with design as one of the facilitators.

3. **COMMON FACILITIES.** Common facilities are designed for daily use, are an integral part of the community, and are always supplemental to the private residences. The common house typically includes a common kitchen, dining area, sitting area, children's playroom and laundry and may also have a workshop, library, exercise room, crafts room and/or one or two guest rooms. Except on very tight urban sites, cohousing communities often have playground equipment, lawns, and gardens as well. Since the buildings are clustered, larger sites may retain several or many acres of undeveloped shared open space.

4. **RESIDENT MANAGEMENT.** Cohousing communities are managed by their residents. Residents also do most of the work required to maintain the property, participate in the preparation of common meals, and meet regularly to develop policies and solve community problems.

5. **NON-HIERARCHICAL STRUCTURE AND DECISION-MAKING.** In cohousing communities there are leadership roles, but no one person or persons who have authority over others. Most groups start with one or two "burning souls" but as people join the group, each person takes on one or more roles consistent with his or her skills, abilities or interests. Most cohousing groups make decisions by consensus, and although many groups have a policy for voting if consensus cannot be reached after a number of attempts, it is rarely or never necessary to resort to voting.

6. **NO SHARED COMMUNITY ECONOMY.** The community is not a source of income for its members. Occasionally, a cohousing community will pay one of its own members to do a specific (usually time-limited) task, but more typically the task will simply be considered that member's contribution to the shared responsibilities.

For more information see <http://www.cohousing.org>.

BAD VIBES: HOT-BUTTON ITEMS AT ELC

Over the years, a handful of recurring problems have caused repeated annoyance, irritation and anguished emails. To aid your transition to ELC and help you avoid unintended offense to others, we have distilled this list of breaches of community norms which seem to cause the most problems. Please follow these simple rules for a smoother launch into community life:

- Work: Much work is required to keep the community functioning smoothly. Each resident is required to spend at least 4 hours/month on community work.
- Smoking: Very few ELC residents smoke. If you, a family member or a tenant smokes, make sure the smoke does not bother other residents when you/they smoke outside your/their home. No smoking is allowed in or around the common house, including the porches, decks, yard, playground and surrounding sidewalks.
- Children: If you have a problem with a child's behavior, talk to the child and/or her parent. If this does not resolve the problem, or if you aren't comfortable doing this, contact the Parents Committee's ombuds-team. Please do not discuss the problem on email.
- Children's toys: Make sure your children's vehicles and toys are not left on pedestrian lanes, sidewalks or in other commoners' yards when not in use.
- Common House: When you use any part of the common house (including porches and decks), clean up after yourself. Take out your trash/recycling and especially your food scraps/compost. Pack It Out! to keep the common house free of roaches. Leave no trace!
- Pets: Control your pets. Your dog must be leashed when outside (except when in the dog run). Keep your dogs out of other residents' yards, and always scoop the poop.
- Driving – pedestrian lanes: Our internal lanes are for pedestrians and children's play. Driving on them is allowed only for a few limited purposes (see "Driving, Deliveries and Parking") at speeds no greater than walking speed/5 mph maximum. If you do have to drive on the pedestrian lanes for one of these limited purposes, get out of your car immediately and close the swing gate or re-erect the posts behind you so delivery trucks, visitors or strangers don't follow you in.
- Getting Rid of Stuff: Do not leave stuff on the ground or sidewalk in the recycling/trash area, in the common house or on common grounds. Put things you want to give away on your porch or yard and email the community. It is your responsibility to remove from the premises items too large for the dumpster (see "Recycling, Compost, Giveaways and Trash" for other options).
- Parking: Each unit is allowed no more than three parking spaces. If you use three spaces, please park the third vehicle against the wall behind Trimble Mortuary.

(revised January 2017)

STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING

Statement of Understanding among residents of East Lake Commons Cohousing Community
As a resident of East Lake Commons cohousing community:

- I understand the principles and responsibilities of cohousing and I want to live in a cohousing community.
- I have reviewed The Book of Commons, and I support the values expressed in the ELC Vision Statement, including community, environmental and participation goals.
- I expect to take an active role in the life of East Lake Commons and realize this will include attending meetings, staying abreast of community decisions, working with

committees and other tasks. I recognize that I am expected to devote time, energy and work to ELC as a self-managed community.

- I understand that most decisions at ELC are made by consensus and I agree with that process. I agree to be bound by decisions already made at ELC, and recognize that I will participate in making future decisions.
- If I sell or rent my unit, or a section of it, I will try to select buyers or tenants who will respect the values and agreements of the ELC community.

AFFORDABILITY FUND

Affordability is a core value at ELC. The Affordability Fund aids active commoners facing financial hardship because of unemployment, serious illness or other reasons. The Fund is not a part of the ELC budget. It is funded by voluntary contributions, primarily from selling homeowners but also by yard sales and other fundraisers organized by residents.

Active commoners may apply for assistance from the Fund by contacting the current chair of the Affordability Fund Group. Applicants should explain in writing the circumstances necessitating their request and provide your active involvement on one or more ELC committees. Assistance typically takes the form of paying the commoner's POA assessments or rent for a limited period. This not only aids the applicant, but helps the community meet its budget by assuring that POA assessments are paid on time. If the commoner is still facing financial hardship at the expiration of the assistance period, they may re-apply.

Homeowners who are planning to sell their units are encouraged to make a parting gift to the community with a contribution to the Affordability Fund from their sale proceeds. Gifts from past selling homeowners have ranged from \$250 to \$10,000, but most often in the \$1,000 - \$2,000 range.

ANIMALS (domesticated or wild)

Pets: Commoners' dogs must be leashed when outdoors. (ELC Board decision, March 15, 2015) Keep your pets out of other residents' yards and private property. Dog-walkers are expected to scoop the poop and dispose of it in the trash, not bury it in private yards or common property. DeKalb County law requires that dogs and cats be collared and tagged. Pets are not allowed in the Common House; only service animals are permitted.

Dog run: Dogs may run freely, under the supervision of their owners, in the fenced-off dog run in the southeast corner of the property, behind the landscape shed and across the path from the blueberry patch. (approved by the Common Grounds Committee September 10, 2015.) Stray dogs sometimes get onto the property and occasionally kill residents' cats.

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

Homeowners are required to respect community-approved architectural standards and guidelines when maintaining and modifying exterior components of their property. All exterior modifications, including changing the paint color, structural change, and changes to the grounds, must be reviewed and approved by the Architectural Review Committee (ARC) before any work can be done.

Routine maintenance does not require review or approval by ARC. Routine maintenance typically includes exterior repairs that correct deterioration or damage, restoring a unit to its original condition.

ARC seeks to help homeowners plan modifications which meet their needs, protect and enhance the community, and meet ARC requirements.

If external changes are undertaken without ARC approval, ARC can request a homeowner to remove the unapproved modification and restore the property to its original condition. If a homeowner fails to make corrections, ARC typically turns the issue over to the ELC Board for enforcement.

[Modifications to common property must be approved by the Common Grounds and Hardscape Review Committee – see “Common Grounds.”]

ASSESSMENTS AND FEES (see also “Assessment Collection Policy” and “Assessment Payment Policy”)

East Lake Commons operates on a budget funded primarily by assessments paid by homeowners. Contact us for current assessments and fees. Homeowners pay their monthly assessments, as well as water bills, termite fees, special assessments and other charges, online. Payments may be made by mail, auto pay from a checking account or online.

Failure to pay on time will incur a penalty of 18% interest. Unpaid balances may trigger graduated enforcement measures including collection proceedings and a lien on your unit. Homeowners facing a financial hardship that prevents them from fully paying their assessment on time may request assistance from the Affordability Fund. (See “Affordability Fund”.)
(revised February 2018)

COMMITTEES AND TASK FORCES

Join a committee! In addition to the tasks you choose to perform, we request that you join at least one committee. Committees are very important because many decisions at ELC begin or are made at the committee level.

The most current list of committees, task forces and other special interest groups as well as contacts can be accessed through our member site once you are a member. Descriptions of some of the main committees are included below for reference; the most current members, roles, group documents, minutes, mission statements and other committee information are available on the website.

Affordability Fund Group: Proposes and implements policies to keep ELC affordable to residents of limited means and those in need of short-term help; solicits, manages and expends funds for that purpose.

Architectural Review Committee (ARC): Evaluates proposed modifications and additions to external portions of homeowners' property; that is, the unit and the lot.

Board Committee: Handles legal and fiduciary aspects of East Lake Commons. Membership is by election.

Common Grounds Committee: Manages changes on communal property, including modifications to pathways, existing structures, etc.

Common House Stewardship Committee: Handles CH scheduling and monitors Common House use.

Community Connect Committee: Provides tours, welcomes and orients new residents, conducts ELC 101 classes, hosts an annual welcoming celebration and publishes The Book of Commons.

Dancing Fox Editorial Committee: Produces and distributes The Dancing Fox, a quarterly community newsletter.

Emergency Readiness Committee: supports East Lake Commons in preparing for and responding to natural disasters and other emergencies in ways that honor community values. Emergencies include but are not limited to medical crises, fires, floods, tornados or bioterrorism. Exceptions are crime related emergencies that are the responsibility of the Safety Committee.

Facilities Maintenance Committee: Supports the ELC Board in carrying out its fiduciary responsibility to maintain ELC's built infrastructure.

Finance Committee: Prepares ELC's budget, pays all bills, receives all moneys, and generally manages all fiscal aspects of ELC.

Friends of the Forest (subgroup of the Sustainability Committee): Nurtures and protects the ELC forest.

Garden Committee: Serves as a liaison between our organic gardener and the POA, and supports our community vision of maintaining an organic garden.

Group Structure and Process Committee (GS&P): Manages our governance and decision-making processes.

Landscape Committee: Manages all landscape aspects of the common space, excluding Gaia Gardens.

Parents Committee: Deals with issues related to the community's children.

Safety Committee: Organizes preventive measures and community responses to crime.

Scribe Tribe: Records, posts and files minutes of general meetings.

Social Committee: Plans, publicizes, decorates for and cleans up after dances, parties and other social events.

Sustainability Committee: Provides information, resources and guidance on environmental sustainability to ELC and the greater community.

Technology Committee: Manages ELC website, email, listservs and other technology-related concerns.

(Updated January 2021)

COMMON GROUNDS (see also “Landscape Maintenance,” “Pesticides” and “Repairs”)

Much of our 20 acres is community-owned for the benefit and stewardship of all residents. Upon moving in, please familiarize yourself with your property boundaries. Renters can check with their homeowners. We ask community members to maintain the common areas adjacent to their property.

However, maintenance does not include modification of the common areas: The Common Grounds Committee must approve any changes to common areas, including those adjacent to your residence. Examples of such modifications would be placing drainage pipes above or below ground, placing quasi-permanent structures, art objects like sculptures, furniture, fountains, etc. Failure to follow this process can ultimately result in the Board Committee's restoring the common property to its previous condition at the expense of the resident responsible.

An exception to the pre-approval requirement is the “15-minute rule of thumb.” If a resident wants to place an item (such as a chair or artwork) on common grounds which can be removed

in 15 minutes, and residents who live near the area have no objections, s/he may do so. If someone objects, the “placer” and the objector should attempt to resolve the issue. Unresolved concerns may be brought to the Common Grounds and Hardscape Review Committee.

New and existing residents who are considering installing Comcast or other utility boxes should check with the provider to determine if an existing utility box can be used. If the utility company indicates a new box is required, the Common Grounds Committee should be contacted prior to adding one.

(revised February 2018)

COMMON HOUSE - GENERAL

The Common House (CH) is the physical center and "heart" of the community. Its primary function is to enhance community connectedness by providing a place for community members to gather and interact in a variety of ways. A secondary function of the CH is to promote shared resources and reduce consumption by providing community members with a facility for meals, personal celebrations, laundry, guest housing, and other things.

All ELC residents and their guests are welcome and encouraged to come by the CH to read, converse, snack, play games, check their emails, do their laundry or just hang out. All areas of the CH -- with the exception of the guestrooms -- are available for spontaneous use when not reserved. Children under 10 years of age are welcome in the CH for non-rough activities if accompanied by an adult.

The CH is available to residents 24 hours a day. A key may be needed to open the main floor doors in the evening or to access downstairs rooms anytime.

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS (see also “Meetings”, “Appendix A”)

Decisions affecting the community are made in three ways:

- 1) At general business meetings (GBMs);
- 2) By the Board Committee; or
- 3) By other committees using the committee empowerment process.

Decisions at general meetings are usually made by consensus of attending homeowners and certified members.

A proposal may be adopted by consensus at one or more meetings where a cumulative quorum is present. In our consensus process, a member may:

- 1) Consent: Agree to adoption of the proposal.
- 2) Stand Aside: Disagree with the proposal but allow it to proceed.
- 3) Block: Prevent adoption of the proposal.

Blocking should be used only when the member strongly feels the proposal would not be in the best interest of the community or has strong personal objections. The blocker must then work with the proposers to seek a solution acceptable to all.

A proposal which fails to achieve consensus after 3 tries may be decided by a 2/3 vote, if 2/3 of those present agree to vote.

Any commoner, group of commoners or committee may place items on a GBM agenda. GBMs may make decisions on any matters on the agenda (whether or not they have been identified as consensus items) which have been posted on the ELCAnnounce listserv and on the mail kiosk and Common House bulletin boards at least 7 days prior to the meeting. However, individual commoners or groups might wish to meet with an appropriate committee to iron out issues prior to (or in lieu of) going to GBM, particularly if the project or request is large or affects common space or the common house.

Minutes of general meetings are kept on the website.

Board Committee: The Board is elected each September by homeowners. All members serve one-year terms, and are eligible for re-election without limitation. The Board has been empowered by the community to handle legal, liability, contractual, budgetary, fiduciary and other types of decisions.

Committee empowerment: Some decisions binding on the whole community are made at the committee level using the committee empowerment process. Each committee decides on its own decision-making process. Committee decisions may be appealed to the GBM by commoners who disagree with them and are unable to resolve the disagreement at the committee level.

We have formed a Property Owners Association (POA) and are obligated to follow our covenants and bylaws.
(revised February 2018)

DRIVING, DELIVERIES AND PARKING

ELC is a pedestrian community. All vehicles should be parked in the parking lot. Handcarts are provided for bringing in groceries or moving other items between your car and your unit, and should be used even if multiple trips are required. Vehicles are permitted on the internal pedestrian lanes only when moving into or out of the community; transporting items so heavy or bulky that they cannot be moved by cart; transporting handicapped persons; or in emergencies. When you must drive on the pedestrian lanes for one of these reasons, please do not leave the entrance gate open. Get out of your vehicle and close it immediately after you enter or exit.

Motorized vehicles on interior lanes must not exceed walking speed/5 miles per hour (community decision, 1/27/2008). Cars driving to the Common House also must have someone walk in front of the car.

Each unit is allowed no more than three parking spaces. If you use three spaces, park the third vehicle against the wall on the west side of the property behind Trimble Mortuary. Also, park vehicles which are not used often against this wall. Please leave the spaces to either side of the electric vehicle charging station clear for electric vehicles to have access to the charger. All electric vehicles which use community-provided electricity must pay a monthly \$10.00 fee.

No junked, inoperable or unregistered vehicles may be left in the parking lot. After notification, such vehicles will be towed at the owner's expense.
(updated March 2016)

GARDENS – CSA AND INDIVIDUAL PLOTS

OUR ORGANIC GARDEN:

ELC hosts Gaia Gardens, a certified organic garden, which leases the garden to a full-time gardener. Gaia Gardens operates as a CSA (community-supported agriculture), which sells shares each year, first to ELC residents and returning CSA shareholders and then, if available, to the general public. You may become a shareholder of Gaia Gardens and enjoy 30 weeks of wonderful homegrown organic produce. Surplus produce is sold at local markets and/or given to families in need as part of our community outreach.

You are also welcome to volunteer in the garden to help pick veggies, weed, mulch or help in other ways. Please call the gardener to coordinate your volunteer time.

Residents are free to walk around the garden, but not through the fields. Produce is available only to shareholders and only at the weekly pick-up or on other announced occasions; Do not pick any produce from the fields as it is the sole source of the gardener's income. The chair of the Garden Committee is ELC's liaison with Gaia Gardens.

BEES:

We have previously operated an apiary for honey production and agricultural purposes. The bee hives are located in the southeast quadrant of the community, past the far end of the parking lot. Honeybees are generally mild-mannered; however, if you or your children are allergic to bee stings, please be mindful of bees in that area.

INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNAL PLOTS:

As a resident, you may request a small personal garden plot to cultivate organically, as available on a first come, first served basis. If you don't want a whole plot, you can join other residents in the "communist plot."

We must maintain these plots in accordance with the requirements for organic certification since they are adjacent to Gaia Gardens. You may use compost from the community's compost bins (but NOT Gaia Gardens compost) in your garden plot.

Each plot must be planted, mulched, or cover cropped at all times. Each plot holder must plant intentional crops at least once per year.

All plantings, compost, tools, etc., must be inside the boundaries of each plot. If a plot holder is given a written notice about not being in compliance with these guidelines, the plot holder will have 30 days to bring the plot into compliance. Within 30 days if the plot is not within guidelines, the garden committee has the right to award the plot to another ELC resident.
(updated February 2018)

LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE (see also "Pesticides")

East Lake Commons Landscape Maintenance Guidelines

BACKGROUND: East Lake Commons encourages the use of practices in our homes and on the land that sustain and protect the environment and our organic farm, Gaia Gardens.

Sustainability is one of our core values.

APPEARANCE: Natural but not wild. High visibility areas bordering parking lots, along paths and near the Common House are more manicured with color and seasonal interest. Borders, fields, woods and designated wildlife areas are kept natural, removing only those invasive plants that threaten the overall health of the land.

STANDARDS:

Use only organic OMRI certified fertilizers when needed. **No use of synthetic pesticides** (see also "Pesticides" section).



Look for this OMRI seal

Recycle dead plants, weeds, and small to medium size branches in the area on the north side directly behind the trash dumpster marked by orange cones or in the area on the south side at the edge of the woods at the far end of the parking lot, marked by cones. Residents

should use extra care with plants that have sharp thorns. Leaves in gutters are to be composted on the property. Please fill the yard trim areas from the back to the front.

Dispose of potted plants and soil by removing the plant from the container and tearing the root ball apart. The upper portion of the plants and attached roots of small plants (too small to be chipped) can be disposed of in brush piles in the woods. Any rocks at the bottom of the container should be reused. Containers should be recycled or discarded in trash. Do not leave containers in or around the landscape shed.

Dirt resulting from property excavation such as building a porch or walk should not be dumped anywhere on common property without permission. If it is anticipated that excess dirt will result from work done on your property, contact the ARC Committee to discuss the deposition of this dirt at the time you present your plans to the community for approval.

Plant native and/or drought-hardy low-maintenance flowers, shrubs and trees with an emphasis on pollinator-friendly and edible plants. Grass is not recommended as an ecological choice.

Utilize the principles of permaculture with an emphasis on enhancing soil health.

Maintain equipment in good working order meeting standards of low emissions and noise levels. Wear appropriate protective gear for equipment utilized.

ROUTINE TASKS:

Apply wood chips to trees and large shrubs 4-6 inches deep in a circle extending out from within 6 inches of the trunk to the drip line to preserve moisture. Mulch piled against the trunk can cause disease. Wood chips are usually available near the Landscape shed or in the parking lot in the corner near the wall that backs up to the mortuary. Contact Karen Skellie if no chips are available.

Apply pine bark or straw mulch to plant beds. Wood (versus bark) chips are not recommended for this purpose as they can tie up available nitrogen (a necessary plant fertilizer). Use commercially available pine bark nuggets (from the bag or in bulk) or straw. Cypress bark is not recommended as it is not environmentally friendly. Apply a layer (about 4 sheets) of wet newspaper on the ground first and place pine bark chips or straw on top to prevent weed growth. It is not necessary to remove weeds before mulching but you may want to cut any weeds very short to ensure good contact of the newspaper with the ground.

Mow grassy common areas and yards at a lawn mower setting that will leave some green at the tip of grass blades or clover. Grass allowed to exceed 6 inches can obscure rocks and toys so should be kept lower than this. On the other hand, removing the entire green tip will stress the grassy ground cover and may kill it. In general, mow higher in summer and lower when temperatures are cool. Usually mowing every 2 weeks is sufficient at ELC. The goal of grassy areas at ELC is to maintain the ground cover to prevent erosion and to allow a few open areas for play. Edge along sidewalks to prevent overgrowth into the walks.

Apply only organic OMRI certified fertilizer as needed. Homeowners are encouraged to use the ELC compost in their yards when available.

Remove invasive weeds such as:

Vines:

- English Ivy (sufficient to prevent growth into tree canopies);
- Japanese wisteria, a serious problem in the woods behind the blueberry field (kills trees by pulling them down when allowed to grow into the canopy);
- poison ivy; and
- honeysuckle.

Bushes:

- privet (is especially bad near desirable trees as it competes with them for available water).

Trees:

- mimosa; and
- sweet gum (where sweet gum balls can create a walking hazard or roots can damage structures).

In general invasive weeds out-compete native plants and limit diversity. If you are unfamiliar with weeds ask a member of the LC to identify them for you. The above list is not exhaustive and additional invasive plants may be identified by the LC.

Walkabouts for educational purposes can be scheduled from time to time to learn about our common areas. Special pulling devices, weed wrenches, are available in the landscape shed for removal of small trees, shrubs or weeds; however, larger ones require use of a chain saw or large loppers and spot treatment of the stump by mechanical removal or use of OMRI certified products, which requires specialized training. Participate in a Green Team Work Day to learn how to remove invasive weeds safely.

Weed plant beds by hand pulling, smothering with newspaper and mulching.

Sweep curbs or rake in parking lot to remove leaves (deposit leaves on borders along parking lot or in wooded areas). Leaf blowers are not permitted for health and noise reasons.

Thin plant beds as needed and move excess plants to new locations or compost.

Prune flowers, shrubs and trees to stimulate growth and to remove dead or diseased plant parts. Be sure to prune at the appropriate time of year for the plant in question. Improper pruning can remove flower buds or weaken the plant. Prune shrubs/grass so as not to impede access to sidewalks and paths. Maintain 7 feet head clearance over all sidewalks. If shrubs/weeds are touching your house, prune back to prevent damage to siding and to allow clear visibility of home foundation. This will assist in preventing termite infestations and rat corridors along the foundation. Trees growing immediately adjacent to foundations should be

cut and roots dug out to prevent re-growth as they will damage foundations. Contact LC if you need instructions and materials.

As part of routine maintenance trees and shrubs should be pruned to:

- Reduce risk of failure from dead or weak branches.
- Provide clearance for walkways, paths.
- Provide adequate visibility and clearance around home foundation.
- Reduce shade and wind resistance.
- Manage **tree** health.
- Manage flower or fruit production.
- Improve aesthetics.
- Improve **tree** structure.
- Repair past improper pruning.

Be sure to prune at the appropriate time of year for the plant in question and in accordance with best practices. Improper pruning can remove flower buds or weaken trees. Small tree seedlings may be pulled or cut if in areas where there is sufficient tree canopy and allowing more trees to grow would negatively impact existing trees or if too close to infrastructure (homes, light poles, signs, in paving). Pruning of trees and shrubs on common ground shall be performed under the direction of the LC. (Groups or individuals having formally adopted areas of common grounds to beautify and maintain are considered performing work under the direction of the LC.) Desired pruning of limbs outside the capacity of volunteers shall be coordinated with the Board and/or Tree committee. Complete removal of trees or major pruning of limbs in the upper story of trees on Common Ground to protect property or for safety reasons shall be governed by the ELC Tree Policy.

Repair any eroding areas on banks.

Treat fire ant mounds with insect growth regulator that is organic OMRI certified. Contact LC for approved organic fire ant bait and instructions on its use.

Maintain mulch such as wood or bark chips in established walking paths between homes and on common ground, so as to prevent erosion. No bare ground should be visible. Replenish annually.

Seed clover in areas where there is no ground cover and erosion could occur. Clover seed is generally available in the landscape shed; if not, contact a member of the LC.

COMMON QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

Who is in charge? The LC coordinates and facilitates maintenance of the landscaped areas on ELC common grounds. Current members of the LC are found on the Committees/Groups list on the ELC website.

Who maintains common ground? Routine maintenance per the above guidelines of common areas is the responsibility of the residents of ELC. Some outsourced maintenance is contracted

for the Common House and the mowing of the large play field. Green Team work days may be scheduled by the LC for large tasks requiring many hands. The ELC pods are encouraged to work together to maintain their adjacent areas.

Do I need permission to plant trees, shrubs and flowers on common ground? Some areas of common ground have been officially adopted by residents as individuals or as a group. The LC reviews and approves these plans as one of their routine duties. Maintenance of these areas is the responsibility of the resident(s). These areas cannot be significantly altered (trees or shrubs removed) without submitting a new plan for approval. Contact the LC before planting on Common Ground, unless you already have an approved plan.

What can I plant in the 5 foot fire lane cutback area in front of my house?

The fire department requires low-growing, non-woody plants.

Where can I get a lawnmower and tools? Equipment and supplies for maintaining common areas and your yard are available in the landscape shed at the end of the parking lot. Access is reserved for those 16 and older (see Gardening Tools section). Report any problems with equipment to a member of the LC and always clean tools when returning to the shed.

Who is available to show me what to do or answer my questions?

- Contact any member of the LC to arrange a time to meet.
- Come to a regularly scheduled LC meeting.

Who pays for materials to maintain the common property? The LC has a budget to cover plants, equipment, supplies and some outsourced maintenance. Availability of money to assist individuals and pods maintaining common property is on a first come first serve basis and will not exceed \$100 on an annual basis. Larger sums would need to be requested prior to the approval of the annual budget (submit in August).

PARTICIPATION

Affordability is one of East Lake Commons' core values. One of the ways we keep ELC affordable is by doing most of our maintenance, cleaning, landscaping, administrative and other work ourselves. Also, a basic tenet of cohousing is that working together builds community. For these reasons, all residents age 18 and older (unless exempted by the Participation Committee) are required to share the community's work.

Residents are responsible for completing 4 work credits per month. In general, one hour of work on a community-approved task = 1 credit. An exception is that no more than one credit may be earned for attendance at a general or committee meeting, even if the meeting lasts longer than one hour. In addition, the Participation Committee may give extra credit for tasks which are not getting done, are especially difficult, are considered especially important for the community, or for other reasons.

Residents needing tasks to fulfil their work requirement may take on unclaimed tasks on a regular basis, join work days, contact committee chairs, and/or respond to appeals for volunteers on the ELC-Announce listserv. Favors done for neighbors, such as providing rides, childcare or cooking meals, while an important part of the cohousing ethic, are not considered community tasks unless specifically organized by a committee.

We appreciate the addition of your time and skills to our community.
(updated February 2018)