

**Last revised
January, 2014**

The Book of Commons

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.

The Book of Commons

January 15, 2014

Dear Commoners,

The Book of Commons is given to all new residents of East Lake Commons to acquaint them with our community life and values. **Please help us keep this information accurate and up-to-date!**

New residents – Let us know what information is missing which would have given you a better introduction to East Lake Commons.

Old-timers – Let us know what is missing that you think all newcomers should know.

Everybody – Notify us of any out-of-date or wrong information.

Thanks for helping us help new residents make a smoother transition to ELC.

-- Bob Goodman, editor

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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. Our best information is that it was written by the developer, Jack Morse, who was later an ELC homeowner and resident. 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.)

* * * * *

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, village-wide 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 asked to spend at least 4 hours/month on community work. Sign up for specific tasks on the website (*see "Participation"*), join a committee (*see "Committees"*) and watch the community bulletin board and email for volunteer opportunities.

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 and yard.

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.

Pets: Control your pets. Keep your dogs out of other residents' yards, and always scoop the poop.

Email: We have two community email lists, each for specific purposes. Review the purposes of each list (*see "Email Listservs and Protocol"*) and post your email to the correct list only – NOT to both lists. Duplicate emails annoy many people and clutter inboxes.

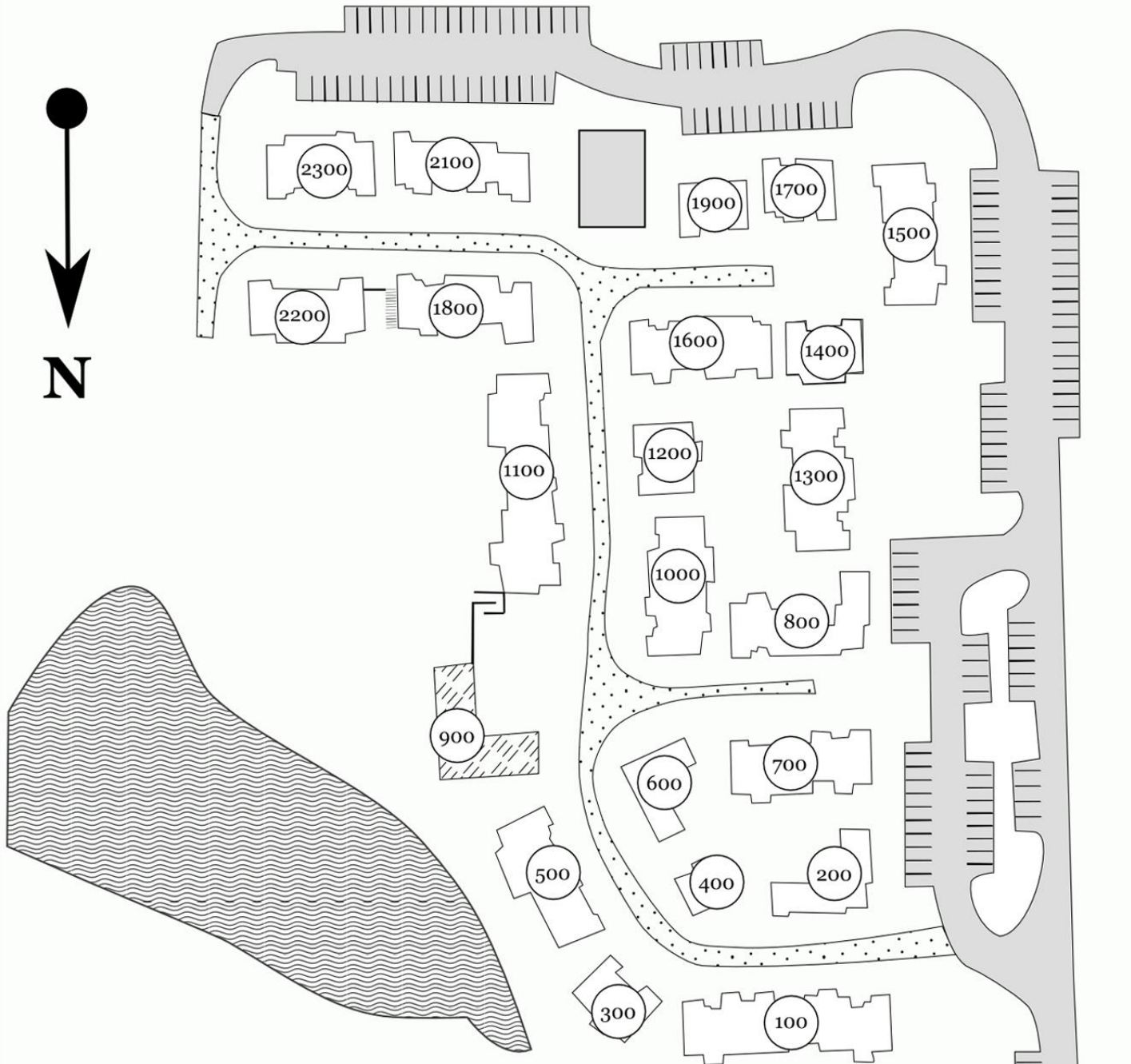
Driving – pedestrian lanes: Our internal lanes are for pedestrians and children's play. Driving on them is allowed only for a few limited purposes (*see "Driving, Deliveries and Parking"*) at speeds no greater than walking speed/5 mph maximum (community decision, 1/27/2008). If you do have to drive on the pedestrian lanes for one of these reasons, get out of your car and close the swing gate immediately 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. If you have something to give away, put it on your porch 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*).

Dumpster: Toss your trash toward the back. Do not leave construction or remodeling debris in the dumpster.

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.

(revised January 2014)



East Lake Commons Cohousing Community



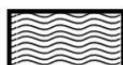
Common House



Pedestrian Lanes



Parking Area



Pond

Gate

