

Participation at CoHo Ecovillage

Why is participation important to our community?

Participation has been an intentional part of CoHo culture from the beginning, as an integral part of our Vision and Values; in the work done to design and build our physical space; and as the way we have lived our lives together as a community since move in.

Doing much of the operations and management of the community around buildings, grounds, finance and other required activities helps maintain affordability. It also gives us a profound sense of community and connection, which affirms our choice to live at CoHo. We are grateful for the deep connection, security and joy that flow from working together and contributing to the community. We celebrate the wisdom that arises and the ease that follows from everyone's engagement in group decisions.

In addition to building connection with our neighbors and nurturing our sense of community, our active participation in a variety of ways offers additional benefits to us as individuals and to our community as a whole.

1. When we all contribute, it helps the community run smoothly, and directly reduces our HOA dues.
2. When we participate in making things work here, we each feel that we are an integral and valued part of our community.
3. We need attendance at community meetings in order to share our group wisdom in conducting CoHo business such as understanding and approving budgets, making leadership selections, and coming to community agreements.
4. We gain a deeper understanding of each other when we work and participate in meetings with our neighbors.
5. We rest easy when we know that the work needed to maintain and enhance the physical site and social cohesion of CoHo is being done.

What are the expectations of individuals?

Our intent is to achieve a reasonable and caring balance between community needs for active contribution and individuals' ability to participate. Expectations regarding participation by individual members of CoHo are outlined below.

1. We voluntarily participate in our community according to our availability, skill, and community needs.

2. We understand that there will be times when life circumstances will cause each person's participation level to ebb and flow.
3. Individuals can participate in the work of the community through attending workdays, serving on teams, completing team tasks and or completing tasks on the CoHo Task List.
4. Individuals can also participate by doing work independently that is not associated with a particular team, because they see that something needs to be done. Checking in with a team that may be connected to that work is encouraged.
5. Individuals also participate in community building through attendance at monthly community meetings, twice-a-year wellness retreats, and completing an NVC basics course.
6. The community has an ongoing budget for child care that is to be used to facilitate and support participation at CoHo. Individuals who would benefit from this can contact the CLC team.
7. Our young people are welcome to participate in community work, based on their interests, available tasks and developmentally appropriate supervision/mentorship, or other available support.
8. There are many other, more informal ways to participate in CoHo activities that build an ongoing sense of community, including attending community meals, parties, and workshops, joining music groups, book clubs, or other special interest groups, participating in game days, and other ideas we have yet to experience!

How does CoHo support community participation?

Teams

1. Community members join one or more teams based on interest, skill, curiosity and/or a desire to learn something new. People new to the community are encouraged to attend various team meetings and talk with members of teams to learn more about what teams do and how they function.
2. Based on their charters, teams develop a list of core or required tasks to keep CoHo running smoothly.
3. Teams report progress, challenges, and resources needed to the Steering Council through assigned liaisons
4. Teams report tasks that they need help with to the coordinator of the CoHo Task List, who shares the list with the community on a regular basis.
5. Teams also report their accomplishments, priorities and challenges at least annually to the community.

CoHoTask List

1. This is a spreadsheet where tasks that need an owner are listed. Tasks can be entered into this list by teams or individuals. Tasks can be one-time or on-going. Teams can also request new team members in this manner.
2. The Task List is managed by the Task List coordinator who regularly communicates this information to the community.

Work Days

1. Half-day work days are held on monthly CoHo Day.
2. Prior to CoHo Day, the Work Day Coordinator(s) send a request to the community for teams to submit tasks for the upcoming work day.
3. Teams send their tasks to the Work Day Coordinator(s) to be assembled into a Work Day project list. This list (which includes a description of the task or project, who is leading the task, and where to meet to get started) is read out at the beginning of the work day and posted for late arrivals.
4. Participants meet at the designated locales around CoHo, bringing energy, enthusiasm, and a spirit of camaraderie to the tasks of the day.

Role of the Steering Council

1. Steering Council assigns liaisons to each of the teams and ad hoc groups.
2. Steering Council assists the community in assessing how well community needs and community energy are matching up.
3. When needs exceed energy, Steering Council helps the community prioritize work to be done.

Goals of Participation at CoHo

- **Community, belonging and contribution:** We each feel that we are an integral part of our community because we all participate in making it work.
- **Ease, communication, and cooperation:** Our community has regular opportunities to determine and communicate our group priorities. Individuals and teams may use this information to help them make decisions about how they would like to participate.
- **Efficiency and effectiveness:** We are proactive and plan ahead so that we meet our goals and are not surprised. Coho work is structured in a way that is rewarding and efficient for the individual.
- **Stability:** We strive to have sustainable processes and strategies that allow us all to participate without burnout and lead to continuity when members depart or are no longer able or interested in doing a task.

- **Connection and trust:** We gain a deeper understanding of each other when we all participate and share in meetings with our neighbors.
- **Security and peace of mind:** We rest easy that the work needed to maintain and enhance the physical site and social cohesion of CoHo is being done.
- **Integrity:** As individuals we assume responsibility for the work that we have accepted, and complete that work in a timely and professional manner. We alert our teams/the community in a timely manner when we are unable to complete our tasks or need help.
- **Appreciation:** It is important to both give and receive appreciation for our work in the community, be it formal or informal. This helps individuals feel good about their participation and gives the community peace of mind knowing that the work is getting done.
- To this end, a transparent reporting system for community accomplishments is developed and maintained.

Participation and CoHo Vision & Values

Participation in our community supports our Vision and is embodied in several of our Values.

From our **CoHo Vision**

CoHo is a cohousing community that is designed to encourage interactions between people and enrich our lives with the pleasure of cooperation and friendship. *Participation enables this value.*

From our **CoHo Values**

- **Sharing Our Lives:** CoHo is a community in which we share work, celebrations, laughter and tears.
- **A Diverse Community:** We embrace diversity in race, age, income level, sexual orientation, religious belief, ethnicity and physical ability. We honor our differences and support the uniqueness and growth of each person. *Acknowledging this value allows different types of individual and team participation.*
- **Consensus Decision Making:** We use the consensus decision-making process because we value every member's participation and inherent wisdom. Communication and consensus decision-making skills are taught to and practiced by everyone in the community.