



GAINESVILLE  
Cohousing

## ***What does it mean to be part of our community?***

The Residents of Gainesville Cohousing are a unique, diverse group working to create a vibrant, intergenerational, nourishing community in Gainesville, Florida. The physical and social environment of this community incorporates principles of sustainability, affordability and respect for the privacy and diversity of families and individuals. The physical design of the community is structured to bring individuals and families together, enhancing daily interaction, cooperation and fun. As neighbors, the residents share the conviction that cooperating in everyday endeavors will enhance their lives. Seeking to live both independently as well as interdependently, the residents strive to balance their needs for privacy and companionship, sharing their skills and resources while respecting each other's property. Although the residents are all unique, common design and materials in each home enhance the neighborhood and reduce costs.

The cohousing neighborhood includes shared outdoor spaces, a workshop, and a large common house for socializing, shared meals, and celebrations. Residents contribute their time and talents in the day-to-day maintenance and management of the facilities. Communication is open with clear processes for decision-making and resolving conflicts. That everyone be heard, and all needs understood is the goal.

Combining intellectual and tangible resources produces benefits on many levels. The community fosters cooperation, goodwill, mutual respect, trust, and tolerance; and inspires similar forms of neighborliness among citizens throughout our region. The balance of individual autonomy and group opportunities enhances the social and economic quality of life of the residents.

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## ***Social Activities***

**Common meals:** Common meals are the heart of every cohousing community. By regularly breaking, and baking, bread together, we build bonds with each other through conversation and the sharing of our work and our lives. It's work and play and feeding each other. It's why we're doing cohousing. While attendance is optional, every individual is encouraged to participate in community meals, both as a diner and as part of a meal team.

**Other events:** Each month there are meetings of the Book Club, the Women's Group, the Men's Group and a First Friday evening gathering. An "Improv" group meets weekly as does a yoga class. We also gather around a firepit on some cooler evenings and around the pool when it's warm.

Holidays are celebrated throughout the year, as are special birthdays or other significant occasions, such as Halloween. Thanksgiving and New Years. Members are encouraged to take initiative in planning social activities.

## ***We Aspire To:***

### ***Participate in and support community:***

- Share in meals, creativity, play, fun, and laughter.
- Share the responsibility for the governance and maintenance of the community
- Accept responsibility and follow through on commitments
- Help to create an aesthetically pleasing, inviting, and safe place to live.

### ***Practice good communication skills:***

- Listen to understand, speak with candor and honesty, maintain open minds, consider the interests and feelings of others.
- Practice thoughtfulness, patience, and willingness to compromise.
- Maintain openness and transparency in community decision-making.
- Consider the needs of the community and accept decisions that we may not have foreseen or advocated.
- Make decisions by modified consensus, giving each household an equal voice and drawing on everyone's knowledge and strengths.

### ***Balance community and privacy:***

- Enjoy spending time with our neighbors in community facilities such as our Common House, garden plots, playground, pool, workshop and other areas.
- Value our individually owned homes and lots, including any semi-private and private spaces, as part of an interconnected community.
- Respect each other's personal choices and needs for activity, rest, and quiet.

### ***Promote health, growth, and individual worth:***

- Optimize our ability to age well in community through a culture of supportive relationships.
- Be responsible for our own health care and personal care needs.
- Recognize and honor the unique ways in which members think and contribute.
- Maintain positive relationships with each other despite differences of opinion; trust that others' intentions are good.
- Value our differences in age, background, religion, politics, sexual orientation, skills, interests, physical ability, economic circumstance, ethnicity, etc.
- Encourage celebrations of diverse traditions and explorations of the spirit.
- Open ourselves to the process of personal growth.
- Cultivate life-long learning and mindfulness.
- Live in the present and respond with curiosity to our life experience.



# Governance

Gainesville Cohousing is a self-governed community. Unlike other communities, decisions are made by us, not for us or to us. The work, as well as the fun, is our responsibility. Every member of our community is expected to participate in the ongoing work of our community, at a level realistic and reasonable for their interests and abilities.

## Gainesville Cohousing Property Owner’s Association (POA)

*Community Business Meetings.* Management of our community is through our POA. Every household (i.e. every owner) is a member of the POA. Community business meetings are held monthly, and all members are strongly encouraged to participate in these monthly meetings. Working together in community business meetings sets the course of our community, builds a stronger community, and enables more inclusive decisions.

*Modified Consensus.* Our group makes significant decisions by a modified consensus process, which is different from “majority rule.” If we lack unanimity on a particular decision, we work hard to listen to objections and seek alternatives through collaboration. If we reach a point where most members favor a decision, but objections remain, we do have a provision for agreeing to a decision by a vote of a significant majority of the membership. This has happened very seldom since we began in 2011.

*Board of Directors.* The Board of Directors (BOD) of the POA is a five member, annually elected board. Generally, the BOD only makes decisions for the community in emergency or extraordinary circumstances. Members of the BOD have specific duties such as organizing and convening community meetings, keeping minutes, and tending to the finances of the organization. The Board of Directors facilitates the preparation of a coordination/prioritization plan for the community.

# How the Work Gets Done

## Groups

Much of the work of our community is done by Groups. Community activities are organized and communicated via the Hub, our intranet. Every adult member of the community is expected to serve on at least one of our Groups. *Some of the current working groups include:*

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|---|--------------------------|---------------------|
| • Aging in Community                        | • Community Connections  | • Landscaping       |
| • Common Meals                              | • Governance             | • Legal             |
| • Communication & Understanding Enhancement | • Grounds and Facilities | • Resale            |
| • Communications & Technology               | • Finance                | • Safety & Security |

## Workdays

In addition, Grounds and Facilities Group organizes one Saturday morning each month for members to work jointly on tasks that would not otherwise be attended to.

# Obligations

In addition to the practices as described, all members are legally required to:

- Pay their POA assessments and bulk utilities fees on time
- Maintain homeowners’ insurance
- Maintain their property
- Gain approval for major external modifications to their property
- Present a first right of offer to the POA when selling their home
- Submit any anticipated lease agreement to the community for approval



To learn more about cohousing contact  
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