

CREEKSIDE COMMONS COHOUSING: INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE PURCHASERS

We welcome your interest in the Creekside Commons community and want to help you learn more about us.

WHAT IS A COHOUSING COMMUNITY?

Creekside Commons is a multi-generational cohousing community built on the following principles:

Participatory Process

Founding members at Creekside took part in planning and designing a community to respond directly to their needs and to the anticipated needs of others wanting to live in cohousing. The process began in December 2004 and continued actively through development and construction. Facilities were completed very quickly and smoothly and people moved in from July through the Fall of 2007. The participatory process continues with the ongoing management of our vibrant community.

Neighbourhood Design

The physical design and placement of the 36 Creekside Commons duplex homes into three neighbourhoods on 9 acres of land enhances and encourages community interaction while maintaining private spaces behind each home. Creekside is pedestrian oriented with parking at the entrance to the property. This keeps our living space peaceful, safe and attractive. Handcarts are used for transporting goods from parking lot to homes. Vehicles are brought into the pedestrian area to deliver large or heavy items or in emergencies.

Private Homes Supplemented by Common Facilities

Cohousing communities are privately owned homes with common facilities available for daily use by all residents. At Creekside our 'Common House' includes a kitchen/dining area and outdoor patio, lounge, play room, multi-purpose activity room, guest suite, mailboxes and a laundry room. Other community facilities include a woodworking shop & craft room, common gardens with a resident-built garden shed, orchard & greenhouse, a children's outdoor play space and a composting facility. Each private residence is a completely self-contained duplex unit.

Resident Management

The people who live at Creekside manage the financial, landscaping and building maintenance functions of the community. We hire professionals to do specific tasks and we also rely on residents to participate in the care of the community, recognizing different interests & abilities. It is this level of volunteerism that builds strong bonds within our community while maintaining low strata fees.

Non-hierarchical Structure and Decision-making

Our organizational structure includes a Council of the whole and a series of teams designed to share the volunteer workload among the members of the community. Decisions are made using a modified consensus process, which works to include all points of view, and reflects choices that are for the good of the whole community. We're using a broad and inclusive consultation process, sometimes starting with an informal fireside chat to explore new ideas and then bringing the idea to teams. If needed a proposal goes to Council. The evolving process gives everyone lots of opportunities to contribute to decisions.

WHAT IS OUR OWNERSHIP STRUCTURE?

Creekside Commons is a strata corporation subject to the by-laws and regulations of the Strata Act of BC. Each owner has title to their individual unit with its limited common property and shares the common facilities with all other owners. Each owner's annual property taxes include a share of the taxes for the common facilities.

WHAT ARE THE BY-LAWS AND GUIDELINES FOR CREEKSIDE COMMONS?

Every resident is a member of the Community Council. We hold regular Council meetings and teams have meetings only as needed. We use a clearly defined *modified* consensus decision-making process, which is different from other stratas. Although Creekside is ultimately subject to the by-laws of the Strata Act, we have developed a set of by-laws with some unique clauses for our community. ***Please familiarise yourself with the by-laws and guidelines before submitting an offer on a home. Copies are available from the seller.***

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WHAT ARE CREEKSIDE'S COMMUNITY INTENTIONS?

While governed by the Strata Act, cohousing communities are not like typical strata properties. Early in our development process we identified the following common intentions:

- Encouraging positive connections while honouring personal privacy
- Taking responsibility individually and communally for our actions
- Using the consensus process to enhance community decision making
- Using resources wisely to care for the earth – reducing our personal footprint on the planet
- Serving others, the community, and the world around us
- Supporting personal growth and community evolution, utilizing the support and power of spiritual practices from all of our traditions.
- Celebrating life together

Discussing and discovering the meanings of these statements for each of us is an ongoing process.

WHY DO WE PAY MONTHLY FEES?

As in any strata development, there is a monthly fee to cover the costs for maintenance of common facilities and services. The fee at Creekside is currently \$180/month for each unit. There is no differentiation in fee based on unit size. The strata fee covers costs for things like water, insurance, landscaping, snow removal, cleaning of the common house, supplies for the common house, gardening, and community development. The strata fee also provides a pool of funds for future property replacement costs like windows, doors, and roofing. In fact, 21.5 % of our monthly fee is designated for the Property Replacement Fund, which totalled \$83,000 in February 2011. The strata fee does *not* cover property taxes, electricity, telephone, internet, or cable for individual units. Individual unit owners are also responsible for insuring their household contents. The annual budget is developed and approved by the community and the monthly strata fee may change to reflect approved costs. The current strata budget is available from the seller.

WHAT IS 'COMMON LAND'?

Each unit has approximately 460 sq. ft of *limited common property* at the back of the unit. This is "private" outdoor space. All other areas in the community are common property and are subject to by-laws and guidelines for usage and alteration. While part of common property, owners are encouraged to plant and maintain the front of their units and the side yard to the mid-point between two units. We encourage native, non-invasive and low water needs landscaping. Any plants and trees paid for and installed by an owner are the responsibility of that owner.

WHAT COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IS ENCOURAGED?

In cohousing communities, you are both purchasing a home *and* joining a community. At Creekside Commons we try to strike a comfortable balance between private and public community life. Potlucks and other shared meals happen regularly for those who wish to attend. We celebrate festive holidays and the change of seasons together with a meal or celebration. Residents organize regular events such as movie nights, work parties, singing, dancing, yoga, play times, meditation and fireside chats. Face to face communication is encouraged as people make their way through the community along with using supportive tools like an email list serve and a community calendar. Residents use the common house for private events if there is no conflict with a community event. Neighbourly cooperation is generally very positive, but as in any community, disagreements arise from time to time. If residents are unable to come to resolution on their own we have a team of volunteers to assist in conflict resolution.

HOW CAN I FIND OUT MORE?

Check out our website at www.creeksidecommons.ca or the Canadian Cohousing Network at www.cohousing.ca. We will be happy to arrange a community tour for prospective purchasers and you are welcome and encouraged to attend a community potluck or meeting. See our website for community contact names to make arrangements.