

Isthmus Cohousing FAQs

Official policies

We're still working on developing our official policies on many topics, but so far we've focused on a handful of topics that are important for people to know up front when deciding whether to become involved in our community. Below are the policies our organizers have adopted by consensus so far.

Will smoking be allowed at Isthmus Cohousing? No. Smoking or vaping of any substance will be prohibited everywhere inside and outside.

Will guns or other firearms be allowed at Isthmus Cohousing? In order to emphasize the safety and care of the members of our community, we intend to limit guns and firearms to the extent legally possible.

Will pets be allowed at Isthmus Cohousing? Up to 4 pets will be allowed in each unit. Small pets confined to cages, aquariums, or terrariums are not included in this total. Pets will not be allowed in indoor common spaces. Reasonable accommodations will be made for assistance animals for people with disabilities.

Will alcohol be allowed at Isthmus Cohousing? Alcohol consumption will be allowed in the individual units without restriction. Members and guests who wish to use the common areas may include alcohol in their personal gatherings and indicate that alcohol will be served at any personal gatherings where community members are invited. All-community meetings shall be alcohol free. Meals and other all-community gatherings may include alcohol, but will have alcohol-free areas for those members who prefer that. Voluntary community gatherings and activities may include alcohol at the discretion of the organizer(s) and shall indicate such when publicizing the event(s).

What our community is not

Just as important as defining our vision for our community is clarifying what it is not. Below is some information to answer some frequently asked questions and help you further understand our community.

We are not an assisted living community. We hope our members can provide support to each other, which in many cases may allow us to age in place and have a safety net in case of injury or illness. However, the community does not and cannot provide or pay for skilled nursing or medical assistance.

We are not intentionally, specifically, or exclusively affordable or low-income housing.

We recognize the need for affordable housing in our community, but we are not able to be a low-income housing organization and are not positioned to provide additional services for low-income residents.

We are not an activist community or charitable endeavor. Our members are free to engage in activism and charitable works, but the community itself does not engage in or pursue any of these activities specifically and is not focused around any goals other than providing housing to its members.

We are not a religious or spiritual endeavor. Members are welcome to pursue their own religious and spiritual endeavors, but the community as a whole does not have any religious affiliation or intentionally pursue any spiritual practice or goal.

We are not a cult. We're a group of friendly neighbors who make decisions together about the place we live based on a set of shared values. No member has power over any other, and anyone may choose to leave the community at any time for any reason.

We are not a work collective. We do not provide employment to our members, and work members do for the community is not intended to generate income. Members are expected to do regular work to maintain the building and manage the community, according to their abilities and preferences, and are not paid for this work.

We do not share income or personal finances. We will collect condo fees just like any other condo association, but each member manages their own personal finances and has no financial obligation to the community other than paying their condo fees.

We're not a housing co-op. Cohousing and housing cooperatives (co-ops) have many similarities, but they are not the same. Cohousing typically operates as a condo association in which each member has their own unit (with their own kitchen, bathroom etc). By contrast, members of housing co-ops typically rent a bedroom but share the kitchen, bathrooms, and groceries. Both housing arrangements typically include large common areas, member meetings, collective decision-making, and an expectation that members are responsible for managing and maintaining the community and building. Although our exact structure and ownership model has not yet been finalized, our intention is that each member of our community will have their own unit with their own kitchen and bath and will have financial equity in the community and/or their own unit.