

LIBERTY VILLAGE

New Resident Handbook

April, 2013

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Liberty Village Cohousing **General Information**

Vision & Mission Statement

Our Vision:

Liberty Village is a cohousing community in a beautiful country setting, where neighbors are friends. We balance privacy with neighborliness to support and extend each family. We play and work together with respect, honor, trust, and caring, using our differences to find new solutions and new ways to grow together.

Our Mission is:

To have a community of people which fosters a sense of belonging and community participation.

To encourage both casual social contact and planned activities.

To respect the environment while providing comfortable housing.

To create an aesthetically pleasing place to live, enjoying the beauty of nature, green space, attractive homes and pedestrian pathways.

To make our decisions by consensus, recognizing our diversity as a benefit to our community, so that the wisdom generated is a true reflection of the group's thinking, growing out of the contributions of individual opinion.

To create a safe place to live where neighbors are concerned for neighbors.

To respect everyone, including children and elders, for the wisdom they bring to the community.

To foster individual responsibility, balancing the rights of each person with the good of the community while being sensitive to special needs.

To respect each other's property and privacy.

To enjoy healthful home cooking together and the fellowship that comes with it.

To encourage personal growth through gracious listening and courageous speaking.

To have a common house filled with the sights and sounds of an active, caring community.

To celebrate Life!

The People:

Currently, Liberty Village is a community of 18 individual households. Our members range in age from 70's to toddlers. We are a mixture of individuals, young families, single parents, couples, empty nesters, retirees and renters. Our diversity crosses cultural backgrounds, religious and spiritual orientations as well as educational and occupational backgrounds.

The majority of adult residents work in the surrounding Frederick, Washington, D.C. and Baltimore areas. Most of the children attend local Frederick County Public schools.

Communal Life at Liberty Village

Rules:

Communal life at Liberty Village is based on trust. We trust that each member will act responsibly toward other members as well as toward the property and equipment at Liberty Village. Because of this trust, we enact minimal rules and instead rely upon open communication and the spirit of cooperation to ensure that we treat each other and the community fairly, respectfully and safely.

Community Meals:

Community meals are an active and social time at Liberty Village. They provide a chance to socialize with neighbors as well as exchange thoughts and feelings on current issues in the community.

Community meals occur regularly at Liberty Village, usually about 6 times a month. They take place in our Common House during most months and are held outside on our picnic tables during the warmer months, weather permitting. A calendar of meals is prepared for a 4-month period and sent out on email to the membership. Every adult usually cooks once a month in conjunction with 3 other adults in the community. The 4 adults responsible for a meal will plan, shop, prepare, serve and clean up for that meal. The rest of the month they are welcome to come to meals free of charge and free of responsibility. The first person listed for each meal is asked to be the initiator for meal planning with the other 3 members as well as to post a notice of the meal and time on our email list. The cost of the meal is shared informally among the four cooks.

Since there are several vegetarians at Liberty Village, it is preferred to have a vegetarian options at our meals, however this is not required. Those

members in the community that work during the week have asked to have weekday meals at 6:30pm. Weekend meals vary, depending on the cooks' preference. Our meals during the week are referred to as KISS dinners. This stands for Keep It Simple, Sweetie. In the summer, meals change to BYOM (Bring Your Own Meat) potlucks, where each household brings a side dish to share and their own food to grill. These are held at the picnic tables.

Common House:

The community rents the second floor , garage, laundry and greenhouse of 9158 Liberty Village Way as our Common House. There is a coded lock on the door and all residents are given this code in order to have access to the Common House. Meals and meetings are held there. There is also a guest room that is available for residents' guests.

Business Meetings:

At Liberty Village we have two legal entities: I) Libertytown Cohousing Partnership, LLP, or the LLP for short, which is the development entity of Liberty Village and II) The Liberty Village Community Association (LVCA), to which every homeowner belongs. These two entities will be explained in more detail in the history section of this booklet.

LVCA business meetings are held throughout the year every month. All residents are strongly encouraged and expected to come to these meetings. A minimum of 8 families present is required in order to conduct business. Proxies are held from all members in order for business to be conducted in their absence. A calendar of meetings is planned and posted a year at a time. Meetings are usually held on the second Sunday of each month at 3 pm. Meetings may occur less frequently in the summer.

The Process Team is responsible for planning the agenda and the Facilitation Team facilitates the meeting. Agenda calls are put out on email one week prior to the meeting by the Process Team. All proposals presented at an upcoming meeting must be out on email 3 days prior to the meeting, and attached to the agenda.

LLP meetings are held as necessary.

Business meetings generally follow the outline below:

Appreciations and Check-Ins

Business meeting starts

Tasks: Review minutes, minute taker, task taker, stack taker,
check quorum

Appreciations/Check-in/Review agenda/Task List Review

AGENDA ITEMS

Open Forum

Decision Making:

All decision making at Liberty Village is done through consensus. Consensus is a process by which concerns from all community members are heard with honor and respect. The final decision is a result of resolving all concerns and finding the wisdom of the group.

Over the years, members have been extensively trained in consensus through outside trainings. New members are introduced and trained in consensus through outside and in-house trainings.

Conflict Resolution:

Since conflict is recognized as an inevitable part of community life, conflict resolution is highly encouraged at Liberty Village. Conflict resolution is also used during business meetings if needed in the large group setting. A Community Care Team has been formed to help individuals with issues or concerns they have been unable to resolve with other individuals or through other community processes.

Getting the Work Done:

The basic philosophy of Liberty Village is one of trust. We all trust that each member of Liberty Village is doing for the community what they are willing and able to do at any given time. This philosophy gives members the freedom to indulge in community work when they have lots of free time and to withdraw from the community when their attention is needed elsewhere. This also means that the sharing of work at Liberty Village rarely occurs equally among its members.

Presently, all the work at Liberty Village is done through teams and individuals on a voluntary basis. There is no monthly or yearly requirement of hours that an individual must work. All members are encouraged to participate in the community in whatever ways they are able and willing.

Teams:

The majority of work in the community is done through teams. Currently, the teams at Liberty Village consist of Common House, Community Care, Community Facilities, Design Review, (DRT), Development, Facilitation,

Marketing, Member Services, Orientation and Mentoring, and Process. Ad Hoc teams are created as needed. A roster of teams and team members is posted in the community room and on the web site. Anyone wanting to join a team should contact the convener of that team.

Pod Dinners:

Several neighbors have joined together and formed what we call pod dinner groups. These dinners occur in neighbor's homes and are outside of the regular community dinners. Pods usually consist of 2-4 families and are organized by individuals within the community. Anyone interested in joining a Pod should ask around to see if there are any openings in the current Pods or they can start a new Pod themselves.

Social Activities:

Social activities occur regularly and spontaneously at Liberty Village. We have several traditions that occur on an annual basis such as 4th of July picnic/parade, Halloween activities, Thanksgiving dinner, and Holiday party. Throughout the year there are numerous game nights, musical evenings, movie nights, birthday celebrations, summer cookouts, potluck dinners, to name a few. Social gatherings are an important aspect of life at Liberty Village. Initiation of any social event is open to any member in the community.

Mail:

The US Post Office in Union Bridge, Maryland delivers mail to the cluster of mailboxes located in the parking area. Currently, the center and the uphill (East) cluster of mailboxes are in use. The downhill or west cluster of mailboxes will be used for the future homes at Liberty Village. It is very important to put outgoing mail only in the center and East mailbox clusters. Outgoing mail will NOT be picked up in the West cluster mailbox.

There is a large plastic container located to the left of the mailboxes. This container is used for large packages delivered to the residents. The red flag on the container is raised if there is a package.

Communication:

We enjoy free, open and friendly communication between residents and use it to help keep the community running smoothly. Neighbors can often be seen speaking with other neighbors throughout the village. Email is used for formal and important announcements. There are bulletin boards near the

mailboxes and in the Common House where announcements can be posted. We also have a Facebook page with a link on the Liberty Village web site.

Liberty Village Property

The Land:

Liberty Village is located on 23 acres of land in Frederick County, Maryland. The homes and the parking area are clustered on 8 acres while 15 acres remain as open space. This open area consists of fields, woods, gardens, orchards and wetlands. The property is bordered on the west side by a 105-acre county park which contains soccer fields, baseball diamonds, play equipment, picnic areas and a 3-mile walking, hiking or biking trail. There is a plank walkway, built and maintained by Liberty Village residents, that connects the village to the park. The east and south sides of Liberty Village are bordered by single-family homes on 5-acre lots.

Liberty Village has three rain gardens, a butterfly garden and a natural meadow, all of which decrease pollution going into the Chesapeake Bay, control runoff and contribute to the beauty of our neighborhood.

We are also the first entire community in Frederick County to be Bay-Wise Certified by the Master Gardeners of the University of Maryland Cooperative Extension and residents have been educated on practices to save the Chesapeake Bay.

The Houses

Our houses are primarily duplexes and are built with several eco-friendly and energy-efficient features. They have ground-source (geothermal) heat systems, extra insulation, high performance windows, and 6-inch stud walls. They are laid out so that the front door opens into the kitchen, the most used room in most houses, and so the front windows and porches face the pathways and other houses, to facilitate and encourage community interaction and neighborly visits.

Parking:

All vehicles at Liberty Village are parked in the large parking lot located on the East Side of the property. There is no parking around the homes. Vehicular access to the homes through the pedestrian pathway is available for drop-off and pick-up when absolutely necessary. At present, there are no assigned parking spaces in the community, however there are lines painted in some of the areas to make more efficient use of the space. More lines may be painted in other

areas as needed in the future. In the meantime, please park as close together as is practical to make sure there are enough parking spaces for everyone.

There are 7 lampposts, which light up the parking area after dark. Five lampposts stay on until 11pm. Two lampposts remain on all night. These two lights are located at the entrance to the parking area, near the Common House, and in the middle of the parking lot, across from the concrete pathway. It is requested that the parking space underneath the latter light remain available for anyone who arrives home very late in the evening. All the parking lights go on again from 5:30am to 6:30am in the wintertime to assist those who leave early for work. The pedestrian path lights remain on all night.

Pedestrian Pathway/Emergency Access:

The pedestrian pathway/emergency access area is located around all the homes. This area is designed for adults and children to have space around their homes for walking, riding bikes, playing and visiting with neighbors without the danger of cars. This area is also used for emergency access for ambulances or fire trucks. This pathway may be used for drop-off and pick-up when absolutely necessary. Daily vehicle entrance into this area is strongly discouraged. Carts are available in the parking lot to aid in the transfer of groceries and other items from the car to the home. Once a member has finished with a cart, he/she is asked to return it promptly to the parking area, so it will be available for others to use. Also, carts should be distributed evenly through the lower two-thirds of the lot so there's usually a cart near each of the most-used parking areas.

Landscaping and Gardening:

Landscaping and gardening are done on a voluntary basis at Liberty Village. Homeowners may landscape around their homes as they wish. Numerous individuals have taken pride and ownership in several smaller flower garden areas around the village. Help is always welcomed. Anyone interested in helping with landscaping or gardening around the community should contact Community Facilities prior to beginning. Larger areas, like the entrance circle and around the parking lot, are usually cared for on workdays. Community Facilities will post a community-wide workday as needed to care for landscaping or maintenance needs in the community.

Vegetable gardening takes place in the open area on the south of the property. A large garden area is available for neighbors to have individual plots. Frequent sharing of fresh vegetables occurs between neighbors. There is also a compost area, an orchard and a chicken coop located near the garden. Anyone interested in vegetable gardening should contact John Beutler.

The Design Review Team (DRT)

The DRT is a team that works with homeowners in the community who want to alter the outside of their homes, build or make significant changes to freestanding structures or plant large trees or shrubs. Plans for these changes are submitted to the DRT, reviewed by the team with input from the community and given final approval, pending resolution of any communal concerns. Plans are posted to the bulletin board in the Common House for community review during the input phase, and the spirit of the process is mutual cooperation and respect and positive outcomes. The DRT will seek ways to enable a project to move forward rather than ways to stop it.

Equipment:

The community owns several pieces of equipment that are used to maintain the property. This equipment is available for all community members. All members are asked to treat this equipment with the same care that they would treat their own equipment. If someone is unsure how to use a machine or the machine breaks, the members are asked to notify someone on the Community Facilities (CF) team.

Who Cuts the Grass?

There is a lot of grass to cut at Liberty Village. All homeowners are asked to maintain the grass around their homes. Often duplexes will work out sharing the grass cutting around their duplex. Power self-propelled and push lawn mowers are available for community use and stored in the green shed located in the parking lot. Everyone is asked to check the mowers for gas and oil prior to use and to contact the advocate for the mower if there is a problem with the machine. Gas is available in the tan container near the green shed. When the gas containers are low, individuals are asked to fill the containers at the gas station and submit the receipt to the Finance team of the LVCA for reimbursement. If there is minimal-to-no gas available and an individual is unable to get to the gas station to fill the containers, they are asked to put an email out to the community asking for someone else to do this task.

A professional mower, hired by the LVCA, maintains the area around the parking lot and along the road. Neighbors, on a volunteer basis, maintain the remainder of the grassy area. Each spring Community Facilities provides a sign-up sheet for the areas that need maintenance over the summer. Neighbors who sign up are asked to maintain their area throughout the growing season. A ride-on mower is available for community use in the green shed located in the wooded area on the south side of the property. Anyone who is not familiar with

using this equipment is asked to notify a Community Facilities member for instruction.

Snow Removal:

When snow is predicted all cars should be parked on the west or downhill side of the parking lot. This helps to facilitate removing snow from the East Side of the parking lot first. There are 3 snow blowers and a tractor plow for snow removal. Snow removal occurs on a voluntary basis. Anyone available and willing is asked to help with snow removal. Community Facilities is available for instruction of snow blowing machines. All homeowners are asked to shovel their walkways. Salt containers are placed along the pedestrian pathway during the winter for use along icy areas. The community asks that the salt be used with restraint, as it kills plants and grass. Spiked shoe attachments are alternatives to salt, which are used by several residents.

Recycling and Composting:

Recycling and composting are encouraged at Liberty Village. Frederick County provides curbside single-stream recycling. It is picked up in our community every other Wednesday. Recycling bins are located in two areas in the community: near the dumpster and at the south end near the red shed. There is a large compost area located near the garden for all to use. There is also a large composting area in the southwest corner for composting yard waste.

The Chickens:

The chicken coop is located adjacent to the vegetable garden area. The Chicken Club (John, Ann, Igor) is responsible for the chickens. Members are encouraged to feed food scraps to the chickens. However, no eggshells or meat products should be fed to the chickens. Eggs are available for sale in the Common House refrigerator for \$2.50/dozen. Please return your empty egg cartons to the Common House or to John's front porch.

Membership

Early History:

Cohousing in Frederick County began back in 1989 when John Beutler wrote an article in the Common Market Food Coop newsletter announcing a

meeting to begin to develop a Cohousing community. A group of interested people attended and the search for land began. Many people came and went during those early years. An attempt to develop a property within the Lake Linganore development foundered, with a number of members losing their investment.

In 1993, a 28-acre farm property in Libertytown, Maryland was put under contract. Five households (Merlin and Cathie Porter-Border, Nellie Porter, Teresa and Ken Film, Tom Lofft and George and Naomi Davis) came together and formed the Libertytown Cohousing Partnership, LCP (LLP). They pooled their money for the deposit and negotiated a contract of sale. The initial partners along with Jim Lane took out a mortgage and purchased the land, which was to become the future Liberty Village. The final sale of the property occurred in Fall, 1994. Soon after that, marketing began to bring in future residents of Liberty Village. By 1997, 19 partners had joined the LLP.

Early meetings of the LLP took place at the Manor House, located on the property. Finances were managed through a mandatory \$6,000 initial investment per partner household. Whenever it became clear that more money was needed to move forward, the hat was passed. Partners added what financial resources they could afford. In the course of building Liberty Village, over \$500,000 has been invested by the partners. These investments are long-term investments that the partners hope will be recouped once the development of Liberty Village is completed with all 38 lots occupied and a Common House built.

The partners worked long and hard to develop Liberty Village. Tom Lofft, Ron Petralito and Merlin Porter-Borden were instrumental in this development. PUD (Planned Unit Development) zoning was obtained in 1996. In July 1998, a multiyear tap agreement (MYTA) was signed with Frederick County allowing for up to 43 sewer taps for the community; at the same time the LLP purchased the first 10 taps.

Also during the summer of 1998, the manor house, and the 4 acres surrounding it, was sold. The proceeds from this sale paid off the mortgage on the land and thus the LLP owned the remaining 23 acres free and clear. In fall, 1998, eight more sewer taps were purchased from the County. In addition, the LLP took out a loan for \$1 million dollars to develop the infrastructure at Liberty Village. Five partner households guaranteed this loan.

Partners then began to purchase their lots. Proceeds from the sale of lots were used to reduce the infrastructure loan. Construction began and the first residents of Liberty Village moved into their homes in 1999. 18 homes were built between 1999 and 2004. In 2000, the LLP was informed of a County sewer moratorium that blocked obtaining further sewer taps. Thus, the development of Liberty Village was halted with 18 units built, leaving 20 lots and the Common House unbuilt as well as the partnership in debt and partner investments still outstanding.

In Fall, 2009, the county lifted the restrictions on sewer taps. Liberty Village can now sell the next 10 lots.

Future Development:

Twenty more homes and a common house need to be built for the development of Liberty Village to be complete. This development has been divided into Phase II and Phase III. Phase II will include the next 10 homes, households 19-28. Phase III will be the final 10 homes, households 29-38. The LLP projects that the common house will be built between Phases II and III. However, all the details for this part of the development have not yet been finalized.

Final county approval for the homes in Phase II has been granted. Sewer taps are available, and these homes can be built immediately. Final county approval for the homes in Phase III requires APFO (Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance) approval and further engineering studies

Libertytown Cohousing Partnership, LLP:

The Libertytown Cohousing Partnership, LCP (LLP) was formed in 1994 to purchase the land and develop Liberty Village. Over the years, several partners have resigned and four have died. Currently there are 26 partners, 11 of whom live at Liberty Village.

Since the completion of Liberty Village was halted by sewer tap restrictions from the County in 2000, the LLP continues to manage the undeveloped areas of Liberty Village as well as work towards the development of the final 20 homes and the Common House. The LLP has a \$90,000 debt outstanding on the development loan. This debt is paid voluntarily by "dues" from partners. These dues also cover other expenses of the Partnership such as property taxes, water/sewer fees, and insurance. The dues are collected monthly..

The LLP will be dissolved once the development of Liberty Village is completed. The ownership of the common land will be transferred to the LVCA once two-thirds of the lots are sold. The LVCA currently supports the LLP by paying rent equal to the property tax for the common space used by LVCA.

Liberty Village Community Association:

The Liberty Village Community Association (LVCA) was formed in 1999 when the first residents moved into the community. Anyone owning a lot at Liberty Village is a member of the LVCA. Currently the membership includes 18 households. The present dues for the LVCA are \$160 a month. An annual LVCA budget for the community is approved every fall to allocate for the needed

services. These services include but are not limited to: Common house rental, maintenance of the grounds, purchase and maintenance of equipment, trash removal, social events, electricity, liability insurance, and marketing. Landlords are responsible for paying LVCA dues for their renters.

The White Notebook:

A white notebook has been compiled which contains the important documents of Liberty Village. These documents include: The LLP Partnership Agreement, LVCA Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws and CC&Rs as well as many of the proposals passed over the years. This notebook is given to all new LVCA residents who are encouraged to read the policies. An electronic version is under preparation for the Liberty Village web site.

The Culture of Liberty Village:

[Consented on 5/15/04]

I. People

A. *Self-selecting membership:* We ask anyone considering living here to learn about Liberty Village by following our membership pathway as outlined in our Checklist for Prospective Buyers and/or by working with mentors.

B. *Relationships:* Liberty Village supports deep interpersonal connections among members. Members offer support and encourage sharing of the good and the bad. However, if at any time a member is uncomfortable with the level of intimacy in a conversation or discussion, they may say so and withdraw from the discussion.

C. *Committed Partnerships:* We respect the vows of marriage and the agreements of other committed partnerships. When there is a conflict between partners, the community is available to both partners for encouragement and support.

D. *Children's Representation:* Although children may not have the same rights and responsibilities as adults, their interests are represented in all decision making as equally valued members of the community.

E. *Parenting:* We recognize that parents rear children as they see fit, keeping in mind that parents are responsible for their children's actions, health, safety, and welfare. Any form of shared parenting is voluntary. However, any adult may interrupt a child's behavior if there is a safety concern or an issue with respecting a person or property.

II. Participation/Independence:

A. *Helping others:* We encourage asking each other for help. Helping others is an important value cherished by this community.

B. *Privacy:* While Liberty Village encourages companionship, sharing, and helping others, at the same time, we respect an individual's need for privacy and freedom to decline an invitation.

C. We invite each person to contribute their individual talents, skills and abilities to the community in a way that benefits and strengthens both the individual and the community and as follows:

1. To create and maintain this beautiful environment, we encourage participation in the ongoing maintenance of the common areas by everyone, to the best of their physical ability.

2. Sharing community meals is, for most of us, the glue that holds us together. We envision full participation in cooking, cleaning, and enjoying regular community meals together.

3. Active involvement in the management and growth of our community can be achieved through a variety of ways, such as:

- Serving on the LVCA Board of Directors
- Joining a team
- Attending business meetings
- Participating in workshops and sharing circle
- Benefiting from ongoing training.

III. Communication:

A. Liberty Village encourages a depth of sharing through sharing circles at meetings and in general, at any level with which the member feels comfortable, knowing their feelings will be honored.

B. Liberty Village does not support gossip (any expression that diminishes a member who is not present). A member is encouraged to only speak critically about another member who is not present for the purpose of clarifying their feelings and exploring options for constructive action. The listener is encouraged to accept responsibility to see that the speaker tries to resolve the issue by:

1. letting go of the judgment or upset or
2. talking to the person directly.

IV. Financial:

A. *Financial Independence:* Each household is financially independent, responsible for paying their own expenses and free from any obligation to pay others. Financial assistance given from one household to another is a private

matter.

B. *Cost Allocation:* Monthly dues are paid to the LVCA. All other collection of money is voluntary at this time.

C. *Home resale:* Owners are free to sell their homes to whomever they wish, with the new owners being subject to the CC&Rs and the LVCA Bylaws. Homeowners are requested to inform the community before their house goes on the market.

D. *On-site Business:* Before any business that impacts or uses community space and/or resources is started, the proposed business owner will discuss it with the community to evaluate possible impacts on the community. Any compensation for professional or business use of the community resources will be determined by the community.

V. Self-Governing:

A. Because we are committed to resolving conflict with respect, honor and trust, we make our decisions using the consensus process. This process relies on each individual's creative thinking to generate together a decision that is best for the community. Therefore, attendance at meetings and participation in consensus is vital to the success of the consensus process.

B *Rules:* Because of the trust we have for each other to act responsibly, we enact minimal rules and instead rely upon open communication and the spirit of cooperation to ensure that we treat each other and the community fairly, respectfully and safely.

C. *Values:* We recognize that community members may have differing moral values, and we try not to impose our own moral values on others. However, we are approachable if someone feels our behavior adversely affects others in the community.