

TWO ECHO COHOUSING COMMUNITY

Introduction For Prospective Home Buyers

Two Echo Cohousing Community is a new kind of neighborhood, uniquely designed and managed to promote a supportive social atmosphere, the sharing of resources, and greater consideration of the surrounding natural environment. Our homes are nestled together along a central pedestrian lane and common green, in the midst of a 90+ acre parcel of woods and fields in Brunswick, Maine.

On a typical day, residents can be seen chatting on the way to and from work, while collecting the mail or taking an evening stroll. Children gather in small groups to play among the trees, sled in the fields, and ride bikes through the neighborhood. Neighbors naturally borrow items from the people next door, share child care arrangements, help those who are sick, discuss gardening tips, and bake cookies for new arrivals. We also join together for such events as suppers, seasonal celebrations, concerts, pick-up soccer games and community work days.

Our surrounding Two Echo woods and fields are preserved as common open space and are available for a variety of sustainable activities. For example, some people have raised broiler chickens in our field. Others have planted a community garden together. Still others have been marking and clearing skiing and walking trails in the woods.

As a Homeowners Association, we manage and maintain Two Echo ourselves. Residents participate in decision making by attending community meetings and by serving on a variety of committees designed to keep the various components of Two Echo running smoothly.

What is Cohousing?

Cohousing is a housing concept that originated in Denmark over 35 years ago. Cohousing communities are small neighborhoods that combine the autonomy of private dwellings with the advantages of shared resources and an intentionally more social environment. Residents usually own their individual homes which often include small private yard spaces and are clustered around a common house and common land. Cohousing residents participate in the planning, design, and ongoing management and maintenance of their community. Cohousing neighborhoods typically range from 10 to 35 households that represent a multigenerational mix of singles, couples, families with children, and elders. Approximately 100 communities have been completed in North America since 1991, and another 100 communities are currently in various stages of development. Each of these communities is independent and free to develop in its own way.

Common Characteristics

Cohousing developments vary in size, location, type of ownership, design, and priorities. Yet four common characteristics are:

Participatory Process: Residents organize and participate in the planning and design process for the housing development, and are responsible as a group for all final decisions.

Intentional Neighborhood Design: The physical design encourages a strong sense of community.

Extensive Common Facilities: An integral part of the community, the common areas are designed for daily use, to supplement private living areas.

Complete Resident Management: Residents manage the development, making decisions of common concern through committees and at community meetings.

Our Brief History

Two Echo Cohousing Community began as an idea in 1991. For several years people interested in the cohousing concept in the Portland area met on a regular basis to dream, share, and plan. The founding group formed a limited liability company (LLC) called Cumberland County Cohousing Community (CCCC or C4) in order to pursue purchasing land and developing a community. The property on Hacker Road was found in autumn 1994 and was purchased in early 1996, once site plan approval had been granted by the Town of Brunswick. Infrastructure construction began later that same year and the first residents moved in during the fall of 1998. The next several years saw continual home construction, including the Common House, which was completed in 2005.

Ownership Structure

Two Echo Cohousing Community is a homeowners association (HOA) governed by a Declaration of Covenants and Restrictions, and Bylaws. All homeowners own and are responsible for their individual homes. They are also members of the homeowners association. As members of the HOA, homeowners own a share of, and are responsible for, the common land and amenities. Individual homeowners own the land under the footprint of their homes and also have exclusive use of their modest yards, also known as limited common elements (LCEs). The community is responsible for establishing and upholding regulations pertaining to all common amenities and common land, including LCEs.

Resale of homes is a private matter and responsibility. However, owners are required by law to disclose to buyers all covenants, restrictions, and policies pertaining to the property. Two Echo's Membership Committee is set up to help facilitate this process and will do so at the request of the buyer or seller.

The Two Echo Property

Two Echo is on private Echo Road, off Hacker Road. The Two Echo homes are clustered on a slight ridge just within the tree line, about 1200 feet from the town road. The interior of Two Echo consists of a winding pedestrian lane bordered by homes, a common green and the Common House. In accordance with cohousing principles, the site design of Two Echo places homes more closely together than does the design of a modern, conventional subdivision. House lots are small, between 50' and 65' by 110'. Homes are designed in typical New England styles and face the pedestrian lane. Parking, and thus most vehicular traffic, is contained along the periphery of the north, west and east sides of the community.

The design of Two Echo, with its welcoming pedestrian interior, enables us to encounter one another as we walk to and from our cars, shovel snow, sit on our front porches, play with our children or walk our dogs. Likewise, children have easy access to playmates of a variety of ages, and can play more freely and safely than in a typical residential development.

The surrounding woods and fields are easily accessible through paths between houses and from the road leading into the community. In an effort to preserve the rural character of the area, the undeveloped 72 acres of our land have been placed in a conservation easement. Activities such as cross-country skiing, gardening, some wood cutting and raising farm animals are permitted in the conservation easement area, but not additional development.

Homes

Individually constructed homes are both single family dwellings and duplexes. Built in accordance with the community's House Design Guidelines, the houses reflect both a diversity of design styles and a visual sense of community cohesiveness. Special attention was also given to creating a welcoming transition from the public pedestrian lane to homes using inviting walkways, low bushes, and small flower beds.

Any additions built onto an existing house, changes to the exterior, or new outbuildings are subject to the standards of the Design Review Committee. The Design Review Guidelines are available on the "Members" section of the Two Echo website (<http://two-echo.org/members/notedex/16a.php>), access available to prospective members upon request.

Parking

Two Echo was designed to minimize vehicular impact on community activity and ambiance. The majority of daily traffic is limited to the exterior of the community. One-third of the households have parking directly at their homes and two-thirds park their vehicles in one of three parking lots distributed throughout the community. Most homes with car-access (parking on site) have attached garages as well as short driveways in which to accommodate vehicles.

Homeowners who park in the parking lots have exclusive right to two parking spaces per home and may build a two-bay garage upon those two spaces. Some residents have already built such garages. Each parking lot also has two additional spaces for guest parking.

We attempt to keep the interior road, known as the pedestrian lane, as free from vehicular traffic as possible. Residents are expected to transport groceries, small children, luggage, etc. to and from their homes via carts, wagons, and strollers.

Occasions for motor vehicles in the car-free zone are limited to moving in or out of residences, emergencies, transporting large bulky items (beyond the capability of one cart), going on vacation (needing to load with more than one cart load), service calls involving heavy equipment such as fuel deliveries, and the following drop-off situations: severe illness, disabled visitor or resident, and severe weather. Motor vehicles may not be parked at car-free homes unless absolutely necessary.

The Common House and Common Amenities

The common house is a prominent feature of most cohousing communities. Ours is in the center of our small village and provides us with space for meetings, shared meals for those who wish to participate, indoor play, craft activities and more. Our Common House includes a large dining/meeting room, kitchen, recreation room, overnight guest room and living room.

We have shared outdoor amenities as well. There are gardens, a small seasonal skating pond and a mowed grassy playing field near the homes. The common green, located just to the east of the Common House, is an inviting spot for a variety of activities, from picnicking to

bird watching, to swinging, climbing and playing tag. Beyond the developed area are acres of woods with winding trails and fields with a small year-round stream.

Living Together at Two Echo

Community Management and Consensus

In accordance with Maine law, Two Echo manages itself as a Homeowners Association (HOA). Homeowners pay monthly association dues which are used for maintenance of the Two Echo commonly owned land and amenities, insurance, and reserve funds for long range infrastructure maintenance. In addition to resident and non-resident members of the HOA, we also have renters and associates. The latter are non-resident, non-owners. We hold general meetings during which we discuss and make decisions concerning HOA matters. Most often, topics to be considered at a general meeting are first discussed in committee and brought forward to the whole group in the form of reports, discussions and proposals. The meetings are open to all, but only owners (resident or non-resident) can participate in the call for consensus.

Our current standing committees are Commons (common land use management), Coordinators, Design Review, Finance, Common House Operations, Maintenance & Management, and Membership. At times, we also form short-term ad hoc committees to attend to specific issues. Periodically, individual circumstances naturally prevent members from attending meetings and participating on committees. However, the participation of adult residents in general meetings and on committees is needed as our decision making process relies on the participation of as many members as possible and the sharing of everyone's ideas and perspectives.

Our community's standard decision-making process is consensus, with a fall-back option of voting. Although sometimes slow and arduous, the consensus process allows our community to give voice to all our members and produces decisions that every member can support to at least some degree. Through the consensus process, we work to reach creative solutions and to put into practice our community's goals and values for our small village. Occasionally, as we progress, individuals or committees may desire to ask the group to revisit standing decisions. In such cases, any changes adopted must be made in accordance with our consensus decision-making process. All important standing decisions are available on the "Members" section of the Two Echo website (<http://two-echo.org/members/>), access available to prospective members upon request.

Financial Obligations

Two Echo sets an annual budget designed to account for both annual and long-term expenses. Reserve fund accounts have been established to collect money for large expenditures such as road repair, Common House roof replacement, and leach bed maintenance. These accounts leave Two Echo in a state of solvency, well-prepared to meet predictable future expenditures. Every household is responsible for paying the monthly association fee. The fee for 2017 is \$151 and has been relatively stable for a number of years. The Town of Brunswick bills individual homeowners for taxes on their property plus a share of taxes on common land.

Community Maintenance

Unlike standard HOA's and condominium associations that hire management companies, we at Two Echo do most of our maintenance ourselves, which helps us to keep our HOA fees low. Various committees are responsible for various aspects of the community. We own equipment to do some snow removal and mowing. Work days are organized to do spring and fall outdoor maintenance, clean the Common House, and take care of special projects. These opportunities to come together, engage in physical labor, and care for our collective property provide a sense of shared accomplishment and connection for our community members.

We hire outside professionals for work that is too specific or too large for residents. For example: a contractor does the majority of our snow plowing, we hire a professional arborist to fell and limb dangerous trees, and our septic systems are inspected annually and pumped by a septic service.

There is an expectation that members will participate in the running of the community by serving on committees and sharing in the work of the community.

Living as Neighbors

Due to the nature of our clustered community design and our shared amenities, the HOA has guidelines and policies regarding outdoor pets, noise, outdoor fires, firearms, home businesses, uses of common land, and uses of the Common House, among other aspects of community living. The text of all such policies is available on the "Members" section of the Two Echo website (two-echo.org/members/), access available to prospective members upon request.

In adopting these policies, we strive to accommodate individual needs and preferences while addressing impact on others and on shared resources. These guidelines and policies may be revisited and revised through our decision-making processes.

Due also to the familiarity and proximity of neighbors at Two Echo, opportunities abound for learning from one another and joining together to pursue common interests. If you need tips on canning applesauce, want assistance using your computer, or have questions about energy efficiency, help is usually right next door. Likewise people don't have to go far to find others who want to play music, do yoga, scrap book, and take daily walks together.

Getting to Know the Community

We encourage all prospective buyers to make several visits to Two Echo. The Membership Committee is available to give community tours and to arrange informational sessions with current residents. Taking a guided walk through the community, attending meetings, sharing a common meal, and visiting in people's homes are all good ways to become further acquainted with life at Two Echo.

Contact Information For further information, please contact the Two Echo Membership Committee via the Two Echo website. <http://www.two-echo.org/>

For Those Ready to Purchase at Two Echo

Before signing a Purchase & Sale Agreement for a home at Two Echo, please indicate that you've read and understand the content of this Introduction to Two Echo Cohousing Community for Prospective Home Buyers by signing the acknowledgement form.

Personal Acknowledgement

As part of the process of purchasing a home in the Two Echo Cohousing Community, I have been advised that I must read the document entitled "Introduction For Prospective Buyers". I understand that the purpose of this document is to make me aware of the unique nature of Two Echo and ensure that I am fully educated about the expectations and rewards of living in a cohousing community.

My signature below attests to the fact that I have completely read the Introduction to Two Echo Cohousing Community for Prospective Buyers.

Signature _____ Date _____

Printed Name _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Printed Name _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Printed Name _____

Witness

Signature _____ Date _____

Printed Name _____