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SENIOR COOPERATIVE FOUNDATION

GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF SENIOR COOPERATIVE HOUSING

Senior Cooperative Housing Conference, Brooklyn Center, Minnesota
May 13, 2015

The attached list of Guiding Principles was developed in consultation with many individuals working with and living in senior housing cooperatives, some of them dating back to the 1970s. They included members, developers, architects, managers, lenders, educators, government officials and cooperative leaders from throughout the United States.

The Principles were first presented on May 11, 2006 as the Ethos Principles of Senior Cooperative Housing at the Senior Cooperative Housing Conference in Bloomington, Minnesota. After ten years of publication and use, the Principles have been reformatted in what is intended to be a more usable and acceptable format based on suggestions and input from both original sources and current users.

From the beginning it has been apparent that senior housing cooperatives, no matter who develops them, are more than “building projects”. From the beginning cooperatives have embodied a set of humanistic standards and principles that are as important in their success—and the satisfaction of their members-owners—as their physical structures. And it is these principles that have stimulated growth of cooperatives, in the upper Midwest, at a rate far greater than other forms of senior “independent living”.

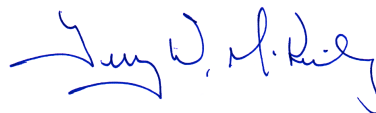
For new cooperative sponsors and developers, we wish to highlight these principles, not just as the right thing to do, but because they are what will ultimately make their cooperatives successful, for all concerned. And for cooperative members and staff, we wish to share with them as a framework for conduct in governance and management.

We commend this set of principles to you for your consideration and adoption in the work ahead. It is a dynamic list, ever changing as we learn, and we hope you will contribute your ideas.

As one cooperative board president remarked, “This isn’t really independent living...it’s really *family*. We look out for each other.” This kind of interdependence doesn’t just happen by chance, or because we are automatically good people. It happens through remaining attentive to these principles, in all our affairs.



Dennis Johnson, Chairman



Terry McKinley, President



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Our Guiding Principles – why senior cooperative housing is unique and successful

The following are a set of guiding principles of senior cooperative housing collected and synthesized from discussions with cooperative members, educators, developers and other cooperative leaders.

Senior Cooperative Housing is:

1. Community

- greater than the sum of its individual parts
- works to protect its members in all possible respects: financial, physical and social
- the dedication of the individual to the cooperative creates a community vibrant enough to fulfill these needs

2. Ownership and Control

- individual members collectively own all aspects of the cooperative
- through a board of directors elected from the individual member-owners, they run it in their own best interests, both as a community and as individuals
- different from other housing types in that members have made a choice to come together to act collectively rather than as disparate individuals.

3. Caring

- puts the well-being of the members above other considerations
- is woven into the very fabric of the cooperative through the day-to-day life of the cooperative

4. Education

- development and marketing require the knowledge of a cooperative and the commitment to know what they do and how they do it
- knowledge about essential functions, such as roles and responsibilities, and about essential skills, such as facilitation and mediation, should happen early and often

5. Communication

- strong communication for success
- both a structure and process consistently cultivated to create and support community and to contribute to the actual business of running a cooperative.



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6. Shared Responsibility, Especially Financial

- enhances community and stability by all members having the same relative interest in the well-being of the cooperative and working together to ensure it
- shared ideals and instruments such as a shared mortgage and reserves, operations and maintenance budgets
- the basic framework that energizes the creation and intensification of community
- always works to reinforce community rather than be a source of confusion or conflict

7. Fair

- encourages fairness and transparency
- up to the members and managers to maintain this ethic and develop it further
- all members have an equal interest in the success of the cooperative
- all members enjoy an equal voice within the cooperative, are equally able to contribute to the well-being of the cooperative and enjoy the same chance to contribute

8. Participation and Involvement

- structure encourages involvement, by most if not all the members
- strong boards of directors and managers facilitate effective and abundant interactions within the cooperative, thereby supporting a vibrant community

9. Good Design

- designed to facilitate community through their barrier-free design and the quality and abundance of common spaces
- quality construction which keeps costs low and satisfaction high
- as owners, members create the spaces that support the way they want to live

10. People First

- meeting the varied needs of the members, as defined by the members themselves
- allows for true responsiveness to the individual versus a homogeneous or institutional response

11. Dedication

- cooperation needs to be cultivated and nurtured
- takes energy, patience, and understanding, but the returns are invaluable

12. Empowerment

- members have diverse and extensive expertise in a multitude of areas
- encourage continued growth and application of this expertise for the improvement of the community