



New Hampshire Community Loan Fund
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Co-op living

Living in a co-op community is different than living in an investor-owned park. This type of community living is unique – homeowners in resident owned communities are not simply tenants in a park, they are *members* of a co-op and *owners* of a business. As a co-op member it is important to understand that:

- The cooperative is a business incorporated under N.H. RSA 301-A, Consumers' Cooperative Associations. It is owned by its members. Individual homeowners do not own the land underneath their homes; the co-op does.
- The co-op has member-approved bylaws, which spell out how the business is governed.
- The co-op is democratically governed by a one-member, one vote system. Each member-household has equal decision-making authority.
- New homeowners moving into the community are required to become members and enter into an **Occupancy Agreement**, binding them to the bylaws and community rules.
- Members elect a board of directors to carry out the day-to-day tasks of running a business. The board then appoints committees to take on other tasks.
- Members have control over big decisions, such as carrying charges (rent), approving the annual budget, electing a board and amending the bylaws or community rules.
- Members can be expelled from the cooperative (which is *different* than being evicted from the community) for obstructing the management of the co-op. This is a serious matter and not to be taken lightly – members who are expelled typically lose voting privileges and pay a higher lot rent.

The board and the appointed committee members must adhere to the co-op's bylaws and rules, as well as to state and federal laws. They are also co-op members, and are accountable to their fellow members. They must run the co-op in a fair, consistent, democratic and business-like manner.

Co-op membership has rewards, rights and responsibilities. The strength of a resident-owned community is directly related to the participation and commitment of its members. By participating in the co-op, members can help reduce costs, build a vibrant neighborhood and grow as leaders. Participation includes everything from baking brownies for the annual community barbecue to operating the well system, from an hour a month to a two-year commitment on the board of directors.