



COLLECTIVE HOUSE MANUAL FOR NEW PROJECT

[This manual is a living document subject to critical interpretation and revision by those who would use it. It is a guide for gauging whether the organic day to day practices of a collective house are actually facilitating a sustainable dynamic and assist living within the theory and practice that guide its internal functioning.]

Mission and Purpose

The [X.....] collective seeks to find creative ways to challenge the root causes and negative effects of white-supremacist-capitalist-patriarchy while mitigating our environmental impact through sustainable practices. Understanding the interconnectedness of class, race, gender, sex, age and ability as factors in the most destructive structures of oppression, it is our intention to develop a safe and productive space for resident members and people from the broader community by integrating a theory and practice guided by the principle that the personal is political.

With this in mind, we envision a collective where we...

- Build trusting relationships while being engaged in social struggle
- Challenge one another to develop personal and political strength/growth to become better practitioners of theory and theoreticians of practice
- Practice honest, open and compassionate communication
- Avoid being dogmatic, even to notions of radical theory and practice
- Implement a horizontal, decentralized, collaborative, consensus-based decision making process
- Share and acquire resources second-hand to combat materialist consumer culture
- Develop/implement house systems that are intuitive, resource conserving and transgressive for maximum collective use and ecological/social sustainability
- Use efficient and environmentally safe practices and products
- Grow, cook and eat vegetarian food as a household
- Share housing that is affordable, clean and functional
- Nurture relationships with neighbors and the community with awareness of gentrification
- Further the mission and purpose of the collective in the local, regional, societal and/or world context

Responsibilities, Rules, and Expectations

Residents are expected to benefit and contribute.

Responsibilities include:

- Pay rent by the due date (20th of the month prior)
- Pay bills (food money, utilities, water and Internet)
- Follow cooking assignment
- Complete chore assignments



- Attend and participate in house meetings and activities
- Maintain common areas in clean, orderly, and functional condition
- Participate in the use and maintenance of house systems
- Help recruit and review new residents as needed
- Participate in some internal and external activities that further the mission and purpose of the collective
- Share protocols and provide orientation for new residents
- Take responsibility for guests (see Visitors and Guests)
- Communicate openly and honestly on important issues in as timely a manner as possible
- Work to develop skills be it communication, urban homesteading skills, cooking, etc.
- When moving out, leave the space as it was given to you (be sure to repair any damages and clean personal areas)

Meetings and Group Decisions

- Resident members of the co-operative have the responsibility to schedule and participate in regular meetings. The primary objectives of meetings are to:
 - check-in with one another and check-out to complete the meeting
 - review house responsibilities and finances
 - review agenda items and special projects
 - review logistics of activities at collective
 - follow meeting process (see below)
 - openly confront any issues with living together as a group (see Conflict Resolution below)
- The meeting agenda is ongoing and anyone can add and review items prior to meetings
- Meeting notes are created during meetings and are open for review by residents who can't attend a meeting
- Effort should be made to inform all members of important matters and agenda requiring a discussion or decision, and to involve all interested members.
- With the review of new applicants, acceptance should be made by consensus of community members based on valid and fair resident review criteria.
- Major decisions have financial implications, involve people moving in and out of the collective and require full participation and consensus. Full participation can include participation of people absent from the meeting.
- Minor decisions can and should be made by the interested parties as soon as convenient whether inside or outside of a meeting. Checking in with those who bottom line projects is a best practice when considering who is and is not an interested party.
- In situations where members can not attend a scheduled meeting, it is desirable to include their comments or opinions either verbally or through written statements when possible. Further, it is expected that members who have missed scheduled meetings inform themselves on the agenda and any decisions by reading the agenda notes or asking a member who attended.

Meeting Process

- Meetings have a rotating facilitator and note taker - members can opt out of either of these if needed
- Meetings operate on consensus:
 - Items being decided on are thoroughly discussed to include every one's evolving perspectives
 - Items that people feel sincere opposition to can be blocked (it's good to think of blocking as something



- you only have a few opportunities to do in your lifetime)
- Meeting format is as follows:
 - Go around of check-ins
 - Squaring of finances
 - Agenda on Google Doc
 - Check-out and crit, self-crit, praise (see addendum)
 - Tactics for handling meeting conflicts:
 - Vibe Checks - someone calls "Vibe Check" when tension builds in a meeting and members decide to pause for a few minutes or do a go-around
 - Go-arounds - everyone in the room takes a turn to share their perspective on the decision being discussed to diffuse back and forth
 - Subcurrent - someone calls out "Subcurrent" and agenda items are put on hold until underlying issues taking place in conversation are addressed and resolved
 - Time:
 - At the beginning of the meeting, time constraints are established
 - Meeting length correlates to the agenda
 - Average meetings last 2.5 hrs.
 - Time check-ins happen at the 2 hour mark assess people's ability to stay in the meeting
 - Meetings are held on a weekly basis with the exception of additionally added or removed meetings based on need

New Applicants

New applicants should be reviewed and accepted by the resident community based on interest and anticipated compatibility with the collective.

Desired (not required) qualities in new applicants are some of the following:

- Socio-political awareness on issues as they pertain to the intersection of race, class, gender, sexuality, age and ability
- Environmental awareness
- Interest in community organizing and activism for social/political change
- Skill sharing and urban homesteading
- Honest, brave, compassionate communication skills
- Artistic expression
- Responsibly clean
- Seeking to understand root causes of personal and political conflict
- Multilingual

Evaluation questions should include questions that assess:

- Experience living collectively, socially or independently (outside nuclear family)
- Current living situation
- Environmentally-oriented interests, knowledge and activities
- How person occupies themselves
- Means of support/ source of income
- Dietary preferences



- Specific medical needs and accommodations (allergies, phobias, substance recovery, etc.)
- Anticipated duration person plans/wants to live in the collective
- Availability of time to invest in collective (meetings, chores, projects)
- Significant others involvement
- Any special/helpful skills, interests, or knowledge that the person might bring to the benefit of the collective
- Knowledge, skills, or features of the collective that person hopes to gain
- General level of cleanliness and tolerance of some mess
- Consciousness on issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, age and ability in society
- Knowledge of, experience with, and perspective on consensus and democratic forms of decision making
- Tolerance of people with differing viewpoints, worldviews, religious beliefs and life styles and practices that may follow from the above
- Beliefs, experiences and practices on conflict and conflict resolution
- Comfort with noise levels
- Storage needs
- Purchasing decisions (as privilege allows)

Resident Rental Arrangements

- We ask that new residents sign a lease with the property management. Other options are available if needed.
- A deposit in the amount of one month's rent is required to move in and is paid to the previous resident of that room. The deposit will be returned minus damages and cleaning fees as soon as another collective member moves into the vacant room.
- Leaving residents are encouraged to help fill their empty room.
- If the collective ends at any point, these rules may not apply because there will not be new collective members moving in.
- If at any point a room is vacant, all members split the cost of the empty room.

Visitors and Guests

- When residents invite guests, it is expected that other residents be informed and introduced.
- In general, overnight guests are permitted for up to 2 nights in a week or 8 nights in a month.
- When a resident plans to host a longer-term guest, a request for approval needs to be sought at a house meeting, and is required. Rental agreement may also need to be adjusted to reflect changes in the number of residents if the guest is staying for longer than 1 month.
- If a resident member has a guest such as a significant other or close friend that desires to regularly stay for more than the 2 nights per week and/or 8 nights per month then it is mandatory that the collective member inform the resident collective of this need with the purpose of establishing a meeting time to interview the guest. This meeting will be held so that all members of the collective may meet and ask questions of the guest with the intention of determining through consensus decision whether to grant the guest, guest membership status. This level of membership status grants full access to the collective and participation in decision making by way of input without vote. The sliding scale fee of \$10-\$20 food money per week and accepted guest member's following of established collective rules, regulations, guidelines and procedures will be the responsibility of the collective member who the guest member is



the primary guest of.

- If a guest member is seeking to stay at the collective more than 5 nights per week, then it is required that the guest member interview in similar manner described above with the intention of receiving resident membership status. If accepted as a resident member, the new resident member will receive full access and rights of a collective member and will be held to all the requirements on practice and conduct of any collective member living at the collective. Further, it is understood that the rental agreement of the collective member that the resident member is the primary friend or significant other of may be altered to reflect the changes in the collective member's living situation.

Procedures on Conflict Resolution

- Conflict resolution should follow the Honor Code method of resolution listed in three progressive stages below:
 - Step 1.** Should a conflict arise between resident members, it is the responsibility of each resident to approach the other resident(s) involved with the conflict in an attempt to resolve the conflict through open and honest communication.
 - Step 2.** Should step 1 fail to achieve a resolution to the conflict, it is the responsibility of the resident to seek out another resident not involved with the conflict to mediate a second conversation with the resident(s) involved in the conflict.
 - Step 3.** Should steps 1 and 2 not resolve the conflict, then the conflict should be brought to the attention of the collective community at a house meeting with the intent of resolving the conflict through open and honest discussion in a collective forum.
- If a resident at any point feels threatened and does not want to engage in 1. conversation or 2. mediated conversation then it is their responsibility to 3. bring the conflict to the co-operative community for collective discussion aimed at resolving the conflict.
- In case of a serious conflict which needs to be addressed immediately, the Honor Code method of conflict resolution still applies. It is the responsibility of the resident member(s) involved in the conflict to call an emergency meeting of the collective community should step 3 be necessary in a serious emergency situation.

Kitchen and Food

- The kitchens are primarily for collective food and meals
- The kitchens are vegetarian (if meat needs to be cooked, use pots and pans designated for meat)
- Kitchens should generally be stocked with organic and locally grown produce
- Personal items may be kept in the kitchens if storage in room is not possible; name should be written on item with blue tape and sharpie marker
- Residents should attempt to use bulk items for collective meals when possible i.e. bulk beans vs. canned beans
- Residents are expected to maintain a high level of cleaning and sanitary protocol when using the house kitchens after each and every use; do not expect the resident who has kitchen clean up as a chore to clean up after your mess (remember to clean counters, stove top and floors after use)



Recycling, Trash, Compost, Free Bin, and Energy use

The City of San Diego provides curbside collection of TRASH and mixed RECYCLABLE ITEMS. There is also on-site composting and separate collection of reusable household items for donation. Trash and recycling are clearly labeled in the house.

Recyclable items “blue bins” (see City’s flyer posted near receptacles for more detail):

- Paper and cardboard in relatively clean condition
- Glass bottles
- Aluminum and steel cans and other substantial metal
- Recyclable plastics #1 through #7 for curbside pick up

Trash “black bin” (see City’s flyer posted near receptacles for more detail):

- Non-recyclable plant materials (including banana/palm tree)
- Non-vegetarian food waste
- Un-recyclable material and dirty paper or cardboard

Compost Bin:

- Plant and vegetable wastes
- Kitchen scraps (no meat)
- Compost bins are labeled and located in each kitchen for food scraps
- Compost bin should be emptied and cleaned weekly (see chore rotation)
- Compost should be mixed and turned regularly to insure proper aeration

Free Bin:

- The Free Bin is located on the front porch
- Clothes or other personal items you’d like to donate
- Avoid adding trash to the Free Bin
- Free Bin will be placed on the street for donation on as needed basis

Utilities, energy, and resources:

- Refrigerator and freezer doors should be kept closed
- Most lights should be turned off when not in use
- House windows should be opened/closed appropriately to minimize energy use (closed in winter, open for night cooling in summer where feasible)
- Heating, cooling, and fan use should be minimized
- Strive to save energy where possible. We discourage the use of plug-in heaters, hair dryers and window/portable air conditioners as well as halogen and incandescent lighting (compact fluorescent bulbs use 75% less energy) - don’t feel bad to use these where needed



Gardening

Garden work is divided into daily maintenance and randomly scheduled collective work parties for non maintenance work and bigger projects.

Water rotation:

- Each resident is assigned 1-2 days of watering
- Watering should be done before 11 if possible - mornings are best
- Most of the garden is watered with drip irrigation that runs on a timer 1x daily
- Areas that are not on the drip lines and need to be watered by hand include (subject to change):
- Sidewalk garden
- Potted pepper garden
- Strawberry towers
- Seedlings (which need to be misted, not showered)
- Ask other residents for a full list of locations

Cleaning:

- Remove weeds from mulch, garden areas, and concrete paved surfaces
- Collect and remove trash/bottles/litter from all yard areas
- Sweep paved areas on a biweekly basis
- Roll up hoses neatly and turn them off after use (black hoses for faucets should remain on)
- Shovels, brooms, rakes, and other garden tools should be put away after use

The Birds

Ducks and chickens are cared for on each resident's watering day and should be done in the morning.

Responsibilities and care includes:

- Letting birds out of coop in the morning and returning them at night*
- Feed birds dry feed from bucket near coop
- Empty water in water pit and fill bin with fresh water
- Find eggs and put in fridge (depending on season, each bird lays one egg a day)
- Coop needs to be cleaned out from time to time.

[***Note:** Howard Hinn and Pollo Chicken sleep in the orange tree]

Chore Rotation

Chores are to be completed once every two weeks. Season cleaning is to be done twice a year. We keep an itemized list of the chores done on a two week rotation. Each member does the number of tasks divided by the number of members - in our case, 8 tasks. As members complete chores on the list, they cross off those tasks and fill in a circle next to their name on the posted chore chart. This chart is posted in the front kitchen.



Bathroom(s):

- Scrub, wipe toilet inside and out
- Scrub, clean tiles/showers/bathtubs/sinks/counters
- Dust horizontal surfaces
- Sweep and mop floors
- Wash rugs
- Wash hand towels
- Empty trash containers
- Verify bathroom contains:
 - toilet brush
 - plunger
 - scrubber in shower
 - sponge for counters
 - toilet and shower cleaner
 - dust pan and hand broom
 - trash
 - hand soap
 - hand towels

Kitchen(s):

- Discard any spoiled food items (pantry, freezer, refrigerator, counters)
- Clean interior of refrigerator
- Clean microwave (interior and exterior)
- Wash rugs
- Sweep and mop hard floors
- Clean and sanitize sink
- Clean horizontal surfaces (including tables and counters)
- Clean and organize pantry, refrigerator, freezer, and spices (spices go in ABC order)
- Verify kitchen has:
 - Dish soap
 - Clean sponge
 - Floor sponge
 - Dish towels
 - Rags
 - Surface cleaner under kitchen sink
 - Broom and dust pan

Inside Common Areas:

- Take lost personal items to lost and found
- Empty and clean trash, compost, and recycling containers
- Wash rugs
- Sweep and mop hard floors
- Dust horizontal surfaces
- Wipe down table tops
- Straighten any furniture moved out of place
- Straighten sofa pads and pillows



Outside Common Area:

Porches and Driveways:

- Sweep porch and driveways
- Dust railings, banisters, outside walls and window sills
- Clean mats

Laundry area:

- Dust horizontal surfaces and wipe down washer, dryer and window sill behind dryer
- Straighten and wipe down detergents and washing supplies
- Sweep concrete around washer and dryer
- Wash and dry communal dish towels and rags
- Fold and store rags after washing

Compost:

- Turn compost

Shopping:

Shopping is done every two weeks. Whoever wants and can go shopping around the two week mark makes a trip to grocery store (People's if budget allows, Sprouts if the budget is tight, and Costco for some bulk items if needed):

- Collect requested shopping list before shopping
- Complete shopping list by cross checking stockpile of food with food staples list
- Make sure that communal purchases follow collective food guidelines
- Buy in bulk when possible
- Divide purchases between the two houses according to consumption needs and storage capacity
- Report on general and specific food money status at collective meetings

Tasks Not Included on Chore Rotation


These items are done on an as needed basis. If members identify these things needing to be done, they can do them.

Trash Bins:

- Empty all trash and recycling containers in kitchen and bathrooms
- Take trash and recycling out Tuesday night before Wednesday morning city pick up (may change on weeks of national holidays)
- Make sure that all bins are closed and at least 2 feet from the curb and 3 feet apart
- Take bins back into storage location within 24 hours after pick up is complete

Lost and Found/Free Bin:

- Lost and found is located in the front living room and the free bin is located on the front porch of the front house

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- Items should stay in lost and found for a considerable amount of time before being moved to the free bin
 - Two forms of communication should be had to all members (two of any of these: email, text, meeting) announcing the need for lost and found items to be moved to the free bin before moving items
 - Normally, free bin items should be put on the sidewalk on an as needed basis (bin gets to full, items are too large, etc.)
 - An effort should be made to notify residents (a simple text) about items in the lost and found that seem unusual due to their value or sentiment

Compost:

- Turn compost piles every 2 weeks
- Add a small amount of water every few days to compost pile and compost bins
- Make sure back porch compost bucket is emptied into compost pile or bins
- Make sure compost pile top is covered with dirt
- Rinse out/off compost bucket/lid when emptied
- Remove completed compost to usable compost pile

Seasonal Cleaning

To be done twice a year in the Spring and fall.

Entire House(s):

- Clean windows
- Sweep spiderwebs
- Dust neglected areas

Bathroom(s):

- Scrape toilet mineral build up

Kitchen(s):

- Clean behind appliances (stove, fridge) and furniture
- Scrub down cabinet doors
- Clean inside of oven

Outside Common:

- Dust outside walls and window sills
- Clean mats
- Sweep spider webs off fences



Removal Policy

A removal is not a punishment, but rather a step taken to protect the collective and its lifestyle, and/or to protect the individual.

The violation of guidelines in this collective house manual are a good basis for proposed removal. Everything written here could be interpreted differently by different people, so members have to rely on common sense, compassion and the wisdom of the collective to make serious decisions about removal. This manual is meant to simply be guidelines as opposed to explicit rules and these may be taken literally in some cases and implicitly in others. It is important to consider the underlying spirit of the collective manual when considering removal and not to view removal as a strict legalistic process.

It is acceptable to consider removal if a person has attempted to subvert collective agreements without technically violating the collective manual. Removal will not be considered where a person has violated the manual by accident or out of understandable ignorance of it. Removal will be considered based on deeper considerations of the collective's intentions and the good of the collective as well as the individual's intentions and the good of the individual.

In extraordinary cases, a community resident might propose removal based on what they see as an implicit agreement. This kind of assertion must be considered very carefully, since even if virtually all residents of the community agree on a certain point (e.g. vegetarianism), this does not mean that it is an implicit agreement. An implicit agreement is a belief that helps form the foundation of the collective without having been put into writing, not simply a widely-held opinion. This provision is important only because our agreements can never be perfect, and therefore we must make allowances for our own limitations as a collective. An example of an implicit agreement that is foundational to the collective could be the agreement to not engage in violent communication with other members of the collective. The collective house manual does not state that principles of NVC (Nonviolent Communication) should be practiced in the day to day interactions with other resident members but all members would agree that violent communication is something that is antithetical to the mission, purpose, and thus, founding principles of the the collective even though a "ban on violent communication" is not literally stated in this collective house manual.

Of course we must come to consensus minus [# of residents being considered for removal] on a removal before it takes effect. If a person brings a removal proposal frivolously or dishonestly, this in itself is a violation of collective agreements, as it does a kind of violence (in an emotional and social sense) to another person.

If a removal is considered as a result of criminal activity, the collective is not obligated to involve the police or any other outside agency.

Alternative Options to Removal

Prior to removing any resident from the collective, it is important to seriously consider other options, strategies and tactics to finding resolution. Here are some suggestions to try:

- Give individual(s) a second chance at altering behavior and finding resolution. Be sure to set clear



framework for checking in and reviewing behavior on a specific schedule to see if change has really been made.

- Find a sponsor - assign a sponsor to the individual(s) being considered for removal. Sponsor should act as an advocate and willing listener who can offer suggestions and support for improvement.
- Seek professional counseling or mediation for/with individual(s), perhaps at collective expense. Everyone must consent to this expense as would happen with any special project. Free mediation is offered in San Diego from the National Conflict Resolution Center.
- Remove the individual(s) for a specific temporary period, with the intention that in the mean time, the individual can seek to address the problem, perhaps with special support from the collective
- If proposed removal is based on a violation of the collective manual, consider reevaluating the portion of the manual in question.

Possible Outcomes of Proposed Removal

Possible outcomes include:

- We do not reach consensus on removing the individual, but some individuals have strong concerns. In this case some means of addressing the problem is usually very important, but removal is not the means by which it is addressed
- We find some alternative to removing the individual that answers the underlying concerns of the proposed removal
- We lay down the removal discussion as being unmerited
- We postpone discussion of removal to a specified future consensus meeting pending further consideration and/or additional information
- We come to consensus on removing the individual
- Consensus on removing the individual is blocked. This situation as a rule will be indicative of a serious underlying problem or disagreement, which should be carefully considered and addressed.

Removal Process

Any resident or collection of residents (regardless of membership status) can propose a removal for any other resident. For example, a guest may propose removal of a full member, for instance if the full member has done some violence to the guest.

Members or a group of members can present a removal proposal on behalf of other collective members if needed, however the original requester must be attributed. Anonymous accusations cannot be accepted in this process.

A proposal to remove a member should be brought up at a house meeting. A special or emergency meeting may be called if necessary. If at all possible, the individual(s) under consideration must be given the opportunity to be present at the meeting, although they are not required to attend. Those calling a special meeting must make every effort to notify and include all residents.

The discussion and decision on removal are handled like any other consensus discussion. At least two meetings (a first to present and discuss, a second or more to discuss further after consideration and potentially come to a decision) are strongly recommended as being helpful to strong consensus and a well-



considered result.

The individual under consideration can participate fully in the meeting, except that they may not block this particular proposal. The rationale behind this is that an individual who has actually violated community agreements may not act in the best interests of the community, instead feeling defensive, frightened or angry and acting out of that feeling.

A person who has been acting in good faith and should not be expelled is of course still subject to this limitation of not being able to block, since that is largely the subject under discussion: they are dependent on others within the community to act with wisdom, understanding, and compassion, as we all are in all events.

In extraordinary circumstances (e.g. individual is in jail, individual is comatose, complete communication breakdown), we may consider the decision without the potential removemember(s) present. However, even in this case some member must be designated as the individual's proxy and must faithfully represent and if possible confer with the individual before consensus discussions begin. If no member is willing to volunteer for this role, someone should be appointed a proxy person, as any individual being considered for removal deserves to have at least one person acting with careful consideration of their interests.

This process is not a trial, and the intent is not punishment but preserving the community and its lifestyle as well as the well-being of individuals in the community (including the potentially removed resident). If a consensus decision to remove the member is reached, we must then reach a consensus decision on when the individual must leave. The default in normal situations is two weeks, although any period is acceptable if it has consensus approval. In emergency situations, where such an individual appears to present an immediate danger to the community, the default period is twenty-four hours.

We may consider an individual, couple, family, or other collection of individuals in this process, but only if all are alleged to have been involved in the underlying problem. Note that references in this document to an "individual" also apply to any group we consider together for removal. The exception is that if all of a child's parents are considered for expulsion, the children are included in the final decision by necessity, although not due to blame.

Appeal and Return

A member who has been removed has no avenue for appeal, as there is no higher authority than the community as a whole. If at some time we find that information that was significant in coming to the decision was incorrect, or if significant new information comes to light, the person or group that has acquired the new information is obliged to call for reconsideration of the decision. A removed resident may re-apply for membership any time after six months past removal. As usual the community must come to consensus on admission of the individual for their return. We are not obliged to consider this re-application.