

Wise Acres New Member Guide



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Introduction

Welcome! Wise Acres is an intentional community in Indianola, WA founded in 1990 by nine families committed to building community together. Those original families, along with new people who came in later, have worked together for over 30 years to build the infrastructure, both physically with the land and interpersonally, to create the vision and values for living cooperatively. Since that beginning, families have built their homes, young children have grown up, new children have been born, and the community culture has continued to grow and evolve to adapt to changing needs.

Community provides the beauty and richness found through seasons, generations, births, deaths, celebrations, struggles, caring for one another, traumas, sharing meals, meetings, playing, arguing, forgiveness, working together, taking steps, building structures, gardening, raising children, family conflicts, young ones becoming teens and adults, marriage, divorce, elderhood and so much more.

We put together this guide to help potential renters and new owners understand what our community is about and what it feels like to live here.

Occasionally, rental spaces or homes for purchase become available within the community. When they do, we hope to attract people that want to be full participants in our community. As a renter or new owner here, you are not only getting a home, you are joining the process of co-creating this community and helping us write our ongoing story.

We are an LGBTQAI+ inclusive community.

Wise Acres Vision Statement

Wise Acres Cooperative Association is a land-based intentional community. We are individuals and families inspired by the riches gained by committing ourselves to actively participate in community. While we recognize and respect the ebb and flow of individual needs and energies, to ensure the success of community we are committed to the following:

- Practice conservation and land stewardship
- Share resources and time
- Honor individual differences
- Build trust through love and forgiveness
- Listen to each other with openness and humility
- Work through hardships we encounter as individuals and as a community
- Raise our children in a collaborative environment
- Seek ways to bring innovation and creativity to our structure
- Participate actively in the larger community of our town, nation, and world

Our community resides on the historic land of the Suquamish tribe. We strive to honor and respect that history.

Suquamish Tribe

Land Acknowledgment

dx^wsəq^wəb

Place of the Clear Salt Water

“Every part of this soil is sacred in the estimation of my people. Every hillside, every valley, every plain and grove, has been hallowed by some sad or happy event in days but long vanished.”

~ Chief Seattle 1854

We would like to begin by acknowledging that the land on which we gather is within the aboriginal territory of the suq^wabš “People of Clear Salt Water” (Suquamish People). Expert fisherman, canoe builders and basket weavers, the suq^wabš live in harmony with the lands and waterways along Washington’s Central Salish Sea as they have for thousands of years. Here, the suq^wabš live and protect the land and waters

of their ancestors for future generations as promised by the

Point Elliot Treaty of 1855.

Community Resources

An important part of intentional community is sharing resources. Over the years we have worked to create shared spaces that provide opportunities for interaction and connection. In addition to what is listed below, we also often share individual resources like vehicles, tools, skills, cups of flour, etc.

Our Common House is the gathering place we use for community meals, gatherings of all sorts including kids' birthday parties, play groups, movie showings (there is a big screen with projector), concerts, and sometimes just another place to hang out. The kitchen is equipped with a commercial 6-burner stove and pots and pans as needed to cook large meals.

It's also where anyone can have a private or public event. If you would like to use the common house for an event and would like to reserve it, you enter your event in the google calendar.

Downstairs in the common house you will find the "Zombie Community Pantry" a pool table, a ping-pong table, and some workout equipment that you are welcome to use.

Community Garden/Orchard

We have a vibrant community garden with two greenhouses and a small orchard that produces an abundance of organic food. Participation is welcomed but not required. It offers the opportunity to connect with others in the process of shared work, as well as a quiet space to enjoy the beauty of nature. It's a great opportunity to teach our kids about where food comes from and to experience the soil. All residents are invited to share the bounty of the garden.

Play Areas include an area for kids in the garden, a small paved area with a basketball hoop, an open commons area for games, and roughly 12 acres of open space wooded land with trails. It's a short walk to Indianola's fabulous beach.

Self-Care We value self-care and believe it is an important nutrient in the community's collective root system. We recognize that community health is deeply intertwined with how we tend and care for ourselves. Our members have diverse interests and passions – music, visual art, rowing, cooking, gardening and dance are just a few ways members seek ways to nurture themselves and each other. Fireside chats are common and often a way the community gathers to share in connection together. We also have a hot tub, wood fired sauna, and immediate access to miles of trails. The Indianola community beach is just a short distance away.

The Larger Community: Since our inception, the web of our community has been woven into lifelong friendships, partnerships, and the raising of children with those in greater Indianola. Families gather at the beach during the blissful sun-filled days of summer, sharing in picnics, long swims, delicious conversations and music; we collectively brace ourselves for the polar bear plunge on New Year's Eve, and celebrate Halloween—adults and children alike—with masks and mischief. We recognize that our success has been made possible by the generous hearts and many hands of greater Indianola that have created bonds and contributed so much to the beauty of our life here in Wise Acres.

Community Benefits

Living at Wise Acres can offer many benefits: Friends, mutual support, spontaneous gatherings, dinners, potlucks, etc. In addition:

Community Meals

We have weekly community meals. These meals provide an important forum for us to connect with each other. Oftentimes people linger after to play games, play music, or just have conversations.

Cooking teams are often couples/families, but a single person can be a cooking team, or a team can have up to three adults. More adults can be included, but then the team will have to cook twice as often. Kids are encouraged to join the cooking team of their household. If you join or form a cooking team there is a rotation schedule. When it is your team's turn to cook, you prepare a meal with enough food for everyone.

Officially, dinners start at 6pm, though there is usually a grace period that allows for gathering and socializing. We start each meal with a circle with announcements, a description of what is for dinner, then a song, poem, or moment of silence - whatever ritual someone wants to suggest. Then we wash hands and eat.

When a meal is done, everyone is asked to help with cleanup, even the kids. Ultimately it is the responsibility of the cooking team to see to it that everything is cleaned up.

Sometimes when people are sick, they can have a friend take them a plate. When people are delayed because of work, school, or other obligations, they can ask someone to set aside a plate for them. Guests can be invited with the cooking team's consent. It is customary to bring a contribution if you are a guest.

Children

Creating a safe and nurturing environment for children has always been a big part of our vision. There are many advantages to raising kids in an intentional community. Children here get access to the expertise, wisdom, resources, and love of many caring adults.

As a parent, it is also a good place to get support and advice from other parents. The children themselves have historically formed their own friendships and they end up supporting and teaching each other. The woods, garden, common house, and play areas all provide places to play and explore. As the kids grow older, Indianola is a very safe town to roam, and the beach areas are awesome for kids of all ages.

Zombie Pantry

We have a little in-house store affectionately known as the "Zombie Pantry", with bulk foods. It is self-serve, and it relies on an honor system. Many dried goods like rice, beans, popcorn and nutritional yeast are available to save you a trip to the store. We also recently have added frozen local grass-fed meat and fish as well as some household items like toilet paper and dish soap. Residents and a limited list of neighbors are invited to shop there.

Garbage/Recycling

We share a garbage dumpster that is emptied once per week on Thursday mornings. It sometimes fills up, so all residents are asked to limit the amount they put in to $\frac{2}{3}$ of a regular trash can per week. After 6pm on Wednesday, if the dumpster is not full, residents are allowed to put more in the dumpster if needed. Everyone is encouraged to compress their garbage as much as possible to create more space for others.

Similarly, there is a recycling dumpster that we share. It is typically picked up every other Tuesday. Cardboard boxes of any size must be broken down so they are flat. Recycling does not need to be sorted, but only clean items should be recycled - rinse cans and bottles, put soiled paper or cardboard items in the garbage dumpster. Consult Waste Management for more details: <http://wmnorthwest.com/kitsap/>

Guest parking is available next to the dumpsters, but it is imperative that all cars be removed from the Dumpster area on Monday nights and Wednesday nights, so it is empty at time of pickup.

Age Diversity

We value age diversity and strive to maintain a spectrum from birth to old age. Children have been born here and several families have been fortunate enough to have their elderly parents spend their last years and die here.

Holidays

Wise acres is spiritually and religiously diverse and accepting. We don't have a group leader and are organized in a non-hierarchical manner. We invite all forms of holiday observances and enjoy learning and growing through conversations around our differences. We have group potlucks and celebrations around Thanksgiving, Christmas, solstices, Diwali, Passover and more. We also have some of our own traditions that have emerged over time, such as, exchanging small handmade gifts with one another in the wintertime such as jam, a wreath, a candle, pins, or cookies ~ all the traditions and celebrations are optional.

Communication & Meetings

Email

We have two different Email google groups that all members are included in:

- **WACACrew:** we use this Email address for all issues related to our internal communication, such as upcoming business meetings, issues and decisions that relate only to people living in wise acres.
- **WACADinner:** this e-mail address is used for things that include friends and family that do not live here that are frequently involved in our community. This includes things such as birthday parties, WACA dinner planning and invitations, larger community celebrations, local community events that people want to share, etc.

Slack

This is a group “texting” app. The community has adopted Slack to communicate spontaneous messages that help us connect. We often use it if someone is looking to borrow a tool or a cup of flour or needs a ride. People also announce spontaneous potlucks, fire circles, movie showings or outings and other gatherings or events using Slack. It is an app you can install on your phone and/or computer. We will send you an official invite to get you subscribed.

Dinner Calendar

You will have access to our collective Google calendar. This is where you’ll find who is cooking on Mondays. It is also where you can reserve use of the common house for a personal event of any kind.

Meetings

There are four regular meetings that happen each month:

- The first one happens on the ***second Wednesday of every month (except July and August) at 7 pm*** and we call it **“Viz/biz”** (short for Visioning and Business). This is where we make decisions about the details of living collectively. When we started Wise Acres we committed to consensus decision making. This process requires us to allow the time and space needed to introduce proposals, listen to individual concerns, and make decisions based on what is best for the whole. We have found that living consensus is a lifelong learning process that continues to reveal its gifts, supporting deeper understanding about how our needs as individuals are met in the bonds of community. All voices are valued; renters and owners alike are welcome to raise ideas, offer proposals, speak concerns, and participate in all discussions to ultimately shape the community we wish to live in.

- The second regular meeting is **Community Support** that happens on the **4th Wednesday of every month at 7pm**. We don't make any decisions at this meeting. This is a place where we can work out conflicts and find ways to understand, connect, appreciate one another as well as lend one another support when needed.
- Our third and fourth meetings are separate gatherings of female identifying people – **first Wednesday of every month at 7:00pm** - and male identifying people - **third Wednesday of every month at 7:00pm** - as smaller support groups.

While we have practiced gender segregated support groups for over three decades, we are currently in conversation about what it looks like to embrace gender fluidity in a truly inclusive way.

Community Responsibilities

Dues

Every adult member of Wise Acres is charged quarterly dues. Dues cover the cost of operating and maintaining the water system, common house, trash collection, road maintenance, garden, hot tub, projects, insurance, and other miscellaneous community expenses.

The amount is determined by us each year as we decide our budget. Our current system assesses dues for each household based on the number of adults living there, so if someone takes in renters, the dues for that household goes up. It is up to the landlord whether they want to include this amount in the rent or ask for it separately.

Chores

All residents here have a chore. We have a history of being creative about finding chores that match the skills, interests, and motivations of the people doing them but there are also some chores that just must get done. Examples of current chores include: the garden team, grounds team, facilities, common house cleaning team, Treasurer, Secretary, Administrator, and a few other individual chores that people have created to match their interests/skills.

Retreats/Work Parties

We currently have a spring (April) and fall (September) community retreat. The retreats start Friday afternoon/evening and end sometime Sunday. We all have busy lives, so this is a chance to take a bit of time off to spend with each other as a group. It's a chance to play music, games, go on walks, and oftentimes we have a visioning meeting of some kind. Our retreats recently have been more of a "staycation" where we get together for meals, games, walks, etc., but we also have work parties to put energy into the community's physical resources.

Conflict Resolution Process

Facilitator Volunteers

Annually in January, we update a list of conflict resolution facilitators; volunteers who have the time, interest, and developing skill to help resolve conflict. Facilitation of any specific conflict is not restricted to this list; other community members may be brought in to support conflict facilitation as appropriate.

Conflict Resolution Philosophy Statement

All community members are responsible for noticing when conflict arises and supporting each other to tend to our relationships with respect, compassion, courage, and openness.

Facilitator Responsibilities

- Facilitators strive to be neutral, not advocating for one side over the other.
- Facilitators commit to form a facilitation team, of at least two people, when called upon to support conflict resolution. This team must be agreeable to all parties involved in the conflict.
- Confidentiality is essential. Participants must be able to rely on the privacy of the process. A facilitator should not disclose information without the permission of the conflicted parties.
- Facilitators are encouraged to prioritize self-care. If you feel overwhelmed or uncertain, do not ignore it. Ask for support or change of role if needed.
- Facilitators commit to meeting 3 or 4 (quarterly?) times per year to discuss and document learnings (without discussing specific situations or people).
- Facilitators are committed to bringing in resources for community learning related to effective conflict negotiation and facilitation - readings, outside experts, books, videos, etc.

Conflict Resolution Flowchart

This is to be taken as a suggested guideline rather than a hard and fast rule.

- Try to iron out your differences one-on-one. See if you can find the courage to talk to the party or parties you are in conflict with. If that is not possible or is not successful, reach out to one of the volunteers on the facilitator list.
- The facilitator contacted provides a safe container and listens to help determine next steps and potentially identify a facilitator team agreeable to all parties involved. This team may or may not include the original facilitator contacted and may include community members not officially on the facilitation list.
- A facilitation process is created and implemented depending on the needs of the specific situation.
- As closure, a timely, formal process/meeting occurs to debrief, determine effectiveness, gather learnings, and identify next steps if necessary.

Community Responsibilities

As previously stated, tending to conflict and discord in our community is the responsibility of all.

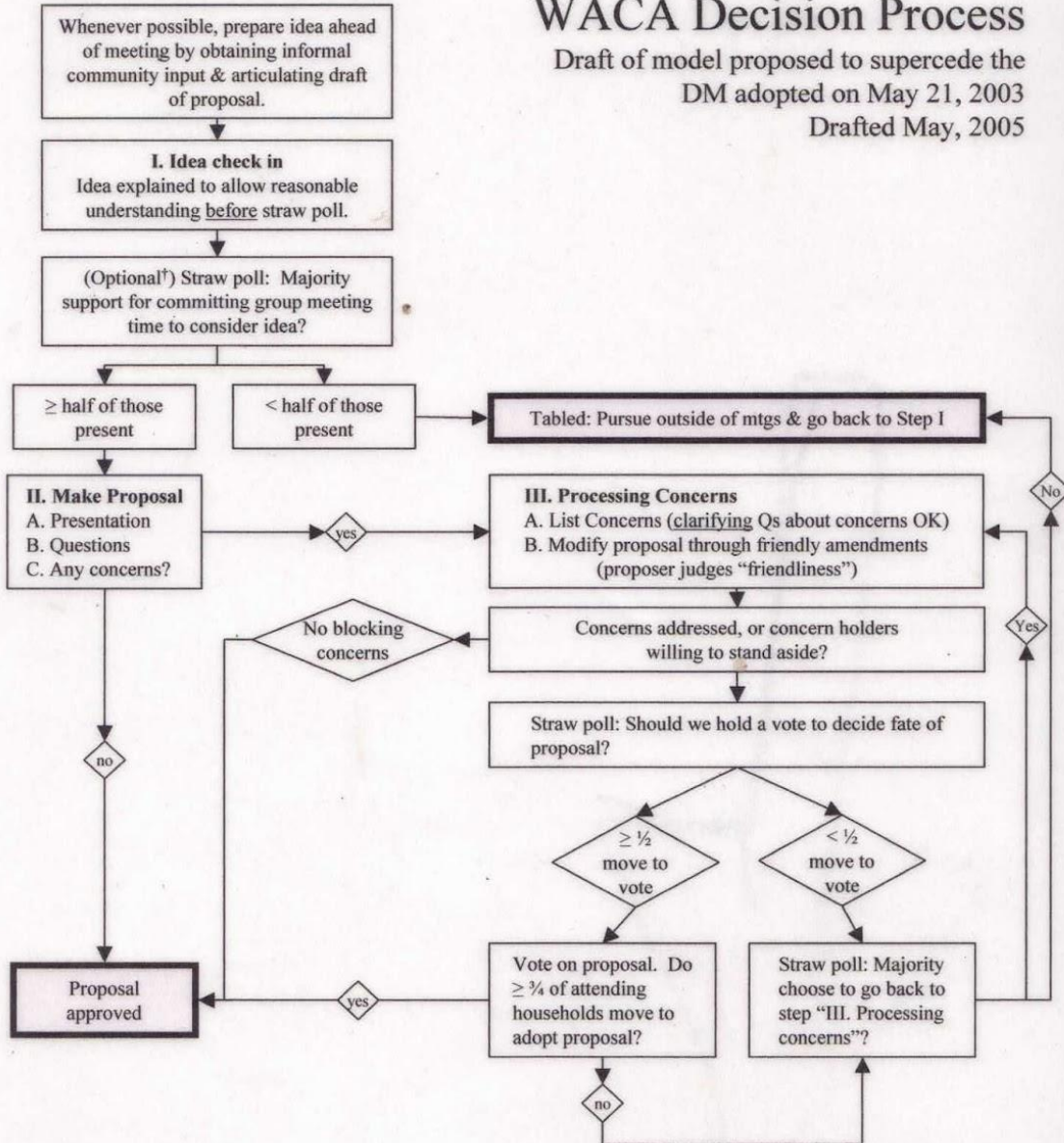
At times, a conflict between parties in the community may have a larger impact than just those involved. If any community member feels this to be the case, they are encouraged to:

- Talk to the parties involved directly to make sure you have accurate information.
- Bring up the community impact at a community support meeting or call for a special community meeting if timing is important/urgent.
- The facilitation team is not responsible for managing or shepherding the community process. Their responsibility is to the parties requesting support.
- To support the long-term health of the community, the first community support meeting of every quarter will include time for checking in on the pulse of ongoing or unresolved conflicts impacting the community that need tending.

Decision Making Process

WACA Decision Process

Draft of model proposed to supercede the DM adopted on May 21, 2003
 Drafted May, 2005



*Notes: "Concerns" means blocking concerns on this flow chart. At any point in the process a facilitator may ask for clarification or more information.
 *May be invoked at the option of any member in attendance.

Sick Policy

Health is a matter of major importance to all of us. Please do not come sick to any community event or meal. You should remain home during this time to assure a speedy recovery and help protect others in the community.

Please stay home if you:

- Have a fever or have had one during the previous 24-hour period.
- Have vomited within the previous 24-hour period.
- Have a cold that is less than four days old.
- Have heavy nasal discharge.
- Have a constant cough.
- Are fussy, cranky, and generally not yourself.
- Have symptoms of a possible communicable disease. (These are usually sniffles, reddened eyes, sore throat, headache, and abdominal pain, plus a fever.)
- Please notify the community at once if you, or someone in your household, has a communicable disease. Other community members can then take appropriate action.
- Have had a close COVID contact.