

FAQs About Lang Cove & Housing Cooperatives

Lang Cove is a non-profit housing co-op, established in 1988, under the British Columbia Co-op Act.

What is a housing co-op? A housing co-op is a legal association of members, and is a form of shared ownership, which provides homes to its members who purchase a share and pay a monthly housing charge. Members own the co-op; the co-op owns the housing. Members work together to create a viable business and a co-operative community. A co-op is a home, not an investment and our goal is to create security of tenure, not equity.

What is the Co-op Act? The *Cooperative Association Act* applies to all types of co-operatives in the province, not just housing co-ops, and governs areas such as membership, member shares, voting rights at members' meetings and dispute resolution procedures. See more at:

http://www.bclaws.ca/Recon/document/ID/freeside/00_99028_01

What is a share purchase? A share purchase is the share you buy to become a member of a co-op. One member per unit in a co-op buys a share in the co-op as they are accepted for membership. Each share gives that member a vote at general meetings. It also works a bit like a damage deposit in that you get the money back when you leave the co-op (unless the unit has been damaged in which case the share is used to cover repair costs). Lang Cove does not return share purchases with interest. Please note that like most housing co-ops, Lang Cove requires two months notice prior to moving out. The share purchase at Lang Cove is currently \$2,000.

What is a monthly housing charge? A monthly housing charge is like rent. It's what the members pay each month to live in the co-op and it varies by unit size (number of bedrooms).

Are co-ops low income housing? No, co-ops are mixed income communities for people of all income levels.

Who lives in Lang Cove co-op? Non-profit housing co-ops like Lang Cove are mixed communities. Our members come from a variety of backgrounds and have a wide range of incomes. Some members pay a full housing charge. This is often called a 'market' housing charge. Other members with lower incomes pay less. This is called a subsidized housing charge. Fifteen of the 50 units in Lang Cove co-op are subsidized.

Is there a maximum income ceiling to qualify for Lang Cove? Lang Cove does not have an income ceiling, although some co-ops do.

Is there a minimum income requirement to qualify for Lang Cove? For units paying the 'market' housing charge there is a minimum income requirement that assures that no more than 30% of a household's income goes to housing charges.

What if my family and I don't meet the minimum income requirement? If your income is below the required minimum, you may be eligible for a subsidy. However, you must be registered with the BC Housing Registry and provide Lang Cove with a BC Housing file number *before* you will be considered for membership when a subsidy comes available. Check your eligibility here: http://www.bchousing.org/Options/Subsidized_Housing and follow the links to register online. Lang Cove is located in Zone 8, and our housing registry code is AHN. Also, please be sure to include the BC Housing file number with your application.

What is subsidy? Lang Cove receives money from the provincial government to help house some low-income members. The housing charge for these units is adjusted to 30% of the household's income. This is often referred to as "rent-gear-to-income" or "RGI" or a subsidized housing charge. The subsidy makes up the difference between what the member pays and the co-op's normal housing charge. The amount of subsidy is limited. When Lang Cove's operating agreement with the government ends in 5 to 7 years (when our mortgage is paid off), the subsidy will also end. We have to start planning for that future.

How long will I have to wait to get into Lang Cove? After applying, it can take 3 months to several years to get into Lang Cove. Those applying for subsidy may have a longer wait than those paying market housing charges.

What will Lang Cove Co-op expect from my family and I? All members are expected to purchase a share, pay their housing charges on time, follow the co-op's rules and policies, keep their unit in good condition, and be good neighbours. Members and their families are also expected to get involved in the co-op community by volunteering at least two hours per month towards committee work or completing some of the many tasks that are necessary to keep Lang Cove a well-managed, well-maintained and affordable housing alternative.

How do I apply to live in Lang Cove Housing Co-op? First, please read through all of the information on our website about our co-op and our expectations of new members, then you can download our application from our website at <http://langcove.ca/membership>. Deliver or mail your completed application to #51 – 700 Grenville Ave, Victoria, BC, V9A 7J7

Keep your file current. Your application will only remain on file for six months unless you contact us to renew. If there have been NO changes to your employment, income, family size, address or contact info, please call 250-380-1228 every six months and leave a message to let us know that you wish to remain on our waitlist. If there have been any changes, please submit a new application. We would also appreciate knowing if you obtain alternative housing and no longer wish to be considered for membership.

~ Adapted from: <http://www.chf.bc.ca/faq>

What is the difference between co-op housing and rental housing?

People who live in a co-op are members of the co-op, not tenants - Members own a share in the co-op and together, they are responsible for the co-op. Each member (one per unit) has one vote and every year a Board of Directors is elected from the membership.

There is no landlord - Non-profit housing co-ops are a form of shared ownership which provides homes to its members who purchase a share and pay a monthly housing charge. Because members own a share of the cooperative property, they are not governed by the Residential Tenancy Act.

Members run the co-op - Members make the big decisions about how the buildings will be maintained and how the business of the co-op will be managed. At an annual general meeting, members elect a board of directors to manage the business of the co-op. Co-ops may hire staff and/or rely on volunteers to do the day-to-day work. Members volunteer time to work together to build community and keep their housing well-managed and affordable.

You don't have to worry about excessive rent increases - Landlords raise rents to maximize their profits. Co-ops are non-profit organizations. This doesn't mean that rents (housing charges) won't go up. Housing charges increase regularly as operating costs increase. The difference is that co-op members review the finances of the co-op and budget recommendations of the Board of Directors. At a semi-annual general meeting the members vote on the budget. If there are housing charge increases, they reflect true costs, not profit margins.

Co-ops try to maximize their housing – This means that market applicants must meet minimum national occupancy standards as set out by the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and subsidy applicants must meet minimums set by BC Housing. Generally, this means no more than one bedroom/person.

Co-op housing is secure - Co-op members are asked to leave only if they break the co-op's by-laws. Co-ops provide secure and stable housing. You and your family can plan to live in the Co-op for a long time.

Co-op members form deep roots in the community - The co-op will never be sold or flipped for profit so members can choose to remain in the co-op for a long time. This encourages involvement and commitment to the community and allows members to feel secure in their co-op and their neighbourhood. It is easier for people to become involved in their community if they know they will be a part of it for a long time.

Co-op members are a part of a larger community of co-ops - Lang Cove is joined with other co-ops as a member of the Cooperative Housing Federation of BC (CHF-BC), an organization that co-ops can turn to for support, information and advice.

~ Adapted from: http://www.coophousing.com/about/about_housing.asp