

Governance Proposal

Sample Community

mm/dd/yyyy

Proposed by the Implementation Circle

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SAMPLE COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE AGREEMENTS

We adopt the following governance system for a period of xx months ending on mm/dd/yy. Around that xx-month mark, we will evaluate the efficacy of this governance system and decide whether or not to continue it. If we decide to continue with this governance system, we will consider changes to this document and to our bylaws, if any are needed. Our governance structure, like any other, will evolve as it is implemented and adapt to fit the personality and culture of our community.

This governance structure strives to address the following goals:

- efficient decision-making, without sacrificing decision quality
- effective management of community work
- clear and specific delegation of responsibilities
- leadership development
- increased participation in Circles and work
- fostering a positive sense of community and stronger connections among community members

1.

Overview

The organizational governance structure of Sample Community will employ interlinking Circles. A Circle is a group of people with a specific purpose (called an **aim**) who work together to accomplish that purpose, including making operations and policy decisions by consent within their specific area of responsibility (called a **domain**).

Governance Principles

The governance system will be guided by the following principles adapted from Dynamic Governance/Sociocracy.

- I. The Principle of Circles: Self-governance through a hierarchical structure of semi- autonomous Circles that are responsible for policy decisions within their areas of responsibility. See appendix for Circle Structure.
 - a. Each Circle is guided by input from community members using a variety of means such as Community Conversations, surveys, etc.
 - b. Circles are linked to one another in a hierarchical structure. (See “Circle Structure,” below.) Broader (“higher”) Circles set and/or affirm the aim and domain of more-focused (“lower”) Circles within the broader Circle’s domain.
 - c. Linked Circles have overlapping members: The Leader and the Delegate (see Circle Roles, below). These shared members form a link between broader Circles and their more-focused Circles, so that influence may flow in both directions (in hierarchical terms, both top-down and bottom-up).

- II. The Principle of Consent: Decisions by Circles are made by consent, including selection of people for Circle roles, except as required by law and/or as otherwise stated in the bylaws.
 - a. Meetings and decision making will generally proceed as outlined in the Consent and Meeting Process Summary Guide (see appendix).
 - b. Consent is defined as having no paramount argued objections. i. Paramount objections are based on the purpose and responsibilities of a Circle and not on personal preferences. ii. Argued objections have a clearly-stated rationale, allowing the Circle to collectively take responsibility for possible resolutions.
 - c. Before a decision can take effect, every member of a Circle must consent. Each Circle shall establish its own written policy defining a quorum for conducting business and its procedures for obtaining

consent from absent members.

- d. Inability to Reach Consent: If a Circle cannot achieve consent on a proposal within three meetings, the facilitator can delegate the decision to the next broader Circle.
- III. The Principle of Continual Adaptation: All policy decisions, including selections of people for roles, will be scheduled for re-evaluation after a defined period of time (and may be re-evaluated at any time). Policy decisions and role selections remain in effect until they are terminated or revised. Work processes are also periodically evaluated. Every meeting is evaluated.

Circle structure

The organizational structure of Sample Community is based on a series of interlinked Circles. In the Appendix, the Circles are illustrated in the organizational structure “flower petal” image, and their purpose (aim) and area of responsibility (domain) are specifically described in a table titled “General Attributes of Circles.”

- A. *Full Circle*: The broadest circle, containing all community members. The Full Circle has ultimate responsibility for all community decisions. However, it delegates most of its aim and domain to more-focused Circles, as described below. At minimum there will be three Full Circle meetings a year, one of which will be the annual meeting. The agenda and schedule of Full Circle meetings may include:
 - a. Major decisions that meet one or more of the criteria stated under “Major Decisions” (below).
 - b. Community conversations requested by any Circle for the purpose of generating input that will help that Circle make a decision. Community Conversations are focused on exploration, dialogue and understanding.
 - c. Community building & learning: telling life stories, games, communication skills development, etc.).
- B. *Main Circles*: The primary set of Circles that divide up the entire work of the community: Condo Management, Community Connections, Extended Home, and Outdoor Living.

- C. Sub-Circles: Circles that are created by a broader Circle (either a Main Circle or another Sub-Circle) to focus on a particular portion of the broader Circle's domain. For example, the Condo Management Circle might create a Building Systems Circle to study and make recommendations on the building's technical infrastructure.
- D. The General Circle: A Circle that coordinates the actions of the Main Circles and sets the agenda and schedule of Full Circle meetings. The General Circle is comprised of the Leaders and Delegates of the Main Circles, along with a General Circle Coordinator. The General Circle Coordinator is selected by the General Circle to support Main Circle Leaders in their efforts to accomplish their Circle's aims.
- E. Helping Circles: Temporary Circles created by an existing Circle to research and recommend actions or policies to the Circle that created it. A Helping Circle can also carry out specific, short-term work assignments. For example, the Outdoor Living Circle may create a Landscape Master Plan Helping Circle to research and recommend changes to their master plan.
- F. Expanded Circles: The "Expanded Circle" is a Main Circle together with all of its Sub-Circles, Helping Circles and/or individual contributors who fill specific roles. Meetings may be called between and among these entities as needed.

Major decisions

Major decisions can only be made by the consent of the Full Circle. These decisions may include:

- Significant and permanent changes to the physical community;
- Significant changes to the governance structure;
- Significant impact on members in terms of money, housing, and/or liability;
- Changes to Master Deed and its amendments, Bylaws and its amendments, and agreements with the City of XXX;
- Annual budget decisions or decisions regarding special assessments*;

Determination of significance is by decision of the General Circle. The above list is not intended to be exhaustive. The General Circle, at its discretion, may choose to raise any decision to the Full Circle.

If the Full Circle is unable to achieve consent after three meetings, the issue will be decided by a majority vote as stated in the bylaws.

*Note: non-property owners may not object to condo fee budget decisions.

General framework of all circles

- A more-focused Circle may be created by a broader Circle. Some or all of its initial members may be selected by the broader Circle.
- Alternatively, any group of community members may identify a potential Circle's aim and domain, then ask the Circle that currently contains the desired domain to recognize the new Circle as its more-focused Circle.
- Once a Circle is established, community members may request to join. The request is put on the Circle's agenda as a proposal to be discussed with the prospective member present. A Circle, by consent, may decline to accept a prospective member.
- Circle members regularly attend Circle meetings and carry out the Circle's responsibilities.
- Individuals may be designated by the Circle to carry out specific work roles within the Circle's domain. These individuals do not need to be members of the Circle. They are, however, considered to be members of the relevant Expanded Circle.
- Meeting Frequency: Circles determine their own meeting frequency.
- Aim (purpose): Meet community needs by providing community services within their domain in ways that are effective, efficient and transparent.
- Domain (area of responsibility): Carry out tasks and enact policies within the limits of authority set by the broader Circle. Conduct information gathering as needed to inform decisions that need greater input.
- Logbook: Create and maintain a logbook (collection of documents) accessible

to the full community that includes but is not limited to a) the Circle's aim and domain, members, role descriptions, policy decisions and meeting minutes; and b) any other documents that record the Circle's activities and plans.

- Ongoing Learning: Develop ongoing learning for its members in three areas: communication/interpersonal relationships, governance structure/meeting and work processes and work content (such as bookkeeping or HVAC repair, etc).
- Evaluation (Measures): Minutes produced and posted for community access. Evaluation at conclusion of each meeting. Annual self-evaluation and by broader Circle regarding both process and product. Periodic evaluations of specific projects/policies according to their purposes and terms.

Circle membership

- I. The intention of the Circle is to be inclusive and welcoming, balanced with the responsibility to respect and commit to the Circle's progress towards achieving its aims.
- II. To ensure well-run productive Circles, every Circle will have a defined membership of individuals who agree to the following guidelines:
 - a. attend Circle meetings regularly
 - b. inform the Circle Secretary if you will be absent
 - c. carry out the Circle's work in between meetings
 - d. make an effort to resolve interpersonal conflicts that occur within the Circle - if you have an issue with one person, speak with the person privately or ask for help
 - e. work to fulfill the purpose and promote the progress of the Circle
 - f. think about what is best for the community
 - g. think in terms of solutions
 - h. assume another person's goodwill
 - i. address others with respect
 - j. avoid personal attacks
 - k. speak only for yourself, or identify those for whom you are speaking
 - l. offer and willingly accept feedback.

- III. A Circle can set additional criteria for membership relevant to the Circle's domain as long as they are clear and transparent.
- IV. No one may be denied membership in a Circle or asked to leave a Circle on the basis of personal preferences.
- V. New members may be asked to "get up to speed" by talking or working with a member between meetings so as not to slow down the work of the Circle.
- VI. If a member is having difficulty following the guidelines of a Circle, the Circle may initiate a respectful and open-minded conversation to support that member in doing better or leaving the circle.
- VII. As a last resort, if the above-named difficulties are not resolved, a member may be asked to leave a Circle by a proposal requiring consent. This member may not object to the group's decision.
- VIII. Non-Circle Members Attending Circle Meetings: Community members are welcome to attend any Circle's meetings. Non-Circle members can always participate in a meeting's opening and closing go-rounds. Circles will reserve up to 15 minutes near the beginning of a Circle meeting to hear any community concern. The Circle may choose to invite anyone to present or comment on any topic at any time. The Circle may choose to include a non-member in go-rounds.

Circle member roles

Any member may fill more than one role, and roles may be combined (except as noted, below). All roles are selected by the Main members of a Circle (except as noted, below). Any selected role person may appoint a substitute to cover their absence from a meeting or that substitute may be appointed by the Facilitator, Secretary or Leader.

Leader. The role of the Leader is to oversee operations of the Circle and to communicate the interests and decisions of the Circle's broader Circle. The Leader is a full, working member of the broader Circle. The Leader may make time-sensitive decisions without being authorized to do so by the Circle. In such cases the Leader will make every effort to seek input before the decision is made. Any such decision must be reviewed at the next Circle meeting.

- When a new Circle is created, the broader Circle that creates the Circle will select its Leader.
- Thereafter, the Circle may propose its own Leader, to be confirmed by the broader Circle.

Delegate(s): The role of the Delegate is to communicate the interests and decisions of the Circle to its broader Circle. The Circle selects its Delegate(s). The selection is then confirmed by the broader Circle. A Delegate is a full member of both the Circle and its broader Circle. The Delegate and Leader roles may not be combined.

Facilitator: The role of the Facilitator is to conduct Circle meetings, provide leadership in decision-making, support listening and mutual understanding, and ensure that the Circle is functioning based on the principles and methods of Dynamic Governance.

Secretary: The role of the Secretary is to manage the affairs of the Circle and perform tasks related to its functioning, such as arranging and announcing Circle meetings, preparing the agenda in consultation with other Circle members, distributing study materials and proposals, taking minutes or ensuring that minutes are taken, distributing minutes, and performing any other tasks assigned by the Circle. As the keeper of the records, the Secretary interprets policies when questions **of meaning or intent** arise.

Logbook Keeper. The role of the Logbook Keeper is to maintain the Circle logbook (see Logbook below). Depending on the size of the Circle and the complexity of its work, the role of the Logbook Keeper may be combined with that of the Secretary.

Work Roles: A Circle may delegate responsibilities, tasks and authority to anyone to be carried out autonomously within the limits set by the Circle (examples: mailroom manager, tree pruner, etc.)

Decision-making process

See the **DG meeting and decision guide** in the appendix for the outline of the process of producing proposals and making decisions by consent.

Since most decisions will be made in Main Circles or their sub-circles, the

following section describes how Circles seek input, how individuals give input to Circles, and how individuals can appeal decisions made by Circles. The aim is both to maintain the integrity of Circles (including their ability to make decisions within their domain) and to have appropriate community input on those decisions.

- Circle considers whether the issue is in its domain and whether it is a Major Decision
- Circle seeks input: When a question comes to a Circle, the Circle may decide the question, research it, survey community members, seek out individual opinions, or send the question to another Circle for input or decision. A Circle may appoint a Helping Circle to research the question and make a recommendation. A Circle can ask for time in a Community Conversation to generate more input. How much input to request and what methods to use to gather that input is a judgment call of the Circle based on the issue's complexity, impact, and/or potential controversy. See diagram of Feedback Loops in the Appendix.
- Any individual can give input to any Circle member.
- Any individual can request to be heard by any Circle that they are not a member of.
- All Circle meeting minutes will be publicly available, and will note upcoming issues as well as past decisions.
- Community members may appeal the Circle's decision in the following manner: Any three individuals, no two related or living in the same household, can appeal any decision to the Circle that made the decision. Those appealing will go to the Circle that made the decision, in order to confirm or amend that decision (in one session). If not successful in that session, those with concerns - along with Circle delegates - seek assistance from Care and Counsel to get resolution (within two sessions, or more if extended by Consent). If that is not successful, the appeal moves to the next broader Circle.

Appendix

- DG Meeting and Decision Guide
- Paramount and Argued: The Basis for Objections
- Feedback Loops Diagram
- Communication Protocols
- Organizational Structure (Flower Picture)
- Table of Circle Aims & Domains
- Role of Coordinator of Hub
- Evaluation

Opening round: check in

Administratives

- announcements
- consent to previous minutes
- confirm next meeting time
- consent to agenda of current meeting

Content agenda items

Closing round: evaluation

POLICY MEETING

Picture forming

- what's the issue?
- what are the dimensions?
- list of dimensions complete?

Proposal shaping

- generate proposal ideas
- organize ideas/make proposal

Present proposal

- Clarifying questions
- Quick reactions
- Consent round
- Announce decision

- facilitator amends the proposal
- refer to...
 - more focused circle
 - more broad circle
 - helping circle
 - refer to originator
- shorten time period and gather feedback
- other creative ideas

proposals

objections

Review role and term

Nomination

- first nomination (write down)
- share reasons
- change round sharing reasons

- Facilitator proposes candidate
- Consent round

ELECTIONS

Leader announces decisions

Report on progress and trends from projects.

Leader or circle members ask questions or give input.

Leader delegates tasks.

OPERATIONAL MEETING

If you don't know what to do call a round and then review.

If it's safe enough to try, go ahead and don't be shy.

If the others don't say "wow" tell them it's good enough for now

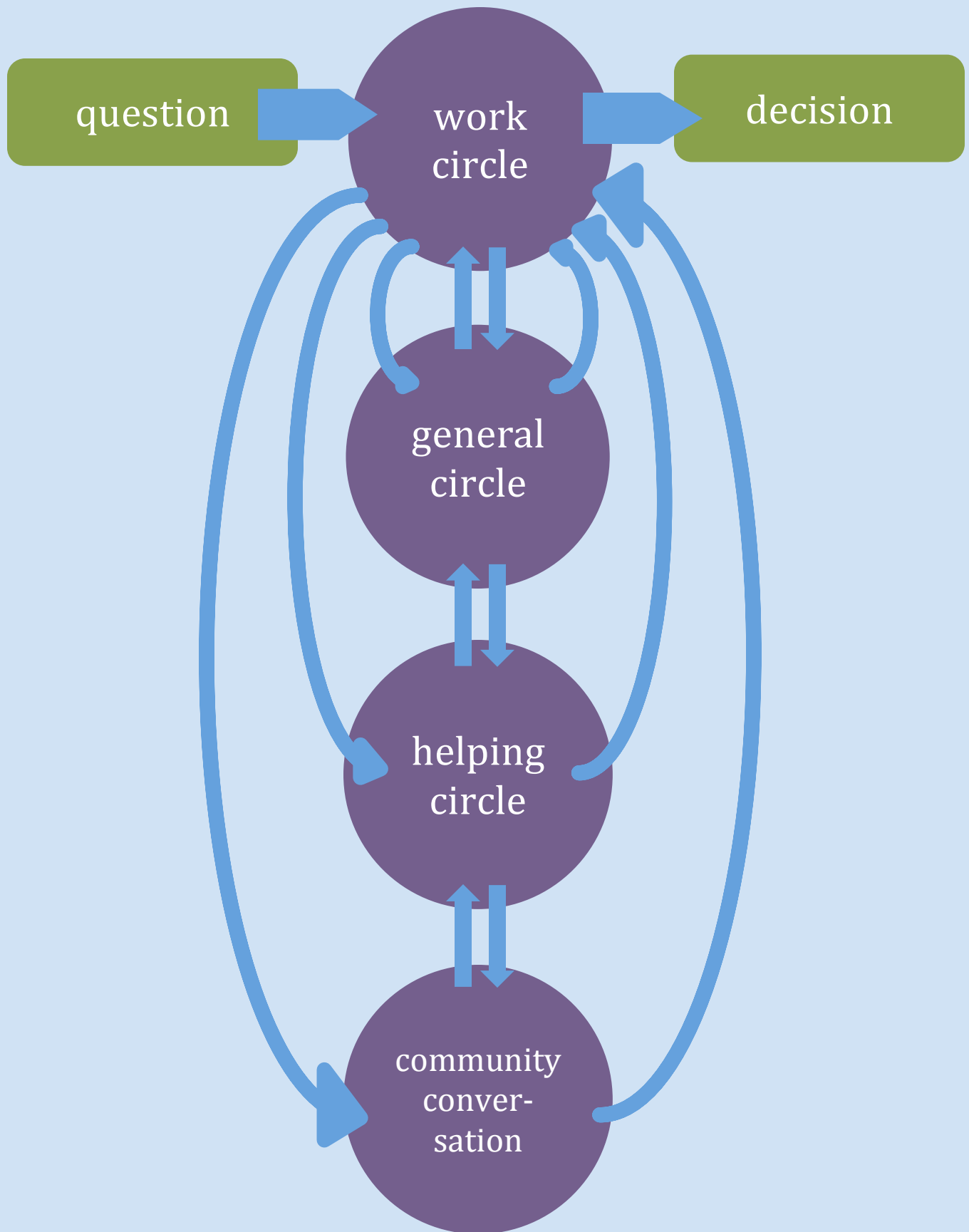
Paramount and Argued: The Basis for Objections



- Paramount objections express a concern that a proposal interferes with a Circle's capacity to accomplish its aim.
 - In some cases, a paramount objection will mean a proposal is dropped for good reasons.
 - In less clear situations, other cases, we will seek resolution of objections by finding some way to move forward on a short term basis while gathering more information (measures) from the doing. Then we will evaluate whether the policy is supporting the Circle's capacity to accomplish its aims, and whether some amendment to the policy would improve it.
- Personal preferences are not a basis for objection.
 - For example, a community's aim may be to have meals available for everyone twice a week. While some members may have a personal preference for having all vegetarian meals, they would not have a paramount objection to meals that include meat unless there was no vegetarian option. Similarly we might object to a meal policy that never included meat or a meal policy that did not require a vegetarian option when a meat oriented meal was served. An individual personal preference for a particular diet is not a basis for objection because a policy based on that preference would violate the aim of serving meals for everyone.
- Argued objections have a clearly-stated rationale, allowing the Circle to collectively take responsibility for possible resolutions.

- For example, the Kitchen Circle with an aim of supporting community connection around shared meals is deciding a proposal to have tables of 8 instead of tables of 6. To say “I object because I like tables of 6 better” does not give the Circle a way to explore resolution. To say “I object because I find it easier to have more intimate and connected conversation in tables of 6” clarifies the underlying need and all can join in exploring strategies to meet that need.
- A proposal would then include a way to measure how successful that strategy was in meeting the need.
- Based on the measures, the Circle can evaluate whether the policy is supporting the Circle’s capacity to accomplish its aims, and whether some amendment to the policy would improve it.

Feedback loops



Communication Protocols

These are recommendations to Circles, not requirements.

Producing Minutes

Rationale: Balancing aims of transparency and efficiency.

- Secretary has 48 hours from a meeting to send draft minutes to Circle members
- Circle members then have 24 hours to send feed back to the Secretary
- Secretary then has 48 hours to publish the minutes to their Circle's Minutes folder in Google Drive and a summary to the community, having used his/her judgment about what to incorporate or not from the feedback received.

Managing Objections from Absent Members

- If a member has a paramount argued objection to a decision that was made in their absence, that member will communicate that objection to the Circle and implementation of the decision will be stayed until the objection has been resolved. That communication will take place within 24 hours of receiving the draft meeting minutes.
- The absent member and the Circle leader will co-determine the process for resolving the objection.

Communication in the Process of Producing and Consenting to Policy Proposals (reference: feedback loop diagram)

A Circle identifies need for a policy creation or revision. The most complex and/or potentially controversial proposals may go through all the steps below. The feedback and decision-making process for simpler proposals may go through appropriately fewer steps.

- a. Circle may do a round of picture forming or reaction.
- b. Circle selects lead person responsible for revision process.
- c. Lead notifies the community that revision process is under way, including original policy and initial circle reaction (or new policy draft), and solicits feedback (picture forming).The notification includes a deadline for input and who to send input to. The depth of

input gathering depends on how complex and/or controversial the issue is. Input may range from, at minimum, the lead reading the existing policy to, at maximum, the lead initiating a community survey and/or a Community Conversation and/or outside research.

- d. Lead writes draft (first) of revised/new policy, circulates that draft among Circle members and gathers feedback.
- e. Lead revises draft policy (second), publishes to community and gathers feedback.
- f. Circle reviews, amends and approves draft.
- g. Lead publishes draft (third) of policy to community with a deadline for input (for big issues hold a Community Conversation) and notice of the meeting date in which the Circle will decide the policy.
- h. Lead reviews community input, revises draft (fourth) of policy, and circulates to community
- i. Circle makes consent decision, including term and measures.
- j. Announce decision: Lead or Secretary posts policy in Community Agreements document, and decision is noted in Circle minutes.

Organizational diagram of Sample Community

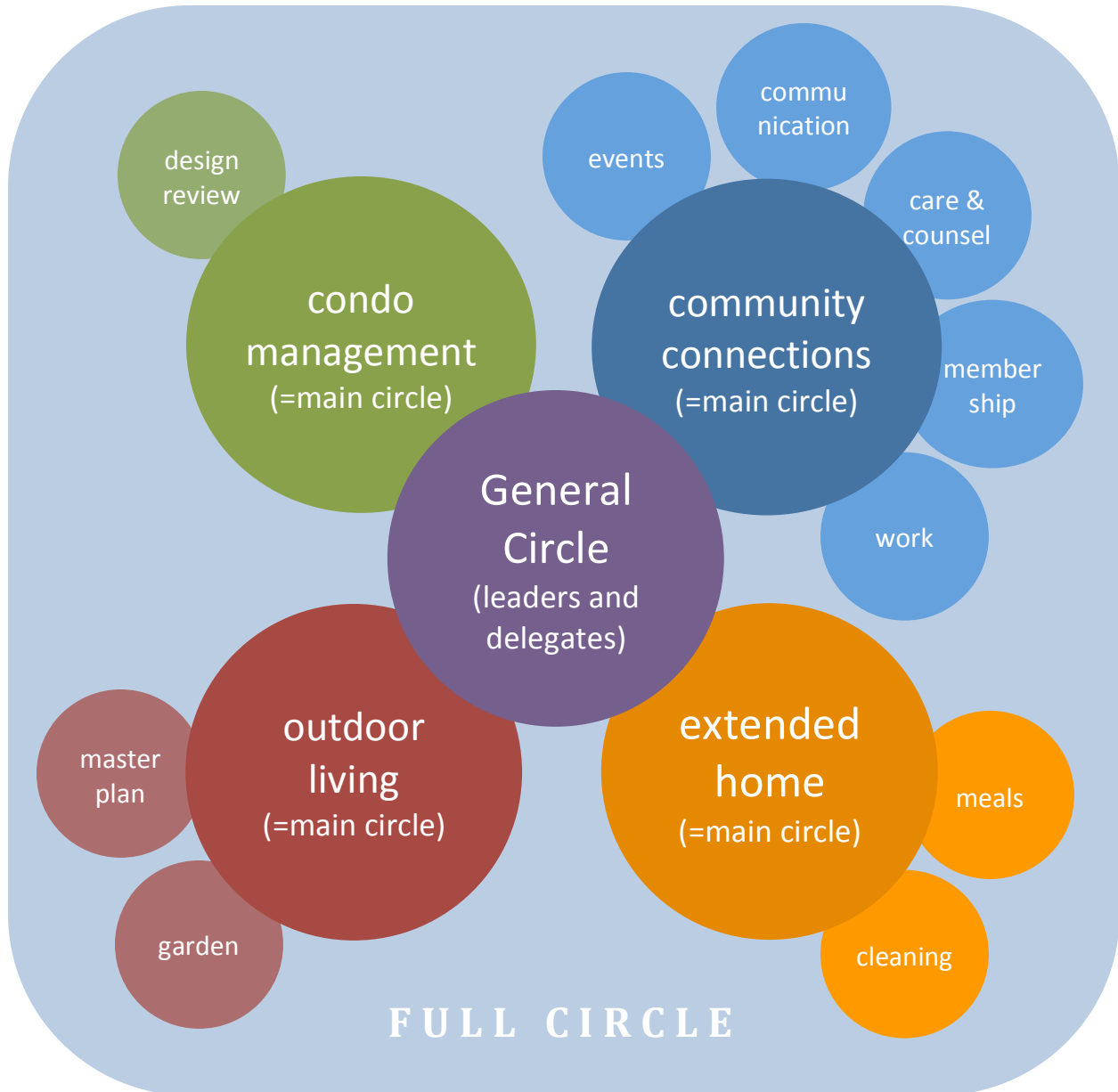


Table of Aims and Domains

circles	Members	Aim (Purpose)	Domain (Responsibilities, Authority)
<p>work circle</p> <p>community connection</p>	<p>Volunteers, who elect a leader and a delegate to the General Circle</p>	<p>Fostering harmonious connections and interactions among residents</p>	<p>Communication systems support systems (mediation, crisis help,...); Work systems; membership and sales; fun and community building events; neighbor relations; social budget</p>
<p>work circle</p> <p>condo management</p>	<p>Volunteers, who elect a leader and a delegate to the General Circle. Formal election confirms for legal purposes.</p>	<p>Maintaining and improving community infrastructure. Managing the condominium related financial and legal concerns.</p>	<p>Improvements, repairs and general maintenance of building systems, building envelope & exterior hardscapes. Snow removal. Planning and policies tasks related to fiscal, legal and safety issues, including replacement reserves, the condo budget and insurance. Relationship with management company.</p>
<p>work circle</p> <p>outdoor living</p>	<p>Volunteers, who elect a leader and a delegate to the General Circle</p>	<p>Maintaining and improving commonly owned outdoor space. Fostering harmonious connection and interaction in outdoor space.</p>	<p>Design, planning, maintenance, functions, decisions and policies for outdoor spaces: vegetable and flower gardens, trees, shrubs, lawns, tools and sheds, fences and gates, containers and tree boxes, composting, trash and recycling, outdoor clotheslines, toys & play structures, bikes, pets and pests.</p>
<p>work circle</p> <p>extended home</p>	<p>Volunteers, who elect a leader and a delegate to the General Circle</p>	<p>Maintaining and improving commonly owned indoor space. Fostering harmonious connection and interaction in our commonly owned indoor space.</p>	<p>Design, planning and maintenance, functions, decisions and policies for common interior spaces, facilities, equipment, decoration and furnishings, including pianos and TVs.</p>

General Circle

Leaders and delegates elected by the work circles plus one coordinator chosen by General Circle (or Full Circle)

Coordinating and facilitating community issues. Mediating and interpreting our processes.

Coordination of community issues, discussions and services. Mediate among core circles. Direct issues to appropriate circle. Facilitation and planning for retreats and Full Circle meetings.

Full Circle

All residents and owners

Exchanging ideas and gathering information on important community issues. Making decisions on annual budget and major issues.

Community conversations, exchange of ideas. Decision making body for decisions defined as "major" including budgets and irreversible decisions. Ultimate decision-making body (when lower circles, including the General Circle, fail to decide.)

work circle community connection	MEMBERS Volunteers, who elect a leader and a delegate to the General Circle	AIM Fostering harmonious connections and interactions among residents	DOMAIN Communication systems support systems (mediation, crisis help etc.); Work systems; membership and sales; fun and community building events; neighbor relations; social budget
work circle condo management	MEMBERS Volunteers, who elect leader delegate to the General Circle. Formal election con-firms for legal purposes.	AIM Maintaining and improving community infrastructure. Managing the condominium, (financial and legal).	DOMAIN Improvements, repairs and maintenance of building systems, building envelope & exterior hardscapes. Snow removal. Planning and policies tasks related to fiscal, legal and safety issues, the condo budget and insurance.
work circle outdoor living	MEMBERS Volunteers, who elect a leader and a delegate to the General Circle	AIM Maintaining and improving commonly owned outdoor space. Fostering harmonious connection and interaction in outdoor space.	DOMAIN Design, planning, maintenance, functions, decisions and policies for outdoor spaces: vegetable and flower gardens, trees, shrubs, lawns, tools and sheds, fences and gates, composting, trash and recycling, outdoor clotheslines, toys & play structures, bikes, pets and pests.
work circle extended home	MEMBERS Volunteers, who elect a leader and a delegate to the General Circle	AIM Maintaining and improving commonly owned indoor space. Fostering connection and in our commonly owned indoor space.	DOMAIN Design, planning and maintenance, functions, decisions and policies for common interior spaces, facilities, equipment, decoration and furnishings, including pianos and TVs.
General Circle	MEMBERS Leaders and delegates elected by the work circles plus one coordinator chosen by General Circle	AIM Coordinating and facilitating community issues. Mediating and interpreting our processes.	DOMAIN Coordination of community issues, discussions and services. Mediate among core circles. Direct issues to appropriate circle. Facilitation and planning for retreats and Full Circle meetings.
Full Circle	MEMBERS All residents and owners	AIM Exchanging ideas and gathering information on community issues. Making decisions on annual budget and major issues.	DOMAIN Community conversations, exchange of ideas. Decision making body for major decisions, including budgets and irreversible decisions. Ultimate decision-making body (when lower circles, including the General Circle, fail to decide.)

Role of Coordinator of HUB

Aims:

- ensuring that logistics of Hub and Plenary meetings are taken care of (scheduling, child care, snacks)
- gathering input and proposing agendas for Hub and plenary meetings
- facilitating Hub or delegating facilitation
- Accountability: supporting and encouraging core circle leaders to lead their circles to accomplish their circles' aim
- ensuring that Hub minutes are kept and that community log keeping is being done effectively
- communicating "state of the community" to general membership regularly. Include statement of significant past decision made and future decisions expected.

Domain: operational decisions in carrying out the aims

Term: one year (6 months if DG is discontinued at the 6 month evaluation point)

Measure: role improvement review every 6 months in Hub