

Community Associations Copy Service

FREE content for homeowner and condominium association newsletters

A Member Service Provided by Community Associations Institute

Volume 1

About this service:

Community Associations Copy Service articles are written for homeowner readers. They are provided quarterly to CAI members to copy and paste into newsletters, other documents, and community association websites. You may edit this copy to suit your circumstances. These articles are *not* copyrighted—you may use them as much as you want and in any way you wish.

This is not a newsletter; it is free copy you can add to newsletters and other information distributed to homeowners and residents in your community. For more information on any of these topics, please go to www.caionline.org.

These articles can be used to:

- Educate homeowners about common association functions and issues
- Support budget increases or board decisions
- Explain why a particular project is being undertaken
- Provide background information
- Augment other articles you have written or use as stand-alone stories

We hope you benefit from this CAI member service and welcome any [feedback you may have](#).

SUBJECT: Maintenance, common areas

WORDS: 100

TITLE: Beyond Lawn Care

Wooded areas, meadows, streams, and ponds are features that add value to our community. We're fortunate to have some of these features because they enhance property values, increase aesthetic appeal, improve our environmental quality, eliminate noise and wind, and reduce our energy bills.

The responsibility to maintain our natural areas goes beyond the capabilities of our lawn care provider, so it's up to us to properly maintain all our common ground--landscaped and natural.

That's why the association pays attention to water resources and quality, wildlife habitats, and species diversity. We believe that proper maintenance and management will benefit the local ecosystems *and* save the association money.

Remember, environmental stewardship begins at the community level.

[Optional: Source: Community Associations Institute.]

* * *

SUBJECT: Strategic planning

WORDS: 200

TITLE: What Is Strategic Planning?

Our association will soon begin strategic planning. What does that mean, and what will be happening? Simply stated, strategic planning

is a process we use to determine where we're going and how we're going to get there. It includes these steps:

- *Assessing our current position.* We will identify our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Knowing where we are now will help get us where we want to be in the future.
 - *Identifying our purpose.* This will become our "mission statement." For example, "Our association exists to ensure the highest possible quality of life for all residents."
 - *Setting goals that identify what we need to achieve the mission.* Our goals will be specific and measurable, and will provide an indication of how we're doing as we progress.
 - *Deciding how to meet our goals.* We may have to allocate resources, create committees, or undertake other tasks to achieve our goals.
 - *Developing an action plan.* Each step will require a specific action plan. For example, if a committee is needed, who will serve, exactly what tasks will be assigned, and when will the results be needed?
 - *Monitoring and updating our plan.* We'll review the strategic plan regularly. . If we learn that our earlier ideas and goals were shortsighted or uninformed, we'll update accordingly.
- [Optional: Source: Community Associations Institute.]

* * *

SUBJECT: Homeowner satisfaction
WORDS 300
TITLE: Here's What HOA Residents Have to Say

Americans who live in community associations are overwhelmingly pleased with their communities, expressing strong satisfaction with the board members who govern their associations and the community managers who provide professional support.

More than seven in 10 community association residents expressed satisfaction with their community experience, according to a survey conducted by Zogby International, a leading public opinion research firm. Almost 40 percent of community association residents say they are "very pleased," with only 10 percent expressing some level of dissatisfaction. Almost 20 percent express neither point of view.

An estimated 54 million Americans live in some 274,000 homeowner associations, condominium communities, cooperatives and other planned developments.

Here's what community association residents say:

88 percent believe their governing boards strive to serve the best interests of the community.

90 percent say they are on friendly terms with their association board members, with just 4 percent indicating a negative relationship.

86 percent say they get along well with their immediate neighbors, with just 5 percent reporting a negative relationship. Of those who reported issues with neighbors, the most common problems were pets, general lifestyle, noise, and parking.

78 percent believe community association rules "protect and enhance" property values, while only one in 100 say rules harm property values. About 20 percent see no difference.

88 percent of residents who have interacted with professional community managers say the experience has been positive.

The research was sponsored by the Foundation for Community Association Research, a non-profit organization created in 1975 by Community Associations Institute (CAI).

Based on telephone interviews conducted in August 2005, the survey has a margin of error of +/- 3.5 percentage points. A summary of the results is posted at www.caionline.org/about/survey.cfm.
[Optional: Source: Community Associations Institute.]

* * *

SUBJECT: Officers of the association
WORDS: 120 words
TITLE: Meet the President

The _____ association enjoys the excellent leadership of a responsible board. Heading the board is _____, who serves as president. Some of the special duties of the president include:

- Working closely with the board, manager, and residents to establish the overall goals of the association.
- Ensuring that the association operates according to the association governing documents.
- Presiding at board and other meetings, prepares meeting agendas, and ensures that valid voting procedures are used.
- Identifying and training potential association leaders.
- Working closely with professional managers and other association professionals to ensure the successful operation of the association.
- Serving as the official spokesperson for the community.

[Optional: Source: Community Associations Institute.]

* * *

SUBJECT: Home values
WORDS: 120 words
TITLE: Home Values Increase Faster in HOAs

Recent research conducted in Northern Virginia by a professor and student at George Mason University indicates that community associations can add a 5-6 percent increase in property values over similar homes in nearby non-association communities. Writing in Regulation magazine, the authors say that the increase in home value attributed to community associations is "especially remarkable when one considers that (HOA) residents pay twice for many local services—once in taxes and then again in HOA fees." The authors also pose valid questions, such as: Do community associations increase home values because they offer better-quality services than local government or because they offer services that local governments

cannot offer (like more restrictive zoning) or do not offer (like greater security)? [Learn more](#).

[Optional: Source: Community Associations Institute.]

* * *

SUBJECT: Volunteerism

WORDS: 135

TITLE: Ten Reasons to Volunteer for the Association

1. Protect your self-interests. Protect your property values and maintain the quality of life in your community.
2. Correct a problem. Has your car been towed, or do you think maybe maintenance has been neglected?
3. Be sociable. Meet your neighbors, make friends, and exchange opinions.
4. Give back. Repay a little of what's been done for you.
5. Advance your career. Build your personal resume by including your community volunteer service.
6. Have some fun. Association work isn't drudgery. It's fun accomplishing good things with your neighbors.
7. Get educated. Learn how it's done—we'll train you.
8. Express yourself. Help with creative projects like community beautification.
9. Earn recognition. If you would like a little attention or validation, your contributions will be recognized and celebrated.
10. Try some altruism. Improve society by helping others.

[Optional: Source: Community Associations Institute.]

* * *

SUBJECT: Volunteerism

WORDS: 85

TITLE: We Don't Need You

Please do not volunteer to help the association or serve on any committees. Here's why:

- It's a giant, scary responsibility.
- Your neighbors will blame you for everything.
- All your free time will disappear, and you'll become enslaved to the association.
- You'll have to work with bombasts, dictators, figureheads, and puppets.
- You'll never have any fun ever again.

Besides . . . there's no real reason to get involved; the community is in fine shape—we don't need you. NOT!

[Optional: Source: Community Associations Institute.]

* * *

SUBJECT: Pets

WORDS: 115

TITLE: Why Scoop the Poop?

Besides being a nuisance, uncollected dog waste is a serious problem for our association. Next time you're tempted to leave your dog's droppings on the lawn, please remember these facts:

1. The Environmental Protection Agency is becoming aggressive about enforcing the Clean Water Act. Our association could be fined if dog waste goes uncollected.
2. Uncollected dog waste may lead to a special assessment. If fined by the EPA, the association could face a potential special assessment that would be levied against all members—not just dog owners.
3. The appearance and quality of the common areas are known to affect home sales—not just whether and for how much they sell, but how quickly.
4. The more residents complain about dog waste, the more time the manager must spend on enforcement rather than serving the association.
5. Uncollected dog waste spreads disease and attracts rodents who feed on pet waste.

[Optional: Source: Community Associations Institute.]

* * *

SUBJECT: Finances/reserves

WORDS: 230

TITLE: Why Do We Need Reserves?

Equipment and major components (like the roofs) must be replaced from time to time, regardless of whether we plan for the expense. We prefer to plan and set the funds aside now. Reserve funds aren't an extra expense—they just spread out expenses more evenly. There are other important reasons we put association monies into reserves every month:

"Whether or not" to me is like "over" to you (and me).

1. Reserve funds meet legal, fiduciary, and professional requirements. A replacement fund may be required by:
 - Any secondary mortgage market in which the association participates (e.g., Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, FHA, VA).
 - State statutes, regulations, or court decisions.
 - The community's governing documents.
2. Reserve funds provide for major repairs and replacements that we know will be necessary at some point in time. Although a roof may be replaced when it is 25 years old, every owner who lives under or around it should share its replacement costs.
3. Reserve funds minimize the need for special assessments or borrowing. For most association members, this is the most important reason.
4. Reserve funds enhance resale values. Lenders and real estate agents are aware of the ramifications for new buyers if the reserves are inadequate. Many states require associations to disclose the amounts in their reserve funds to prospective purchasers.
5. The American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) requires the community association to disclose its reserve funds in its financial statements.

[Optional: Source: Community Associations Institute.]