

THE COMMUNITY BUILDER

What is a Newcomer's First Impression of Your Community?

Do you remember what it was about your community that caused you to drive into it for the first time? Was it the well maintained landscaping at the entrance? Was it the neat and well maintained homes or buildings? Was it the clubhouse and pool? When my husband and I were looking to buy, we went back to our neighborhood probably 5 or 6 times just to drive through it. There was something that kept bringing us back, letting us know this is where we wanted to live.

As it happened, the realtor we were working with lived in the neighborhood. He was able to answer my questions about the association, the board of directors and the financial well-being of the association. I could see that the people who lived there were doing their job because 99% of the homes were neat and well maintained. So it took very little else to let us know this is where we wanted to live when the home we live in came on the market.

After we moved in, our Association provided us with a Welcome book. It contained a directory of the neighbors, a listing of the utility providers and their phone numbers, information from the County about trash removal and other services and a letter from the Board welcoming us to the community.

What is it about your community now that brings in residents and owners? Is the entrance as well maintained and attractive as it was? Do the homes and/or buildings still look well-kept and maintained? Is the pool furniture in good repair? Is the signage fresh and painted?

How is a new owner greeted and made aware of the services in your community, the calendar of events that might take place at the clubhouse, who the board members are, who the management company and manager are, where can they make their assessment payments?

It can still be done the old-fashioned way by creating a booklet that can be sent to every new owner when they close through Sentry's Closing Department. Or in letter form, letting new owners know there is a website where this information can be found. Of course, that means that your website will need to contain this information so the owners, both new and existing, can have access to it at their



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convenience. As things change quickly sometimes, changing information on the website is far easier and less expensive than having to do paper revisions. So it is a great idea for savings to take advantage of the website and encourage your new owners and existing owners to visit often for community updates and information.

How do you let members know when and where Board meetings are? Do you post a notice in advance? Is it held in a place where people could actually come and observe the Board in action? All of these things work towards making a healthy and happy community. There is no doubt that the operation of the association is a business... but there is a social component as well that needs to be nurtured to make a community a neighborhood. It takes appropriate budgeting, it takes cooperation, it takes planning, it takes work. But in the end, isn't it worth it?

