



# COMMUNITY BUILDER

November 17, 2023, Volume 15, Issue 14

## Brilliance in Policy: Illuminating the Significance of Holiday Lighting and Decorations Guidelines

Once again, the season has arrived when you step into your nearby grocery or hardware store and exclaim, 'I can't believe holiday items are on display already!' It's that time of the year when houses start adorning themselves in festive glory, marking the swiftly approaching holidays. For board members of community associations, this signifies the challenge of fairly managing the diverse displays put up by homeowners within the community.



With the holiday spirit in the air, it's crucial to strike a balance that respects individual creativity while maintaining a cohesive and harmonious neighborhood. We recommend that the board adopt a holiday lights and decor policy to accomplish this. A comprehensive policy for holiday lights and decorations within a community association is essential. Such policies provide clear guidelines to residents, ensuring that their holiday decorations contribute positively to the community spirit.

The board of directors should consider the following as they endeavor to create and maintain a policy on holiday lights and decorations:

### **Decorative Guidelines:**

The policy should begin by outlining the types of holiday lights and decorations permitted within the community. This could include string lights, wreaths, garlands, inflatable decorations, and other festive ornaments. Defining the allowed decorations helps create a cohesive and harmonious look throughout the neighborhood. Additionally, the policy may specify the appropriate decoration sizes and placement locations. For instance, guidelines can indicate that decorations should be displayed on front porches, windows, or yards, avoiding blockage of walkways or driveways.

### **Lighting Restrictions:**

Consider implementing regulations regarding the brightness of holiday lights, as bright or flashing lights can cause discomfort to neighbors, especially during nighttime.

Encourage warm, soft lighting that adds to the holiday ambiance without being overly intrusive.

**Respectful Decorations:**

To maintain a positive and inclusive environment, request that residents avoid controversial or offensive themes in their holiday decorations. Emphasize the importance of respecting different cultural and religious backgrounds within the community. By promoting inclusive and respectful decorations, the policy ensures that everyone can enjoy the holiday season without feeling excluded or offended.

**Noise Levels:**

If holiday decorations include music, sounds, or animated elements, it is wise to establish guidelines regarding the volume and duration of these features. Excessive noise can disturb neighbors, so setting specific hours during which sound-producing decorations are allowed can mitigate disturbances while allowing residents to enjoy their festive displays.

**Duration and Timing:**

Another essential item is establishing specific dates for when holiday decorations can be put up and when they must be taken down. Starting the holiday season too early or leaving decorations up for an extended period after the holidays can create a disorganized appearance within the community. The neighborhood maintains a festive atmosphere during the appropriate timeframe by setting clear start and end dates.

**Safety Considerations:**

Safety should be a top priority when it comes to holiday decorations. Encourage the use of LED lights, which consume less electricity and generate less heat, reducing the risk of fire hazards. Residents should be educated about proper installation techniques to secure decorations effectively, especially in regions prone to windy or rainy weather. By promoting safe practices, the policy ensures the well-being of residents and their properties.

**Enforcement and Penalties:**

Establish a clear system for enforcing the policy, including a warning system for initial violations. Residents should be informed of the policy's consequences, such as fines or removing decorations not adhering to the guidelines. Fair and consistent enforcement ensures that everyone in the community abides by the rules, contributing to a harmonious living environment.

**Exceptions and Special Circumstances:**

While guidelines are necessary, allowing exceptions in exceptional circumstances is important. Residents may have unique religious or cultural celebrations that differ from the mainstream holidays. Establish a transparent process through which residents can request exceptions, allowing them to celebrate their traditions while respecting the overall guidelines of the community.

Once the policy is drafted, the board may also want to consider the following:

**Communication:**

Transparent communication is vital to successfully implementing the holiday lights and decorations policy. Notify residents about the policy well before the holiday season and any updates or changes made. To ensure that all residents know the guidelines, utilize various communication channels, such as community newsletters, emails, and social media. Additionally, make the policy easily accessible by posting it on the

community association's portal/website or distributing printed copies to every household. Clear communication helps set expectations and ensures that residents understand their responsibilities.

**Community Spirit:**

Encouraging community participation enhances the holiday experience for everyone. Consider organizing community events such as decorating contests, tree-lighting ceremonies, or neighborhood potlucks. These activities foster a sense of togetherness and camaraderie, reinforcing the community spirit during the holiday season.

**Review and Updates:**

A dynamic policy should be subject to periodic reviews. Schedule an assessment after the holiday season to evaluate the guidelines' effectiveness and address any emerging issues or concerns within the community. Solicit feedback from residents through surveys or community meetings to gauge their opinions on the existing policy. Based on the feedback received, make necessary updates and improvements to ensure that the policy remains relevant and responsive to the community's evolving needs in years to come.

In conclusion, a thoughtfully crafted policy for holiday lights and decorations is a cornerstone for maintaining a festive, safe, and inclusive community atmosphere during the holiday season. The policy provides residents with clear expectations by addressing various aspects such as decorative guidelines, safety considerations, community spirit, and communication, fostering a sense of belonging and harmony within the neighborhood. Regular reviews and updates ensure that the policy meets the community's needs, contributing to a joyful and cohesive holiday experience for everyone.

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