

# How to Build Community Pride

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Community Pride is fostered over time, with communication and through a series of achievements that bring a sense of belonging to the homeowners. Where there is a high level of community pride, communities will have much more voluntary compliance with the governing documents, so raising the level of pride is critical to a smooth running community and reducing administrative costs.

First and foremost, regular positive communication (please note I use the word "positive") of the accomplishments that the association completes helps the owners understand what you are doing for them. A good example would be outlining things that were fixed or installed, or that a savings was achieved. Members will never know what you don't tell them, and often have a myopic view of the community. It is the Association's job to communicate to the Members those accomplishments they would otherwise never know about. Try to avoid turning the communication (email, newsletter, etc.) into a "rule of the month reminder". Most Members that are breaking the rules know they are, and it is best to reduce communicating negative aspects to the membership, which does the opposite of instilling pride.

When I spoke in China about community associations, they had an English TV channel that I called the "Good News Channel", it was all good news and left me feeling happy, quite a contrast to watching our evening news. Think "Good News" when communicating with the members.

Begin a "Home of the Month" or "Home of the Quarter" award program. Put a sign in the winner's front yard, put a photo of the home on the website or in the newsletter, send them a \$25 gift card to Home Depot. Receiving recognition for doing something that increases the curb appeal within the community and creating a sense of competition inspires Members to improve and builds pride once they receive recognition.

Engage Members by asking for their input prior to a change of rules, policies or services. By example, think of the difference for the homeowner; you publish that the Association plans on removing trees whose roots are creating problems and would like everyone's input at the next meeting prior to a decision being made. You have informed the Member of your intention to remove trees, let them know the reason, and asked them for their input. In many communities, the first time a Member finds out about tree removal is when they walk onto their back porch with a cup of coffee and see their favorite tree being chain-sawed down. Engagement, or at least the offer of engagement does wonders to make a Member feel prideful.

Arrange volunteers to help with city events, or a charity function, then communicate that to the membership. If possible make sure the local paper knows about it so the owners can read something positive about their community.

Send out "thank you" letters. If the Association inspects the community for violations, send thank you letters to those Members that have improved their home or are properly maintaining their homes. If the only time the Member hears from the association it is bad news (as in the case of a violation letter) - it will be harder for that Member to feel prideful about their community.

There are hundreds of other small changes you can make, but these are the top ones.