

ENUMERATE...

# How to Build a Great HOA Board

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HOA board members are responsible for running their community and overseeing its legal and financial business. They are democratically elected by the HOA members and make decisions on their behalf.

The exact workings of any HOA vary from association to association. This includes the size of the board and the regularity with which they're reelected. But there are some general guidelines that most HOA boards follow to facilitate the fair and effective management of their community.

### How Many Board Members Should Your HOA Have?

As with so many things, three is the magic number for HOA board members. Any homeowners association should have a minimum of three members on its board at any time to ensure that no one member ever holds responsibility for the entire community alone. Most HOA boards consist of three to five members, although there can be as many as nine in particularly large associations. In all cases, it is advisable to have an odd number of board members to avoid 50/50 splits of opinion, which can hinder decision-making and progress.

### What Is Best for Your Community?

The size of your HOA board will largely depend on the size and style of your community. For example, a small- to medium-sized HOA with few luxury services and amenities may only need a small board of three members. However, a large HOA with multiple facilities and contracted services may need a larger board to handle the extra duties and responsibilities.

What is important to remember is that an HOA board should serve the community and assist its smooth running. Having an extensive board doesn't always aid this and can sometimes lead to slower decision-making, difficulty scheduling, and unnecessary administration. It is often better to encourage active engagement from members and keep the board of directors to a five-person limit.

## Who Can Serve on an HOA Board?

Becoming an HOA board member is a voluntary position that requires dedication and commitment. Each board member should first be a member of the association at large who has been democratically elected by their community. Though the criteria for who can serve on an HOA board will change from association to association, there are some critical guidelines that most HOAs follow when accepting candidates.

- **Board members must currently live in the community** — It is generally accepted that you must be living within the community at the time of election to become an HOA board member. However, some HOAs specify that board members must have been community members for at least a year before their election.
- **Board members must not have any past felony convictions** — Most HOAs stipulate that those serving on their board of directors cannot have any past felony convictions. However, this is not always the case, and some exceptions can be made based on individual situations.
- **Board members must not have any past legal disputes with the HOA** — To avoid any conflicts of interest, it is essential that board members have no previous or current disputes with the association. This is particularly important as board members are responsible for the legal aspects of their association.
- **Board members must not have any current violations of HOA governing documents** — To lead by example and with integrity, board members should not have committed any violations of their HOA's governing documents and bylaws. This is because the board's job is to encourage compliance with said bylaws and documents from all their members.

## What Qualities Should You Look for in HOA Board Members?

It is important to note that the election of HOA board members should not solely be a popularity contest based on social status within the community. Although having friendly, approachable, and respected board members is key, other qualities should also be considered when choosing people to run your community's business. Qualities that you should look out for in your HOA board members include:

- Honesty
- Reliability
- Education and knowledge of the community
- Motivation
- Communication

## HOA Board Member Positions

The various roles on an HOA board each hold specific responsibilities and require different skills and characteristics.

- **President** — The President of an HOA is the figurehead of the board. They are responsible for making the final call on all decisions and ensuring that those decisions are followed through and enacted effectively. The HOA President chairs all meetings and must therefore be a confident public speaker. They call the meeting to order, outline the agenda, and keep the conversation on track. They should be a natural leader, a good listener, and open to considering multiple opinions to make informed decisions. They need to be knowledgeable about their HOA bylaws, rules, and documents and be a galvanising presence within the community.
- **Vice President** — The Vice President must also be well-versed in the HOA bylaws, governing documents, and rules because it is their job to stand in for the President when they are unavailable. However, this doesn't mean that the Vice President has nothing to do for the rest of the time. Instead, they are responsible for overseeing tasks delegated to them by the President and should be an active and enthusiastic board member.
- **Secretary** — The Secretary is responsible for all the administrative tasks relating to the HOA. Legal documents, records, and meeting notes need to be kept up to date and cataloged by the secretary, so they must be organized and efficient. The HOA secretary is also responsible for circulating all relevant information and paperwork to community members to keep them informed of the decisions and actions that the board members are taking.
- **Treasurer** — The HOA treasurer is responsible for the financial management of the HOA. They collect the member's monthly dues, draw up the budget, and decide how funds are spent. They must ensure that the day-to-day costs are covered and keep sufficient funds in reserve for unforeseen circumstances. They should have a good understanding of mathematics, accounting, and budgeting and be responsible and reliable.

## Final Thoughts

With the right people appointed to the correct positions, a team of three to four board members can run your HOA efficiently, fairly, and smoothly. What is vitally important is that the members-at-large also pursue an active role in the community and stay up to date with the decisions made on their behalf. A happy HOA board leads to a happy HOA community.