



Associated Property Management

HOW TO DEVELOP A NEW RESIDENTS' WELCOME MANUAL

By Associated Property Management

Since more than 75% of new residents moving into a community association have never lived in an association before, it is wise, as a part of a new resident screening process or in the case of communities that do not have a formal approval process, to at least have a "New Resident Welcome Manual." This manual would not only help welcome a new resident to the community, but help to orient the new resident and their family to the community, along with educating them to the more important rules and regulations and overall culture of the community.

A New Resident Welcome Manual can be simple or very sophisticated depending on the size and complexity of the community in question. At the least, the manual is a written document that a new resident receives at the approval process or prior to the moving in that outlines to them the general rules and operating procedures for the association. In all cases, it is helpful and wise that it is pointed out to the reader to refer to the Association's documents for further clarification of any procedure or rule. Throughout the manual, if you can reference certain pages in the Association's documents, the better.

The following is a suggestion for a Welcome Manual for a medium size community association.

In the introduction to the New Resident, you can summarize the community, its size, units, unit types, amenities, and anything else of community interest. Discussion on what it means to accepting the deed or taking the unit, subject to the documents, may be helpful. Review what makes up your documents, Declaration, Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws and how those documents affect the owners and the operations of the community. Along with this information, you may want to include when and where the Board Meetings are held, notices and unit owner participation - same for Annual Meetings, Members Meetings and Budget Meetings.

If there is Property Management as part of the community, it is good to discuss this aspect of the community operation. Describe the extent of the management and what it covers and does not cover in terms of service, time on site, etc. List the manager's or the management company's responsibilities and how complaints are handled and what constitutes an emergency. Also, outline how paperwork, approvals and other communications are handled and management's part in this. In the New Resident Manual discuss security and safety issues in and around the home, as it relates to the residents, their families and neighbors. There are many great brochures that you can get from police and fire rescue that can be included in the manual.

Outline and review why there are assessments for maintenance, what it covers and how it is payable. Spell out exactly, when it is due, when it is late and what the penalties are for making a late payment to the Association. You may want to discuss further your collection policies and how your Association's attorneys will collect on a delinquent account and how the owner will be responsible for the costs of collection.

Detail the maintenance responsibilities of the Association and what the unit owner is responsible for. Spell out the minimum standards that are acceptable for the community and how this affects every owner's values, if not adhered to. Discuss trash collection days and procedures for putting out and taking in cans. What are the recycling days for the community? (Same for solid waste and vegetation clippings.)

Define and discuss what common areas of the community are and how they are maintained and used by the residents. Define the amenities within the community and how they are to be enjoyed, what their hours of operation are and how they can best be reserved or used by the residents.

Explain how Architectural Controls are being enforced throughout the community and how and why this is important to the values of the community. Detail the procedures of the approval process of the ACC Committee and exactly how to expedite the process. Explain the time constraints in this process and also include forms for the new resident in this package as well. If there are preapproved items, such as flags, fences or types of materials that can be used, detail this as well.

List all of the other Committees within the community, such as Covenants, Fines, Landscape, Maintenance, Security, Pool, Social and Communications. Detail their functions, when they meet, and how you, the new resident, can make contact with them. Always make a pitch as to the need for volunteers for these committees. Detail the type of government that the community is a part of: Municipal, County, Special Taxing District. Give an overview of how these governments also regulate and affect how we live in this community as well. Explain what it means to have your property with a Homestead Exemption and the advantages of being a Florida resident. Other items that would be useful in the Welcome Manual would be a list of local amenities and services within a certain radius of the community. This could include shopping, medical services, places of worship, hardware stores, movies, etc.

Additional items that could be included would be utility brochures and public service announcements from local governments, copies of old newsletters, Minutes of past Annual Meetings, helpful telephone numbers of government services and other emergency services, a roster of Board members and Committee members, copies of cable TV channels, website information, maps of the area, and merchant coupons and discounts.

Overall, a New Resident Welcome Manual can help to make a new resident feel welcome, bring to their attention the more important rules of the association and how to orient the family in the local community quickly.

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