

## Aspirational Communities

According to author Brent Herrington, community associations, and the people who lead them, are either administrative or aspirational.

Administrative associations operate under the premise that a community association is a neighborhood housekeeping organization whose sole purpose is to maintain common elements and enforce rules. The board and the manager running an administrative association tend to regard a high level of resident apathy as a compliment. They believe the more invisible and unnoticed the association becomes, the happier its members are presumed to be. Issues of conflict are resolved in a dispassionate, process-oriented manner.

The board's goal in administrative associations is to treat every person and issue in a uniform fashion. Interactions tend to feel businesslike.

In aspirational communities, the roles of the board and manager are as much about building the well-being of the community as they are about maintaining the physical plant or enforcing rules.

Aspirational communities tend to be managed by people who express a sense of passion and idealism about their community. These types of managers and board members believe their roles are to provide leadership and inspiration, not merely administration. Apathy is viewed as negative, and community meetings tend to draw high levels of attendance and participation.

These managers often identify themselves as community managers rather than association managers. Not surprisingly, they have learned that their efforts to build a sense of community tend to greatly reduce the number of administrative problems such as rule violations and delinquent assessments. The goal is to transform housing units into vibrant neighborhoods and communities.

The difference between these two types of associations has little to do with the association's governing documents and everything to do with the values and priorities of the people who lead them. Those who are willing to place a strong emphasis on community seem to transcend the legalistic nature of their governing documents.

As a community builder, you'll need perseverance and determination. Not every new program will be successful. Most start slowly and gradually gain momentum. However, there are initiatives you can take to help get the ball rolling:

- Set a tone that is light-hearted and fun. It should be a joy to be active in the community. Remember to celebrate small victories—recognition is like rocket fuel for volunteer-based activities.
- Don't make the community an island. Connect and collaborate with the larger community. Your community can have mutually beneficial relationships with area schools, businesses, clubs, city government, social service agencies, worship groups, activity groups and others.
- A major part of your volunteer activity should be based on helping others. Community-based philanthropy or social service projects embody the highest ideals of community.
- Build community traditions. In the greatest communities, residents look forward every year to major seasonal events and community celebrations. These recurring events can help create countless memories and become deeply ingrained in the pattern of life in the community.