

Model Code of Conduct 1-10

1) Be engaged.

Start with the basics. Make sure your Board always has current contact information for you and your tenants if you're renting out your house. Attend as many homeowners meetings as you can. Don't wait to be asked to participate in your community. Ask what you can do to help. And when you're asked – whether it's to vote, to respond to a request for information from your Board, or to volunteer for a committee or the Board – do it willingly. When homeowners aren't engaged, the burden of running your association falls on the shoulders of the few – and your association fails to benefit from the wisdom of diverse voices and opinions.

2) Read your governing documents

Boring as it may seem, you must read your Covenants & Restrictions, Bylaws, and any other correspondence you receive from you Board. Those documents form the framework that everyone in the association must live by and follow.

3) Always comply with your governing documents

First, concentrate on your own property to make sure it's attractive and well maintained. Then, even when you disagree, follow the rules. They're there so that everyone can enjoy the community. Following the rules also helps you build a case when you're frustrated with a neighbor's rule breaking and you ask the Board to get your neighbor to comply. How can you expect the Board to enforce rules against your neighbors if you're not following the rules yourself? If you're not sure whether something you'd like to do is permissible, ask a Board member or call the office before you take action.

4) Pay your assessments, and pay them on time

When investing in an association, you become a member of a not-for-profit business that has fiscal obligations. Delinquent revenue to the association

directly affects the community's monthly operations and may limit the Board in its attempt to maintain and enhance the community. All the benefits you get from your association – street lights, for example – come to you because the association pays the money to provide them. If you and other homeowners don't pay assessments, service suffers and everybody loses.

5) Don't try to benefit personally from your association

6) Support your Board of Directors

This may sometimes be hard, and in some communities, as us versus them mentality can develop. But for a community to be successful, everyone needs a "we" mentality. Remember that Boards may make decisions that inconvenience a few homeowners, but they're made based on the long-term good of the entire community. If you disagree on an issue, more often than not, a friendly and polite face-to-face conversation with a Board member will give both of you the opportunity to explain your side, which you may not have been able to do before because of the time constraints of a Board meeting or because you weren't able to attend prior meetings.

7) Always be professional

Follow whatever communication protocols are set up. If you're having a run-of-the-mill dispute with a neighbor, don't ask the Board to take sides. Treat your neighbors and the Board with respect and decency. Many problems don't happen when there's open dialogue within a community. Never make personal attacks on your Board or fellow homeowners. Don't harass Board members or other residents, and refrain from defaming anyone in the community, including your Board. Even when you disagree, there's no need to be disagreeable.

8) Extend common courtesy toward your neighbors

Little things can make everyone's life easier. Be considerate about things like noise levels and properly storing your trash cans. And don't do things that will impose a burden or expense on your community or other owners.

For example, don't remodel your house and throw away the debris on an empty parcel.

9) Get to know everybody

Be on a first name basis with your Board members and your neighbors so that you feel comfortable calling to report problems, ask questions, and offer to help. Knowing what's going on with your neighbor is the first step toward knowing what's going on in your community. The more that people within the association respect each other, the better the experience will be for everyone.

10) Keep things in perspective

If your association doesn't already have one, help organize a party once a year. Right after the annual homeowners meeting in March is a great time to do it . Make it potluck. The idea is to get to know your neighbors and have fun so that you don't take association life too seriously.