

Best Practices for your Mt Vernon Village Homeowner Association (HOA)

Our condo association is self-managed, meaning the board of directors are all volunteers, and own a home here as well. Operating a successful HOA or Condo association requires the right combination of excellent volunteer and leader support along with the ideal best practices. Your board has willing-and-able members who care about our community and serving it well. However, without the right guidelines and practices, they won't have the tools needed to manage finances, collect association assessments, resolve complaints, or ensure operational compliance with the law.

Our association is more than a team of people trying to do good things for residents! As an official HOA or Condo association, we must follow laws and operate within the community's best interest with integrity and transparency.

When you purchase a home here, you automatically become a member of our association and you too become responsible for following all HOA rules. The primary purpose of having community rules and standards is to protect your investment as a homeowner and provide a common framework for a successful neighborhood.

At first glance, having HOA rules for a neighborhood or community may seem restrictive. However, there are many HOA benefits that come with having a robust set of guidelines, including:

- Preserving the aesthetics of an area
- Protecting and enhancing home values
- Enforcing the community's Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions (CC&Rs) & Bylaws
- Maintaining the property of the association and its owners

What are our HOA rules and standards?

- Our MVV HOA has various documents that outline the rules homeowners must follow to participate in the association. They're created to cultivate our community's aesthetic, preserve the value of the property and lay out behavioral guidelines for neighbors.
- You might see some overlapping terms when it comes to HOA rules, so here's a quick breakdown of each:
 - **Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions (CCRs)** are a binding legal document that is filed with the state. Similar to Rules and Regulations (see below), they cover things like property-use restrictions, dispute resolution agreements, maintenance and assessment obligations and insurance.

However, they are much more difficult to change, requiring both a membership vote and conversation with the state!

- **Rules and Regulations** serve a similar function to CCRs. The primary difference is that they can be changed with a simple community review and board vote! They're typically used for any rules that could eventually be changed—like the number of pets allowed or the swimming pool hours. These rules can't contradict the CCRs.
- **Bylaws** are a legal document that defines our organization's operational rules. This can include election and term guidelines for board members, meeting frequency and structure, dues management, the community budget and more.
- **Articles of Incorporation** are the paperwork that's filed with the state when our homeowners' association was established as a corporate entity. Our name is included in this paperwork, along with our purpose, address and original board members.

Who makes the rules for my HOA?

- Your Mt Vernon HOA is run by an elected board of directors. They are all homeowners here just like you and they are elected at the annual HOA board meeting by all MVV homeowners that are in good standing. (ie: members who are current with their HOA dues).
- The board has the power to implement additional rules. Additionally, local, state, and federal government bodies also pass new laws that may create or alter regulations that are set by your association.

Can an HOA board change or add rules?

- Yes, the board can adopt new rules for the community. However, if these rules significantly alter the governing documents, then a vote by all members of the association is typically required. In general, homeowners have a lot of influence on how their community operates.

Do I have to follow my HOA's rules?

- It's always in your best interest to adhere to HOA rules and regulations. When neighbors work together to enhance their association, everyone sees the benefits—from increased property values to a greater sense of community and belonging.

How does an HOA enforce rules?

- Not following HOA rules can carry legal and financial consequences. Enforcement policies may include warnings, fines, and more. If penalties aren't paid, your HOA may act by placing a lien on your home. However, most violations get corrected with a friendly reminder by phone or mail.

Can police enforce HOA rules?

- While the rules and regulations of an HOA are legally binding for association members, they generally aren't enforceable by law enforcement. Instead, violations of association guidelines are considered a civil matter between the HOA and offending member. As such, any dispute that can't be resolved at the community level will need to be handled by mediation or in civil court. The exception to this is when your HOA's rules overlap other laws. These laws could include parking violations or county noise restrictions that may mirror your HOA rules.

We hope this brief explanation of common HOA best practices has been useful for you! Rules are created to connect and improve our community. Every one of us sets the tone for our neighborhood—so please do your part in making it a great place! Thank you!