



Snap Survey

February 2026

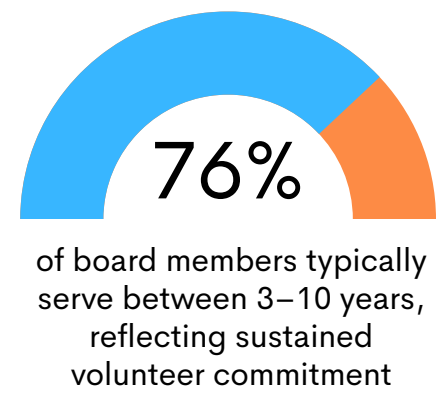
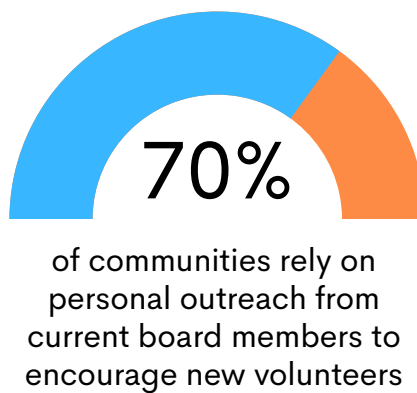
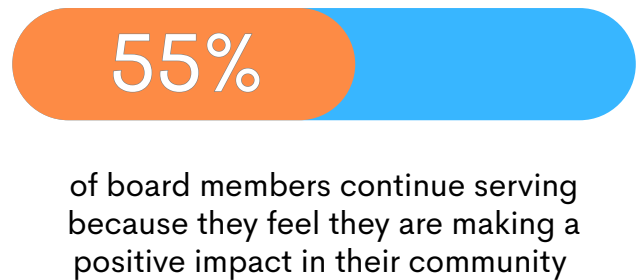
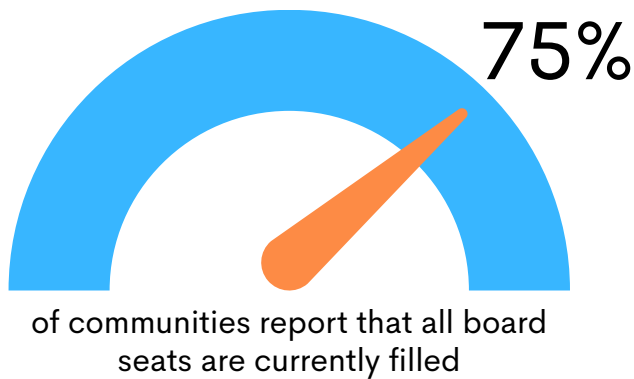
587 Respondents
from 39 U.S. states

Volunteer Leadership Continues to Strengthen Community Associations

Volunteer board members play a vital role in shaping the success and long-term stability of community associations. Across the world, thousands of residents contribute their time and expertise to help guide their communities, oversee financial stewardship, and foster a strong sense of shared responsibility.

To better understand how communities support volunteer leadership today, the Foundation for Community Association Research conducted a nationwide Snap Survey examining board recruitment, retention, and homeowner engagement. The findings highlight both the commitment of current volunteer leaders and the strategies communities are using to strengthen engagement and develop future leadership.

Overall, respondents reported that many communities maintain stable board leadership and continue to build participation through improved communication, training, and stronger collaboration between boards, managers, and homeowners.



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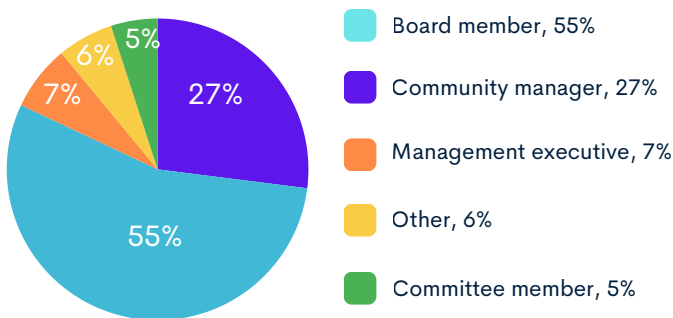
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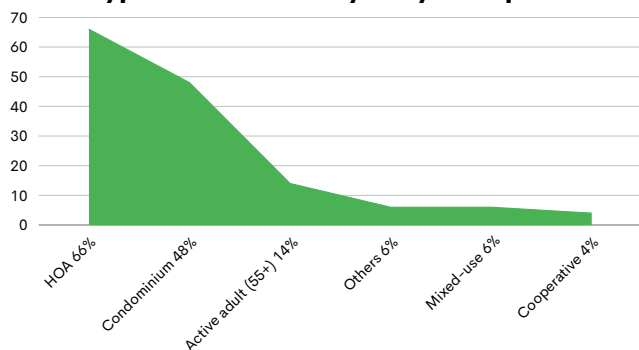
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About the Respondents

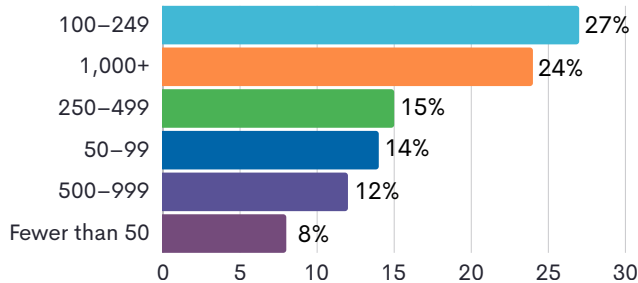
What is your role in the community association industry?



What type of community do you represent?

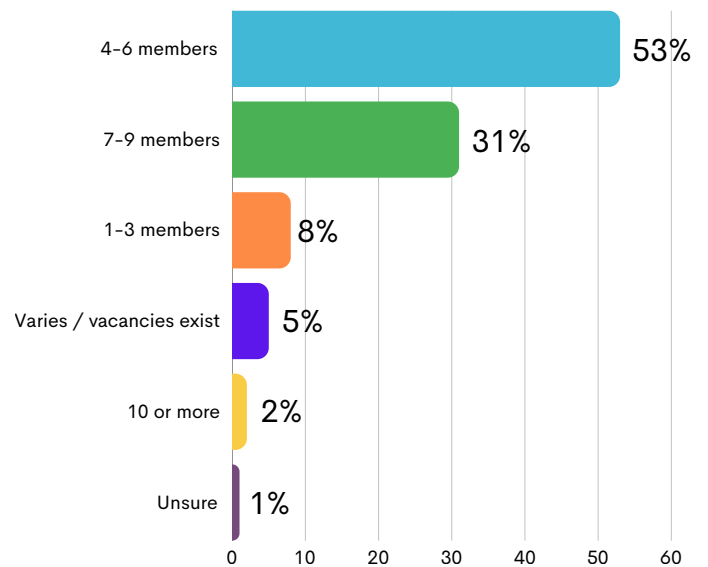


Approximate number of units in the community you represent:

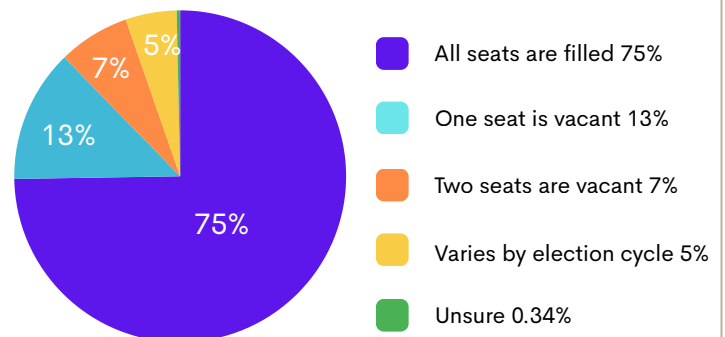


Board Retention

What is the current size of your community's board of directors?



Which of the following best describes the current status of your community's board seats?



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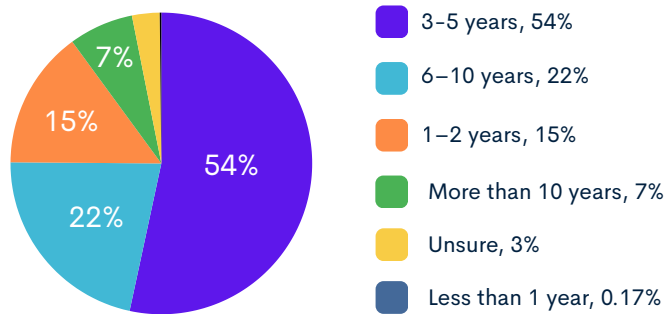


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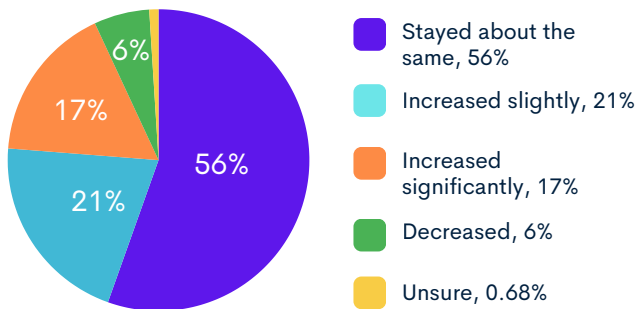
On average, how long do individuals typically serve on your community's board before stepping down?



Which, if any, of the following issues does your community experience when conducting board elections?

- 63%** Low homeowner participation or engagement
- 56%** Insufficient number of candidates
- 26%** Difficulty achieving quorum
- 18%** Confusion about roles or responsibilities
- 17%** No challenges
- 10%** Uncertainty about election procedures
- 10%** Complex or outdated election procedures
- 10%** Other
- 4%** Legal or regulatory constraints
- 1%** Language or accessibility barriers

In the past 3 years, has board turnover increased, decreased, or stayed the same?



How would you describe most board elections in your community?

- 59%** Uncontested elections (same or fewer candidates than seats)
- 23%** Contested elections (more candidates than available seats)
- 13%** Seats are often filled by appointment due to lack of candidates
- 5%** Elections are frequently postponed or extended due to lack of quorum

Common Trends

- **Volunteer leadership requires ongoing recruitment.** Board service depends on residents' willingness to volunteer, making proactive recruitment and leadership development important for sustaining participation.
- **Time commitments influence participation.** Busy work schedules, family responsibilities, and perceptions about the time required to serve can influence how many owners choose to run for the board.
- **Importance of board education and role clarity.** Better understanding of board responsibilities, governance practices, and leadership expectations can strengthen candidate preparation and participation.
- **Community engagement shapes election participation.** In some communities, participation levels reflect overall homeowner engagement, with satisfied residents sometimes feeling less urgency to run.
- **Healthy governance culture matters.** Positive board culture, clear processes, and strong collaboration among board members, managers, and homeowners can help encourage participation and strengthen elections.

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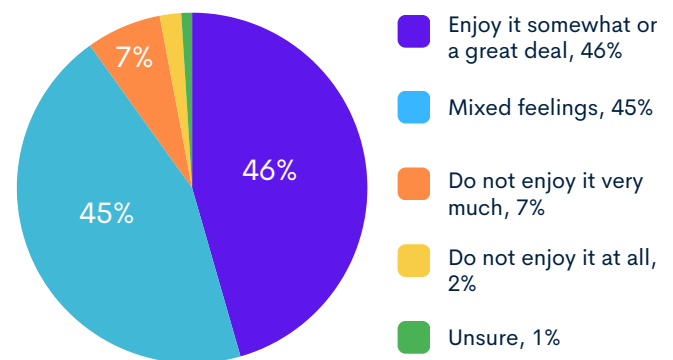
What factors most influence board members' decisions to continue serving or step down from the board?

- 55%** Feeling they are making a positive impact in the community
- 54%** Sense of duty, purpose, or commitment to the community
- 44%** Time demands associated with board service
- 34%** Support from fellow board members
- 29%** Personal attacks or incivility
- 25%** Conflict with homeowners
- 24%** Support from the community manager or management company
- 9%** Complexity of financial or operational decisions
- 9%** Fear of liability
- 9%** Other
- 8%** Increasing regulatory or legal requirements

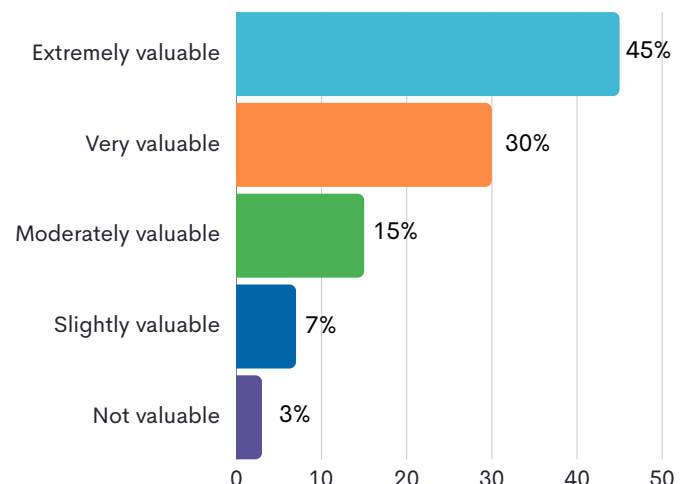
Other Common Trends

- **Sense of responsibility to the community.** Some respondents indicated that board members continue serving because they feel a duty to the community or want to ensure important issues are addressed.
- **Time commitment and burnout.** The time required to serve effectively, along with stress or burnout, was frequently cited as a factor influencing decisions to step down.
- **Health and personal circumstances.** Health issues, aging, relocation, or other personal changes were commonly mentioned reasons for leaving board service.
- **Limited volunteer pool.** Several responses noted that board members often remain in their roles because few other homeowners are willing to step forward to fill open seats.

Based on your experience, how much do board members in your community appear to enjoy serving on the board?



How valuable is board training and education in improving engagement and effectiveness?



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Board Recruitment

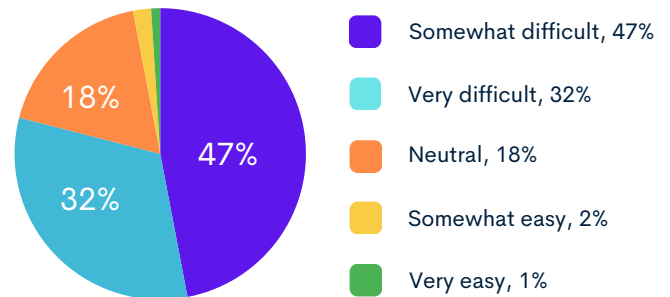
How does your community typically recruit new board members?

- 71% Email announcements or newsletters
- 70% Personal outreach by current board members
- 35% Notices at board or annual meetings
- 30% Informal word-of-mouth encouragement
- 22% Community website, portal, or app postings
- 17% Committees as a pathway to board service
- 15% Nominating or elections committee
- 15% Personal outreach by the community manager
- 9% Targeted outreach based on skills or experience
- 8% We do not actively recruit board members
- 5% Community social events or informational sessions
- 2% Leadership interest forms or surveys
- 2% Other

Other Common Trends

- **Formal candidate notices.** Calls for candidates through mailed notices, emails, or annual meeting announcements.
- **Proactive recruitment.** Identifying and encouraging potential candidates throughout the year.
- **Self-nomination.** Owners in good standing may volunteer to run for open seats.
- **Direct outreach.** Current board members personally encourage residents or former board members to serve.
- **Structured pipelines.** Some communities use approaches such as board internships, building representatives, or management support.

How difficult is it for your community to recruit new board members?



Which factors most influence board recruitment in your community?

- 69% Lack of homeowner interest
- 67% Time commitment required
- 38% Lack of understanding of the board role
- 35% Contentious community culture
- 26% Increasing complexity of board responsibilities
- 18% Limited pool of eligible candidates
- 11% Fear of personal liability
- 7% Other

Other Common Trends

- Board recruitment is often influenced by time constraints, work and family responsibilities, and homeowners' willingness to take on leadership roles.
- Several respondents noted that perceptions about the workload or complexity of board service can discourage potential candidates.
- In many communities, recruitment ultimately depends on personal outreach and encouraging residents to step forward and serve.

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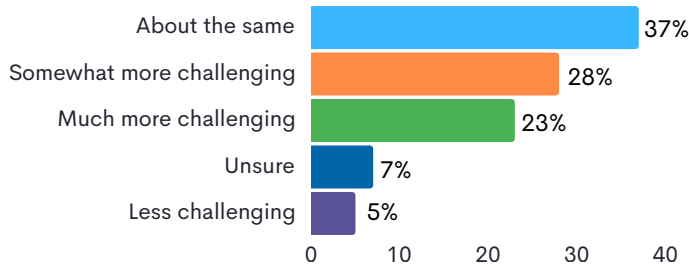


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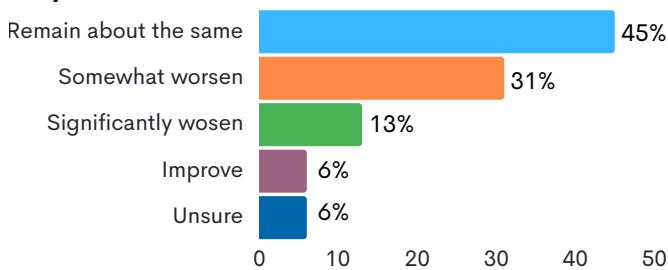
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Compared to five years ago, how would you describe the challenge of recruiting and retaining board members today?



Do you expect board recruitment and homeowner engagement challenges to change over the next 3-5 years?



Are there specific skill gaps on your board today?

- 43% Legal and governance understanding
- 33% Financial and budgeting expertise
- 32% Strategic planning
- 31% Construction and maintenance knowledge
- 30% Human relations and conflict management
- 26% No significant skill gaps
- 24% Technology and communications
- 6% Other

Which strategies have been most effective in strengthening board leadership and homeowner engagement?

- 58% Improved communication and transparency
- 38% Strong manager support
- 34% Clear role expectations and onboarding
- 28% Board and committee training programs
- 26% Use of technology and digital tools
- 16% Community-building events
- 7% Other

Other Common Trends

- Education and professional development.** Several respondents highlighted the value of board training and professional education, including CAI resources, chapter programs, and educational events to strengthen leadership skills.
- Clear governance expectations.** Establishing clear expectations such as mission statements, codes of ethics, and defined leadership roles was cited as helpful in guiding board conduct and improving effectiveness.
- Leadership and board culture.** Respondents noted that strong leadership and a collaborative tone on the board can improve trust, engagement, and overall community confidence in board decisions.
- Communication and transparency.** Improvements in communication, including better use of technology and more open dialogue with homeowners, were seen as important factors in strengthening engagement.
- Community building and social engagement.** Informal activities such as social gatherings, volunteer recognition, and community events were also mentioned as ways to build relationships and encourage participation.
- Leadership transitions and renewal.** Some respondents noted that bringing in new board members or leadership perspectives can help revitalize governance and address long-standing challenges.

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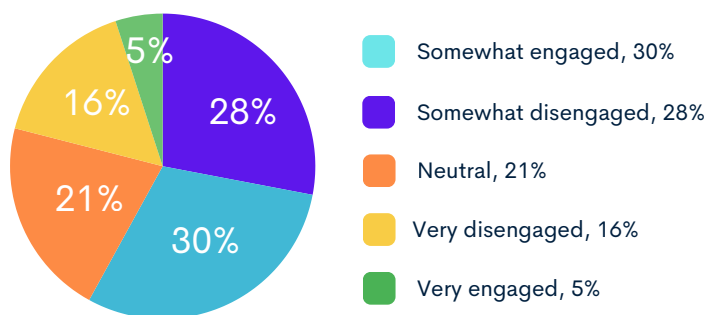
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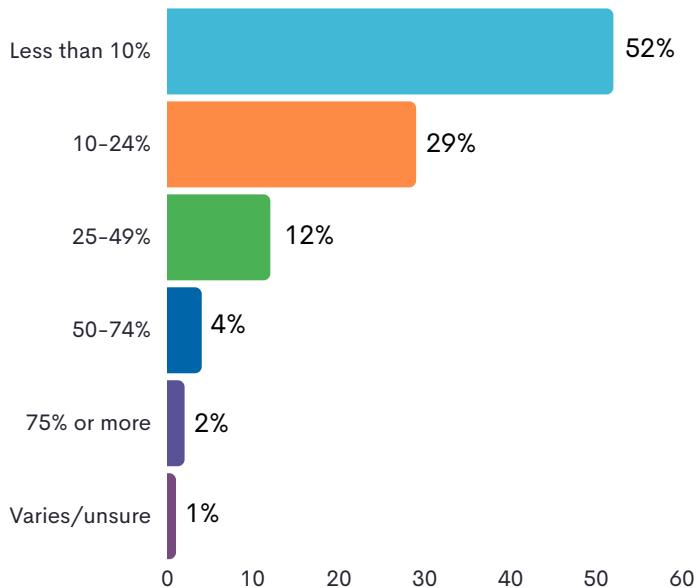
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Homeowner Engagement

How would you describe overall homeowner engagement in your community?



Typical homeowner attendance at community meetings:



Which tools does your community use to encourage homeowner participation?

- 72% Email newsletters
- 57% Online portals or apps
- 50% In-person events
- 38% Town halls or listening sessions
- 37% Electronic voting
- 22% Social media or community forums
- 22% Surveys or polls
- 10% Other

Common Trends

- **Digital communication.** Email updates, community websites or resident portals, and text alerts are commonly used to share information and encourage participation.
- **Print communication.** Printed newsletters, mailed notices, and bulletin boards remain important tools for reaching residents who may not rely on digital communications.
- **Meetings and forums.** Open board meetings, town halls, and owners' forums were frequently cited as opportunities for residents to stay informed and participate.
- **Community events.** Social gatherings such as picnics, happy hours, and committee activities help build relationships and encourage engagement.
- **Personal outreach.** One-on-one conversations and personal invitations were noted as effective ways to encourage involvement.
- **Engagement challenges.** Several respondents reported limited formal engagement tools or noted that participation often comes from the same small group of residents.

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Respondent Insights: Building Stronger Volunteer Boards

What is one change that would most improve board recruitment, retention, or homeowner engagement in community associations?

Open-ended responses revealed several recurring themes.

1. Education and Training for Board Members

Many respondents emphasized the need for stronger education and preparation for board service. Representative comments:

- *"Board members should receive initial and ongoing education on their roles, best practices, and emerging issues."*
- *"Providing training for both board and committee members would strengthen community leadership."*
- *"Greater awareness of what boards actually do would encourage more people to get involved."*

2. Improving Communication and Homeowner Engagement

Respondents frequently suggested clearer communication and more opportunities for residents to participate. Representative comments:

- *"Town hall meetings would help create more open dialogue between boards and homeowners."*
- *"A regularly posted calendar and consistent communication, such as a monthly newsletter, would improve engagement."*
- *"Frequent, clear communication helps build trust within the community."*

3. Helping Homeowners Better Understand Board Roles

Several responses noted that residents often underestimate the responsibilities and time commitments involved in board service. Representative comments:

- *"Homeowners need a better understanding and appreciation of the role boards play in community governance."*
- *"Community members often underestimate what board members are responsible for."*
- *"Clearer definition of board roles and responsibilities would help reduce misunderstandings."*

4. Mentorship and Leadership Development

Respondents also highlighted the importance of creating clear pathways for future volunteer leaders. Representative comments:

- *"Formal or informal mentorship programs could help prepare future board leaders."*
- *"Committee participation can create a pathway for residents to eventually serve on the board."*
- *"Communities should recruit potential board members throughout the year—not just during elections."*

5. Liability Concerns and Legal Exposure

A smaller but notable group cited fear of legal exposure as a deterrent to serving. Representative comments:

- *"Reducing personal liability concerns would encourage more residents to serve on boards."*
- *"Volunteer board members need stronger legal protections; threats of legal action can discourage residents from volunteering."*

Common Themes

The responses make clear that **education**, **communication**, and **stronger support for volunteer leaders** are the most effective ways to strengthen board recruitment and engagement. These insights reinforce a central theme of the survey: while serving on a board can be complex, communities that invest in prepared, supported, and informed volunteers are better positioned for long-term success.

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