



4 Ways Gossip Hurts Your Community (and How to Stop it!)

MORGAN PLACE ([HTTPS://HUB.ASSOCIAONLINE.COM/AUTHORS/MORGAN-PLACE](https://hub.associaonline.com/authors/morgan-place))



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Gossip is harmful in all organizations, and community associations are no exception. For communities, the spread of rumors and misinformation creates a toxic environment where residents don't feel comfortable in their own homes; it causes division and reduces the sense of community boards work so hard to build. But the damage doesn't stop there – left unchecked, gossip among board members and homeowners hinders **operations** (<https://hub.associaonline.com/blog/7-ways-to-give-your-community-an-operations-makeover>), undermines productivity and further affects quality of life for the entire community as a result.

Below are the specific ways gossip hurts communities along with tips for keeping your community gossip-free.

1. **Gossip prevents board members from making business decisions.** In a community where board members are afraid of what residents – or even vendors – will say or do behind their

backs in reaction to a decision, it's common for boards to take a long time to make decisions or to avoid making them at all. For example, in one community a resident submitted an **architectural review request (<https://hub.associaonline.com/blog/architectural-compliance-actionable-ways-to-improve-consistency>)** to their board and waited months to hear back simply because the board was afraid of creating backlash with the resident for not approving the request or with neighbors for approving a request they didn't like. Situations like this one keeps communities from delivering services to residents and making progress on its goals.

2. **Gossip encourages emotional decisions.** Board decisions should rely solely on business facts. But in a gossip-filled community, boards can be swayed by emotions, rumors, and past events, diminishing their ability to fulfill their fiduciary duty.
3. **Gossip creates confusion and unrest.** Constant rumors obscure facts and serve to upset residents and board members, which only adds to the difficulty of leading the community objectively and competently. For example, in another community residents spread a rumor that an unlicensed security guard was working on site. Instead of reporting their concerns, residents took the fact-finding process into their own hands and needlessly created confusion and fear among residents, guards and the security company.
4. **Gossip wastes the board's time.** We've observed that gossip requires the **board to engage in constant communication (<https://hub.associaonline.com/blog/6-tactics-for-more-transparent-board-communication>)** and hold extra informational meetings to correct misinformation. This takes away from time that could be spent on more pressing business. In one scenario, a condo association was voting to sell an easement and the community talked amongst themselves about how the vote would be affected by how the board decided to use the funds that were awarded. This convoluted the situation and the board had to address rumors instead of simply handling the sale of the land.

Ways to Prevent or Reduce Gossip

Try these tips to discourage gossip in your community.

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- Residents should be encouraged to bring their questions directly to the board and management to get the facts instead of asking each other.
- Strive for factual transparency with your residents and make this goal known to them. Answer questions as completely as possible and maintain regular communication through channels like **TownSq** (<https://www.townsq.io/>).
- Ask your fellow board members to commit to avoiding all gossip themselves and to lead by example. As leaders of the community, when board members engage in gossip it breaks the trust residents should have in the board.
- Be patient. This problem will take time to solve. Continue to display transparent leadership, resist gossip and present a united front to residents.

With a complete understanding of the havoc that gossip can wreak on a community along with ways to address it, you and your fellow board members will be much more equipped to tackle this issue and restore trust throughout your community.

About the Author

Morgan Place serves as the Vice President of McKay Management. She began her career in the community management industry with McKay Management 11 years ago. She holds Certified Manager of Community Associations (CMCA®) and Association Management Specialist (AMS®) designations through Community Associations Institute (CAI) and is working toward the highest recognition of Professional Community Association Manager (PCAM®).



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