

APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 1, 2016.** Please include this application form with electronic entry.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Henrico County

Program Title: Homeowners' Association Website and Lookup

Program Category: Customer Service

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Cristol Klevinsky

Title: Management Specialist

Department: County Manager's Office

Complete Mailing Address: 4301 E. Parham Rd., Henrico, VA 23228

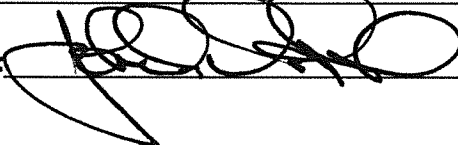
Telephone: 804-501-4370 Website: henrico.us

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Name: John A. Vithoukas

Title: County Manager

Signature: 

Homeowners' Association Website and Lookup

Henrico County, Virginia

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Short Overview:

The Homeowner's Association Website and Lookup is a one stop website providing information on Homeowner's Associations located in Henrico County. The responsibilities of Homeowners Associations (HOA's) may include protecting home values and the safety of the neighborhoods they govern and maintenance of common areas or other features of the community. Over the years, the Henrico County Department of Community Revitalization has seen an increase in nonfunctioning Homeowners Associations, and homeowners who are not aware of their rights and responsibilities in living in a HOA community. Although we do not provide legal, accounting, management or other professional advice, the department has dedicated staff to respond to citizens' HOA questions. In addition, a website was created to empower citizens who live in one of the many HOA's throughout the county. The website contains a set of tools and links that enables citizens to better understand and manage their responsibilities whether they are a homeowner or governing board member. Currently, we maintain contact information for individual HOA's and a HOA lookup feature. The lookup feature is maintained in the Geographic Information System (GIS). This is a new service to residents that was designed to fill a recognized gap.

The Problem, Challenge or Situation for the Program:

Today's work environment has changed; it is more complex due to advanced technology. In the era of technology, we needed a new approach to manage the County's existing HOA's. There has been an increase in vacant, abandoned, foreclosed properties, and nonfunctioning HOA's. The department has identified hundreds of HOA's and have found that often times citizens are not aware they are in an HOA subdivision and that they have responsibilities, nor do they know the boundaries of their subdivision and common areas, or how to obtain copies of their restrictive covenants. In addition, there was a lack of a centralized data base in regards to HOA information such as common areas, covenants, and HOA contact information.

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Description of the Program:

The website and HOA Lookup was just an idea five years ago. Staff from Community Revitalization and Information Technology began working together in March 2011 to create this valuable tool which was made available to citizens in July 2012. Staff involved includes Community Revitalizations Neighborhood Planner, Geographic Information Systems GIS Coordinator and Information Technologies Web IT. Updates and maintenance is administered by Community Revitalizations Neighborhood Planner and the Planning Departments Technology Support Specialist II.

The website and HOA Lookup were designed to empower residents with vital information. While the department provides a dedicated staff member to respond to citizens' HOA questions or concerns, the website has a set of tools and links that enables citizens to better understand and manage their responsibilities whether they are a homeowner or governing board member. The website includes helpful resources such as a list of frequently asked questions, outside agency contacts, GIS mapping, the date of restrictive covenant recordation, plat book and page numbers, HOA boundaries, common area boundaries and acreage. The website can be found at <http://henrico.us/revit/hoas/>. Answers to frequently asked questions include, what are the benefits to living in an HOA, what are restrictive covenants, and some as simple as what is common area. As everyone's definitions or ideas may differ, we strive to provide the most accurate and up to date information. Below are examples of frequently asked questions:

- What are the benefits to living in an HOA?

HOAs have the ability to impose standards of property maintenance higher than the County is able to do, given state law. They also have means of enforcement provided in their covenants, bylaws and rules. Developments run by Homeowners' Associations are usually more successful in preventing neighborhood deterioration and most owners like the quality of life in a Homeowners' Association. The board of directors that run HOAs are made up of owners who have volunteered to take on considerable responsibility for the benefit of the community. The effectiveness of HOAs depends on these volunteers. Should the Homeowners' Association become ineffective, the neighborhood may lose its

ability to prevent deterioration to the higher standard of the HOA. Property values may decrease. Owners will have to depend on the County for enforcement of minimal property maintenance codes. This results in frustration on the part of the owners and additional resources required from the County.

- What are restrictive covenants?

Restrictive covenants are legal obligations imposed in a deed by the seller upon the buyer of real estate to do or not to do something. Such restrictions frequently “run with the land” and are enforceable on subsequent buyers of the property. HOA restrictive covenants are publicly recorded deed restrictions.

- What is common area?

Common area is property within a development which is owned, leased or required to be maintained or operated by a Homeowners' Association for the use of its members and designated as common area in the declaration.

While answering HOA questions and concerns can tie up staff resources, the website and lookup tools provide citizens with twenty four (24) hour access to information. Anyone with a personal computer and internet service can access the information in the comfort of their home or office. Currently, the department maintains a database of 562 recorded covenants representing hundreds of individual HOA's.

The department provides a detailed website containing information such as a description of the program, staff contact information, frequently asked questions, and the availability for HOA's to update their contact information. The platform of the HOA Lookup is the County's GIS. The Lookup feature provides citizens the opportunity to examine boundaries of an HOA, resources to obtain information on restrictive covenants, and identify common areas. The website is available to anyone with computer and internet access twenty four (24) hours a day. If citizens are unable to locate the information needed, they have the ability to email or call staff directly. The website also provides helpful links for contacts outside the county. They include:

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Virginia Department of Professional & Occupational Regulation	http://www.dpor.virginia.gov/CIC-Ombudsman
National Homeowners' Association	http://www.perfectliving.org/
Community Associations Institute	http://www.caionline.org/Pages/Default.aspx
VA Community Association Law Blog	http://www.virginiacommunityassociationlaw.com/

Financing and Staffing Cost:

The County incurred no new costs in producing the HOA website and Lookup as no new supplies, equipment or outside technology was purchased. The HOA website and lookup was conceived, developed and implemented in-house using designated personnel from the Department of Community Revitalization and the Information Technology department. This internal collaboration allowed for the HOA website and Lookup to be implemented at no additional cost.

Program Results:

The implementation of the HOA website and Lookup has succeeded in providing citizens, board members, management companies, and real estate agents with access to information that was at one time difficult to locate or unavailable. By providing this information, it has saved many hours of staff time responding to inquiries. The improved quality of data results in providing better information to the county's internal and external customers allowing for improved decision making. Since July 2012, the website and Lookup feature has received 17,383 hits.

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Brief Summary:

The HOA website and lookup provides a central location and easy access for information that once before required each inquiry to be manually researched. As each new HOA is created, the data is entered for easy tracking. Although we only maintain a database for Henrico County, the general information about HOA's that is provided has been of great value to others based on the inquiries we have received from across the state. The department designed the web portal to fill a gap and enhance service delivery. The department recognized that this service was needed to fill the gap. While the website has not created a new revenue source, it has greatly improved access to valuable information for both county staff and citizens. It organized existing data and simplified tracking of new HOA data, which improved the consistency of data and resources available countywide. Citizens now have access to their HOA information online and do not have to leave their home to obtain it. This has increased their capacity to manage HOA's and saved the County many staff hours.