



## *Using Technology to Help Communities*

It can be so frustrating. Your community Board Meeting is over and you have information that needs to get out to your residents as quickly as possible, or maybe the Board needs feedback from the residents about whether or not to proceed with an idea they have. How do you go about this? Well, until very recently, you might have had someone on the Board create an information flyer or survey on paper, make a bunch of photo copies, and hand deliver one to each residence in your community (or worse yet, mail them). This method is costly in both time and money and in the end; it's not very effective. Days, or even weeks, may go by before the information gets out and most residents don't return surveys because it's a hassle for them. Another alternative is to use the old stand-by "phone-tree", where various people are responsible for calling a portion of the residents on the phone. Anyone who has tried this knows it quickly turns into an extended game of answering machines, busy signals and phone tag. Once again, a very inefficient way to communicate with the residents of your community.

Well, thanks to the Internet, all of this is changing. Your community can now have its own web site that will disseminate information out to your residents quickly and very cost effectively. You can post announcements on your web site for residents to read and you can post survey questions online that residents can answer at their convenience by just pointing and clicking. No more filling out and returning forms. But this is just the beginning. An interactive community web site also lets your community have an online events calendar so residents can see at a glance what is going on around the neighborhood; a message board for them to post questions and comments to each other and the Board of directors; a chat room for live interaction among residents; an address book where residents can go to lookup their neighbors phone number or find a 4<sup>th</sup> for tennis; Garage sale listings, Home for Sale listings; online community documents including Bylaws, Covenants, Newsletters and much, much more. The community can even sell classified ads on their web site to local product and service providers and keep that money for the community.

Since privacy is always an issue when you are talking about the Internet, you would want to make sure that only residents had access to certain information on your site (such as the address book). This is handled by having both public and private areas. The public portion is available to everyone on the Internet but allows access to only a few features that you choose, such as the Homes for Sale and Classified ads as well as some general information about your community including pictures. In order to get to the "good stuff" each resident would be assigned their own login ID and password that would get them inside.

Having such a web site gives your community the power and flexibility to get information and news out to your residents at a moments notice, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It allows your residents to keep up with community happenings, interact with their neighbors, Board members, and committee members, and do all of this on their own time schedule, whether that is late at night, after putting the kids to bed or while on a lunch break at work.

AtHomeNet can provide your community an affordable web site with all of these features and many more and we can do it within one week. The site is highly customized for your community with your pictures, your color scheme, your information on the home page and only those features that you want. To learn more, see the other side of this page or visit our web site at [www.AtHomeNet.com](http://www.AtHomeNet.com) where you can try out a full-featured demo of our community web site. If you have any questions or if you would like to establish a web site for your community, please call us at 678-566-1689 or 800-556-7852.