



NextGen Homebuyers: Very Demure, Very Mindful



Table of contents

Gen Z Homebuyers by the Numbers 2

What is an HOA? 3

Why do HOAs Matter? 3

What Do HOAs Do? 4

The HOA Cheat Sheet 5

The Rise of Self-Managed HOAs: Taking Control of Your Community 6

Choosing a Neighborhood That Aligns with Your Values:
How a Self-Managed HOA Can Help 8

How Tech Tools Tame HOA Terrors 9

As you embark on the exciting journey of purchasing your first home, you're joining a growing number of next-generation [homebuyers](#) stepping into the real estate market earlier than ever. Whether you're driven by a desire for financial independence or simply looking to plant roots in a community that reflects your values, your approach to homeownership is shaping the future of the housing market. Let's dive into what you, as a Gen Z homebuyer, are looking for, how you're navigating the process, and why an HOA (Homeowners Association) could be a perfect fit for your lifestyle.

Gen Z Homebuyers by the Numbers

- 90% believe in the “[American Dream](#)” of homeownership.
- 63% plan to buy a home within the [year](#).
- 40% worry they [can't afford](#) a home.
- >50% are actively saving for a home.
- 81% use online resources and apps during the home-buying process.
- 70% will [pay more](#) for “green” features.
- 25% of adult Gen Zers [own a home](#).

Top Barriers to Homebuying For Gen Z

- Affordability
- Financial Knowledge
- Lack of Support

52% of Gen Zers get their [financial advice from TikTok](#).

Gen Zers [purchase the smallest homes](#), with a median size of 1,480 square feet.

What is an HOA?

As you embark on the exciting journey of purchasing your first home, you're joining a growing number of next-generation homebuyers stepping into the real estate market earlier than ever.

- 30% of the US population lives in HOA communities.
- There are ~365,000 community associations in the U.S.
- 67% of newly completed homes are part of HOA communities.

Why do HOAs Matter?

They set standards for how homes should look, what you can do with your property, and how common areas like parks, pools, or clubhouses are managed. If the community always looks like it just got a glow-up, that can be a big plus because it helps maintain property values and ensures everyone's home stays in great shape.

- \$12.2 trillion—that's the value of homes in HOA communities.
- 87% of residents believe HOA rules protect and enhance property values.



What Do HOAs Do?

Here's a peek at how HOAs keep your neighborhood in check:

- Property Maintenance: Keeps the neighborhood looking sharp and ready for its close-up
- Dues and Fee Collection: Handles the cash flow that powers the community
- Enforcement of Rules: Makes sure everyone plays by the rules so harmony reigns
- Architectural Review: Checks that your home improvements fit the neighborhood vibe
- Budgeting and Financial Management: Manages the money so the community stays on point
- Communication with Residents: Shares the 411, FYIs, or any [911s ASAP](#)
- Community Building: Brings neighbors together for fun and connection
- Governance and Meetings: Makes the big decisions that guide the community forward
- Dispute Resolution: Bridges the gap when neighbors clash
- Legal Compliance: Handles the legal stuff so everything runs smoothly



The HOA Cheat Sheet

Thinking about buying a home in an HOA community? Awesome choice! But before you dive in, there are a few things you'll want to have on your radar.

HOA Fees

Think of your HOA fees as your ticket to maintaining a beautiful, well-kept neighborhood. These fees, which are typically monthly, quarterly, or yearly, go towards keeping everything in tip-top shape — from landscaping to that awesome community pool. But, just like any subscription, what you get depends on what you pay. So, whether your community offers a basic lawn service or a full-blown fitness center, your fees will reflect that. Factor HOA fees into your budget and decision-making so you know what you're signing up for.

HOA Rules

Before you move in, grab a copy of the HOA's playbook — officially known as the Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions (CC&Rs). This is your guide to what's cool and what's not in your new neighborhood. Want to paint your front door a bold color or start a backyard garden? Check the CC&Rs first to see if it's allowed. Think of it as a way to ensure the community vibe matches your lifestyle so there are no surprises down the road.

50-60% of homebuyers fail to thoroughly read the CC&Rs before purchasing.

Fines and Enforcement

As in sports, there's a penalty box in HOA life. If you accidentally break one of the community rules — like parking your car in the wrong spot or letting your grass grow too tall — you might get a friendly warning. But if you keep breaking the rules, you could face fines. So, it's a good idea to stay on top of the community guidelines to avoid any unnecessary costs. After all, it's easier (and cheaper) to play by the rules!

40% of all fines issued by HOAs are for:

- improper landscaping
- parking violations
- unauthorized exterior modifications

HOAs collect \$108.8 billion in assessments from homeowners annually.

The Rise of Self-Managed HOAs: Taking Control of Your Community

If you're considering buying a home in a community with a homeowners association, you might come across something called a "self-managed HOA." It's a trend that's gaining popularity, especially among communities that want to save money and have more control over how things are run.

What Is a Self-Managed HOA?

In a traditional HOA setup, communities often hire property management companies to handle day-to-day operations. These companies take care of everything from managing finances to enforcing rules and communicating with homeowners. While convenient, it also comes with a hefty price tag, resulting in higher HOA dues for homeowners. A [self-managed HOA](#) flips the script. Homeowners take on these responsibilities instead of outsourcing to a property management company. The community elects a board of directors — usually of fellow homeowners — who manage the HOA's operations. They oversee things like maintaining common areas, enforcing community rules, and keeping the lines of communication open with everyone in the neighborhood.

- 30-40% of community associations are self-managed.
- 100,400,000 volunteer hours of service are performed annually.

Why Is Self-Management the New Trend?

One of the main reasons communities are moving towards self-management is to save money. Property management companies can be expensive, and those costs are typically passed on to homeowners through higher dues. By going self-managed, the community can lower these dues since there's no need to pay an outside company. Instead, those funds can be redirected towards community improvements or kept in homeowners' pockets.

But it's not just about saving money. Self-managed HOAs also give homeowners more control and say in what happens in their community. Without a third-party company making decisions, you and your neighbors have direct input on everything from how funds are used to which projects get prioritized. This level of involvement can lead to a more engaged, connected community where everyone has a stake in making the neighborhood a great place to live.

The Role of HOA Software

You might be wondering how a group of homeowners can handle all the tasks a professional property manager would typically do. That's where HOA software comes in. Today's technology makes it easier than ever for self-managed HOAs to operate efficiently. With the right software, like PayHOA, homeowners can [manage finances](#), organize meetings, [send out communications](#), and [even enforce community rules](#) — all from a single platform. HOA software streamlines the management process, making it accessible even if you don't have a background in property management. It's a way to modernize community management, keeping things organized and transparent while reducing the need for expensive external services.

Why a Self-Managed HOA Might Be a Great Fit for You

If you value having a say in how your community is run and appreciate cost-saving measures, a self-managed HOA could be an ideal option. It's an opportunity to be more involved in your neighborhood, ensuring that the community reflects the values and needs of its residents. Plus, with the help of HOA software, you can enjoy the benefits of a well-managed community without the added cost of a property management company. For many Gen Z homebuyers, the combination of lower costs and greater control makes self-managed HOAs appealing. It's about taking charge of your living environment, fostering a strong sense of community, and making smart financial decisions that benefit everyone involved.



Choosing a Neighborhood That Aligns with Your Values: How a Self-Managed HOA Can Help

Choosing a place to call home is about more than just the house itself. The neighborhood you choose should reflect your values, lifestyle, and the kind of community you want to be a part of. For many next-generation homebuyers, this means looking for a neighborhood that prioritizes sustainability, inclusivity, and community engagement. A self-managed HOA can play an important role in making sure your neighborhood aligns with what matters most to you.

Sustainability: Building a Greener Future Together

[Sustainability](#) is a top priority for many Gen Z homebuyers seeking environmentally responsible communities. A self-managed HOA provides the flexibility to implement eco-friendly initiatives tailored to your neighborhood, such as recycling programs, renewable energy projects, and water conservation efforts. By actively participating in your HOA, you can help reduce your community's carbon footprint and create a healthier, greener environment for everyone.

Inclusivity and Diversity: Creating a Welcoming Community

Inclusivity is a key value for many Gen Z homebuyers who want to live in welcoming, diverse communities. A self-managed HOA allows residents to actively shape their neighborhood's culture, fostering an environment that supports and celebrates diversity. By participating in your HOA, you can help implement initiatives like cultural events and accessible spaces, ensuring that everyone feels they belong.

Community Engagement: Building Strong Connections

Many homebuyers value a strong sense of community. A self-managed HOA enhances this by empowering residents to actively organize events, make decisions, and improve the neighborhood. From block parties to community projects, these activities strengthen connections and create a supportive network where neighbors truly feel at home.

Affordability and Financial Responsibility: Smart Living Choices

For many next-gen homebuyers, making financially smart choices is crucial, and a self-managed HOA offers a great way to keep costs down while fostering community values. By eliminating expensive property management companies, you'll have more control over how funds are allocated — a collaborative approach that ensures your contributions directly benefit the neighborhood and reflect what's important to you and your neighbors.

How Tech Tools Tame HOA Terrors

Living in a community with an HOA can offer a lot of benefits — neighborhood aesthetics, shared amenities, and a sense of order. But let's be real: sometimes, [things can go a bit sideways](#). From bizarre rules about lawn care to unexpected fees, even the best communities have their share of hiccups. But what if there was a way to avoid those “uh-oh” moments altogether? For next-gen homeowners like you, who value transparency, efficiency, and common sense, HOA software could be the game-changer.

1. The Lawn Height Hiccup

In sunny Arizona, one unlucky homeowner found themselves in a turf war with their HOA over the height of their lawn. The grass grew a smidge too tall, and they were hit with daily fines. The situation spiraled into a legal showdown, costing the homeowner big bucks and even bigger headaches.

Imagine if the HOA had used software to [send out friendly reminders](#) before the grass got out of hand. A quick nudge could have saved everyone the trouble. Plus, with a community voting feature, neighbors could have weighed in on whether grass height should be such a big deal.

2. The Surveillance SNAFU

In a Florida community, potential homeowners were spooked by a clause in the HOA agreement allowing board members to view footage from any resident's security cameras. Keeping an eye on the neighborhood is one thing, but this felt more like Big Brother than a block party.

With the right HOA software, transparency could've been the name of the game. The board could have clearly communicated the intent behind the rule, using secure, resident-only forums to discuss concerns. A few tweaks to the policy — [voted on digitally](#) by the community — might have kept those security cameras and the peace of mind intact.

3. The Trash Time Trouble

A California HOA got a bit too trashy with its rules, insisting that residents only put out their bins four hours before collection and bring them back within four hours after. With unpredictable trash pickup times, following the rules was nearly impossible, leading to neighborly tensions and, let's be honest, some pretty trashy behavior.

HOA software to the rescue — a community calendar with real-time updates on trash collection schedules could've turned this sticky situation into a smooth operation. Plus, automated reminders could have helped residents stay on top of the timing — no more trash talk necessary.

4. The Construction Surprise

A newlywed couple in Georgia was all set to enjoy their new condo until they discovered, three days after closing, a hefty special assessment for building repairs. Talk about a post-honeymoon hangover. They were blindsided by a \$7,500 bill they never saw coming.

HOA software with [document storage](#) and automated alerts could've saved this couple from the surprise. They could have easily reviewed all the necessary documents before signing on the dotted line, and an alert system could've flagged the upcoming assessment. A little tech goes a long way in avoiding these "gotcha" moments.

5. The Unauthorized Koi Pond

In Sandy Springs, a green-thumbed homeowner added a koi pond and new fence to their yard, thinking it would boost the property's charm. The HOA, however, was not impressed — especially since the homeowner skipped the approval process. The result? A legal battle, a forced removal, and some unhappy koi fish.

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With [the right HOA software](#), submitting and tracking approval requests would have been a breeze. The homeowner could have easily uploaded their plans, and the board could have quickly reviewed and approved (or denied) them. No fuss, no fishy business — just clear communication and smooth sailing.