



## THE POWER OF COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT:

### Building More Than Neighborhoods

Community management is often described as a profession of balancing budgets, enforcing governing documents, and maintaining common areas. While these responsibilities are essential, they represent only part of what community managers contribute to the neighborhoods they serve.

At its core, community management is about creating environments where people can thrive. Every project completed, every homeowner concern resolved, and every community event organized contributes to a greater goal: fostering a sense of belonging and enhancing quality of life.

Today's community managers face increasingly complex challenges. From navigating legislative changes and reserve funding requirements to addressing homeowner expectations and emerging technologies, the role continues to evolve. Successful managers must be skilled communicators, problem solvers, financial stewards, project coordinators, and leaders—all while maintaining professionalism and objectivity.

One of the most rewarding aspects of community management is witnessing the direct impact of our work. Whether it's overseeing a major renovation project, improving community amenities, implementing new communication tools, or helping residents resolve conflicts, managers have a unique opportunity to shape the future of their communities.

Professional organizations such as Community Managers International Association play a vital role in supporting this important work. Through education, networking, mentorship, and professional development, CMIA helps managers stay informed, connected, and prepared to meet the challenges of an ever-changing industry.

As communities continue to grow and evolve, the need for knowledgeable and dedicated managers has never been greater. By investing in our professional development and sharing best practices with our peers, we strengthen not only our own careers but also the communities we serve.

Community management is more than a profession—it is an opportunity to make a lasting difference, one neighborhood at a time.

## CMIA TODAY

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Have you changed jobs or have a new mailing address?  
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If you are a member, there is a number on the lower right corner of your wall plaque that should be included with your correspondence.

### CMIA Mission Statement

*Providing Large Scale Community Manager Members with superior professional education, outstanding networking opportunities, and relevant compensation information.*

## COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS CELEBRATING AMERICA'S 250<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY



Photo by Miles Incley

In 2026, the United States will commemorate a remarkable milestone—the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Known as the *Semiquincentennial*, this historic occasion presents a unique opportunity for community associations to bring residents together through celebration, education, and civic engagement.

Community associations are uniquely positioned to foster a sense of connection and pride among residents. The nation's 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary provides a meaningful theme around which communities can create memorable events and lasting traditions.

Associations may wish to consider organizing patriotic parades, community picnics, concerts, historical presentations, or volunteer service projects. Neighborhood decorating contests, children's poster competitions, and "250 Acts of Kindness" campaigns can encourage participation from residents of all ages. Communities with recreational amenities may host themed events such as movie nights, trivia contests, fun runs, or family festivals celebrating America's history and values.

The anniversary also offers an opportunity to educate residents about the nation's past while reflecting on the future. Associations can feature historical articles in newsletters, invite local historians to speak at community events, or create displays showcasing significant moments

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## Community Associations Celebrating America's 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, *continued...*

in American history. Communities may even choose to develop a time capsule project, preserving memories and messages for future generations.

Beyond celebrations, the *Semiquincentennial* serves as a reminder of the importance of civic involvement and community service. Neighborhood volunteer initiatives, charitable drives, and beautification projects can honor the spirit of citizenship that has helped shape the nation over the past 250 years.

While every community is different, the goal remains the same: bringing neighbors together. Whether through large-scale events or simple acts of community engagement, the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the United States offers a once-in-a-generation opportunity for associations to strengthen relationships, build community pride, and create lasting memories.

As community leaders begin planning for 2026, now is the perfect time to start thinking about how your association can participate in this historic celebration. After all, America's story is ultimately a collection of local stories—and community associations play an important role in helping write the next chapter.

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**Community Managers International Association**  
**WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP?**  
CMIA has provided Large Scale Community Manager  
Members with superior professional education, outstanding  
networking opportunities, and relevant compensation  
information since 1999.

- **Annual Workshop**
- **Roundtables and Webinars**
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Community Managers International Association



# TOUR • LEARN • NETWORK • IMPLEMENT



COMMUNITY  
MANAGERS  
INTERNATIONAL  
ASSOCIATION

*"In my opinion, our format remains at the top of the list for continuing education and professional growth in this industry. I have remained at one location for 36 years in the middle of the country, which is not typical but have found the old HOA/POA workshops and the current CMIA workshops to provide great benefits to what we do at my Association." - Jeff, CMIA Member*

*It is a "must attend." The most valuable workshop every year. - Heather, CMIA Member*



## MORE THAN A CONFERENCE: THE CMIA WORKSHOP EXPERIENCE

One of the greatest benefits of CMIA membership is access to our educational workshops hosted by member communities throughout the United States. Unlike traditional conferences where attendees spend most of their time in meeting rooms, CMIA workshops place participants directly inside the large-scale communities. Attendees tour facilities, observe operations, meet management teams, and engage in meaningful discussions about the opportunities and challenges unique to large-scale community associations.

Recent workshops have included tours of award-winning recreational facilities, community centers, lifestyle programs, maintenance operations, and resident amenities. Participants gain firsthand insight into how other communities approach everything from staffing and budgeting to events, programming, technology, and resident engagement. Equally valuable are the relationships formed during these events. The small-group format encourages open discussion and collaboration among professionals who understand the complexities of managing large-scale communities. Many attendees leave with not only new ideas, but also a network of trusted colleagues they can call upon throughout the year.

At a CMIA Workshop, you will:

- Tour exceptional large-scale communities and amenities
- Learn how other associations approach operations, recreation, facilities, events, staffing communications, and resident engagement
- Participate in candid roundtable discussions with peers facing the same challenges you face every day
- Exchange ideas, successes, and lessons learned with professionals from across the United States
- Build relationships that become valuable resources long after the workshop ends
- Return home with practical ideas and solutions you can implement immediately

Whether you're a General Manager, Assistant General Manager, Recreation Director, or Lifestyle Professional, CMIA workshops provide an unmatched opportunity to learn directly from industry leaders in the environments they manage every day.

Come see what makes these communities successful—and take those ideas back to your own association.

If you have never attended a CMIA workshop, consider making it a professional goal. The knowledge gained, connections made, and ideas exchanged often provide value far beyond the cost of attendance.

# THE SURPRISES BENEATH THE SURFACE:

## Lessons Learned Renovating a 50-Year-Old Recreation Facility

When our Association embarked on a series of facility improvement projects, we thought we had a fairly good understanding of what we were getting into. The plans were complete, contractors had been selected, budgets were established, and permits were in process. Like many aging communities, however, we quickly discovered that the greatest project risks were not the things we could see; they were the things hidden underground and behind decades of improvements.

Our clubhouse and recreation facilities were originally constructed in 1974, with additions built over the following decade. While some components had been repaired and replaced over the years, much of the original infrastructure remained in place. As construction progressed, we encountered a series of challenges that may sound familiar to anyone managing capital projects in mature communities.



### When the Plans Don't Exist

One of our earliest obstacles was surprisingly simple; we couldn't find the original plans. Neither the Association nor the City had complete as-built drawings for portions of the facility. Because our community was constructed before the City's incorporation, many records remained with the County, and not all of those records survived the transition. As a result, we began portions of the project with incomplete information about what existed beneath the surface.

Even when plans did exist, they weren't always accurate. During construction, we discovered that our main sewer line was located approximately ten feet away from the location shown on the recorded tract map. That may not sound significant, but it can create major complications when excavation, utility connections, and construction schedules are involved. In our case, we had to go back to the drawing board and relocate the location of a proposed snack bar.

The lesson? Trust the plans but verify whenever possible. Our surveyor went off the tract map, so even he didn't catch the sewer pipe and easement conflict.

### The Hidden Infrastructure Problem

One of our first surprises involved electrical infrastructure buried beneath our pool decks. As demolition began, contractors discovered deteriorated conduit and electrical lines encased in concrete decades earlier. The conduit had corroded to the point that replacement wiring could not simply be pulled through as planned. Portions of the deck had to be opened, trenches excavated, and entirely new conduit systems installed.

What began as a pool deck renovation suddenly involved additional costs, schedule delays, design modifications, and increased coordination between contractors and inspectors. And a lot more money. Infrastructure hidden from view is often impossible to fully evaluate until demolition begins.

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## The Surprises Beneath the Surface, *continued...*

### Pool Plumbing: Bigger Isn't Always Easier

Our pool renovation included replacing aging circulation piping with new 6-inch plumbing designed to improve performance and reliability. On paper, the upgrade made perfect sense. In practice, the larger plumbing system created operational challenges we did not anticipate. Pump priming characteristics changed. Skimmer performance became inconsistent. Vacuum systems required adjustments. Balancing flow rates throughout the system became an ongoing process involving contractors, pool professionals, and maintenance staff.

The experience reinforced an important principle: replacing aging infrastructure with modern systems often changes the way an entire facility operates. Upgrades are not always “plug and play.”



### ADA Compliance: The Scope Creep Nobody Wants

Like many communities developed decades ago, our facilities were built during an era with significantly different accessibility standards. What initially appeared to be straightforward improvements quickly evolved into extensive discussions regarding accessible paths of travel, slopes, parking, restroom accessibility, pool access, and site circulation. Our facility and surrounding homes sit on terrain largely created from fill material excavated during construction of our man-made lake more than fifty years ago. While the topography creates beautiful views and unique character, it also presents significant accessibility and soil-quality related challenges.



Adding to the complexity, we discovered that improvements constructed as recently as 2017 did not fully comply with current accessibility standards. Something as simple as a paper towel dispenser or toilet paper holder projecting too far from a wall can create compliance issues and delay plan approval.

Managers undertaking renovation projects should understand that ADA considerations rarely affect only the area being renovated. Improvements in one location can trigger review of surrounding facilities and pathways, creating costs that are difficult to anticipate during budgeting.



### The Human Side of ADA Compliance

Perhaps the most unexpected challenge was not construction-related at all—it was communication. Despite town hall meetings, newsletter articles, website updates, and extensive outreach, many residents questioned why ramps, accessible pathways, and sidewalk improvements were necessary. More than once we heard comments that “nobody will use them.”

As managers, we know accessibility improvements are not popularity projects. They are legal requirements, risk management tools, and investments that ensure our facilities remain accessible to all residents and guests. Their value is not measured by how often they are noticed, but by ensuring equal access for everyone.

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## The Surprises Beneath the Surface, *continued...*

### Expect the Unexpected

Looking back, perhaps the biggest lesson was that contingency budgets are not optional; they are essential. For us, three percent, or even ten percent, would not have been enough. By the time unforeseen conditions, utility conflicts, ADA requirements, and infrastructure repairs were addressed, project costs had increased dramatically beyond initial estimates.

When managing projects in facilities that are forty, fifty, or more years old, assumptions should be treated cautiously. Original plans may no longer exist. Previous repairs may not have been documented. Conditions hidden underground may have little resemblance to what appears on record drawings. Experienced contractors often joke that demolition is the real discovery phase of a project. There is more truth to that statement than many managers would like to admit.



### Advice for Fellow Managers

If I could offer a few recommendations to managers preparing for major renovations in aging communities, they would be:

1. Budget larger contingencies than you think you'll need.
2. Expect underground utilities and infrastructure to surprise you, and not in a good way.
3. Verify utility locations whenever possible, even when plans exist.
4. Involve maintenance staff early; they often know more about hidden facility issues than anyone else.
5. Anticipate ADA reviews extending beyond the immediate project area.
6. Build schedule flexibility into every major project.
7. Communicate frequently with boards and homeowners about unforeseen conditions and change orders.
8. Accept that some of the most important project expenditures may be completely invisible once construction is complete.

The project you budgeted for may not be the project you ultimately complete. In aging communities, that reality is often the rule rather than the exception.

*Alisa Woolsey*  
CMIA Board Member



## CMIA Education QUARTERLY WEBINAR SERIES

Third Thursday of January, April, July, & October at 11:00 AM PT



# Inside Cotino™, a Storyliving by Disney™ Community

Thursday, July 16, 2026 | 11:00 a.m. | Zoom

**Presenters: Ana Arias, Manager of Community Operations for Cotino™, a Storyliving by Disney™ community; and Frederick T. Whitney, Esq., Whitney Curry, APC.**



This timely program will offer a behind-the-scenes look at one of the most distinctive new community developments in the country, exploring how innovative planning, technology, lifestyle programming, and operational strategy come together in a large-scale mixed-use environment. Drawing from the experience of Cotino™, a Storyliving by Disney™ community, the presentation will address current trends in new developments, the role of technological advances in community operations, and the unique maintenance challenges associated with managing a 24-acre lagoon amenity.

Attendees will also gain insight into the practical and strategic considerations involved in blending multigenerational community needs while balancing residential expectations with commercial, hospitality, and vacation-oriented uses.

Community managers and industry professionals will benefit from this discussion of emerging issues facing large-scale and lifestyle-oriented communities, including lessons that can inform planning, governance, maintenance, and resident experience in communities of all sizes.

**RSVP to [alisa.woolsey@lf2.org](mailto:alisa.woolsey@lf2.org)**



**UP NEXT**



**Thursday, October 15, 2026**

**11:00 a.m. | Zoom**

**Presenter: Kelly G. Richardson of Richardson Ober LLC**

**When Homeowners Attack – Dealing with Bullying**