



**MONTPELIER WOODS HOMEOWNERS' ASSOCIATION**

**COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS**

**January 2018**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Montpelier Woods Homeowner Association (MWHOA) is a community of 348 homes located in Prince George's County, MD. The homes were mainly constructed from 1977 to 1984. The homeowners association is a non-profit, 501(c)(4), and is represented by a Board of Directors (BOD) comprised of five (5) volunteers elected by the community for one year terms. The BOD is vested with the management of the affairs of the non-profit corporation on behalf of the member-homeowners. The authority of the BOD is derived from and limited to those powers expressly vested in it by its governing documents and Maryland law<sup>1</sup>. The BOD is responsible for:

- Keeping a record of its acts and corporate affairs and to present a statement thereof to the members at the annual meeting of the members, or at any special meeting when such statement is requested in writing by one-fourth (1/4) of the members;
- supervising all officers, agents and employees of this Association, and to see that their duties are properly performed;
- determining the amount of the annual assessment against each lot at least thirty (30) days in advance of each annual assessment period and sending written notice of each assessment to every Owner and issuing, upon demand by any person, a certificate setting forth whether or not any assessment has been paid;
- procuring and maintaining adequate liability and hazard insurance on property owned by the Association; and
- maintaining the Common Area.

In the summer of 2017, the BOD authorized the creation and execution of a community survey. Since the community was founded, there had not been a formal survey accomplished. The previous (2017) and current (2018) board felt it was important to hear about a number of issues and to help guide the management of the community's affairs.

### Research Process:

- The survey was opened from September 1, 2017 to November 30, 2017;
  - the survey was postal mailed to all 348 member homeowners as well as current renters; and, a wide-scale announcement was made in the fall community newsletter.
- The survey contained 28 questions about:
  - Resident Demographics;
  - thoughts on the neighborhood;
  - neighborhood activities; and,

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<sup>1</sup> Maryland Homeowners Association Act

[https://govt.westlaw.com/mdc/Browse/Home/Maryland/MarylandCodeCourtRules?guid=NA1DF66D09CC311DB9BCF9DAC28345A2A&originationContext=documenttoc&transitionType=Default&contextData=\(sc.Default\)](https://govt.westlaw.com/mdc/Browse/Home/Maryland/MarylandCodeCourtRules?guid=NA1DF66D09CC311DB9BCF9DAC28345A2A&originationContext=documenttoc&transitionType=Default&contextData=(sc.Default))

- HOA priorities.
- Responses received from 76 homes, resulting in a 22% response rate.

## **HOA SUMMARY OF RESULTS**

### **Section 1: Resident Information, Questions 1-7**

- 76 households responded to the survey.
- All of the respondents were homeowners, no renters completed the survey.
- 44 of the respondents (59%)<sup>2</sup> have lived in the neighborhood for 20 or more years.
  - Note: the survey results are biased towards, or more representative of, homeowners who have lived here for more than 20 years.

### **Section 2: Thoughts on our neighborhood, Questions 8-22**

- 76% (n=56) of respondents rated the general upkeep of the community as better than average or well kept. Two respondents (3%) said the general upkeep was worse than average or run down.
- The majority of the respondents (68%, n=46) like to interact with their neighbors.
- All of the respondents (n=75) knew at least a few of their immediate neighbors.
- Residents were asked about the assets of the neighborhood. They could choose more than one response. The most frequently chosen assets were: low HOA fees (73%, n=53), low traffic (60%, n=44), parks, open spaces and trails (55%, n=40), community character and environment (53%, n=39), proximity to shopping (44%, n=32) and public services (44%, n=32).
- Residents were asked about the services needed in the neighborhood and 33 people provide response. Seven said leaf removal services, six said snow removal, 5 said that the common areas needed attention, and 3 people said the entrance signs to the neighborhood needed landscaping and/or lights. Other answers were: street repair, a dumpster for bulk trash removal, improved security (i.e. block captains), an electronic recycling event, and the organization of group discounts on home repair services (i.e. roof repair). The full list is available in the Appendix.
- Two-thirds (67%, n=43) of respondents said they would support increases in HOA fees to improve services or obtain additional services for the neighborhood. However, some said their support of increased fees depended on what the additional services would be or do.
  - Of those who said they would accept an increase, the maximum increases ranged from \$5 to \$240 a year.
  - Nine said they would accept a maximum increase of \$5 to \$10; four said they would accept a maximum increase of \$20-\$30; six said they would accept an increase of \$40 to \$50; and 11 said an increase of \$100-\$125 would be acceptable.
- Forty-two people provided a write-in response to the question of what upgrades or improvements they would like to see. Nine people said they were happy with the neighborhood as is, 10 said they would like more neighborhood events, 11 wanted improved maintenance of common areas and trees (i.e. removal of dead

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<sup>2</sup> Percentages were calculated on the number of responses for a given question.

trees), and 8 would like to see more landscaping and/or lights around the neighborhood entrance signs. Other answers were: a more informative newsletter, people to pick up after their pets, speed bumps or other speed deterrent installed, a community vegetable garden, a lawn and home equipment exchange, and a stop light at the neighborhood entrance on Rt. 197 and Basswood Dr.

- It should be noted that one respondent wrote that they were against the development of trails in the common areas behind people's houses. Their concerns were that these paths would make homes more vulnerable to break-ins and vandalism.
- Other concerns were regarding the amount of litter and debris that is in the neighborhood, both from neighbors and outsiders. The full list of responses is available in the Appendix.
- 83% of respondents (n=62) said they were happy here and would probably state for the next 5 years. Only six people, or 8% of respondents, said they were unhappy here.
- Respondents (n=70) had many positive things to say about the neighborhood.
  - 39 (56%) said they liked that it was quiet, calm and/or peaceful.
  - 35 (50%) people liked the location of the neighborhood and its proximity to DC, Baltimore, Annapolis, major roads, shopping and/or restaurants.
  - 21 (30%) people said they like their neighbors and feel that the residents are friendly.
  - 16 (23%) said it was a nice place to walk and/or like the trees and wooded feel of the neighborhood.
  - 10 (14%) people said the neighborhood is safe and has low crime.
  - Other answers included privacy, the different architectural designs of the houses, it is reasonably clean, and the diversity of people.
- However, there are also elements of the neighborhood that could be improved. Some of the things that people said they liked the least were: the lack of upkeep to some people's homes and yards (n=17), renters and/or party houses who do not respect other neighbors (n=11), drivers speeding (n=10), and the large number of cars parked on the streets to include commercial vehicles (n=10).
  - Some residents said they disliked things that are not under the control of the HOA, such as loud motorcycles, circling helicopters, traffic on Rt. 197, and the lack of a neighborhood pool.
- Respondents (n=22) provided suggestions for ways to clean up or improve the common areas. The most common answers were the removal of dead or dying trees (n=7), removal of debris and trash (n=3), and the replacement of deteriorating cable boxes (i.e. Verizon and Comcast) (n=3).
- Respondents were asked to rate 8 items about whether or not they were problematic, on a scale of 0-5. A score of 0 indicated that it was not a problem and a score of 5 meant that it was a problem in need of immediate resolution.
  - Crime, drugs, and violence – 43% (n=28) said it was not a problem (0) or a minimal issue (1). Less than 10% (n=6) said it was a big problem (4) or one in need of immediate resolution (5).

- Limited recreation activities – 68% (n=42) said it was not a problem or a minimal issue. Less than 5% (n=3) said it was a big problem or one in need of immediate resolution.
- Sewage/drainage issues – 57% (n=37) said it was not a problem or a minimal issue. Less than 10% (n=6) said it was a big problem or one in need of immediate resolution.
- Abandoned/run down houses - 32% (n=22) said it was not a problem or a minimal issue. 21% (n=14) said it was a big problem or one in need of immediate resolution.
- Unsupervised children/teenagers - 56% (n=36) said it was not a problem or a minimal issue. 11% (n=7) said it was a big problem or one in need of immediate resolution.
- Tension between neighbors - 82% (n=50) said it was not a problem or a minimal issue. Less than 7% (n=4) said it was a big problem or one in need of immediate resolution.
- Limited involvement in neighborhood activities – 52% (n=30) said it was not a problem or a minimal issue. Less than 9% (n=5) said it was a big problem or one in need of immediate resolution.
- Traffic speed - 17% (n=11) said it was not a problem or a minimal issue. 30% (n=20) said it was a big problem or one in need of immediate resolution.
- Other problems that people wrote-in included: too many cars parked on the street (n=4), solicitors (n=2), poor property maintenance of some homes and yards (n=2), people not picking up after their pet or letting it off the leash (n=3), and trash in the common areas and streets (n=4).
- Suggestions for improvement were: (Q22)

### **Section 3: Neighborhood Activities and HOA Priorities, Questions 23-28**

- 63% (n=46) of respondents said they never used the playground. However, many of these people said this was because they did not have children or young family members (i.e. nieces, grandchildren) in the home or nearby. 32% (n=23) said they used in a few times a season. None of the respondents said they used the playground almost daily.
- 45% (n=32) of respondents said they never used the walking trail near the playground. 35% (n=25) use the trail a few time a season. 11% (n=8) use it bi-weekly or weekly and 8% (n=6) said they used it almost daily.
- 70% (n=44) said they supported a portion of annual HOA dues going to pay for neighborhood activities, 30% (n=21) said they did not. Of those who did support it, some noted that they only wanted a small portion used for social events.
- Support for the following HOA activities:
  - Easter egg hunt – 77% said yes (n=44); 23% said no (n=13)
  - Movie night at the park - 57% said yes (n=31); 43% said no (n=23)
  - 4<sup>th</sup> of July cookout and kids parade - 79% said yes (n=48); 21% said no (n=13)
  - Fall/winter holiday hay rides - 71% said yes (n=41); 29% said no (n=17)

- Annual community garage sale - 84% said yes (n=54); 16% said no (n=10)
- Several people who said they did not support the events was because they did not have children and most of the events were “kid-centric”.
- Other activities/events people would like were: shredding events, electronic recycling, book club, wine and cheese nights at someone’s house, farmers market, general cookout, block parties for each street, monthly get together, and pool parties at Patuxent Greens, Bowie Baysox night, game nights, day at the museum, pick up trash events, a book swap/community library boxes, and a gardening club. The full list is in the Appendix.
- Respondents were asked to rank neighborhood priorities on a 5-point scale, with 1 being the highest priority and 5 being the lowest.
  - Common area maintenance – 22% said low or least priority (4 and 5)(n=14); 67% said it was a high or the highest priority (1 and 2)(n=42)
  - Common area improvement – 32% said low (n=19); 47% said high (n=28)
  - Tree removal in common area – 28% said low (n=17); 45% said high (n=27)
  - Pet related nuisance – 40% said low (n=28); 31% said high (n=22)
  - Homeowner property upkeep – 17% said low (n=12); 64% said high (n=45)
  - Noise nuisance – 41% said low (n=28); 44% said high (n=30)
  - Covenants violations – 28% said low (n=19); 48% said high (n=32)
  - Neighborhood safety – 12% (n=8); 70% said high (n=46)
  - Neighborhood communication – 22% said low (n=14); 56% said high (n=35)
  - Traffic/vehicle speed – 21% said low (n=14); 63% said high (n=43)
  - Unsupervised children/teens – 38% said low (n=24); 37% said high (n=23)
  - Neighbor conflict resolution – 51% said low (n=31); 28% said high (n=17)
  - Vandalism – 37% said low (n=23); 40% said high (n=25)
  - Family social activities – 52% said low (n=32); 24% said high (n=15)
  - Adult social activities – 57% said low (n=35); 21% said high (n=13)
- 56 respondents provided an answer to a follow-up question about what they would like to see happen. The full list of comments are available in the Appendix.
  - Nine people made mention of home and yard upkeep, to include mowing the lawn.
  - Ten people wants the common areas to be better maintained and/or better delineated to neighbors. People want litter, trash, and debris removed from the streets and wooded common areas.
  - Five people suggested improvements for the playground area, such as installing two trash cans at the front to reduce litter, mulching,
  - 19 people said they want stricter enforcement of the covenants on items regarding home and yard upkeep, permissible fence types, noise ordinances, broken cars, trailers and RVs, pets, and renters.

- Some respondents (n=14) suggested installing speed bumps or warning signs, decrease the speed limit, and working with the police to patrol for speeders in order to deter speeding.
- Three people said they would like landscaping and lighting to be installed around the two neighborhood entrances on Rt. 197.
- Eight people want better engagement with police in order to address crime, speeding, and unwanted activity in the park. Some of these people also mentioned block captains.
- Four people want neighbors to pick up after their pets and keep them on leashes.

## 2017 NEIGHBORHOOD SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

### Section I. Resident Information

1) Name:

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2) Street Address:

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3) Phone Number:

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4) Email address:

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5) What is the primary language spoken in your home?

English  Spanish  Other (please list) \_\_\_\_\_

6) Do you own or rent the residence?

Own  Rent

7) How long have you lived in Montpelier Woods?

0-5 years  5-10 years  10-20 years  20+ years

### Section II. Thoughts on our neighborhood

8) How would you rate the general upkeep of the community?

Well Kept  Better than Average  Mediocre  Worse than Average  Run Down

9) Do you feel that the residents of Montpelier Woods interact as a community?

Yes  No

10) In some neighborhoods, people do things together and commonly interact and assist each other when needed. In other neighborhoods, people mostly go their own way. What kind of neighborhood interaction do you prefer?

- Common interaction    More than average interaction    Average interaction  
 Mostly independent    Little interaction

11) Do you know your immediate neighbors (neighbors on your street/block)?

- Most    Some    Few    None

12) In your view, what are some assets of our neighborhood?

- Community character and environment    Diversity of residents  
 Parks, open spaces, trails    Property maintenance  
 Proximity to shopping    Community sponsored events  
 Low crime    Low HOA fees    Low traffic  
 Public services (police, fire, trash, snow removal, etc.)  
 Other assets: \_\_\_\_\_

13) Is there a service that our neighborhood needs that is not currently being provided?

- Yes    No

If yes, please identify the needed service: \_\_\_\_\_

14) Would you support increases to the annual HOA assessment to obtain increased neighborhood services/activities/Common area upgrades?

- Yes    No

15) What is the maximum increase you would accept for service upgrades?

\_\_\_\_\_

16) Please indicate the types of activities/common area upgrades you would like to see in the neighborhood.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

17) Which of these statements best describes how you feel about living in your neighborhood?

- I'm happy here and will probably stay for the next 5 years
- I'm unhappy here but will probably stay for the next 5 years
- I'm unhappy here and will probably move in the next 5 years
- I'm happy here but have to move within the next 5 years

18) What do you like **MOST** about living in our neighborhood?

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19) What do you like **LEAST** about living in our neighborhood?

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20) Are there specific common areas in the neighborhood that need to be cleaned or repaired, or require tree cutting services? If so, please list below:

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21) Please indicate if you believe the following items are problematic in our Montpelier Woods neighborhood, rating the level of problem you believe it to be (0-indicates not a problem; 1-indicates minimal issue; 2-indicates small problem; 3-indicates a medium sized problem; 4- indicates a big problem; and, 5-indicates problem needs immediate resolution).

- \_\_\_ Crime, drugs, violence
- \_\_\_ Limited recreational activities
- \_\_\_ Sewage/drainage issues
- \_\_\_ Abandoned or run-down homes
- \_\_\_ Unsupervised children/teenagers
- \_\_\_ Tension between neighbors
- \_\_\_ Limited involvement in neighborhood activities
- \_\_\_ Traffic speed
- \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

22) What other suggestion(s) do you have to make our neighborhood better place to live?

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**Section III. Neighborhood Activities and HOA Priorities**

23) How often do you and your family use the playground?

- Never  A few times a season  Bi-weekly/weekly  
 Almost daily

24) How often do you and your family use the walking trail near the playground?

- Never  A few times a season  Bi-weekly/weekly  
 Almost daily

25) Do you support a portion of our annual dues going to pay for neighborhood social activities?

- Yes  No

26) Please indicate your support for the following activities to occur, in our neighborhood, facilitated by the HOA?

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| Easter Egg Hunt                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Movie Night at the Park                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> of July Cookout and kids parade | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Fall/Winter Holiday Hay Rides                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Annual Community Garage Sale                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |

Other desired event(s)(describe): \_\_\_\_\_

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27) Please choose and rank the highest priority areas for improvement for our neighborhood. Of the list below, choose the button to indicate the priority, with 1 being the highest priority and 5 being the lowest priority.

- Common Area Maintenance       1    2    3    4    5
- Common Area Improvements       1    2    3    4    5
- Tree Removal in Common Areas       1    2    3    4    5
- Pet Related Nuisance       1    2    3    4    5
- Homeowner Property Upkeep       1    2    3    4    5
- Noise Nuisance       1    2    3    4    5
- Covenants Violations       1    2    3    4    5
- Neighborhood Safety       1    2    3    4    5
- Neighborhood Communications       1    2    3    4    5
- Traffic/Vehicle Speed       1    2    3    4    5
- Unsupervised Children/teens       1    2    3    4    5
- Neighbor Conflict Resolution       1    2    3    4    5
- Vandalism       1    2    3    4    5
- Family Social Activities       1    2    3    4    5
- Adult Social Activities       1    2    3    4    5

Other (please describe & indicate priority) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

28) For each of the areas above that you identified as a top priority, what would you specifically like to see happen?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

***Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. We greatly value your input and will use this information to best respond to the needs of our community!***