

Survey Results

Executive Summary—Board Members and Residents

Survey Responses

Two surveys were conducted: one geared toward HOA board members, and one geared toward residents of communities with HOAs. Responses were collected from across the county, and from HOAs of different sizes and types of housing.

Board member responses

123 Participants

101 HOAs represented

Resident responses

802 Participants

317 Communities represented

Board Meetings

Resident-driven sustainability initiatives rely on having open communication with and access to HOA decision-makers. Our survey asked both board members and residents whether their HOAs' board meetings were open to residents and advertised.

Board member responses

- **55%** Reported meetings **OPEN** to residents
- **42%** Reported meetings **CLOSED** to residents
- **3%** Reported not sure of meeting type

Resident responses

- **52%** Reported meetings **OPEN** to residents
- **28%** Reported meetings **CLOSED** to residents
- **20%** Reported not sure of meeting type

Sustainability Interests

Both residents and board members expressed significant interest, or openness, to implementing more sustainable practices within their communities.

Board members

77 Responses

42% Of board members expressed support for adopting sustainable practices, **50%** possibly interested, **8%** have no interest.

- 1** Landscape companies specializing in sustainability
- 2** Stormwater management retrofits or improvements to infrastructure
- 3** Landscaping with native plants

Residents

552 Responses

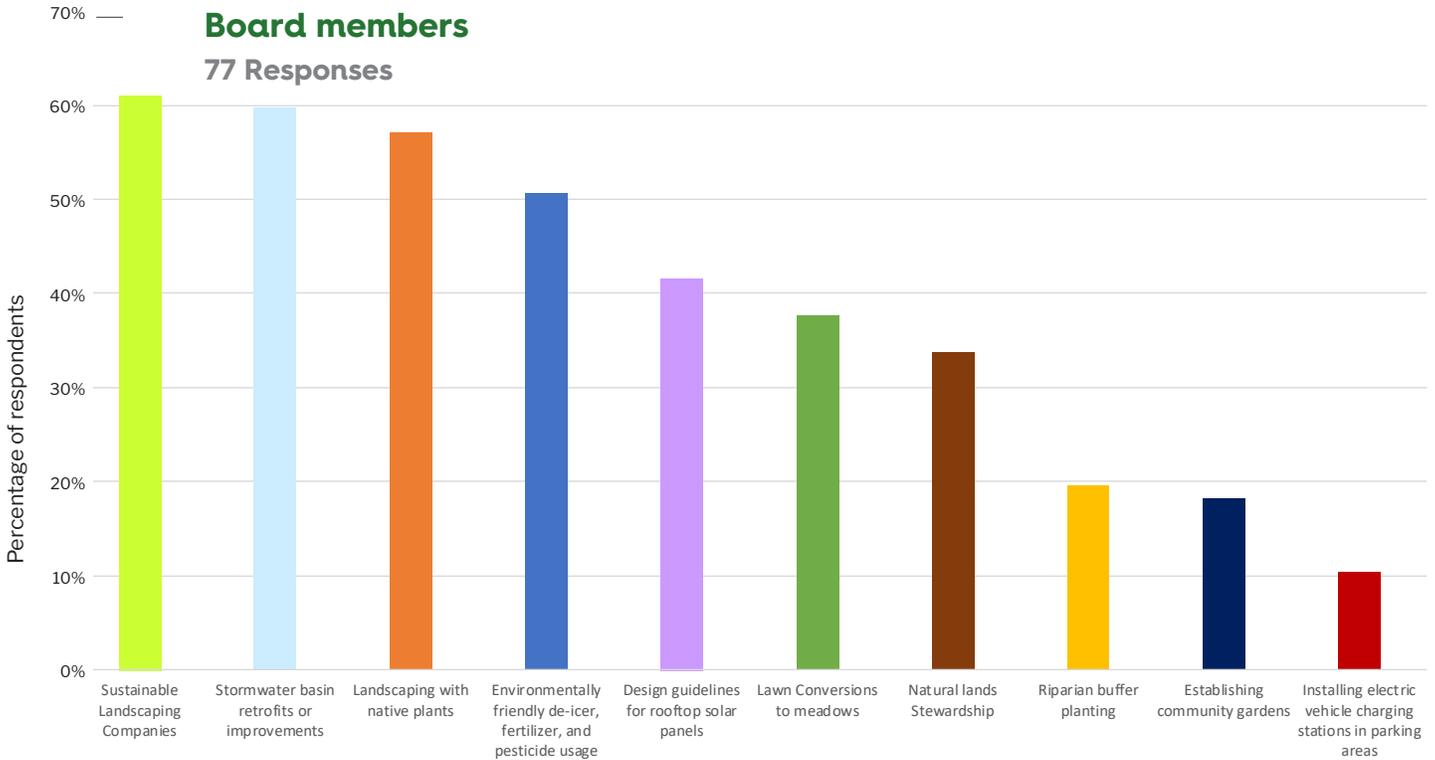
Among residents surveyed, 552 responded to the survey question about if their HOAs pursue or residents would like them to pursue sustainable practices.

About **99%** (545 participants) responded with a sustainable practice they were interested/already pursued, and **1%** (7 participants) responded they did not currently pursue or did not want to pursue any sustainable practice listed.

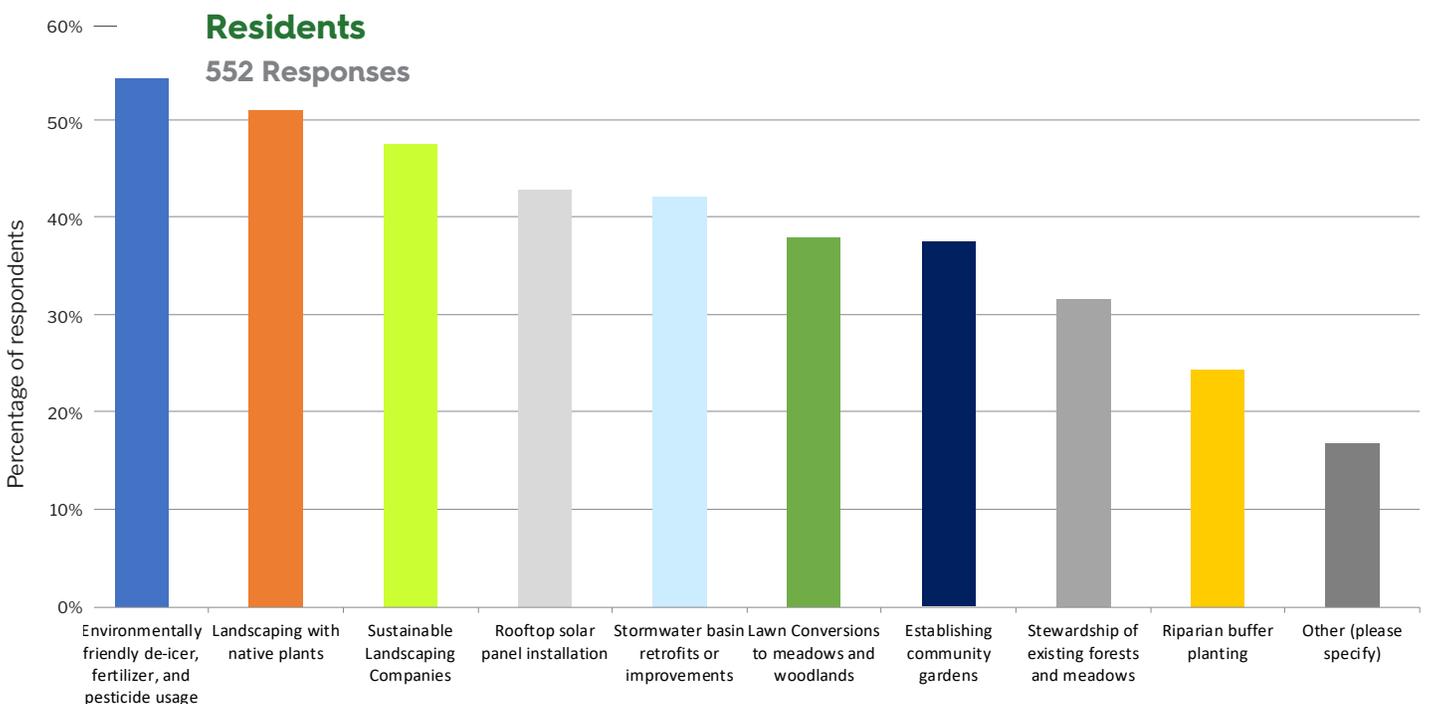
Residents were able to submit open-minded responses for sustainable practices they would like to add. Common responses included interest in composting sites as well as "no spray" initiatives to reduce or eliminate the use of pesticides and herbicides in their HOAs.

- 1** Environmentally friendly alternatives
 - Pesticides, herbicides
 - Fertilizer
 - De-icer
- 2** Landscaping with native plants
- 3** Landscape companies specializing in sustainability

QUESTION: "What sustainable practices are HOAs interested in implementing?"



QUESTION: "Which of the following practices has your HOA pursued or would you like them to pursue?"



Solar Power in HOA Communities

Although many HOAs restrict residents from installing solar panels, the survey showed most residents have interest in and/or a lack of opposition to solar energy within their communities.

80% Positive responses from residents



500 Out of **635** responses conveyed that residents already have solar, are interested in solar, did not mind if others installed solar, and/or were neutral or liked the look of solar.

Board members

107 Responses

- 38%** Communities DO permit rooftop solar panels
- 29%** Communities DO NOT permit rooftop solar panels
- 22%** DON'T KNOW if their community permits rooftop solar panels

Residents

635 Responses

- 23%** Communities DO permit rooftop solar panels
- 36%** Communities DO NOT permit rooftop solar panels
- 34%** DON'T KNOW if their community permits rooftop solar panels

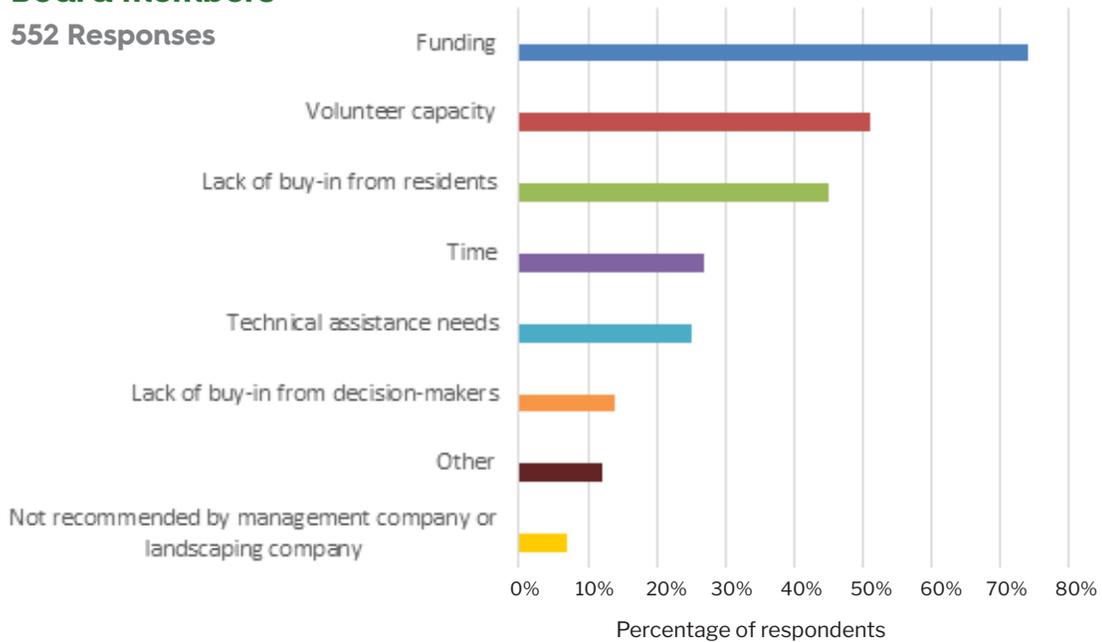
Obstacles to Sustainable Projects

Overall, the HOA board members surveyed were supportive of pursuing sustainable practices for their communities however, they noted a few obstacles that inhibited their progress. Barriers that were cited most frequently were: funding, volunteer capacity, and a lack of buy-in from residents. Other barriers mentioned included a lack in township guidelines to help with implementation, needing more knowledge about best practices, and residents not supporting these practices.

QUESTION: What are some barriers your HOA faces when implementing a project or program like those listed in the previous question?

Board members

552 Responses



Major Concerns

Board members and residents both report the lack of funds to cover costs as the biggest concern facing their HOA. Board members are concerned that they do not have enough funding due to a lack of HOA fees being collected, as well as the general high costs of operations. Many residents responded that their HOA dues are too high for the lack of upkeep they observe.

Board members concerns

85 Responses

- 1 Collecting enough dues to cover expenses**, and rising costs of maintenance and capital projects. Some respondents indicated issues with homeowner non-payment. **(46%)**
- 2 Resident relations**—this includes communicating rules to residents and enforcing rules, as well as meeting everyone’s expectations. **(19%)**
- 3 Maintaining aging stormwater management infrastructure**—high costs and a lack of technical knowledge were noted. **(8%)**

Other commonly noted concerns were an increased need for tree care, struggling to maintain common areas due to rising costs and varying resident expectations, and a lack of volunteerism from homeowners.

Resident concerns

293 Responses

- 1 Costs of covering expenses for community upkeep.** This includes concerns about rising HOA dues, some residents not paying dues, and rising expense costs. **(30%)**
- 2 Maintenance of common open areas**, including rising costs, unsatisfactory landscaping, and managing varying preferences. **(13%)**
- 3 Enforcement of HOA rules**, including rules being enforced too strictly or inconsistently and rules not being enforced **(8%)**. Some residents felt overall aesthetics were suffering due to non-enforcement, and some residents felt their private property rights were being infringed upon **(13%)**.
- 3 Lack of communication from HOA board**, including transparency complaints and feelings that there is no one to contact about issues. **(8%)**

Other commonly noted concerns were a lack of two-way communication between residents and the HOA board (8%), failing stormwater management infrastructure (4%), pond maintenance (3%), issues with the management company (4%), expensive tree care needs (4%), and legacy issues from poor development quality (3%).

Opportunities for Volunteering

Because many sustainability initiatives can be accomplished through resident volunteers, our survey sought to understand how common resident-driven grounds committees are, and whether residents would have interest in volunteering on such a committee.

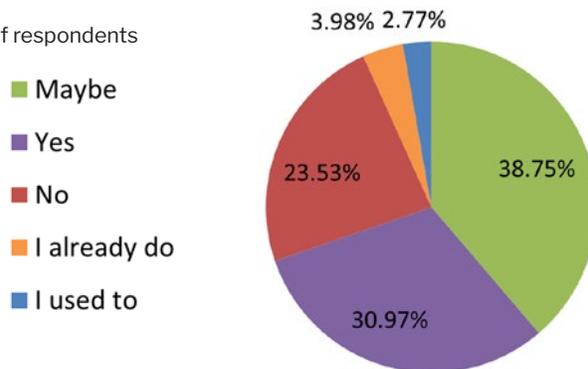
Board members reported a lack of volunteerism from homeowners as a concern to carrying out responsibilities in their developments, as well as an obstacle to implementing sustainable practices.

QUESTION: If your HOA has a grounds/environmental committee, or if it did in the future, would you consider joining the committee and volunteering? These committees often take on projects like native landscaping, pollinator gardens, rain gardens, community gardens, riparian buffer plantings, etc.

Residents

578 Responses

Percentage of respondents



HOA/Municipality Relationship

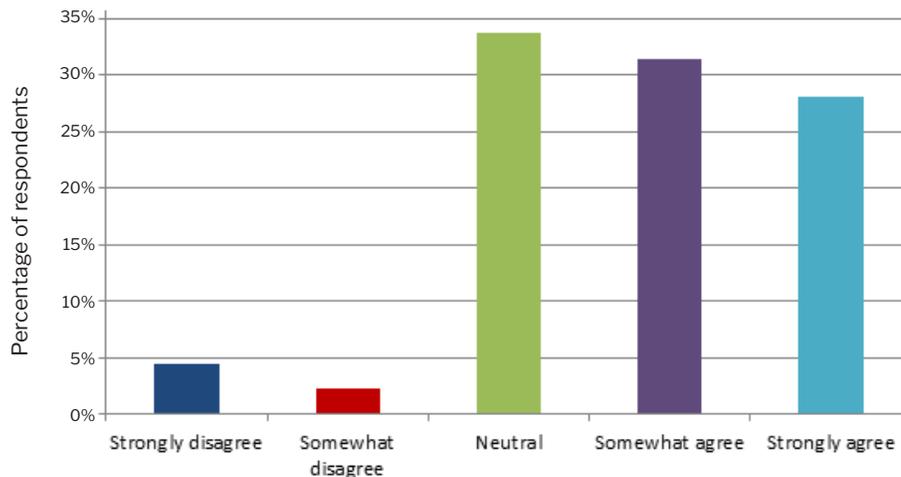
Managing the often complex tasks involved in governance, finance, and common space maintenance can be a challenging job for volunteer HOA boards. Municipalities can support HOAs through having active and open lines of communication.

43% Of HOA board member respondents indicated their HOA has a helpful relationship with their municipality. About **59%** of 89 respondents agreed that their HOA board would benefit from more interaction and support from their municipality. Others were neutral (**34%**), and the rest disagreed (**7%**).

QUESTION (agree or disagree): My HOA board would benefit from more interaction with and support from our municipality

Board members

89 Responses



Rules and Regulations

HOA rules can restrict residents from implementing sustainable practices like backyard gardening, composting, installing solar panels, or converting lawn areas to naturalized gardens.

Resident responses

When residents were asked about their feelings toward HOA rules, about **78%** of **625** respondents answered that their HOA rules could use adjustments and updating or that the rules did not reflect what residents want.

Board responses

Responses to the board survey revealed that nearly half (**49%**) had never amended their rules.