



COMMUNITY LIVING

The Historical Perspective

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I have been fortunate enough to observe the growth of estates in South Africa since the early 1990s, and then to build a career in the same Industry from the late 1990s. For some, community living is no different than a village, clan, hamlet or a parish system that existed for thousands of years in different formats around the world.

The community living to which we are accustomed today in South Africa originated in the mid-19th Century in the United States due to the rapid population growth in the 1960s, and the construction of highways that made commuting from outside areas to cities easier and handled the large uptake in community living. The fourth level of government became hugely popular as owners became members of the association and had a say over rules, architectural and aesthetic appearances of their houses and the upkeep of common facilities.

In South Africa it all started in the mid 1980s, with Fourways Gardens Residential Estate which was believed to be the first residential estate with an HOA as a legal entity. Various estates followed in quick succession over the next 15 years, and international golf course designers like Gary Player, Jack Nicklaus, Tom Weiskopf, Ernie Els, Nick Price and Greg Norman were sought after to put their names to the next best golf course in estate developments. Next ensued the battle for the best entrance gate, amenities and championship golf courses became typical for each development.

An overview of the community developments in the USA is a clear indication of how we in South Africa have progressed in a very short space since 1984.

CAI - M-360 Leadership practices in building community

Pre 1960s - The House (floor plans, façade etc)

1960s - 1970s - The Neighborhood Amenity
(community pool, golf course, etc)

1980s - 1990s - The Lifestyle (access gates, amenity packages, security, respite from the outside world)

1990s - 2000s - Community and Values
(community / place / technology / health / education recreation)

The financial meltdown in 2008 had a massive impact on the development of estates in South Africa and more than 10 years later, some estates still struggle to be financially viable. Golf courses were suddenly not the only attraction for potential buyers, but rather sustainable lifestyle and eco estates which used clubs, amenities such as gyms, restaurants and the like to attract and retain members.

Today it's massive industry with a value chain that stretches way beyond the traditional security, landscaping, cleaning and accounting services that most estates are known for. Local authorities do not have the financial capacity to provide housing and most future developments will use HOAs as a legal entity. So on that note, community living is here to stay!