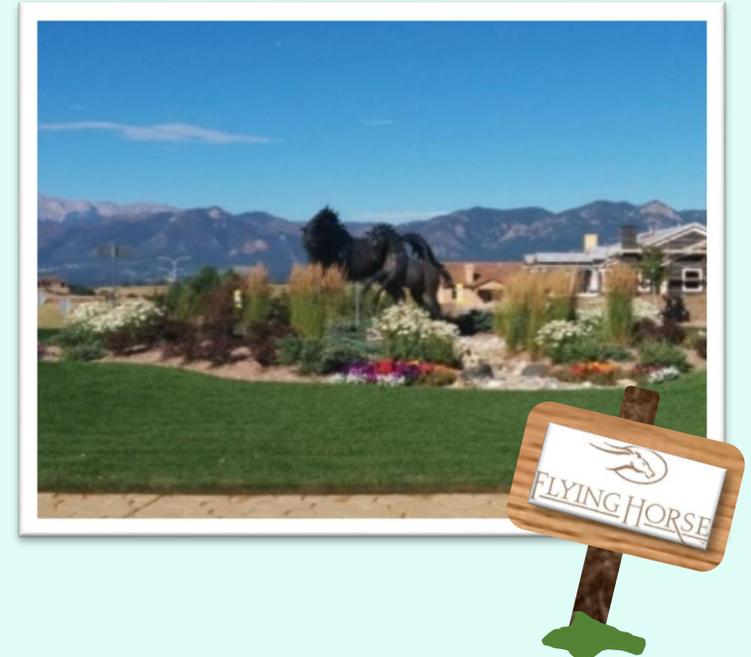


Manager of the Year Award Nominee: Scott Ellison



For many years I've been living in a state that boasts 53 peaks higher than 14,000 feet. I am no stranger to elevation or a good challenge. When I was brought in to manage Flying Horse Community in May of 2014, I immediately recognized a mountain of issues. The property-a developer controlled, 1,593 acre, 1,014 home, Large Scale Community established in 2004 in the high desert of Colorado Springs, Colorado-had seen four prior managers within the period of two years.

In short order, it became apparent that the community needed some help. Most obviously missing was an overall lack of community, communication and follow through with internal and external customers. The Association also struggled with financial concerns, deferred maintenance, poor covenant enforcement and general dissatisfaction in providing education and service to its homeowners. The Board of Directors made it clear the need to address these concerns and I knew the journey and climb was going to be quite an adventure!





Magazine



E-blast



Easter Bunny Visits!



Garage Sale

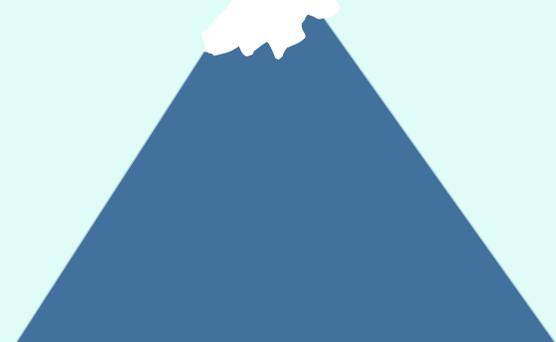
The first obstacle was to overcome Mount Communication.

I immediately instituted bi-weekly emails with general announcements, village and community specific messages, maintenance notices, educational articles, event invitations and upcoming committee or board member meetings.

In addition, we needed a more cohesive community through recreational activities. The board invested nearly \$30,000 in fun activities including eight summer concerts in the park, an Easter Egg Hunt, a Community BBQ, a Movie Night, a Christmas (Holiday) Party and two garage sales. Community members appreciated the open communication and thoroughly enjoyed the neighborhood events.



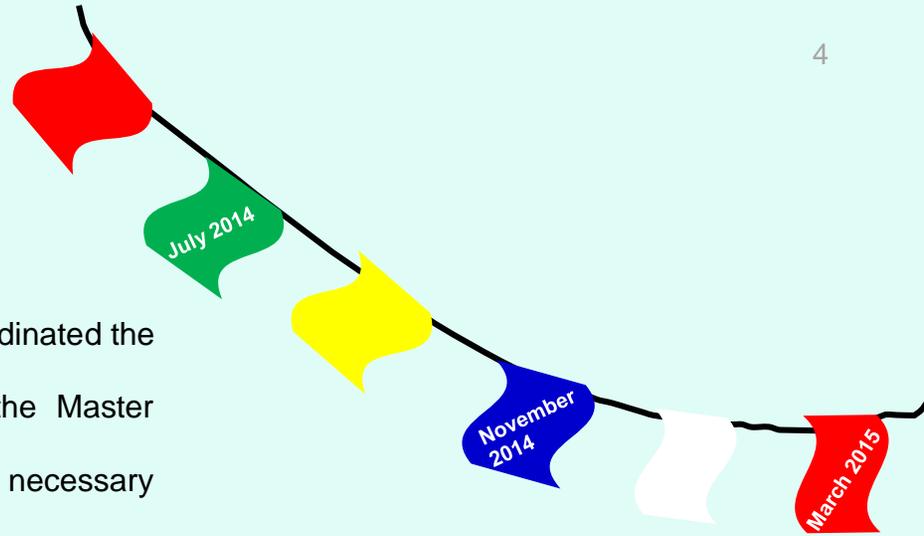
Concert in the Park



Next challenge: Finance Mountain.

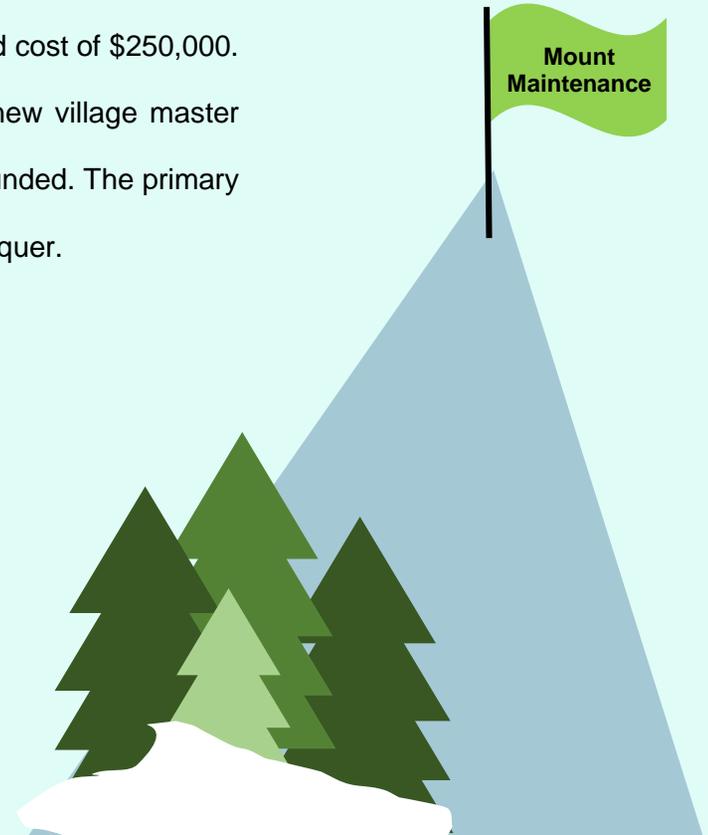
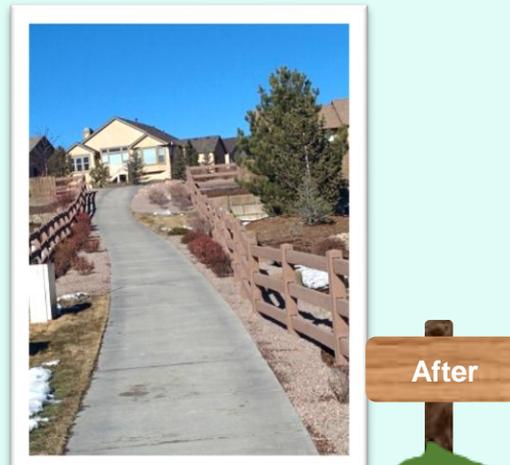
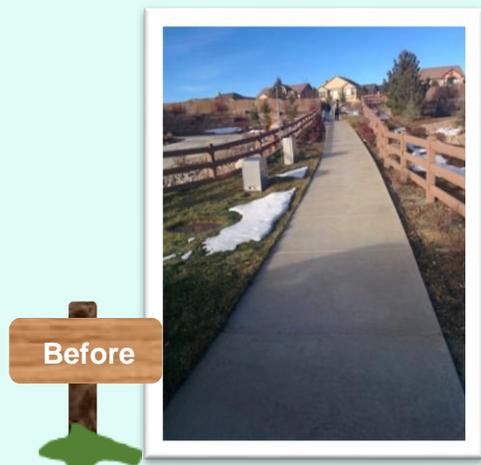
In July of 2014, in partnership with our accounting department, I coordinated the development of seven village specific operating budgets as well as the Master Association Revenue and Expenses. Tracking and coding all expenses was necessary to have a better understanding of where money was being spent. Creating a more descriptive chart of accounts and tracking for each village helped devise a necessary planning tool to develop a more comprehensive budget.

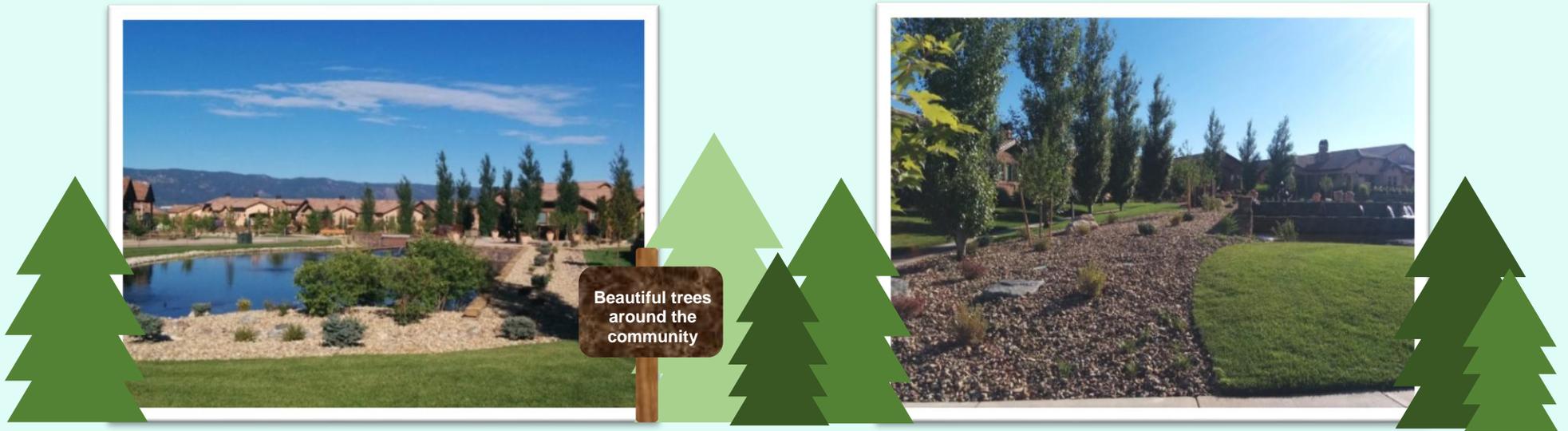
Six months into my tenure, in November 2014, the Association’s auditor stated that there would be a 65% increase in fees to prepare the upcoming Audit & Taxes due to inaccuracies in financial records and support documentation. I took a more proactive approach with the auditor by setting up a meeting with all parties involved, identifying prior issues and developing a two page document outlining tasks, deadlines and the information necessary to complete the audit. The end result? An on time, satisfactory audit, with no inaccuracies or issues and a complimentary note from the auditor, “Thank you for all your support during the audit process: it was greatly appreciated.” I scaled another fourteener.



On to Mount Maintenance!

The village of Sonoma has not had an increase in assessments since its inception in 2008, in fact, the assessments were reduced. The village's limited budget was reflected in its eroding landscaping. Residents of Sonoma were gathered at a forum in September 2014 to explain the current status of the village, its history, its budget restraints and the need to develop a plan to bring this village back to its "flag ship" status. In January 2015, assessments were increased 33% and cost saving measures were implemented. One hundred thirty three thousand square feet of plant beds, with wood mulch that must be turned or replaced annually at a cost of nearly \$36,000 per year, were converted into decorative rock. Reducing water needs and replacing dead plants provided a cleaner, more appealing look and continued savings. This concept of rock bed conversions is being utilized throughout the entire community. A complete revitalization and master re-design of the landscaping within the village is underway at an anticipated cost of \$250,000. A town hall meeting scheduled for 2016 aims to get feedback from the homeowners about the new village master landscaping plan, to further discuss how and when to proceed, and identify how the project will be funded. The primary objective for all is Preserving, Protecting and Enhancing the value of this Village. A mountain to conquer.





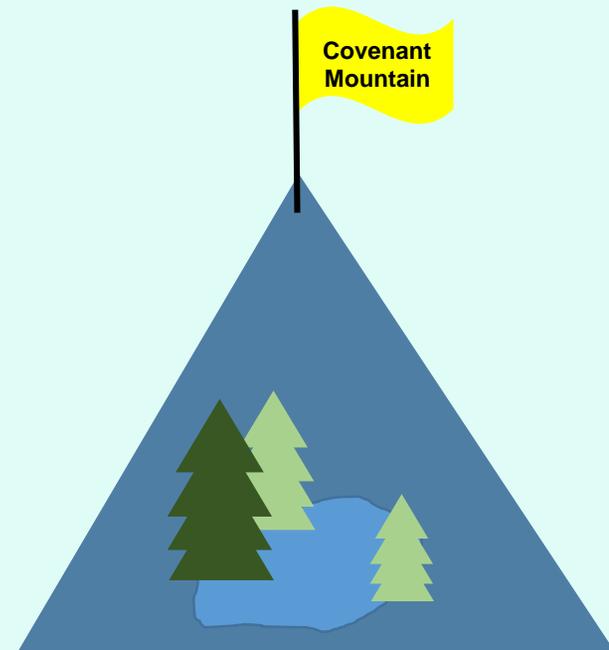
The landscaping improvements and long term savings continued with the institution of a communitywide Tree Care Program, established in February 2015, that provides annual pruning, fertilization, and insect control to the nearly 4,000 trees within the development. This initial, three year, \$80,000 program has been established to protect one of the largest investments of the community environment-trees. Annually, the community replaces 40-60 trees at an average expense of \$680 per tree (\$27,200-\$40,800). Could these savings be put to better use within the community? Absolutely.



Conquering Covenant Mountain

Highlighting covenant enforcement was a main goal for 2015. The key culprit? Landscaping violations. The community issued 235 violations in spring and summer of 2015. Homeowners were educated on expectations in the bi-weekly communications followed by a formal letter to discuss their respective properties and how the landscaping had deteriorated throughout the season. Non-compliant homeowners received fines after providing ample time to resolve the issues.

On the other hand, we found it very important to recognize the many hours and commitment that community homeowners had given to the maintenance of their properties. Taking this into consideration, we emphasized the exceptional homeowners that took pride in their homes and landscaping by creating and distributing a “We Noticed” door hanger in May of 2015.



My time at Flying Horse has been quite the journey but truly a day does not pass without learning something new about the community and its governance. I know there will always be new goals, new challenges and new mountains to climb but the opportunities, new friends and challenges abound make me proud and excited to be a part of the Community Association industry.

