

# Condominium Home Owners' Association

*Serving BC's Strata Property Owners since 1976*

Bulletin: 300-180

## Condo Smarts

Headline: Combining two units into one can be done.

Topic: Amalgamation of strata lots

Publication date: June 4, 2006

Publication: The Province

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Amalgamation of more than one strata lot into one is a growing trend and is achievable, but owners considering doing this should approach with care and be armed with information.

Recently, the Grays of Vancouver wrote to say that, with a three-child family, they decided to buy two two-bedroom apartments and renovate them into one larger apartment - but have met with resistance from the strata council who say they will exceed their occupancy limits and do not want to reduce the Gray's strata fees to those of one unit.

Here's information to keep in mind when you want to amalgamate two or more units into one:

- The alterations will affect the individual units but also, possibly, the common property. If there are structural alterations as well as external alterations that affect the common hallways, common property or the common-service facilities like electrical or plumbing they will require the written approval of the strata corporation.
- Owners can amend the strata plan technically, consolidating the two lots, without strata approval if:
  - 1) The unit entitlement of the consolidated strata lot is the same as or less than the combined unit entitlement of the two or more units consolidated;
  - 2) The total number of votes of the consolidated strata lot is the same as or less than the number of votes of the two or more strata lots being consolidated;

3) The amendment will not increase the share of the common expenses borne by a strata lot, other than the strata lots being consolidated.

- Before you proceed, you will need construction permits, reasonable cooperation of your strata and your neighbours and increased personal insurance coverage.
- Your municipal office can assist you with occupancy limits when you apply for permits.
- By amalgamating two units your liability for common expenses will likely double, so be prepared for the future costs of operating or unforeseen assessments as well. As well, if this is a new building, built after 1999, there may be a warranty limiting certain alterations.
- Give some consideration to the marketability of your home if you ever decide to sell. Will there be a market for your condo and will you be forced to return it to two units to successfully sell the property?
- Finally, there will be some legal agreements and complications in your purchase and sale so have a discussion with an experienced strata lawyer before you proceeding.

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