

Condo Smarts

Headline: The Best of Strata Living: Community

Topic: Strata Living

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Dear Tony: I want to thank you for your many years of columns, and hope that you would consider a column about the really good side of living in a condo. We are fortunate to live in a 48 unit condo building that has had very few issues, but most important is a wonderful community of people who are there for each other. The technical information in the columns has been very helpful, but it does make condo living look a bit gloomy some times.

Jean Robertson

Dear Jean: Thank you for your encouragement to take a view from the positive side of strata living. Condo living has many great benefits for owners and residents and is one of the best uses of land distribution and density in many parts of the province. For every problem or crisis that arrives in a gloomy email there are 1000's of strata owners who are extremely happy with condo living and how their strata corporations operate.

There was a time when people chose condos more because of affordability. While strata living still provides affordable housing for many people in the province, it is now a positive lifestyle choice for many homeowners and tenants. New condo developments usually take a few years for their communities to develop and form a cohesive function, but take a close look at communities that have developed over the past 5 decades, and you will find a very strong community bond, a close network of mutual support, assistance, and understanding of strata living. Noise, lifestyle, pets, cultural diversity and use of property for parking or storage facilities are rarely ever an issue. The success in these communities is based on the understanding of the owners that a certain level of tolerance and respect are necessary. Some of the best pot luck dinners I have had the privilege to attend are at strata annual general meetings.

Older buildings in high density areas are currently being courted by a number of developers as they are now at the stage of major renewals and upgrades. It makes sense to consider a redevelopment of a site that could have a higher

density around services such as transit, community centers and public facilities, yet what I find most intriguing is the number of aging communities that have refused developer offers. In some cases the offers are substantially higher than current market value, but because the owners are protecting the value of the community that they have developed, they are not interested. I attended a general meeting in November where a land buyer offered 150% of the market value, and over half of the owners voted against the offer. One owner who spoke at the meeting supported their community and wasn't willing to move. "Where will I go to find the same wonderful people who I have grown to trust as my neighbours. If we do sell and I do move, I won't be able to afford another condo at the same size in this neighbourhood." Strata living provides occupants with many advantages we often take for granted. They are a collective that purchases many services and amenities that are not affordable in detached home ownership. For travelers, working families and seniors we can collectively contract our building maintenance and services and maintain higher security in a contained neighbourhood. No more gutters, lawns, tree pruning or snow removal, and games rooms, pools, exercise facilities, golf courses, marinas, resort access, community gardens, libraries and guest suites all add to the increased enjoyment of our properties.

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