What Does It Mean to Live in a Condominium?

Some of us have moved here from private homes, some from apartments. A condominium is both of these and neither of these. It is a unique place to live. It has the advantage of home ownership but it is also like an apartment in that there are individual units within one large building. So what does that mean?

A condominium is a community, and just like in an apartment building, some of the freedoms one has in a detached, single-family home are restricted. River Park, like all condominiums, is governed by rules and regulations. If each of the approximately 500 residents drafted these, we would probably have 500 different sets because nobody would agree upon anything. Ours come from the recommendations of the Rules and Regulations committee and are approved by Council. Or they may be initiated by Council as issues arise.

Some of our rules, such as maintaining a dress code in the lobby, prohibiting carrying open drinks in the common areas, restricting the color of the window treatments (white or beige) that can be seen from the outside, are designed to maintain the overall appearance and ambiance of the building as well. They reinforce the idea that we are a luxury building and not a college dorm. This is common to most condominiums.

In a condominium, some of the worries about repairs and upkeep are minimized, since they are mostly carried out by the maintenance staff. Toilet backed up? Dripping faucet? Help, at a nominal fee (certainly much less than what you would pay a plumber), is usually minutes away. Incidentally, this type of maintenance is **not** available in many condominiums; the service we have here, coupled with the longevity of our staff, is something about which we can boast.

We are always concerned about maintaining the value of the building, which means maintaining the value of our significant investment. Your home isn't confined to just your four walls. The common areas of the building are also part of it. Think of them as the foyer of your own unit; you would not be pleased to find that someone had scraped the paint and soiled the wallpaper within your doors. This is why we stress that care be taken when using shopping carts, for example, to minimize the damages done to the common areas.

When it comes to big-ticket items, such as a new roof or air conditioning chiller, those that you don't see, somebody has to pay for them. If you were in a house, you would take care of these expenses. In an apartment building, the building owner—assuming they are a good one—handles these. But in a condominium, we take care of them because *we* are the collective owner. We are the building, one big house, and therefore, the costs for these

capital projects are shared by all of us. Most of the time they are paid from our monthly condo fees; occasionally they are paid through an assessment.

And then there are the operating expenses. Some may remember the expression, "Turn out the lights when you leave the room--we don't have shares in the electric company." In many buildings like River Park, a high-rise built in the mid-1960s, the units are not metered, which means that the amount for utilities is distributed equally among all owners. Think of it as going out for dinner with a group of people where you order one glass of wine and everyone else racks up a large bar bill: since you are all splitting the dinner check, your portion of the meal now becomes quite pricey! So it is with utilities at River Park. You may be careful with *your* use of electricity and running water, but you still pay for the usage from your neighbor next door who leaves lights on in every room.

It's easy not to take as much care individually in a building like ours; after all, we don't receive a bill every month to pay for water, electricity, gas. But we do. Only the bills don't come to our units. They go to the Management Office. We may not write the checks individually—the office does—but we *all* pay nonetheless.

Sincerely,

Council and Management

River Park House Condominium Association