



CONDO CONNECTION NEWSLETTER



An **Associa**® Company

[Q1 - 2019]
IN THIS ISSUE:



Message from the President

Going (more) Green in 2019

At Wilson Blanchard we look at each new year as an opportunity to explore ways to serve you better while, at the same time, keeping up with technology trends and considering our impact on the environment. 2019 is no different. As we looked at the different possibilities to communicate with you, we noticed that more and more Board Members and Unit Owners are communicating with us electronically only. Here are a few of the ways that we are trying to enhance our service to you and reduce our carbon footprint as a company:

- As of February 2019, all monthly financial reports for each corporation are produced and delivered to Board Members by email. This helps us track our service delivery level for the crucial financial update Boards require promptly every month. It also helps us print about 600,000 less sheets of paper each year. Printed hardcopies of the monthly report can be requested from your Manager for any Board Member that still requires one.
- Starting with properties managed from our Hamilton office, we are pleased to announce that all corporation records will be transitioned to electronic document storage. We note that most correspondence is now sent to your Manager electronically so there is no need to print and copy every paper that we receive. Further, more Board Members are receiving the Management Report and associated attachments electronically and using a laptop or tablet at the boardroom table instead of printing. Of course, we will still provide printed copies whenever requested.
- Electronic document storage of records will be completed within the requirements of the Condominium Act for Record Retention and will save corporation's from paying for storage of archived records. It also improves the fulfillment of a records request for owners and helps us all go green.
- We are exploring additional ways to communicate and provide you with relevant content. As always, our blog <https://www.wilsonblanchard.com/blog/> provides valuable industry information and content is also shared on our social channels including LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter. We are also preparing for a custom, mobile-friendly news feed that you can review on your smartphone.

In this newsletter you will read about elevator maintenance, landscape trends, benefits of well-funded reserve funds and information on how to stay in touch with us.

We thank you for partnering with us as we continue to serve you in more convenient and timely ways while helping us consider our impact on the environment.

**Sincerely,
Brad Wells**

President – Wilson Blanchard Management Inc., An Associa® Company

Elevator Ups and Downs.....2

5 Landscape Trends to Try
in 20193

4 Benefits of
Well-Funded Reserves 4

Let's Stay in Touch.....4

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Elevator UPS AND DOWNS

By Courtney Cartmill, Condominium Manager – Waterloo Regional Office



Users of the approximately 19,900 residential and institutional elevators in Ontario take approximately 655,000 elevator trips in a single day, according to Delta Elevator. And elevators are essential to the mobility of many of these users, who include residents and guests of condominium corporations.

As such, it's important to ensure users who rely on elevators to get around have access to this vertical transportation when needed. Part of that is maintaining and repairing elevators, as well as replacing them altogether when the time comes, to avoid un-planned down-time.

However, these activities may also require planned elevator down-time. There are certain factors that should be considered when preparing for both planned and un-planned elevator down-time.

Maintaining and repairing elevators

Preventative maintenance helps keep elevators up and running in good working order. And it's not just about ensuring that they undergo regularly scheduled inspections. Preventative maintenance includes receiving feedback from the elevator mechanic on potential repairs. Quotes should be included with the reports when suggested or mandatory repairs are found.

Managers may then take measures to get these repairs completed. When planning for elevator down-time, managers should consider all other possible changes that may be needed, including ensuring the elevator is up to current code requirements. Having all repairs scheduled at one time is the best way to utilize an elevator mechanic's time. Ensuring that the preventative maintenance is effective is also crucial.

Having a third-party consultant perform a maintenance evaluation will ensure that all areas of a building's elevator needs are being addressed. Elevator mechanics have several units on their routes, which can cause items to be missed. It is important to get a second opinion when there are concerns about a particular elevator. Sometimes a second set of eyes can simply see something the first set did not.

A maintenance evaluation is different from a safety inspection. This does not mean that a safety inspector does not look at maintenance. However, while they may write up a dirty pit, they lack extensive maintenance and mechanical knowledge. A maintenance evaluation will make sure elevators are being properly serviced.

Maintenance logs should also be reviewed regularly. Don't be afraid to ask questions or meet with the mechanic on site to get a better understanding of the building's elevators and their condition.

Replacing and updating elevators

At a certain point in the life cycle of an elevator, it will come time to consider full replacement in order to continue providing reliable elevator service in a building. A full elevator replacement may seem difficult to justify, but due to new code requirements and parts of older model elevators becoming obsolete, it may be something to consider sooner rather than later.

A replacement project takes extensive planning. Seeking feedback from the consultant's previous clients may assist managers in covering areas they may not have considered. Consulting with the condo corporation's fire protection company on this type of project is also important to ensure that the fire panel is compatible with the update. Many elevator modernizations end up requiring a new fire panel that can pinpoint exact locations of trouble signals, whether it's the elevator room or a smoke alarm. Having this information as a part of the bid process will save headaches when attempting to finish the project.

If there is a generator that allows an elevator to continue to operate during a power outage, including the generator company on this project will ensure that the generator is compatible to offer this service during a power outage. Lastly, don't forget keep the budget and financial adviser up to date on the project, including about additional items such as the fire panel and generator that may require changes. It is important to have all parties involved with the project attend a "pre-construction" meeting to put all inquiries on the table and make sure everyone is on the same page. Having surprises during the middle of a lengthy project just adds stress to the project managers, clients and residents.

Planning for elevator down-time

On-site time for elevator installation crews ranges from about two weeks for an accessibility lift, to four weeks for a hydraulic elevator, to six weeks for a traction elevator. Reviewing the accessibility concerns of occupants in the building prior to starting a project of this size is crucial — especially if there is only one elevator.

Users may also be seniors with mobility issues, and it is important that their needs are considered if an elevator is out of service. Installing a stair lift for the duration of a project would be beneficial if many of the users are seniors.

Also consider scheduling projects for when a building is least active. If many residents of a building go away in the winter, this may be the best time to make the changes.

Alert all residents or commercial clients to elevator down-time with notices, which should also be posted on every level the elevator services prior to the date of work and for the duration of down-time. The notices should also advise occupants of alternate options for users with mobility issues or who require assistance transporting large items.

Update notices weekly to keep residents and commercial clients aware of the progress of the project. And

consider including a penalty for every day that the contractor is behind schedule, but also offer a bonus if the contractor comes out ahead of schedule.

Supporting the users who rely on elevators comes down to being proactive with maintenance and repairs, planning carefully when full replacements are required and providing a flow of communication before and during scheduled down-time.

5 [LANDSCAPE TRENDS] TO TRY IN 2019



Plants and shrubs are perhaps the best way to create borders and define space in a community. Like fences, they need to be maintained if they're going to do the job. Unlike fencing, your landscaping needs to be tailored to your climate as well as the time you plan to spend keeping it maintained. Consider these five landscape trends to try in 2019 to provide a fresh look to your property.

1. THE LESS WORK, THE BETTER

Low maintenance plants provide natural beauty and cost less to maintain. Choosing plants that are native to your area, like ornamental grasses, are a great way to cut down on watering and upkeep costs. Consider your local garden center for plant varieties that do best in your climate or keep an eye out for common plants that grow in the wild near your property. These plants will be native ones that are well adapted to area temperatures and will naturally thrive on your property.

2. START A GARDEN

Planting fruits and vegetables is a great way to engage the community. Consider planting strawberries along with a border or even use herbs in a planter to provide a surprise element for residents and guests. Creating a community garden is also an excellent way to motivate residents into caring for their home and the surrounding

area. Large gardens don't have to be a substantial area of land but instead can be planted along borders and in smaller sections throughout the property. Growing food also increase the pollinators on your property, which is beneficial to all plants, but will also encourage healthy habits and education among residents.

3. DRAW ATTENTION

Choosing colourful and unique plants for the edges on your property can help draw attention to your community. There are many kinds of plants that offer stunning colour as well as impressive height. Creating an outline around your property sign will make it more noticeable to both residents and guests. Consider planting the exquisite flowers next to the mailbox center or office.

4. DEFINE PRIVATE SPACES

Residents want both large common areas on their property, as well as smaller private outdoor living spaces. Help create a sense of definition by planting fast-growing shrubs and barrier plants. These will not only help to add privacy to a patio area, but will also become a natural selling point when showing properties to potential residents. If you already have these kinds of areas on your property, consider checking on them to see if any plants are diseased or dead and replacing them with new options.

5. LUSH LAWN

Creating an engaging outdoor living space is vital when it comes to welcoming new residents and keeping the current ones happy. Create a green front and backyard that people can use on a daily basis. Instead of focusing on multiple parts of the lawn, try focusing on the one main area that always seems to draw a crowd. Maintain the lawn with annual aeration and fertilizer applications to create a thick carpet of green. Use proper lawn mowing techniques. If the grass isn't growing well, you may want to replace it with another variety. Create multiple smaller lawn areas all around the property that focus on different uses including grilling areas, lawn games, and sports courts.

Whether choosing to add a garden or just upgrading the lawns to keep people happy, an improved landscape in 2019 will also help improve the value of the property.

A note from Wilson Blanchard:
As always, please be sure to get approval from your association or board before making changes to your landscaping.

About the Author

Peter Goldberg is a gardening and landscaping writer, and outdoor extraordinaire. He likes to fire up the grill to cook for family and friends, as well as using his organically grown garden produce to create mouth-watering meals.

4 BENEFITS OF WELL-FUNDED RESERVES

Managing a condominium's finances and creating budgets that allow a community to preserve market values are key responsibilities for the board of directors. It's essential that a board budgets for the future repair or replacement of major components in a reserve fund. An up-to-date reserve fund is critical to the financial management of a community and it's required by law. But, legal compliance isn't the only reason you should strive to have a well-funded reserve. Here are four great reasons to make sure your reserves are properly funded:

- 1. It proves responsibility.** Creating and maintaining an adequate reserve fund is part of a board's fiduciary duty, but a well-funded reserve demonstrates good stewardship of the association's money. Homeowners will have peace of mind that the board is acting in their best interest and that their biggest and most valuable asset will be protected.
- 2. It keeps you prepared.** When an association has a well-funded reserve, they can pay for unexpected expenses. If an association experiences an unexpected event and doesn't have sufficient funds set aside, they may have to issue a special assessment - which homeowners could see as a sign of financial mismanagement.
- 3. It gives lenders confidence.** Lenders appreciate a well-funded reserve because it's unlikely that there will be a special assessment to pay for repairs and replacements. Lenders are more confident that their decision to lend is passed on actual costs, with a very small chance that a buyer will overextend credit lines or deplete cash. Additionally, some lenders assess for indications of financial health when reviewing mortgage applications and an association with inadequate reserves may be at risk for mortgage denials.
- 4. It attracts buyers.** The overall appearance of a community translates directly into its property value. A well-funded reserve allows an association to pay for unexpected expenses and community asset replacements - thus improving resale values, keeping current homeowners happy and attracting new buyers.

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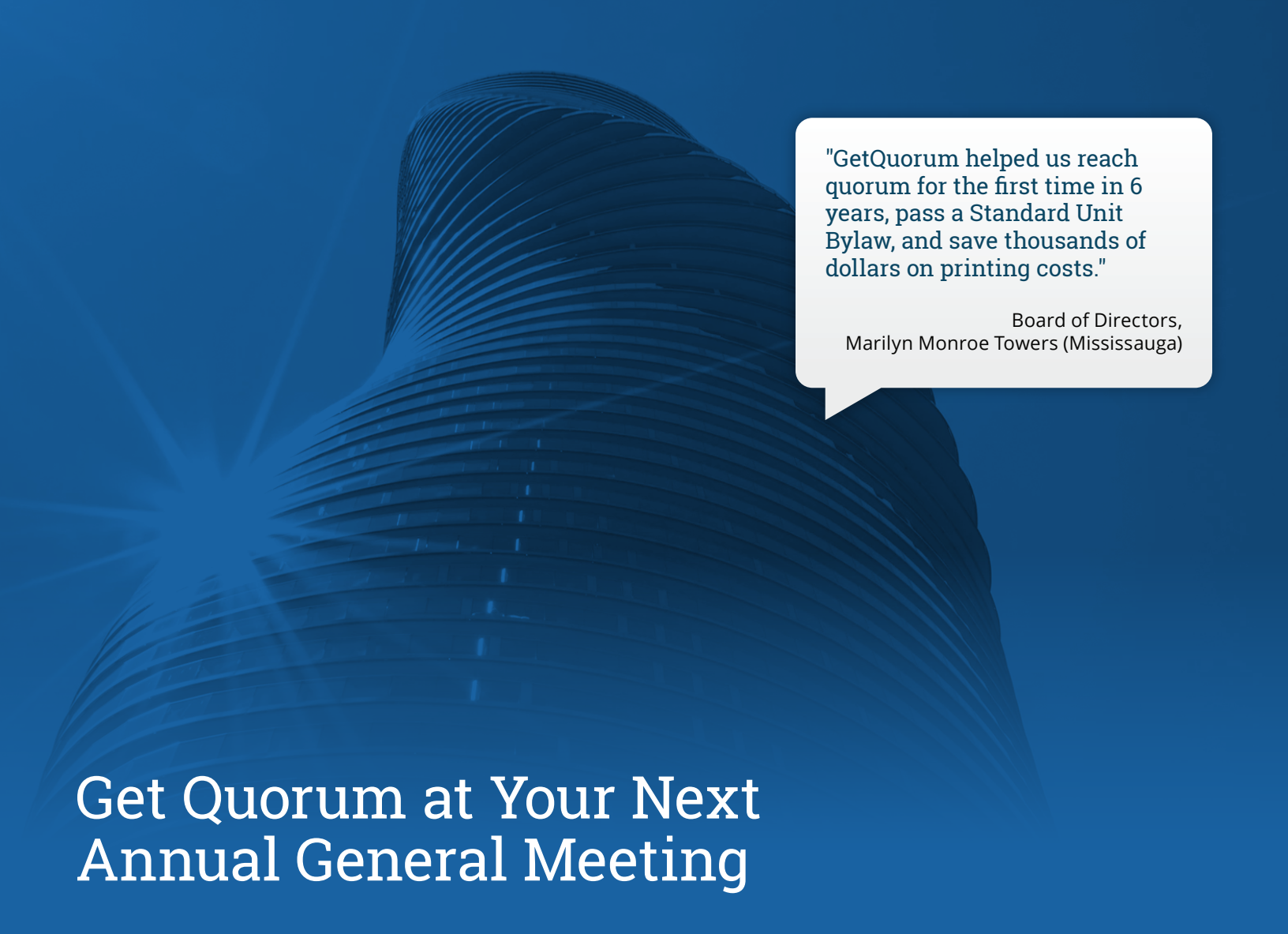
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