



What Makes a Safe Community?

BY MATTHEW WILLIAMS

IN TODAY'S condominium culture, owners and investors choosing to buy and live in a condo community are increasingly emphasizing the importance of safety and security. Working with numerous condominium boards and property management companies, we see first hand what it takes to create and maintain a safe environment for your residents and the positive effect it has on the community as a whole.

Firstly, a comprehensive security program should be in place in every single condominium building or complex, regardless of the size, age and/or demographic. A good security program not only creates peace of mind but also contributes to maintaining a high property value. As board members and property managers, it is your “duty of care” and therefore this responsibility begins with you. To implement a good program, you do not have to be security experts but you do have to be proactive and have an understanding and appreciation for the value of security.

Integrate Your Security Program

Most security standards that are implemented are governed by the corporation’s financials. In some condominiums, security is one of the main and largest items in the operating budget; in others, security features are put on a waiting list until spare funds become available. Whichever the scenario, to have an effective security program, you should have an integrated package consisting of the following aspects:

Physical security. This refers to physical barriers and deterrents such as fences, locks, gates, barriers, natural surveillance, lighting and signage.

Technological security. This refers to technological security such as video surveillance, electronic access controls, alarms, sensors, intercom systems and panic stations.

Procedural security. This refers to the procedures in place such as staff manuals, corporation rules/regu-

lations and bylaws, emergency procedures, fire safety plans and post orders for security guards.

Security personnel. This refers to staff that are trained in security awareness.

Conduct Frequent Reviews

Your corporation's program should also be continuously reviewed, updated and improved upon to ensure it is achieving the maximum effect. Too many times, a security program is implemented but never maintained. Cameras and surveillance systems age and break, procedures and access lists become outdated, lights burn out and are never replaced, fences become damaged and staff become complacent. All these factors cause huge security liabilities. If you are unsure how or where to prioritize these improvements, security audits are hugely beneficial. A security audit not only identifies problems, issues and weak spots, they offer a variety of cost-effective solutions, which can be worked into a corporation's



After a walk through of Applewood Landmark, discussions were held. From left: Erica Williams (COO, Pennine Security Solutions), Neil Davis (director of operations, Pennine Security), Jennifer Lawther (property manager, Whitehall Residential), Wayne Arthurs (board president, PCC 171, Applewood Landmark), Steven Hill (president, Whitehall Residential). Not shown: Matthew Williams (president & CEO, Pennine Security Solutions). The group discussed the site grounds, security patrol routes, areas requiring lighting, signage and having a general site meeting to ensure all are on the same page. Photos: Supplied

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long-term financial plan. However, you must use an impartial security consultant or product provider and never someone who already services the building.

If your condominium has the budget, bringing in the right security company can be extremely beneficial to both the level of security and the daily operations of the building. Secu-

Love Your Security Guard

A good security guard is extremely important. A good guard is not only accountable for their actions as a first responder but becomes an extension of the property manager after they leave the site. A good guard will go above and beyond their duties and will still be impacting the safety of your building even when they are not physically

If property managers and board members can encourage residents to truly invest in their community, then that becomes the biggest investment they can make in security.

riety personnel play a central role in every aspect of security. All of the technological systems that are employed to enhance physical security are useless without a security team that is trained in their use and maintenance, and know how to properly respond to security-related issues. Always perform adequate due diligence when tendering for a security provider and never look for the cheapest option. If a bid is significantly cheaper than the rest then there is usually a reason why, but that reason will never be a lower profit margin and usually comes at the expense of the guard provided and the corporation's overall service level.

present. Making sure your guard is financially taken care of will encourage loyalty and reduce staff turnover. If your corporation is only paying minimum wage, which will be reflected in the security company's proposal, your provider will only supply you with either a low calibre or inexperienced guard. If you do receive a competent guard, they won't stay at your building for long. Too often, the goal is to keep monthly condo fees low and pay as little as possible for security services. If you are stretching your budget to have manned guarding at your building, try working with your provider to reduce the security coverage to reflect

key times at the building and pay for a better quality guard.

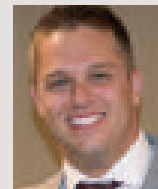
Above all this, the major factor in a successful security program is the collaborative effort of every single member of the condominium community. The safety and security of a building does not start and end with the security program. No matter how many cameras or security guards a building deploys, unless the residents buy into living in a secure environment, the system can still fail.

A successful, safe and secure community is one

where the residents take the time to get to know one another, communicate issues and problems to members of staff, are observant of suspicious activities and are always conscious of who is entering the building behind them. Property managers and board members can help promote this ethos by holding resident information nights or community-building functions, performing regular fire drills, investing in building software that also has a resident portal, supplying a suggestion box and strengthening cohesive communication by openly providing the contact information of the key service providers for the building. If property managers and board members can encourage residents to truly invest in their community, then that becomes the biggest investment they can make in security. ❖



Pennine staff Darwin Diongco, concierge/security and Neil Davis, director of operations, review the daily log.



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