

CONDO OF THE YEAR

Manhattan Place - MTCC No. 595

**BY JACKIE HOGAN,
VICE PRESIDENT AND THE
COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE**

Manhattan Place is a vibrant and diverse condominium community that recently celebrated its 26th anniversary.

This 23-storey tower at 131 Beecroft Road, just northwest of the Yonge Street and Sheppard Avenue intersection, opened for occupancy in 1983. The interior finishes of its common spaces are outstanding, especially the hammered copper artwork in the high-ceilinged main lobby. Amenities include 24-hour concierge and valet parking services; a spacious, sunlit indoor swimming pool with saunas and change rooms; a large library with table tennis and billiard equipment; a busy and well-equipped fitness room, plus racquetball and squash courts; a BBQ patio, VIP Lounge, and a board/party room with full kitchen.

The building is surrounded by extensive green space, featuring mature hardwoods and evergreens, a Japanese garden with reflecting pool, pleasant pathways and patio space that is well used by residents. An attractive colour brochure of the property is always available at the front desk in the building for any residents, visitors or agents.



Board of Directors

Manhattan Place enjoys progressive and responsive governance from our Board of Directors. Budgets are balanced, often enjoy a surplus, and there have been no special assessments - ever. While in recent years there have been heavy demands on the Reserve Fund, the challenge of the major capital and replacement schedule has consistently been met.

The Board, comprised of seven directors, is supported by five standing committees, made up of enthusiastic volunteers from our many interested residents, who are involved in gathering information, reviewing, recommending and advising the Board through a Board liaison in each of the following important areas of concern that affect our condominium environment: Social, Safety and Security, Energy, Communications and Landscaping Committees. More on these committees later.

An Annual Budget Meeting is held every January for the owners and any

other interested residents, to explain the approved budget for the current fiscal year to them, and answer any questions or concerns they may have regarding expenses or anticipated repair/replacement projects around the property.

The Annual General Meeting is held in June of each year and is always attended by a majority of owners, in person or by proxy, allowing the Corporation to move forward with any important business. Elections for new directors are often contested, with multiple candidates standing for election to the Board. Town Hall Meetings are held two or three times per year, to inform and communicate with the residents on any issues or upcoming projects. Our information meetings are often characterized by lively question and answer sessions between the owners, residents, Board of Directors and management.

Candidates who have declared their intention to stand for election to the Board are given an opportunity to speak to the assembled owners and residents at a Town Hall Meeting a month or so

in advance of the Annual General Meeting.

The Board has undertaken the challenging task of informing and educating the owners of the need to update our By-laws and Rules for the Corporation and,



over the past couple of years, a new General Operating By-law and Mediation and Arbitration By-law have been passed by the owners. A Standard Unit By-law is currently before the owners. The Rules and all Forms in use for our internal procedures have been exhaustively reviewed and were extensively revised in 2008 to realistically reflect the style of living at Manhattan Place, while continuing to protect and ensure the quiet enjoyment of the units by our residents.

During the past four years our building has undergone a major capital repair, replacement and upgrading program. This has included an extensive energy efficient lighting initiative throughout the common elements, new recirculation piping lines, a complete boiler plant replacement, chiller and cooling tower, a new emergency generator with enhanced capabilities, garage waterproofing and installation of a carbon monoxide detection system, a complete renovation of the indoor swimming pool, saunas and change rooms, and extensive exterior building cladding renewal. A comprehensive window replacement program is ongoing and a modernization of our elevator equipment is

planned for 2010.

The Board has instituted both an Occupational Health & Safety Policy and a Human Rights Policy within the past three years, which are prominently displayed for the review and information of residents, staff, visitors and contractors. These are important indicators that this Corporation takes its duties and responsibilities to all parties seriously.

The Board of Directors enjoys the benefits of annual membership with the Canadian Condominium Institute (CCI) and keeps informed by sending directors to some of the CCI conferences, as well as reading the CCI Review, Condo Voice and CM Condo Manager Magazine provided by the Association of Condominium Managers of Ontario (ACMO).

Staff Relations

We enjoy a unique place as an employer in the condominium housing sector in that we hire our own personnel, rather than use an outside staffing contractor. Our turnover for concierge, valet and moving guard positions is very low. There are always two staff members available at the front desk to assist our residents and visitors to the



property. Many of our staff members, including our very experienced building operator and superintendent in residence, have been with us for years, allowing residents and staff to develop a warm familiarity with each other. This contributes to a friendly and harmonious environment for residents and staff alike. We are proud of our highly motivated, knowledgeable, and helpful



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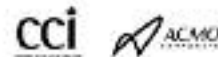
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staff. Our cleaning staff, while not employees of the Corporation, have also been with us for years and are well known and liked by our residents.

Community Spirit

Residents are encouraged to participate in our many committees and activities, which are held on and off the property.

Social Committee

This collection of community-minded residents stage two lively parties annually, a summer pool patio event and a winter holiday season gathering, which affords newcomers an opportunity to meet and socialize with their new neighbours, Board members and the property manager. Both events are well organized and very well attended. Non-perishable food items are collected from the residents at the holiday season party and donated to the North York Food Bank, and many gifts to management are given to the North York Women's Shelter.



Safety and Security Committee

This committee has been instrumental in overseeing the complete replacement and upgrading of our in suite alarm system, building card and fob reader access system, fire panel, security monitoring and video surveillance equip-

ment. A concrete ramp was installed at the back access door to the building to ease the transition from street level to interior hallway level for our residents, in a safe and convenient manner. A warning light at the bottom of the garage P2 level ramp was installed to warn descending vehicles of pedestrians passing. Access doors from the garage to the lobby areas of the building were installed with red warning indicator lights to alert someone coming the other way that an access door was about to be opened inwards towards them. All exterior fire route and other warning signage around the property and in the garage was replaced and increased to ensure fair and effective notice to all drivers and pedestrians entering the property.

Energy Committee

There has been a successful program of energy efficient upgrades to our mechanical, electrical and lighting systems initiated by this committee over

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the past three years to reduce energy consumption and costs in the building, some of which have been noted above. All of the lighting for the common areas has been replaced with energy efficient fluorescent bulbs. The refuse rooms on every floor and pool change rooms were retrofitted with light sensors to keep the lights off when not in use. An Energy Performance Audit is still under review, with more recommendations coming to the Board on an ongoing basis. A carbon monoxide detection system for the garage has been installed, which is further reducing our energy consumption.

Communications Committee

This committee's priority is to publish a lively, informative, easy-to-read newsletter. Named The Manhattan and printed five times annually, it was an immediate hit and went on to win the Newsletter of the Year Award from the Canadian Condominium Institute (Toronto Chapter) in 2006.

The Manhattan is designed to appeal to a cosmopolitan readership with varied tastes and interests. Each issue carries a profile of an interesting resident and a feature story to help our residents become better informed about their neighbourhood. There are also profiles and photos of new staff members as well as reports by Board members and articles highlighting Board decisions. The property manager also contributes a regular column. There is ongoing news to encourage common causes, such as energy conservation, recycling and reduction of solid waste output. Other articles keep residents informed of new upgrades and initiatives around the building, as well as reminders regarding rules and procedures that benefit all residents collectively.

A special supplemental series, written by a resident and former general contractor, provided residents with handy tips on in suite maintenance and minor repairs, including appliances, televisions, stereos, computers and the internet, as well as dealing with contractors and major renovations, and was very well received.

Our residents have become very environmentally aware, as a result of an ongoing initiative by this committee. For example, there has been a sustained and successful campaign through our newsletter to encourage residents to put far less in the garbage chutes and far more in the recycling and organics bins. Large blue recycling and green organics bins were installed in the refuse

rooms on every floor for the convenience of our residents, and there is a separate collection bin for batteries, conveniently located on the common elements.

Landscaping Committee

These volunteers work with the property manager and our landscaping contractor in overseeing the professional



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landscaping that provides a profusion of colour from spring through fall, making recommendations and selections of flower and plant material to enhance the visual beauty of the property. A major initiative to select and install a new generation of perennials will soon be underway.

Condo Care Group

This unique initiative has drawn the attention of the Toronto Star, which ran an extensive article with photos. It's a practical way of neighbours helping neighbours and has proven to be a very popular service, providing assistance with small in suite maintenance and repair issues and volunteer driving services.

An outgrowth of the Condo Care Group has been the efforts of one of our volunteers to ensure that all electronic equipment being discarded by our residents is effectively donated, recycled

and reused. Residents merely have to bring their old electronic equipment down to the front desk for temporary storage by our staff. Our very own volunteer of the year then makes deliveries on an ongoing basis to reBOOT Canada. In 2008, these donations totaled 113 items, including 17 computers, 22 monitors and 24 printers. As it says on its website, "reBOOT Canada is a non-profit organization providing computer hardware, training



and technical support to charities, non-profits and people with limited access to technology." Learn more at <http://www.rebootcanada.ca/>.

Pot Luck Club

This dinner is generally held on a quarterly basis and is open to all residents, with the many varied and delectable cultural dishes prepared and provided by the attendees themselves. This culinary smorgasbord is complemented with a generous selection of wines. Needless to say, a good time is had by all.

Ideas Galore

This creative group is dedicated to incubating ideas that have the potential to stimulate and strengthen the spirit of our social fabric and provide opportunities for residents to meet and mingle. Activities promoted by this group include the Book Club, Aquafit classes, Bridge and

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Lectures

Qualified residents provide interesting talks in their professional field of expertise, or based on their life experiences, which are held in our spacious board/party room, for the convenience of our residents. Topics have ranged from eye surgery to a travelogue on China. Over the past year we have featured talks on colds and flu prevention, osteoporosis, arthritis, eye and heart health, diabetes and stress, sadness and depression presentations from a naturopathic perspective given by one of our qualified residents. These lectures are appreciated and well attended by our residents.

Welcome Manual and Website

Newcomers to Manhattan Place receive a recently updated Welcome Manual that provides a variety of useful infor-

mation about living in our condominium environment and our orderly procedures. The Corporation maintains an attractive website as another communications and information tool for our residents, prospective purchasers or agents, which can be viewed at www.manhattanplace.ca.

Management

Y.L. Hendler Ltd. has been providing superior property management services and successfully managing the property for a number of years now. Continuity in management is so important to the regular and effective daily operational routines and procedures that continue to make residents and staff members feel comfortable and relaxed in their condominium community and working environment. The Corporation generously provides for a full-time (onsite) property manager and very experienced part-time site administrator. The property manager is a qualified Registered Condominium Manager

(RCM) and member in good standing of the Association of Condominium Managers of Ontario (ACMO).

Management has proven to be open and responsive to the needs and concerns of residents and staff as they arise. Management also provides additional services to residents not normally associated with property management, such as personal use of the office copier and fax machine (within reason, of course), extended visitor parking privileges for visiting relatives and friends and, in the absence of family or friends and neighbours in the building, will collect and hold mail for vacationing residents for short durations.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, residents and staff of Manhattan Place, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to present a brief overview of our vibrant condominium community for consideration in the CCI Condo of the Year Contest. ■



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