

Living In Halton Hills

Condominiums popular buys

There are 292 households in Halton located in miniature towns, with their own elected councils, laws, and a tax of sorts.

They are called condominium communities.

Like detached home owners, all families buy their own row houses, including a small but private yard and parking space.

Like commune dwellers, resources are pooled to pay for services, thus, the definition of a condominium community, offered by Ron Burnett of the town's planning department — "a method of owning your own home with a negotiable title while sharing ownership and costs of the operation of the balance of the property with fellow owners."

For example, a maintenance fee of \$27, monthly is paid by each household living in the condo community on Kingham Drive in Acton. Jackie Yaworsky explained that this money is used to cover insurance, water, snow plowing, lawn mowing, landscaping painting, her husband Gene the bookkeeper and anything else of benefit to the whole populace.

Residents of the condominiums on Mountainview Road in Georgetown pay a little more — \$31.50 per month — because instead of being managed by the original developer or their elected executive, they hired a management company.

Horton, Skinner and Mead, to do the job. Democratically, it's the people's choice.

Christine Kogon, a high school science teacher and executive president of Mountainview, said that external management prevented squabbles between neighbours.

On Kingham Road, however, the elected executive is responsible for collecting fees, hearing complaints, hiring employees and enforcing rules.

Usually consisting of a president, vice-president, second vice, secretary and treasurer, the executive is voted in to serve for a one-to-three-year term. Being volunteers, their genuine interest in the operation of a settlement of townhouses is evident.

Most people adhere to the rules, which include things such as leashing pets, building standardized fences, contributing \$1, a month to an emergency reserve fund, not changing public land by planting a garden or adding lawn decorations, and the like.

People respect the common property because it is partially their own and the co-owners are their friends. Townhouse residents become very close in comparison to apartment dwellers.

Last week, along many a row, throughout the town, women and their toddlers were gathered together to chat and sun bath. At Sinclair Avenue, a "Know Your Neighbours" dance was held.

"It's like we're all living in one big house," Marlene Graham of Kingham Road said of the hospitality, "we visit each other for coffee at seven in the morning in our pajamas."

The kids can get together at the provided playgrounds consisting of swings and slides and best of all, space.

Not only is the atmosphere of a condominium community congenial and the outside maintenance taken care of, the price is right.

Or, the price was right. Alf Perry of Alton Construction Company, Acton, built 185 town houses in three phases over a two and a half year period. The Kingham Drive project was completed a year ago. The first places ready for residents, priced at \$17,500 are now worth \$38,000, said Barry.

Acton real estate agent Gord Iru said he had recently sold local townhouses in the range of \$34,000, to \$39,000, depending on renovations and the appliances included.

Of the 67 condominiums built by AGZ Developments Limited on Sinclair Avenue and Mountainview Road in Georgetown, Mrs. Zorge said, "They were gone just like that."

Recognizing the investment opportunity, Terry and Helen Gilbert purchased three townhouses on Sinclair Avenue just over two years ago. They sold two and live in the other.

A Georgetown real estate agent said that these condominiums had increased approximately \$11,000, in value since the Gilberts bought them.

Christine Kogon described townhouses as a "stepping stone."

"They're not as expensive as houses," she said, "Buying a condominium as a first purchase gives them a chance to build up a little bit of equity."

Daw agreed that the turnover of townhouse owners was fairly high since many were saving for a detached home, but some of the residents interviewed preferred condominium living and do not intend to move to a different type of dwelling.

Said Von Langridge of Acton, "This is a nice community to live in. I wouldn't leave or move back to England. They don't have anything like this there."

"We'll never go back to a single home," said Helen Sinclair, "unless my husband becomes a millionaire and we can hire someone to do the outside work."

Wendy Bailey of Acton is one of many former apartment dwellers who appreciate condominium living because "we can sit outside."

The only complaints voiced about Halton Hills townhouse settlements regarded location.

Some of the people who moved into the Kingham Road condominiums from out of town were unaware that or- c-tours from the local tannery would permeate their domaine, and that mosquitos would visit from a nearby swamp.

Department stores are not the best view, agreed some Sinclair Avenue residents but the fact that there was a park close by seemed to compensate for this.

Many commented on the convenience of their homes to the heart of town.

Illustrating the overall popularity of condominiums is the number of vacancies. There are few, although they change hands often enough, indicating that demand exceeds supply.

According to Ron Burnett, Garthdale Investments have made a proposal to construct condominiums on John and River Streets.

"Halton Hills needs to maintain a good mix of housing types," believes Burnett, "and what that infers is that we need both more rental accommodations and condominiums."



TAKING OFF on her bike is nine-year-old Christine Gilbert who lives in a Sinclair Avenue condominium townhouse. Playing next door are Paul Kim and David Christie, who earlier took advantage of the yard and staged a wrestling match on the lawn.



Bottom COOLING OFF in a wading pool in the yard of one of the Kingham Road, Acton condominium townhouses is Wayne James. Heather Moreland babysits Wayne, two other kids and has two of her own. "The pool keeps the kids in one place," she said.

Top WALLPAPERING the hall in her Sinclair Avenue condominium is Helen Gilbert. She enjoys the freedom of decorating which some apartment buildings do not allow.

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