

# **FREE PERFECT CONDO MANAGEMENT**

**THE GUIDE TO  
GOVERNING WELL**

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Table of Contents.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
A Note to Condo Boards.....	3
Chapter 1: The Role of the Board.....	4
Chapter 2: Governance vs. Operations .....	5
Chapter 3: Authority, Accountability & Fiduciary Duty.....	7
Chapter 4: Working with Your Manager.....	9
Chapter 5: Committees and Community Volunteers.....	10
Chapter 6: Engaging Owners (Without Losing Control) .....	11
Chapter 7: Reserve Funds and Long-Term Planning .....	13
Chapter 8: Special Assessments vs. Borrowing.....	14
Chapter 9: Financial Transparency and Owner Trust .....	15
Chapter 10: Insurance, Risk, and Real Costs.....	19
Chapter 11: Community Vision and Values .....	21
Chapter 12: Beautification, Modernization & Property Value .....	23
Chapter 13: Governing for Sustainability .....	25
Chapter 14: Accessibility and Aging in Place .....	27
Chapter 15: Governance vs. Operations (Expanded).....	29
Chapter 16: The Power of Process .....	32
Chapter 17: Transparency, Reporting, and Communication .....	35
Chapter 18: Vendor Management and Contract Clarity .....	38
Chapter 19: Respect and Responsibility.....	40
Chapter 20: Conflict Resolution and Emotional Intelligence .....	42
Chapter 21: When Things Go Wrong – Crisis Management.....	46
Chapter 22: Board Succession and Training.....	50
Chapter 23: Digital Tools and AI in Condo Management.....	53
Chapter 24: Building Resilience in Communities .....	55
Chapter 25: Build for the Future.....	58

Free Perfect Condo Management

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A Roadmap for Community Success

## A Note to Condo Boards

This publication is called Free Perfect Condo Management for a reason.

It's free because good governance shouldn't be locked behind a paywall.

And it's "perfect" not because we expect flawlessness—but because we believe your board is capable of clear, effective, and principled leadership.

Many condominium boards in Ontario are self-managed, meaning they govern and operate without a professional property manager. That's permitted under the Condominium Act, provided the board understands its obligations and has the right tools, processes, and support in place.

This guide is written for you—but not just for you. It can be a valuable tool to any condo board that wants to lead better, ask smarter questions, and govern with confidence. It's also written to help board members understand the role of management and the logic behind the systems and processes they use.

🔴 This is not legal, engineering, or professional management advice. The information in this publication is for general educational purposes only. Your board should always seek advice from licensed professionals—including lawyers, engineers, and condominium managers—when making decisions that impact your community or financial future.

That said, you don't need to be a lawyer to govern well. You don't need to be a contractor to approve repairs. You just need to care, read carefully, and lead with intention.

This publication is here to help you do exactly that.

## Chapter 1: The Role of the Board

Condo boards are often misunderstood—even by those who serve on them.

Some believe they're just volunteers who help run the building. Others think their role is to solve complaints, sign cheques, or chase down contractors. But a great board does something much more powerful: it governs.

When you join a condo board, you're stepping into a leadership role on behalf of every owner in the building. Your responsibility is to uphold the Declaration, By-laws, and Rules of the Corporation, manage finances responsibly, and make decisions that serve the long-term interests of the entire community.

The job isn't to micromanage vendors or approve every invoice. It's to set clear direction, ensure accountability, and support your manager in carrying out day-to-day operations.

Boards Govern. Managers Operate.

A strong board delegates the how to trained professionals and focuses on the why and what. You're the strategic layer—the ones asking:

- Are we in alignment with our governing documents?
- Are we budgeting based on facts and long-term needs?
- Are we moving toward the kind of community we want to build?

That's a very different mindset than asking, "Did management book the plumber yet?"

When boards stay in their lane and govern well, they create stability. When they blur the line between governance and operations, confusion follows—and so does burnout.

Culture Starts at the Top

You're not just maintaining property—you're shaping community. How you make decisions, how you communicate with residents, how you treat your manager—all of that trickles down.

Boards that lead with confidence and clarity tend to get more support from owners, even when delivering unpopular news. Boards that waffle, avoid decisions, or get lost in minor details often lose trust—and momentum.

If there's one thing to remember, it's this: you're not just fixing roofs. You're building culture.

That culture determines how your community handles challenges, grows its value, and keeps good people involved.

## Chapter 2: Governance vs. Operations

If there's one concept every condo board should revisit regularly, it's this:

Governance and operations are not the same thing.

Boards govern. Managers operate. And when those lines get blurred, everyone pays for it—in burnout, inefficiency, and avoidable mistakes.

Governance is About Direction

Think of governance as the strategic work:

- Setting policies
- Approving budgets
- Making big-picture decisions
- Upholding the Declaration, By-laws, and Rules
- Planning for the future

It's about defining what needs to happen and why. You decide priorities, ensure compliance, and hold professionals accountable to results—not methods.

Operations is About Execution

Operations is where the work gets done:

- Issuing work orders
- Following up with contractors
- Managing communication
- Handling the daily firehose of emails and resident questions

That's your manager's domain—or, in some cases, the domain of staff or contracted service providers. When the board dips into this level too often, it creates confusion and slows things down.

Micromanagement Hurts Everyone

When board members get too involved in daily tasks, a few things happen:

- Managers can't do their jobs effectively
- Staff and contractors get mixed messages
- Strategic items fall off the radar
- Decision-making becomes reactive and inconsistent
- Board members burn out—and start dreading the role

Clear Roles Create a Healthier Board

Strong boards govern from a high level and support their manager by being decisive, communicative, and consistent.

Here's the test:

If your board meeting is spent reviewing individual complaints or debating work order minutiae, you're too deep in the weeds.

Refocus on what only the board can do—and let your manager shine in the rest.

That's how you get traction, trust, and results.



## Chapter 3: Authority, Accountability & Fiduciary Duty

Joining the board of directors in a condominium corporation isn't a casual commitment. It's not just an act of community service or a way to keep fees low. It's a legal role with real power—and real responsibility.

### You Have Authority Because Owners Gave It to You

When you were elected to the board, you were given a mandate: to represent all owners and make decisions on their behalf, according to the corporation's governing documents.

That's serious. It means the board doesn't just advise—it acts with legal authority. The Declaration, By-laws, and Rules are your framework. But within that framework, the board has the power to make major decisions about:

- Budgets and spending
- Reserve fund investments and borrowing
- Contract approvals
- Enforcement of rules
- Repair and maintenance timelines
- Communications with owners and legal counsel

### You're Accountable—Whether You Know It or Not

When board decisions are well-informed, clearly recorded in meeting minutes, and aligned with legal obligations, everyone benefits—even when the outcome is unpopular.

But when decisions are made casually, verbally, or off the record, things unravel fast:

- Owners lose trust
- Managers are left exposed
- Disputes escalate
- Insurance claims rise
- Regulatory or legal intervention may follow

### Fiduciary Duty Isn't Just Legal Jargon

It means:

- Acting honestly and in good faith
- Putting the corporation's interests above personal ones
- Using care, diligence, and skill in your decisions

This isn't an abstract idea. It shows up in day-to-day actions like:

- Approving a contract you've actually reviewed



- Recusing yourself from a vote if your friend is bidding on the job
- Challenging assumptions if something seems off

#### The Board Sets the Tone

Strong boards don't hide behind the manager or defer everything to "what we've always done." They lead with intention—and they document how.

And when that happens, even difficult decisions become easier to navigate.

## Chapter 4: Working with Your Manager

If the board is the brain of the condo corporation, the manager is the nervous system—keeping everything connected, responding to issues, and executing the board’s decisions in real time.

### Your Manager Is a Professional—Treat Them Like One

A licensed condo manager isn’t an errand-runner or a glorified concierge. They’re trained in:

- Condo law
- Budgeting
- Contract administration
- Risk and insurance

They are your operational quarterback. When the board treats them with the respect due to a skilled professional, the manager is empowered to do their best work—and you’ll get far more value from the relationship.

### Set Expectations Early and Often

The board should provide clear direction on:

- Communication style and frequency
- Reporting and decision-making processes
- Delegated vs. board-held authority

### Good Managers Want to Be Held Accountable—Fairly

Accountability doesn’t mean micromanaging. It means:

- Monthly reporting
- Performance reviews
- Constructive feedback

### Back Your Manager Publicly—Then Course-Correct Privately

If something isn’t working, address it as a board—with documentation. Don’t throw your manager under the bus.

### A Strong Manager-Board Relationship Builds Owner Confidence

When owners see unity between the board and management, they feel the building is in good hands.

## Chapter 5: Committees and Community Volunteers

Committees aren't mini-boards. They're support teams.

Start with a Mandate

Every committee needs a written, board-approved mandate:

- What's the purpose?
- Who reports to whom?
- What decisions can they recommend (not make)?

Popular Committees That Work

- Social Committees
- Green Committees
- Beautification Committees
- Policy Review Committees

Give Committees the Tools to Succeed

- Clear liaison from the board
- Timelines
- Reporting structure
- Recognition and gratitude

Know When to Say No

Some issues require professional input. Committees are a tool—not a shortcut to avoid governance or expertise.

Well-Managed Committees Build Trust

When boards use committees wisely, residents feel engaged, included, and more likely to support long-term plans.

## Chapter 6: Engaging Owners (Without Losing Control)

If your owners don't feel heard, they'll find ways to make themselves heard. And it usually doesn't go well.

They'll show up frustrated at AGMs. They'll write long, critical emails. They'll talk over each other (and the board) in common areas. In extreme cases, they'll even try to get elected to the board—not because they want to govern, but because they want something fixed.

That's what happens when boards forget this basic truth: engagement is part of governance.

But—and here's the key—engagement doesn't mean giving up control.

You don't have to run every idea by the community. You don't have to treat every complaint like a referendum. But you do need to give people confidence that their voice matters, even when the board makes a decision they don't love.

Here's how to do that.

**Be Clear About the Board's Role** Boards often try to over-accommodate. They send out too many surveys. They avoid making decisions until every owner has “had their say.” They let meetings spiral into debate forums.

That's not governance—it's crowd control.

Your role is to listen, lead, and decide. Not to host an ongoing suggestion box.

It's okay to say: “The board considered all owner input, reviewed the professional advice, and made a decision in the corporation's best interest.”

When you own that role, owners may not agree—but they'll respect the structure.

**Respond Without Getting Pulled In** One of the most effective skills a board can learn is the short, clear, respectful reply.

You don't need to argue. You don't need to give a lengthy justification. You just need to acknowledge the concern and reinforce the process.

Example: “Thank you for your feedback. We've included it in our review and will respond through our formal update once the board has met.”

That kind of response does three things:

1. Shows the person they were heard
2. Avoids unnecessary back-and-forth
3. Protects your time and energy

And over time, it conditions the community to respect structure.

**Communicate Early, Often, and Predictably** Don't let the only time owners hear from the board be during elections or fee increases.

Simple, consistent updates go a long way. A one-page monthly memo. A quarterly email summary. A post on your communication board or online portal. Even just a bulletin in the elevator.

Key idea: Don't overexplain. Just explain.

If you've got a big project coming, tell people the what, why, and when—and give them a way to ask questions.

Good boards aren't reactive. They shape the conversation.

Respect Is a Two-Way Street Sometimes owners are rude. Sometimes they're demanding, repetitive, or suspicious. That doesn't mean the board should respond in kind.

Your professionalism sets the tone for the community. Be firm, but always be respectful. When owners see you modelling patience, clarity, and structure, it invites them to show up the same way.

Not always. But often.

You're Not Running a Town Hall—You're Leading a Corporation Engagement matters. But engagement doesn't mean abdication.

Governance means taking in information, processing it through the lens of your fiduciary role, and making clear decisions. When you do that consistently, engagement becomes a tool—not a threat.

And your community starts to feel not just heard—but led.

## **Chapter 7: Reserve Funds and Long-Term Planning**

### **It's Not About the Money Sitting in the Bank**

Too many boards look at the reserve balance and think, “Looks good—we’re fine.”

But the balance today is meaningless without a timeline attached. What matters is:

1. Will we have enough when the big jobs hit?
2. Are we growing our contributions at the right pace?
3. Have construction costs outpaced our assumptions?

These are strategic questions—and they deserve strategic thinking.

### **Balances Don't Always Tell the Story**

Even if a low balance matches what you should have—because a major project just finished—you can still consider your reserves strong.

On the other hand, a high balance isn't reassuring if the building has urgent needs that the fund can't cover.

The real measure of reserve health isn't the number on a bank statement—it's the relationship between the plan and the property.

### **\*\*You're Contributing to a Long-Term Plan—And Covering Your Share Today**

Reserve contributions are part of a decades-long funding strategy. They ensure the money will be there—not just for what's breaking now, but for what will need replacing down the line.

If the roof was just replaced and has a 35-year life, contributions begin again immediately. That way, when it needs replacing next time, the cost is already distributed fairly across the people who used it—and those who are using it now.

You're not just saving for the future—you're paying your share of long-term wear and tear, year by year.

Smart boards don't try to keep fees low by deferring reality. They budget based on real costs, real timelines, and real risks.. They budget based on real costs, real timelines, and real risks.

### **Stay Close to the Plan—But Not Blindly**

Engineers can't predict the future—but they give you the best starting point possible.

Your plan should be reviewed regularly, adjusted when projects shift, and used as a real-time tool—not a static report.

Use your reserve fund study like a compass—not a crystal ball.

## **Chapter 8: Special Assessments vs. Borrowing**

### **The Board Decides—But the Community Lives With It**

Ultimately, the board is responsible for making the best financial decision on behalf of the corporation. But the way you present that decision can make or break community morale.

Lead with clarity. Offer choices where you can. And show that you've done the work to think it through.

That's what earns trust—even when the news comes with a price tag.

### **The Condo Act Gives the Board Superpowers**

When it comes to raising funds—whether through regular fees or special assessments—the Condominium Act gives boards significant authority.

The board sets the budget. If the building needs a large influx of cash, the board can issue a special assessment—and every owner is legally required to pay.

If they don't, the corporation has the right to place a lien on the unit and recover the amount through legal means, including power of sale.

That's how serious financial integrity is under the Act.

So when you make these decisions, make them wisely, transparently, and with the whole community in mind.

### **Borrowing Is a Board Decision—But a Community Conversation**

Borrowing can be a powerful tool when used well. It spreads the cost of major repairs over time and avoids sudden financial shocks to owners.

But it also comes with interest, long-term commitments, and the need for thoughtful planning.

Boards can approve borrowing by passing a borrowing by-law. That by-law must be confirmed by a majority of owners.

So while the board initiates the process, owners still have a voice.

### **You're Not Just Funding a Project—You're Protecting the Community**

Whether you choose to borrow, issue a special assessment, or both—your goal is the same: preserve the safety, value, and functionality of the community.

That's not just a financial decision. It's a leadership one.

### **Some Owners Can't Afford the Increases—And That's Painful**

There's another group of owners that boards sometimes hear from—quietly, or in moments of stress:

1. Seniors on fixed incomes
2. Long-time residents who feel left behind
3. Owners whose financial situation has changed, but their address hasn't



These owners aren't arguing out of defiance. They're hurting. And they're hoping the board can hold the line just long enough for them to catch up.

But here's the hard truth: sometimes a community becomes unaffordable for the people who've called it home the longest.

That's not the board's fault. And it's not something to feel good about. But it is something to acknowledge—with compassion.

"We understand these increases are hard. We also understand that the cost of running this building continues to rise—and our responsibility is to the financial health of the entire community."

You can show care. You can listen. But you can't stop reality.

Good boards recognize the emotion without compromising the math. And they communicate with kindness—without shying away from what needs to be done.

That's leadership. And over time, it's what builds trust—even through difficult decisions.

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## **Chapter 9: Financial Transparency and Owner Trust**

Money is emotional—especially in a shared community.

When owners don't understand where their fees are going, or when budgets change without explanation, trust begins to erode. And once trust is gone, even responsible decisions start to feel suspicious.

That's why financial transparency isn't just a best practice—it's a pillar of good governance. You don't need to show every receipt, but your owners deserve to understand the financial health of their home.

And when you share clearly, consistently, and confidently, you give your community a powerful gift: peace of mind.

**What Transparency Actually Means** Financial transparency doesn't mean sending out your entire ledger or debating line items with every owner. It means being:

Proactive – sharing information before people feel the need to ask  
Clear – explaining the “why,” not just the “what”  
Consistent – reporting on the same things, in the same way, at regular intervals  
Open – willing to answer fair questions without defensiveness

You're not opening the books—you're opening the door to trust.

**Common Owner Questions—and How to Head Them Off** Most owners aren't accountants. They're not looking to audit the numbers. But they do want to know:

Why are fees going up? Where is our money going? Are we saving enough for future repairs? What's being done to control costs?

When you answer those questions before they're asked, you reduce tension and show leadership.

“This year's fee increase is due mostly to rising insurance premiums and contractor costs. We've adjusted two vendor contracts and pushed one non-essential project into next year to minimize the impact. We're also continuing to fund the reserve at recommended levels to stay on track with the long-term plan.”

Short. Clear. Human. That's transparency.

**The Budget Isn't Just a Spreadsheet—It's a Story** Every dollar in the budget tells a story about your priorities.

Are you planning ahead or just reacting? Are you maintaining the status quo or investing in improvement? Are you buying peace of mind—or just postponing pain?

The way you frame these choices matters. It shows owners that you're not just managing costs—you're leading with intention.

**Financial Stress Creates Noise—Transparency Clears It** When financial information is vague or withheld, speculation fills the gap. Owners start talking to each other, worrying about secret deals, bad spending, or hidden problems.

It's not because they're cynical—it's because the board hasn't told the story yet.

Get ahead of the story.

You don't need to overexplain. But a one-page financial summary, a slide at the AGM, or a few words in your next update can make all the difference.

"Here's what we spent. Here's why. Here's what's coming."

That's all most people need to feel reassured.

Not Everyone Wants to Understand—And That's Okay Some owners don't want to understand the budget. They just want it to be lower.

You'll meet people who oppose any fee increase—no matter how justified. Some are short-term investors trying to maximize cash flow. Others feel any rise in cost is unfair or unnecessary. And some simply want to be heard, not informed.

Learn to choose your battles.

These voices are often the loudest—but rarely the majority. You can't let them steer the ship.

You can appeal to logic:

"If the corporation chooses to underfund itself, the eventual cost is always higher—through emergency repairs, deteriorating property value, or special assessments."

You can also be honest:

"In today's economy, it's unrealistic—and possibly dangerous—for condo fees to go down. Costs are going up across the board. We're making sure the building can keep up."

Sometimes that gets through. Sometimes it won't. And that's okay. Your job is to lead responsibly—even when it's unpopular.

"I Pay My Fees, So..."—The Misunderstood Transaction Another challenge comes from owners who believe that paying condo fees entitles them to extra service or personal exceptions:

"I pay my fees, so someone should deal with my neighbour."

"I pay my fees, so management should take care of my window screen."

"I pay my fees, so why hasn't someone stopped the geese from flying over my balcony?"

It's important to clarify: Condo fees don't buy service—they support structure.

They fund the common elements, the reserve, the operating budget, and the shared infrastructure that everyone relies on. They don't entitle anyone to concierge service—or the rewriting of the rules.

If an owner is asking for something that's not in the budget, not in the scope of management, or not part of the corporation's responsibilities, the board's job is to say so—respectfully, but clearly.

"Your board is responsible for the collective. Not the individual."

That's not cold. It's governance.

Some Owners Can't Afford the Increases—And That's Painful There's another group of owners boards sometimes hear from—quietly, or in moments of stress:

Seniors on fixed incomes Long-time residents who feel left behind Owners whose financial situation has changed, but their address hasn't

These owners aren't arguing out of defiance. They're hurting. And they're hoping the board can hold the line just long enough for them to catch up.

But here's the hard truth: Sometimes a community becomes unaffordable for the people who've called it home the longest.

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“We understand these increases are hard. We also understand that the cost of running this building continues to rise—and our responsibility is to the financial health of the entire community.”

You can show care. You can listen. But you can't stop reality.

Good boards recognize the emotion without compromising the math. And they communicate with kindness—without shying away from what needs to be done.

That's leadership. And over time, it's what builds trust—even through difficult decisions.

## Chapter 10: Insurance, Risk, and Real Costs

If the reserve fund is your long-term plan, and the operating budget is your monthly engine, insurance is your emergency parachute—and one of the fastest-rising costs in condo management today.

But many owners don't understand what insurance covers, who's responsible for what, or why the premiums keep climbing. And when the board doesn't explain it clearly, frustration grows.

Worse, some boards try to suppress fees by underinsuring or accepting risk they shouldn't—until something breaks.

Understanding how insurance works—and how risk translates into cost—isn't just good management. It's survival.

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### What Insurance Does (and Doesn't) Cover

Condo corporations typically carry:

1. Property insurance on the common elements and standard unit finishes
2. Liability insurance for injuries or accidents on common property
3. Directors and Officers (D&O) insurance to protect the board
4. Boiler and machinery, crime, and other specialty coverage as needed

What insurance *doesn't* cover:

1. Upgrades inside units (unless insured by owners)
2. Wear and tear
3. Known deficiencies not disclosed or repaired
4. Every last thing someone wishes it covered

The most misunderstood line of division?

Where the corporation's coverage ends and the owner's responsibility begins.

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### Who Pays When Something Goes Wrong?

Let's say a pipe bursts and floods a hallway and an owner's living room:

1. The corporation's policy may cover repairs to the drywall and flooring up to the standard unit finish
2. The owner's policy is needed to cover any upgrades (hardwood, custom trim, etc.)
3. The corporation's deductible—which can be \$10,000, \$25,000, or more—might be charged back to the unit owner if the damage originated from their unit, depending on your by-laws and governing documents

This is where things get tense.  
Because insurance doesn't prevent loss—it just reallocates it.  
And if owners don't understand the structure, they feel blindsided.

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### Why Premiums Are Rising

You're not imagining it. Condo insurance premiums in Ontario have spiked in recent years due to:

1. Aging infrastructure (especially in buildings over 30 years old)
2. Climate risk (wind, water, wildfire)
3. Increased claims and litigation
4. Rising construction costs
5. Fewer insurers willing to take on high-risk buildings

**Some buildings have seen annual increases of 20–40%, with deductibles rising just as fast.**

It's not just happening to “bad” buildings—it's an industry-wide shift.

That's why boards must **plan** for these increases—not react to them.

And one of the best ways to help keep rates competitive is to **invite multiple insurers to compete for the business** each renewal cycle. When you create competition, you create options—and options help reduce cost.

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### Cutting Corners is Not Cost Control

Sometimes boards try to keep fees low by:

1. Delaying repairs that increase the risk of failure
2. Ignoring professional advice
3. Failing to update by-laws that allow cost recovery
4. Choosing a cheaper policy with worse terms

These aren't savings. They're bets.

And when the bet goes bad, everyone pays more.

Smart boards invest in:

1. Preventative maintenance
2. Clear owner education
3. Legal reviews of indemnity clauses
4. Annual insurance consultations

It's not glamorous, but it's essential.

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### **Communicate with Confidence, Not Panic**

Owners don't need to know every clause in your policy—but they do need to understand:

1. What's covered
2. What's not
3. Why the cost is what it is
4. What they're expected to insure privately
5. What steps the board is taking to control risk

This kind of clarity doesn't just build trust—it reduces future complaints.

If your owners know in advance that water damage in their upgraded kitchen won't be covered by the condo—they're far more likely to get their own coverage, and far less likely to blame the board when something happens.

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### **You Can't Eliminate Risk—But You Can Manage It Well**

Risk is part of community life. Pipes fail. Windstorms happen. People make mistakes.

But when your board leads with knowledge, preparation, and clear communication, you're not just managing insurance.

You're managing expectations.

And that's what keeps communities calm when the unexpected hits.

## **Chapter 11: Community Vision and Values**

Every condo community is unique. Not just in layout or finishes—but in *feel*. Some are quiet and private. Others are social and spirited. Some value low fees above all. Others want investment in amenities and long-term value.



This difference in priorities is more than just personal taste. It's the foundation of **community identity**—and one of the most overlooked leadership tools a board has.

You're Not Just Managing Property—You're Stewarding a Vision Many boards fall into a cycle of reacting: to complaints, to rising costs, to the latest urgent repair. And yes—those things need attention. But **reactive management alone won't build a thriving community**.

A board's deeper role is to shape and protect the *character* of the property.

That means asking:

1. What kind of community do we want to be?
2. What do our decisions say about our values?
3. Are we leading toward something—or just holding the line?

When a board operates with a clear vision, everything starts to align: spending, communication, priorities, even tone.

Values Aren't Voted On—But They Can Be Shared Condo boards aren't elected to run popularity contests. But they are entrusted to lead on behalf of the collective. That leadership should reflect values that are already present in the community—not invent them from scratch.

Start with what's real:

1. Is the community safety-conscious?
2. Do residents value quiet?
3. Is beautification a recurring concern?
4. Are owners proud of their property—or just surviving it?

You don't need a vision statement. You need **visible patterns**—and the courage to align decisions with those patterns.

From Words to Action: Vision Should Shape Strategy Let's say your community values cleanliness and pride of place. That vision should show up in:

1. The landscaping budget
2. Communications about litter or maintenance
3. Rules enforcement around balconies or common areas

Or maybe your board is focused on long-term affordability. That should show up in:

1. Reserve fund contributions that match future needs
2. Disciplined budgeting that avoids surprises
3. Investments that prevent costly deterioration later

It's not about slogans. It's about **decisions with intention**.

Conflict Comes When Vision Is Missing One of the most common causes of owner frustration isn't the decision itself—it's the lack of a clear "why."

1. "Why are we spending on this but not that?"
2. "Why did fees go up again?"
3. "Why do they keep saying no?"

Without a visible direction, owners fill in the blanks with suspicion. But when the board communicates not just what it's doing—but **why**—you invite alignment.

Even disagreement becomes more respectful when people understand the principle behind the policy.

This Is What Good Boards Do They don't just respond to emails. They don't just collect fees. They don't just sign off on repairs.

**They lead toward something.**

They steward a community—not just a building.

And they make decisions that reflect not just the laws—but the values of the people who call this place home.

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## Chapter 12: Beautification, Modernization & Property Value

Condo boards don't just maintain buildings. They shape experiences—and influence property values in the process.

Landscaping. Hallway finishes. Mailroom lighting. Window replacements. These aren't just aesthetic choices. They're **signals**—to owners, buyers, and neighbours—about how the community is cared for.

And over time, they matter more than most boards realize.

Property Value Isn't Just About Location When people think about real estate value, they think:

1. "Location, location, location."
2. "What's the square footage?"
3. "How new is the roof?"

But there's a less obvious layer: **emotional value**.

That's what buyers experience when they pull into the driveway, walk through the lobby, or feel the warmth of a well-maintained courtyard.

Boards that understand this emotional layer start to lead differently.

They stop saying, "Can we afford to repaint?" and start asking, "Can we afford *not* to?"

Small Upgrades Send Big Messages You don't need marble countertops or rooftop patios to boost value. Often, the best ROI comes from simple choices:

1. Upgraded hallway lighting = safety and warmth
2. Pressure washing = pride and cleanliness
3. Repainting shared spaces = care and renewal
4. Garden improvements = beauty and investment

These upgrades **signal discipline**. They show that the community isn't waiting until something breaks to act.

Buyers (and owners) take note.

You're Not Just Protecting Value—You're Creating It Some boards think their job is to maintain the status quo. But in reality, a board that governs well has the **power to make the building more desirable**.

When decisions improve curb appeal, reduce friction for buyers, and create a sense of care and consistency, property values rise. Not just through luck, but through leadership.

And here's the best part:

Improving value helps everyone.

1. Owners gain equity
2. Future buyers gain confidence
3. The board gains goodwill

Beautification ≠ Reckless Spending Let's be clear: beautification doesn't mean going over budget or upgrading for vanity.

It means:

1. Budgeting for long-term enhancement

2. Tying improvements to reserve or operating plans
3. Prioritizing high-impact, visible changes
4. Communicating how improvements align with the corporation's vision

Boards that explain upgrades as part of a broader strategy earn more trust—and fewer complaints.

Modernization Is More Than Looks It's tempting to treat modernization as just aesthetics. But it also includes:

1. **Energy efficiency** upgrades
2. **Accessibility** improvements
3. **Security** enhancements
4. **Digital tools** for owners (portals, payments, notices)

These investments save money, improve function, and future-proof the building.

And they send another message:

This isn't a building that's falling behind.

It's a building that's keeping up—and planning ahead.

Don't Apologize for Pride of Place Sometimes boards feel nervous about spending on aesthetics. They worry that owners will accuse them of “wasting money” or “trying to impress.”

But a well-kept, thoughtfully improved property isn't frivolous. It's **responsible**.

It creates equity. It attracts quality buyers. And it gives residents something powerful: pride.

This is their home.

Make it feel that way.

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## Chapter 13: Governing for Sustainability

Sustainability isn't just about the environment. It's about *longevity*. The ability of your community—its systems, its finances, and its people—to keep going strong, not just this year, but 10, 20, 30 years from now.

And that means **boards have to think beyond the current term**.

Good governance isn't just about making things work now. It's about ensuring they still work when the next board takes over—and the one after that.

Sustainability = Planning with Tomorrow in Mind If your reserve plan only works because you defer key repairs...

If your budget looks fine but ignores future utility costs...

If your board has no continuity plan when members step down...

Then you're not governing sustainably. You're patching holes.

Boards that govern for sustainability ask:

1. Will this decision hold up 5 years from now?
2. Will future owners thank us—or curse us?
3. Are we leaving behind a solid system—or a mess?

That's long-term thinking. That's stewardship.

Environmental Sustainability: The Practical Stuff You don't have to be a green building to make sustainable choices:

1. Upgrade lighting to LED (low cost, long lifespan)
2. Install motion sensors in common areas
3. Encourage water conservation in rules or messaging
4. Replace high-maintenance landscaping with native plants
5. Explore EV readiness or phased-in charging stations

Small moves add up. Not just in environmental impact, but in reduced operating costs—and long-term value.

Financial Sustainability Means Predictability Reserve contributions. Insurance increases. Inflation. It's not a mystery—costs go up. And when boards avoid making hard decisions today, they create hardship for future owners.

Sustainable boards don't overpromise. They:

1. Budget realistically
2. Fund reserves properly
3. Phase in costs with honesty
4. Avoid “kicking the can” past their term

It's not always popular. But it's fair. And in the long run, it's cheaper.

Culture Is Part of Sustainability, Too A building doesn't just run on systems. It runs on people.

When boards govern with clarity, consistency, and care—they model a culture that can outlast them. They leave behind norms and expectations that the next board can inherit and improve—not unravel.

That's sustainability.

You're not just passing down financials. You're passing down values, practices, and tone.  
And when those are strong? Communities flourish—even as leadership changes.

Legacy Happens Either Way Whether you plan for it or not, your board leaves a legacy.

It can be:

1. A building in disrepair and behind on everything
2. A culture of distrust and complaints
3. A budget that's been balanced by luck or neglect

Or it can be:

1. A well-maintained property with a strong reserve
2. A community that knows what it stands for
3. A board culture that future volunteers want to join

One way or another—you leave something behind.

So make it something good.

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## Chapter 14: Accessibility and Aging in Place

Condo boards are not just maintaining property—they're shaping the conditions for how people live.

And one of the most urgent, human conversations boards need to be having is this:

“Can people continue to live here as they age?”

“Can our building serve a wide range of needs, abilities, and circumstances?”

If the answer is no—or even “we're not sure”—then it's time to talk about **accessibility and aging in place**.

The Demographics Are Changing—Fast Canada's population is aging. And condos, by design, attract older adults—downsizers, retirees, and long-time owners alike.

Some buildings were built decades ago with little thought for accessibility. Others have physical barriers that make life harder for anyone with mobility challenges.

And in both cases, it's the board's job to ask:

1. Are we being reactive or proactive?
2. Are we accommodating needs or waiting for a crisis?
3. Are we budgeting for future upgrades—or waiting until we're forced?

Aging in Place Isn't Just About Seniors Accessibility helps:

1. Owners recovering from surgery
2. Residents with temporary or long-term disabilities
3. Visitors with strollers or limited mobility
4. Future buyers with loved ones in care

You don't need a building full of retirees to care about this.

You just need a building full of people.

Where Accessibility Shows Up Some upgrades are visible and obvious:

1. Automatic door openers
2. Ramp access at main entrances
3. Wider doorways or handrails in common areas
4. Elevators with low, easy-to-press buttons

Others are just as important:

1. Lower intercom systems or digital entry options
2. Clear communication formats for notices (large print, plain language)
3. Patience and respect when dealing with mobility delays or medical devices

Accessibility isn't a one-time fix. It's a mindset that says,

"We want this place to work for everyone who calls it home."

**Budgeting for Accessibility** The mistake many boards make is waiting until someone files a complaint or requests a change before doing anything.

That reactive approach can:

1. Increase liability
2. Hurt community morale
3. Lead to conflict or human rights concerns

A better approach?

Include accessibility in your **long-term plan**.



1. Review entranceways, elevators, and common areas
2. Price out phased-in improvements over 5–10 years
3. Make it part of your capital plan—not an afterthought

Small investments now reduce big problems later—and show owners that this is a place that *cares*.

This Isn't a Favour. It's Responsibility. Nobody wants to feel like a burden. And no board wants to feel like they're being pushed into an expense they didn't expect.

But accessibility isn't a favour.

It's not "being nice." It's governance with compassion.

You're not just meeting physical needs.

You're upholding dignity.

You're saying:

"We see you. You belong here. And we've thought about what that means."

That's how strong communities are built.

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## Chapter 15: Governance vs. Operations (Expanded)

One of the biggest traps a condo board can fall into is *confusing governance with operations*.

It's easy to do. After all, most directors are passionate, involved, and want to see results. But when boards start chasing individual work orders, micromanaging contractors, or rewriting communications themselves, they're not helping—they're crossing a line.

And in the process, they may be weakening both accountability and trust.

Let's fix that.

Governance Is Direction. Operations Is Execution. In simple terms:

1. **Governance** is what the board does: big-picture decisions, strategy, policy, oversight.
2. **Operations** is what the manager and contractors do: day-to-day implementation of those decisions.

The board sets the goals. Management gets them done.

You don't need to chase the plumber. You need to make sure plumbing is being managed well.

You don't need to re-inspect the roof. You need to ensure the reserve plan covers it—and that it's being followed.

That's the separation. That's good governance.

When Boards Get Too Operational Here's how it happens:

1. A contractor misses something.
2. An owner complains.
3. A board member thinks, "I'll just step in this once."

Suddenly, the board is:

1. Replying to individual service requests
2. Supervising maintenance staff
3. Calling suppliers directly
4. Giving instructions that override management

And now? Confusion. Role overlap. Potential liability.

Even worse—if something goes wrong, **accountability disappears**. Whose decision was it? Who signed off? Who's actually in charge?

Without clear boundaries, nobody knows.

Trust Doesn't Mean Silence—It Means Structure Boards shouldn't be passive.

They should ask questions. Review reports. Hold management to a high standard.

But they should also **respect the flow of authority**:

1. Owners → bring concerns to management
2. Management → implements solutions, escalates when needed
3. Board → reviews performance, approves direction, makes policy

If you step into management's lane, you don't just blur roles—you undermine your own authority.

What If the Manager Isn't Delivering? Then you deal with it **through governance**.

You don't take over. You don't micromanage. You address it as a contract or performance issue.

1. Review deliverables and timelines
2. Use written evaluations
3. Request changes through formal channels
4. Consider termination if needed—but with fairness and professionalism

Boards that respond operationally to a failing manager end up burned out and exposed.

Boards that respond strategically get better results—and better replacements.

Owners Don't Always See the Line—Boards Must Owners will email you directly. They'll stop you in the elevator. They'll ask questions like:

1. “Why hasn't my leak been fixed?”
2. “Can you make the manager call me back?”
3. “Can you look at the security footage?”

It's tempting to jump in. But the strongest boards have a simple, respectful response:

“That's a management item—please direct it to them so it's properly tracked. We oversee the system, not individual service.”

The more you say this—and live it—the more the community learns how the system works.

Clarity Protects Everyone When boards govern—and managers manage—everything gets better:

1. Owners know where to go
2. Managers know where they stand
3. Boards have more time and energy for strategy, planning, and leadership

Clear boundaries don't reduce power.

They increase focus.

They keep accountability clean.

And they let everyone do their job better.

That's the difference between running a meeting... and running a building.

## Chapter 16: The Power of Process

People don't usually get excited about process.

They want results. They want action. They want things done.

But here's the truth condo boards learn—sometimes the hard way:

**The difference between chaos and consistency... is process.**

The difference between burnout and confidence?

The difference between “how did this happen?” and “this was handled properly”?

Almost always—process.

It's the hidden engine behind strong communities.

---

### When Things Fall Apart, It's Usually Process

- The wrong owner got a violation notice? Likely a process failure.
- An invoice didn't get paid? Process failure.
- No one knows if the roof was inspected last year?  
You guessed it—process.

It's not that people weren't trying. It's that there wasn't a system that held the work up—even *when individuals got tired, busy, or changed roles.*

---

## **Strong Boards Don't Just Make Decisions—They Build Systems**

Let's say your board wants:

- Faster communication
- Better tracking of maintenance
- More consistency in rule enforcement

Great. Now ask:

What's the *process* that makes that happen?

- Is there a form for owners to use?
- Who logs the request?
- How does the board know it's resolved?
- What if someone's on vacation or leaves the board?

If you can't answer those questions, you don't have a process.  
You have good intentions. And that's not enough.

---

## **Process Creates Accountability—Without Finger-Pointing**

When things go wrong, the worst response is “Who dropped the ball?”

The best response is:

“Let's revisit the process. Where did it break down?”

Good systems *depersonalize* mistakes.

They allow the team to learn, improve, and protect against repeat problems.

It's not about blame—it's about building something that works, even under stress.

---

## **What Should Be Processed?**

In short? Anything repeatable. Especially things that affect:

- Owner communication
- Service requests
- Contract approvals
- Rule enforcement
- Financial reporting
- Annual planning
- Onboarding new board members

The more often something happens, the more it deserves a *clear, written, shared process*.

Even if it starts on a napkin.

Even if it changes over time.

Write it down. Walk it through. Make it better.

---

### **Good Process Doesn't Mean Bureaucracy**

Let's kill this myth:

"If we write things down, we'll lose flexibility."

Nope.

What you actually lose is **ambiguity**.

And ambiguity is what kills trust, speed, and effectiveness.

Clear process *freed up energy*.

It creates a known path.

It reduces drama and prevents burnout.

And it lets people *trust the system* instead of relying on memory, habit, or goodwill.

---

### **Build for the Next Board—Not Just Yours**

One of the best gifts you can give the next board is **clarity**:

4. A binder.
5. A checklist.
6. A shared folder.
7. A list of who to call, when, and why.

It doesn't have to be perfect. But it has to be something.

Because you're not just managing this term.

You're setting the next one up for success.

That's leadership.

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## Chapter 17: Transparency, Reporting, and Communication

No matter how smart your decisions are, they won't build trust if people don't understand them.

That's why transparency and communication aren't just soft skills. They're **core competencies** for a successful board. And they're deeply connected to the legal duty of a condo corporation to keep owners informed.

But let's be clear:

Transparency doesn't mean chaos.

And communication doesn't mean overload.

The best boards communicate clearly, predictably, and with purpose.

---

### Transparency Starts with Structure

Boards sometimes assume transparency is about sharing everything. But it's not. It's about **sharing the right things, in the right way, at the right time.**

That means:

4. Regular financial reports
5. Clear summaries of major decisions
6. Project updates and timelines
7. Notices about changes to rules, vendors, or operations
8. AGM packages and voting documentation

This isn't just good practice—it's often required.

But when done well, it doesn't feel like a legal checkbox.

It feels like clarity.

And clarity builds confidence.

---

### Not Everything Is for Distribution



It's important to understand that **not all condominium records are meant to be shared with owners**. Some information is confidential and intended for the board only—especially when it involves legal matters, contract negotiations, or sensitive personnel issues.

The **Condominium Act, 1998** outlines which records are accessible and under what conditions. Owners may request access using the proper CAO forms, but the board has a legal right—and a duty—to deny requests that don't meet the Act's criteria.

The board's role is to act as a gatekeeper:  
**to share when appropriate, and to protect when necessary.**

---

### **Predictability Beats Frequency**

You don't need to send weekly emails.  
You need a rhythm.

4. A board summary every quarter
5. A simple update after major meetings
6. Notices that go out *before* people ask questions
7. A communication schedule your manager can rely on

When owners know when they'll hear from the board, they stop speculating in between.

---

### **Use Plain Language**

Don't talk like a lawyer.  
Unless you are one—and even then, don't do it here.

Great communication sounds like this:

“We're replacing the roof in June. It's on schedule and on budget. You'll get a notice next month about temporary access changes.”

Not this:

“The project in question shall commence June 3rd, barring exigent delays, pursuant to approved capital plans.”

You're not impressing anyone with formality.  
You're reassuring them with simplicity.

---

### **Say the Why, Not Just the What**

Owners don't just want to know *what* happened. They want to know:

5. Why was this chosen?

6. What options were considered?
7. How does this impact me?
8. What's next?

When you explain the *why*, even bad news goes down easier:

“We increased the fees to cover insurance and reserve funding. We cut costs where we could, but those two items couldn't be avoided.”

Short. Honest. Human.

That's transparency.

---

### **Communication Is a System, Not a Task**

Don't let communication rest on one board member's shoulders.

It should be built into your manager's scope, supported by templates or tools, and overseen by the whole board.

Create a shared calendar.

Use simple templates.

Pick consistent platforms (email, bulletin board, portal).

The easier it is to send an update, the more likely it will happen—*even when things are busy*.

---

### **Don't Confuse Transparency with Consensus**

Being transparent doesn't mean putting every issue to a vote.

The board makes decisions. But when those decisions are communicated clearly, fairly, and with context—they're easier to accept.

If you've done the work, show your work.

If a decision was tough, say so.

That kind of openness builds credibility.

And credibility gives the board space to lead.

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## Chapter 18: Vendor Management and Contract Clarity

No condo runs without vendors.

Landscaping. Snow removal. Elevators. Fire safety. Waste disposal. Window cleaning. Paving. Roofing. Engineering. Security. The list goes on.

And yet, few boards get formal training on how to manage vendor relationships—or how to protect the corporation through contracts.

Here's what great boards understand:

Vendors don't just deliver services.

**They shape the resident experience.**

And the board's role is to set expectations—and enforce them.

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### Not All Vendors Are Created Equal

A vendor with a big brand name might still deliver poor service. A small outfit with no flash might outperform every expectation.

The key isn't who you hire. It's how you manage them.

Boards should:

5. Use **competitive bidding** when possible
6. Ask for references from other condos
7. Review contracts before renewal (not just after problems start)
8. Involve management in the selection process, but retain oversight
9. Set **performance expectations** up front

The goal isn't just cost control. It's *results control*.

---

### Contracts: Your First (and Last) Line of Defense

A good contract should include:

4. Clear deliverables
5. Service frequency
6. Emergency protocols
7. Insurance and WSIB compliance

8. Start and end dates
9. Termination clauses
10. Who supervises and approves the work

If it's not in writing, it doesn't exist.

If it's unclear, it can't be enforced.

---

### **Build a Vendor Scorecard**

Want better performance from contractors? Start scoring them.

Simple categories:

11. On-time delivery
12. Communication
13. Quality of work
14. Responsiveness to issues
15. Value for cost

Even just knowing they're being evaluated makes vendors more attentive.

---

### **Don't Wait Until It's Bad to Intervene**

Smart boards:

16. Do **walkthroughs** with management
17. Review service logs and reports
18. Collect resident feedback early
19. Address small slippage before it becomes major failure

If something's wrong, don't wait. Document it. Flag it. Step in.

---

### **Change Isn't Failure**

Sometimes a vendor just isn't the right fit anymore.

That's not failure. That's leadership.

Just handle it right:

20. Follow the contract
21. Be professional
22. Leave clean records

23. Onboard the next one with clearer expectations  
Every transition is a chance to get better.

---

## **Chapter 19: Respect and Responsibility**

*(Updated with “One Voice” section)*

At its core, a condo corporation isn't just bricks and budgets.  
It's people. Living close together. Sharing costs, space, and decisions.

That's why respect isn't just a social nicety—it's the foundation of good governance.

And responsibility isn't just about getting things done—it's about *how* you do them, and the impact you leave behind.

---

### **Respect Isn't Earned by Winning Arguments**

Boards sometimes get stuck thinking that respect comes from being right.  
From asserting authority. From shutting down complaints with logic or legalities.

But true respect—the kind that builds cooperation—comes from:

24. Listening before responding
25. Speaking clearly, not sharply
26. Explaining without defensiveness
27. Enforcing fairly, not punitively
28. Showing up when you say you will

It's not about letting people walk all over you. It's about showing the professionalism you wish others would show back.

---

### **Respect Starts Inside the Boardroom**

You can't expect the community to be respectful if your board meetings are filled with tension, passive aggression, or eye-rolls.

Model it first:

1. Give each other the benefit of the doubt
2. Let people finish their thoughts
3. Don't undermine each other in front of residents or management
4. Hold firm boundaries—but with calm, clear language

Respect among board members sets the tone for everything else.

---

### **The Board Speaks with One Voice**

Sometimes decisions are split.

Sometimes the vote is close.

Sometimes a board member walks away frustrated or disappointed.

That's part of governance. But once a decision is made, **the board speaks with one voice.**

That means:

1. No public dissent
2. No subtle undermining
3. No “I voted against it but...” in front of owners

You can disagree privately. But publicly, you represent the full board.  
And that unity is what gives your decisions weight, structure, and credibility.

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### **Responsibility Means Showing Up—Even When It’s Hard**

Board service isn’t always fun.  
There are budget meetings that go long.  
Emails that feel personal.  
Owners who make demands you can’t meet.

And yet—you show up.  
You stay thoughtful.  
You do the reading.  
You vote your conscience.

That’s responsibility. It’s quiet. Often thankless.  
But it’s what keeps the whole system going.

## **Chapter 20: Conflict Resolution and Emotional Intelligence**

Conflict is inevitable in any shared community.  
You’ve got different people with different needs, values, and personalities—living under the same rules, paying the same fees, and expecting the same respect.

Boards don’t get to avoid conflict.  
But they can learn how to manage it—and more importantly, how not to escalate it.

The key? Emotional intelligence.

Not everyone has it by default. But it can be built. And when it's present at the board table, everything changes.

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### **The Root of Most Condo Conflict Isn't the Issue—It's the Feeling**

When someone is yelling about garbage pickup, it's rarely *just* about garbage.

It's often about:

1. Feeling ignored
2. Feeling disrespected
3. Feeling like no one is taking responsibility
4. Feeling like the rules apply unequally

Boards that learn to hear the *emotion* beneath the complaint can de-escalate fast.

Try this:

"I can hear that this has been frustrating. I'm sorry you've had to deal with that. Here's what's being done."

You don't have to admit fault.

You just have to show humanity.

---

### **Avoid the Three Emotional Traps**

1. **Taking It Personally**  
If someone accuses the board of incompetence or unfairness, don't lash out. You're not there to win the argument—you're there to lead through it.
  2. **Over-Explaining**  
When people are upset, they don't need a 900-word policy explanation. They need to know you're handling it.
  3. **Avoiding It**  
Hoping the problem goes away only makes it louder. Address issues early, clearly, and calmly.
- 

### **Board Members Must Be the Emotional Adults in the Room**

You will encounter:

1. People who raise their voice
2. Owners who send hostile emails



3. Residents who bring emotion to every interaction

Your job is not to match their energy.

Your job is to be the calm, consistent, professional presence that the community can trust.

That doesn't mean letting people walk over you.

It means responding with:

1. Neutral tone
2. Clear boundaries
3. Respectful firmness

---

### **When Conflict Is Between Board Members**

Disagreements among directors are normal.

But when they turn into grudges, sarcasm, or power struggles, the whole board suffers.

Here's how to keep it healthy:

1. Stay issue-focused, not personality-focused
2. Address concerns directly—not through side comments
3. Use a chairperson or facilitator when needed
4. Remind each other: You're here to govern, not compete

Conflict on the board is a leadership test.

Pass it by leading with maturity.

---

### **Use Meetings as Conflict Prevention**

Most blowups happen when people feel left out of decisions or blindsided by outcomes.

You can reduce that risk with:

1. Clear agendas
2. Fair speaking time
3. A culture of listening
4. Documented follow-ups

It sounds simple—but it's rare.

And rare is what earns trust.

---

### **Know When to Step Away**

Some conflicts aren't fixable in the moment.

If a conversation is becoming heated:

1. Take a break
2. Reschedule with a neutral third party
3. Put it in writing if live conversation isn't working

De-escalation isn't weakness. It's wisdom.

### **Emotional Intelligence Isn't Soft—It's Strategic**

The best boards understand that managing emotion isn't about being nice. It's about protecting the integrity of the community.

When residents feel heard, seen, and respected—even when they disagree—they're more likely to cooperate.

And when the board leads with emotional intelligence, owners stop reacting to *tone*—and start listening to *content*.

That's how conflict becomes progress.

---

### **Safety Always Comes First**

Not all conflict is reasonable. Some behaviour crosses the line—especially when mental health issues or personal instability are involved.

If someone's behaviour feels threatening, erratic, or aggressive, **you are not obligated to continue the conversation.**

Trust your instincts.

De-escalate when you can. Step back when you must.

If someone threatens or tries to intimidate you or others, that's illegal—call the authorities.

Boards should also consider seeking **legal advice** to understand what protective steps the corporation can take, especially if someone poses an ongoing risk to safety or governance.

Governance requires courage. But it never requires putting yourself in danger.

## Chapter 21: When Things Go Wrong – Crisis Management

No matter how well a board plans, *something will go wrong*.

- A pipe will burst.
- A roof will fail early.
- A theft or fire or flood will shake the community.
- A contractor will abandon the job.
- A board member will resign mid-crisis.
- A global pandemic will grind the world to a halt. (Sound familiar?)

What separates strong communities from fragile ones isn't whether they face crisis—it's **how they respond**.

Crisis management isn't just a reaction skill. It's a governance responsibility.

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### The First Rule of Crisis: Stay Calm, Then Communicate

When something goes wrong, most people don't need *everything fixed right away*. They need to know:

- What happened
- What's being done
- Who's in charge
- What to expect next
- That someone competent is handling it

If the board stays silent or scrambles incoherently, fear and rumors take over. But if the board (through management) leads with clarity, even bad news feels manageable.

"A pipe has burst in Building B. Emergency repairs are underway. Units 201–207 may lose water for a few hours. We'll provide a full update by 5pm."

That's leadership. Calm, factual, human.

---

### **You Don't Need All the Answers—But You Need a Plan**

It's okay to say:

"We're still gathering information. Here's what we know so far."

Then:

- Assign a point person
- Get the facts fast
- Set internal deadlines for updates
- Keep records of all actions taken
- Contact your insurer (if applicable)

You don't have to fix the whole crisis in an hour. But you **do** need to demonstrate control and competence.

---

### **Support Your Manager—But Don't Micromanage**

In a crisis, your manager is your most important player. Let them:

- Activate emergency vendors
- Coordinate with contractors
- Manage resident communication
- Track damages or disruptions

The board's role is to:

8. Stay informed
9. Provide backup where needed
10. Approve large expenditures or deviations from normal process
11. Support—not override—professional advice

Micromanaging slows everything down.

Trust your systems. Trust your team.

---

### **After the Fire's Out, Debrief**

Every crisis is a chance to improve your readiness.

After it's over, review:

9. What worked
10. What fell apart
11. Who stepped up
12. What needs documenting or changing

Then update:

8. Emergency contact lists
9. Communication templates
10. Vendor protocols
11. Insurance documentation
12. Budget lines (for unforeseen emergencies)

This is where resilience is built.

---

### **Keep Residents Informed—Even After It's Over**

Silence after a crisis creates anxiety.

People want to know:

9. What went wrong
10. What it cost
11. What's been done to prevent recurrence
12. Whether there are lessons learned

Even a short memo that says:

“Thank you for your patience during last week’s elevator outage. We’ve replaced the failed component, updated our inspection routine, and confirmed vendor response times for the future.”

...goes a long way in restoring confidence.

---

### **Crises Reveal Character—Individually and Collectively**

Stress brings out the best in some people, and the worst in others.

You’ll see:

- 10. Owners who offer help
- 11. Owners who demand special treatment
- 12. Managers who shine
- 13. Managers who panic
- 14. Board members who step up—or check out

Use those moments to *learn* about your team and your support structure.  
Then adjust accordingly.

---

### **Crisis Doesn’t Have to Mean Chaos**

Yes, it’s scary. Yes, it’s high-pressure. But when a board:

- 4. Knows who does what
- 5. Communicates early and often
- 6. Keeps records
- 7. Supports its team
- 8. Stays calm under fire

...it proves to the entire community that leadership is real, not just theoretical.

And that’s when trust grows—even in the middle of trouble.

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## Chapter 22: Board Succession and Training

A condo board is not a forever team.

People move. People burn out. People finish their term and choose not to run again.

And yet many communities treat every new board election like a surprise—scrambling for candidates, explaining the role from scratch, and hoping the next group figures it out.

But strong boards don't just govern.

They **prepare the next board** to lead well after they're gone.

That's what succession planning is all about.

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### Good Governance Doesn't End with Your Term

When your term is up, what are you leaving behind?

- 9. A list of decisions?
- 10. A trail of emails?
- 11. A few vague memories?

Or are you handing over:

- 12. A binder (or folder) with board policies
- 13. A calendar of required tasks
- 14. A plain-language overview of what the board does
- 15. Key contacts, login info, and service provider summaries
- 16. A few lessons learned—on paper

You don't have to create a corporate textbook.  
Just a **living playbook**—so the new board doesn't start at square one.

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### **Train While You Serve**

Succession isn't just about the future. It's about how you operate now.

Here's how smart boards keep the pipeline full:

17. Invite owners to observe meetings
18. Involve committee members in decisions
19. Share summaries of what the board is working on
20. Be visible, available, and welcoming to potential candidates

When people understand the board's purpose, they're more likely to step up—*and to lead well* when they do.

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### **Onboarding New Board Members Shouldn't Be an Afterthought**

Imagine starting a new job with no training.

No one tells you what to expect.

You don't know who to call.

You're expected to vote on major decisions within days.

That's how many board members feel in their first month.

Change that. Provide:

21. A welcome email with key documents
22. A 30-minute walkthrough with the manager
23. A "who's who" sheet of current board and vendors
24. An honest conversation about expectations and responsibilities

They'll feel more confident—and they'll serve better.

---

### **Culture Is Contagious—So Set It Now**

If your board culture is respectful, organized, and forward-thinking, the next board is more likely to carry that forward.

If your board is disorganized, reactive, or cliquy—that gets passed down too.

Succession is not just about who fills the seats.

It's about what kind of leadership they inherit.

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## **Elections Are Opportunities, Not Threats**

Some boards dread election season. But with the right preparation, it can be a time of renewal—not panic.

Tips:

25. Start talking about elections 60–90 days out
26. Encourage balanced representation (skills, demographics, styles)
27. Provide simple info sheets about the role
28. Avoid fear-based messaging (“If nobody runs, we’re doomed!”)
29. Consider exit interviews or thank-you notes for outgoing members

Turnover is natural. Plan for it—and *elevate it*.

---

## **The Best Boards Plan to Be Replaced**

That’s not resignation. That’s leadership.

Because when a board stops thinking about “what we’re doing this year,” and starts thinking, “How do we make sure this community is well-led *every* year?”  
...everything gets stronger.

Your job isn’t just to lead today.

It’s to make tomorrow’s leaders better than you found them.

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## Chapter 23: Digital Tools and AI in Condo Management

It used to be clipboards, file folders, and printed notices on bulletin boards.  
Now? It's cloud portals, instant alerts, and AI tools that can scan a document in seconds.

Condo management is changing fast.  
Boards that embrace digital tools don't just "keep up"—they gain *clarity, control, and confidence* in the systems they oversee.

But technology isn't the goal.  
**Better service, better decisions, and stronger communities**—that's the goal.

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### Don't Use Tech Just to Look Modern—Use It to Work Smarter

Technology should serve a purpose:

30. **Portals** that let owners see notices, pay fees, and log requests
31. **Shared drives** that keep board records accessible and secure
32. **Automated alerts** for deadlines, renewals, or building issues
33. **Communication tools** that reduce delays and lost emails
34. **AI tools** that help screen documents, summarize minutes, and draft notices
35. **Digital forms** that reduce manual input errors

The best tools don't add noise. They reduce it.

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### Ask: Does This Help the Board Govern?

Technology that helps your manager isn't the same as technology that helps the board.

Smart boards ask:

36. Can we track progress better with this tool?
37. Can we make more informed decisions faster?
38. Can we reduce our reliance on memory or personalities?

That's the real ROI: **transparency and continuity**.

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## **Security and Privacy Still Matter**

Digital doesn't mean less risk—it just means *different* risk.

Boards must ensure:

- 39. Sensitive documents are stored securely
- 40. Owner data is encrypted and access-controlled
- 41. Platforms comply with privacy regulations
- 42. Login credentials are changed when board members leave

You wouldn't leave paper files in the lobby.

Don't leave digital ones exposed either.

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## **AI Is a Tool—Not a Replacement for Judgment**

AI can help:

- 43. Summarize meeting minutes
- 44. Suggest policy language
- 45. Generate replies to common questions
- 46. Flag financial anomalies
- 47. Auto-sort service requests

But it can't:

- 48. Make decisions for the board
- 49. Replace due process
- 50. Understand tone and community nuance
- 51. Prevent bias if fed biased data

Use it to assist—not to abdicate.

Boards remain responsible for every decision made in their name.

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## **Embrace the Learning Curve**

Some board members are tech-savvy. Others... not so much.

That's okay.

The key is *willingness*.

- 52. Hold short tutorials.
- 53. Ask your manager to walk the board through new tools.

- 54. Choose platforms that are intuitive, not flashy.
  - 55. Document how systems work so new board members aren't lost.
- Digital tools work best when everyone knows how to use them.
- 

### **Don't Confuse Tools with Transformation**

Getting a shiny new portal won't fix poor communication.

Buying AI won't solve governance gaps.

Having a cloud system doesn't guarantee consistency.

Technology is an amplifier.

If your systems are sound, tech makes them stronger.

If your systems are broken, tech just reveals that faster.

Start with values. Build the right habits.

Then let tools *support* the culture you've created.

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## **Chapter 24: Building Resilience in Communities**

Resilience isn't about toughness.

It's about **adaptability, support, and shared purpose**.

A resilient condo community doesn't just "survive" challenges—it bends, flexes, responds, and gets stronger over time.

That's not luck. It's leadership.

And it starts with the board.

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## What Is a Resilient Condo Community?

A resilient community:

- 56. Communicates clearly—especially in tough times
- 57. Has financial strategies that absorb shocks
- 58. Doesn't panic when problems arise
- 59. Handles turnover smoothly
- 60. Encourages respect across differences
- 61. Knows how to disagree without dysfunction

It's not about perfection. It's about **recovering well**.

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## Resilience Comes from the Ground Up

You don't build resilience during a crisis—you build it *before* one.

You build it when:

- 62. You maintain the property proactively
- 63. You make reserve contributions even when they're unpopular
- 64. You budget for contingencies
- 65. You invest in governance tools and board training
- 66. You take the time to explain tough decisions to owners

Resilience is the compound interest of preparation.

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## Strong Boards Build Strong Culture

Every email, every meeting, every by-law change reinforces one of two things:

- 1. "This community is chaotic and reactive," or
- 2. "This community is fair, thoughtful, and stable."

You're always reinforcing something.

If the board handles disagreement with patience and transparency, the community learns to do the same.

If the board acts with clarity and care, trust grows—even when hard things happen.

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### **Support Matters as Much as Structure**

You can have the best systems on paper, but if people feel isolated, ignored, or dismissed, it breaks down.

Resilient communities:

1. Invite owner questions—not just at AGMs
2. Offer timely, human responses
3. Celebrate positive news, not just urgent problems
4. Acknowledge when things are hard—and keep people informed

People handle change better when they feel respected.

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### **Resilience Means Planning for People, Not Just Pipes**

Governance isn't just maintenance schedules and budgets. It's about *people*.

And people are vulnerable to:

1. Job loss
2. Aging
3. Illness
4. Isolation
5. Language and cultural barriers

Resilient boards think about:

1. Accessibility
2. Clear signage and translation where needed
3. How to support residents on fixed incomes while protecting the collective budget
4. Having social spaces that feel welcoming, not exclusive

A strong reserve fund matters.

But so does a sense of belonging.

---

### **Resilience Doesn't Mean Saying Yes to Everything**

Boundaries are part of resilience too.

Resilient boards:

1. Say no with kindness
2. Explain decisions clearly
3. Avoid favoritism
4. Stick to principles even under pressure

Because being firm and being fair can absolutely go together.

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### **You're Not Just Protecting a Building—You're Holding a Community**

And when you govern with that truth in mind—every system, every decision, every meeting—people feel it.

They may not thank you today.

But in a moment of crisis, or change, or celebration, they'll know:

This board has our back.

That's the true reward of resilient leadership.

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### **Chapter 25: Build for the Future**

Every board gets caught up in the present.

1. The next project
2. The next email
3. The next owner complaint
4. The next deadline

That's part of the job. But it's not the whole job.

Strong boards don't just react to the now.  
They **build with tomorrow in mind**—so their work becomes a foundation, not a patch.

---

### **Good Boards Solve Problems. Great Boards Set Direction.**

If your board only tackles what's in front of it, the community becomes **reactive and short-sighted**.

But when the board:

5. Identifies long-term priorities
6. Aligns decisions with a shared vision
7. Builds systems that outlast individuals
8. Plans for change, not just continuity
9. Leaves records, training, and culture behind

...it doesn't just lead for today. It **leads the way forward**.

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### **Ask Bigger Questions**

Beyond your term, ask:

10. What kind of community do we want this to become?
11. How do we want people to feel about living here?
12. What do we want future owners to inherit?
13. Are we leaving behind strength—or just keeping the lights on?

You don't need all the answers. But asking the right questions is the start of every important shift.

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### **Make Time for Vision**

Set aside one meeting a year—not for budgets or updates—but for vision.

14. Where is the building headed?
15. What feedback are we hearing from owners?
16. What would we be proud to say we helped change?
17. What's on the horizon we should prepare for?

Even one annual conversation like this can transform the board from a management group into a **leadership team**.

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## **Don't Just Fix—Beautify**

Repairs are essential. But so are upgrades that make people feel proud of where they live.

Future-focused boards:

18. Look for small wins (paint, lighting, signage, common areas)
19. Choose materials that will age well
20. Engage residents in decisions that affect shared space
21. Prioritize both function *and* feel

Pride of place builds stronger communities.

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## **Be Remembered for Building, Not Just Preserving**

When your term ends, what will your legacy be?

Did you:

22. Steady a struggling community?
23. Bring clarity to a confusing system?
24. Make things easier for the next board?
25. Add beauty, functionality, or fairness where it was lacking?

You don't have to do it all.

But you can move the whole story forward.

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## **You're Part of Something Bigger**

When you serve on a condo board, you become a **temporary steward** of something lasting.

The property.

The culture.

The rules.

The people.

This work is real.

It's hard.

It matters.

So govern with care.

Decide with purpose.

Lead like the future depends on you—because it does.