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GENERAL INFORMATION ON STRATA LIVING

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A significant number of all real estate transactions in British Columbia involve the purchase or sale of a strata unit. More and more people are choosing to purchase strata titled property such as a townhome or condominium over the traditional suburban single family home. This is for a variety of reasons, usually affordability, lifestyle or location (try buying a single family home in downtown Vancouver!!).

It is important that prospective buyers learn as much as they can about the rights and responsibilities of what we call “strata living”. This article is designed to provide a general overview on strata living. The other articles on our site focus on specific issues which we feel a more detailed analysis is required.

What are examples of strata title property?

The concept of strata title property has been in place in British Columbia for over 45 years. They are commonly referred to as a bare land strata, duplexes, townhomes or condominium buildings, whether residential or commercial. They may be freehold (in which the purchaser becomes the actual owner) or they may be leasehold (in which the registered owner is a third party who then subleases the unit to the owner). Examples of leasehold strata developments include developments on the University of British Columbia or Simon Fraser University.

In British Columbia all such properties are governed by the Strata Property Act (“SPA”) and it’s Regulations. Note that SPA does not deal with First Nations Lands.

The SPA basically provides for the basis for an entire layer of governance through the Strata Corporation and the Strata Council. These two topics will be further discussed in other articles.

Community Living

Buyers of strata units must understand that they are entering into a form of community living. Homeowners pay a monthly fee for common costs (landscaping, maintenance, fitness facilities, etc.) and are responsible on their own for items relating to their strata unit (property taxes, utilities, interior maintenance, etc.).

There may be occasions when the majority of homeowners vote for a certain bylaw which not all homeowners are in favour. The fact that a majority of owners wish the bylaw to pass means it will, and ALL homeowners must abide by the new bylaw.

A typical example is a bylaw prohibiting rentals. There may be some homeowners who purchased the unit with the intention of renting the unit. If a bylaw is passed prohibiting rentals these homeowners must abide with the new bylaw, even if this requires the owner to sell the unit. Rental bylaws are one of the most debated issues in strata and there is an entire page on our website dedicated to this issue.