



Building security: What does it really mean to you?

Among the more pressing topics of discussion at association board meetings is security and how to best ensure the safety and protection of residents in their homes.

While some believe the primary way to achieve a high level of security is by investing in improved technology, others feel that the key is providing more intensive training for safety and door staff personnel. Another popular belief is that the best defense for homeowners is resident awareness. Many view the solution as a synthesis of all three approaches.

Determining what protective measures to undertake ultimately amounts to how security affects each individual association and its homeowners. Many of the residents in Sudler-managed properties recently took a survey on what security means to them. The results indicated that for most residents, security is determined by their felt level of safety, tranquility and freedom from danger.

Here are some resident responses to Sudler's survey:

- "For me, security in our condo refers to the measures we have taken to protect our residents from any outside danger. It means that people who shouldn't be in our building do not gain entry, and that people who do not live here and do gain entry (contractors, delivery people, etc.) go about their proper business."
- "Security in a visible building is not simply about being safe — but also about feeling safe. The perception of safety in one's home impacts how we live each and every day. It extends not just to our homes and our buildings, but also garages and the area immediately around our buildings. Visible security is vital. Door staff that is active and attentive, monitors the perimeter of the building, and stands guard in the lobby is vital. Security cameras that do not just record, but are also visible enough to act as a deterrent are important. An active resident base that is encouraged to report any suspicious incidents or people also adds to the safety of the building."
- "Living in an urban environment is wonderful and the lifestyle many of us choose. It also carries with it some risks. Safety and, arguably of greater importance, the perception of safety is vital to a building and its property values."

- "Building security refers to the protection of the building's common elements from criminal activities. Security is achieved through structural approaches (building layout, security cameras and security devices), appropriate training of building staff, and most importantly, the education of the building occupants."
- "Security is having the peace of mind that your home is a safe haven and that procedures are put in place by the security employees assigned to your building to protect that feeling of safety."
- "As the board president of a 321-unit condominium building, security means different things to different residents. For a few residents who violate rules from time to time, security is a hassle, as it should be, but the remaining majority of residents appreciate living in a safe community that they call home. Good security begins with the condominium rules and regulations which state clearly what can and cannot be done within and around the building. With a clear set of rules, doormen and security personnel understand what the owners want, expect, and often demand. A security committee can be formed, based on the condominium rules. They may suggest security devices which can aid security personnel and doormen in performing their duties, such as fobbed access and automated doors, fences, etc. Some resident demands for increased security personnel or equipment may at times seem to be unreasonable and may in fact be unaffordable. However, try to keep in mind that they may have real fears or expectations based on previous experiences. The proper level of security should prevent unacceptable incidents at a reasonable cost to the unit owners. Managing a condominium is a business, and the bottom line is value. Just as poor maintenance will have a negative impact on property value, poor security has the potential for an equal or greater impact."

Security risks vary from property to property, and it's clear that the decision to overhaul an association's safety system is dependent on what gives the individual homeowners contentment and peace of mind. In the final analysis, any board discussion regarding association security will most likely begin with awareness and preparedness. Rarely does an association not make safety a top priority.