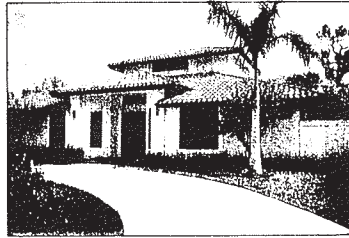
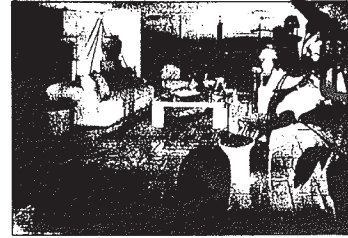


3 Getting to know:
Theo Treuren



Treuren's custom home.

17 River Bridge has
active lifestyle



Model lets views in.

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Martinique II

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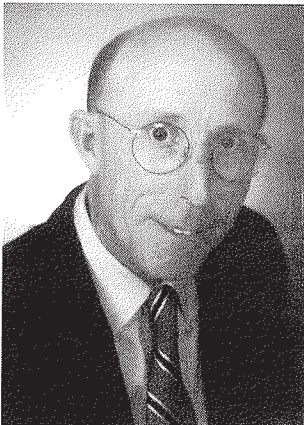
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GUEST COLUMN

Buying in a planned community: what to know, expect and ask

By **JOHN R. MATH**
President/Associated Property Management of the Palm Beaches Inc.



John R. Math

In Palm Beach County, planned communities range from townhouses to quadraplexes, single family subdivisions to multi-faceted developments, such as PGA National and Wellington.

Planned communities can offer residents land planning, recreational facilities, amenities, services, maintenance, security, design and a lifestyle not usually found in older, unstructured subdivisions.

The entity that governs, manages and perpetuates the planned community is a property owners' association (POA).

A POA is owned and operated by the homeowners within a community or subdivision. Usually, there is one vote per home. A board of directors, selected by the homeowners, manages the POA or hires a property management company. In either case, the homeowners have a direct voice in the governing of their community.

A POA assesses and collects fees from the homeowners which are used for maintenance, repairs and making improvements to common areas. The POA also creates and enforces rules, gives approval for resales and rentals, and grants

or denies approvals for architectural plans or exterior improvements.

This structure may sound confining, but these rules are made and enforced to protect the appearance of the community as well as maintain and increase the value of the homes.

A professional property management company can guide the association's daily operation and perform the functions required by the board of directors.

When purchasing in a community governed by a POA, there is a recorded set of documents that a buyer needs to read prior to signing the sales contract. These documents include:

1. The Declaration of Protective Covenants and Restrictions
2. Articles of Incorporation
3. By-Laws of the Association

These documents set forth the purpose of the association, prohibited and permitted uses, architectural guidelines and deed restrictions. The documents outline the mechanics of how the association is managed. They affect almost every

aspect of the community's operations, as well as your lifestyle immediately outside the confines of your home.

It is important to thoroughly understand them. If the documents are too bulky or difficult to understand, have a real estate attorney review and interpret them for you.

Another factor is how the association is presently being managed and how it will be managed in the future. In a new community, the POA is usually under the developer's control. Determine how long the developer will retain control and if, in the interim, the developer will allow homeowners on the board.

Gradually, the homeowners need to learn about the POA's operations and take control of the management.

The transition from developer to homeowner is an excellent time for the homeowners to decide if they want to manage the association or have a professional property management company handle the day-to-day operations.

Find out from the developer

how this transition is to be handled as well as the time frame for the turnover.

Determine if the developer is subsidizing the maintenance fees. If so, that usually means higher fees after the project is completed.

Find out if the community is currently being managed by the developer or by a professional management company. In many cases, the developer runs the association with his own staff — these costs may not be fully represented in their budget.

When the owners take over, these costs need to be added to the budget in order to maintain the present level of services. If a professional property management company is employed, then these costs are already in the budget.

It makes sense to investigate all of the ramifications of living in a planned community. Look for a developer with a proven track record in your area. Talk to homeowners in the builder's other developments. If there is a management company involved, investigate their track record.

A final comment about turn-overs of a POA from the developer to the homeowners: Prior to the sellout of a community, homeowners need to investigate the management, operations and finances of the association they will inherit from the developer. A full-service property management company can guide both sides to a smooth, successful transition.

For more information about Associated Property Management of the Palm Beaches Inc., call 588-7210.

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