

Summertime and the condo living is (mostly) easy | Home & Living

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Imagine that you wake up in your condominium to a lovely Saturday perfect for outdoor activities. It's just the right weather for changing the oil in your car in the parking lot, followed by some charcoal grilling on your balcony and nighttime stargazing on the lawn while your boom-box pumps up the volume.

Sounds great, but you forgot that just about every condo association has rules that regulate what residents can and cannot do outside on the grounds of the condo community.

The urge to enjoy the environs right outside your door swells with the return of fine, warm weather. Yet folks who live in property owners association and condo communities can easily forget that the "common elements" of the grounds, sidewalks, parking lot and pool are not an anything-goes venue.

Rules apply, and the first one that comes to mind is the restriction on outdoor grilling. The obvious fire danger posed by charcoal or even gas grilling on your unit's balcony is so great that the General Assembly outlawed the practice some years ago.

Furthermore, I know an association that formerly let residents grill on the condo grounds so long as the fire was at least 10 feet from any structure, and the grill used electricity or small-tank propane. But some folks kept using unauthorized grills or let fires go unattended, and the association finally banned all grills on the grounds.

Many associations also ban do-it-yourself auto maintenance and repairs on their property. It might seem harmless for residents to change their oil or swap their brake pads in their own parking space. But experience shows some residents pour the old oil down the catch-basin, or leave their vehicle to sit, partly disassembled, for days and days. Neither is acceptable.

On the other hand, the pleasure of a summer picnic on the lawn is fine. Spread your blanket and enjoy nibbles and beverages with other unit owners or guests on your condo grounds. But, again, if your idea of a picnic is a keg of beer, a blaring stereo and unneighborly rowdiness, you are out of line. Condo associations do not allow events that encroach on other owners' right to quiet enjoyment of the premises.

That's why hanging out on the grounds after nightfall, and whooping and hollering to loud music, isn't allowed. You'll be a nuisance and might also run afoul of association rules that impose a quiet time, say between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m.

There are also rules for using swimming pools, one of the most important being the no-glass prohibition like that at my own condo association. Broken glass isn't just a danger at pool side. If glass shards end up in the water, the pool likely will have to be drained and cleaned out, depriving everyone of a summer dip for days.

All this underscores that the old saying “Every man’s home is his castle” has limits in condo living. Many conditions apply to condo life, and while it is a fine life, there are a lot of things you cannot do.

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