

The CCRA Board and You—Owner Modification of Commonland Units

Many Commonlanders assume that owning a unit is like owning a private, single-family home. There are important differences, however, because of Commonland's status as a *Planned Unit Development* <http://patch.com/new-york/smithtown/bp--whats-the-difference-between-a-condo-a-townhouse-and-a-pud>. Here, responsibility for each unit is **shared** by the individual owner and the Association.

- **The Association** is responsible for the exterior maintenance and upkeep of each unit, except for windows and doors.
- **As the owner**, you are responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of the interior of your unit, for the maintenance of its windows and doors, and (for above-ground units) insulation of exterior utility pipes.

When you bought your unit, you signed a document promising to uphold the bylaws of Commonland Community. One of the items in that promise reads *I understand that any modification [to my unit] which affects the exterior of my unit or my unit's structural integrity requires approval by the Board of Directors **before the inception of the project***. The basis for this rule is the shared responsibility that characterizes a Planned Unit Development. Its formal statement appears in **Article XIII** of Commonland's Bylaws, entitled ***Architectural Control***. Article XIII states in part that:

*No building, fence, wall, or other structure shall be commenced, erected, or maintained upon the properties . . . nor shall any exterior addition to or change or alteration therein be made, . . . **until the plans and specifications** showing the nature, kind, shape, height, materials, and location of the same shall **have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Board of Directors of the Association or by the Architectural Review Committee composed of three or more representatives appointed by the Board of Directors.***

The Board, in other words, is charged with overseeing the structural quality and value of each unit, and thereby to support and preserve the value of all units.

Units *can* be modified, as long as the change is consistent with quality control. Here are several examples:

- Addition of stairs from back porches to ground level (above-ground units)
- Addition of railings to front porch steps (above-ground units)
- Addition and/or replacement of windows and patio doors
- Installation of air conditioning (window/wall units or heat-pump installations)
- Conversion to NYSEG gas lines (installation of propane tanks is no longer permitted)
- Installation of TV antennas (microwave downlink receivers *e.g.* DirecTV)
- Installation of through-roof exhaust fans
- Introduction of or removal of plantings affecting or likely to affect persons other than the owner
- Addition of structures or modules such as storage units

Remember, though, that each proposal must be approved by the Board before any work is done. Once the Board is sure that its responsibility under Article XIII has been met, approval will be granted and work may begin.