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Waterside Village

Hypoluxo, FL

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Waterside Village

by Megan McMurry Hypoluxo, FL

With groves of stately mango trees as an enticing backdrop, the founders of Waterside Village had the foresight to see the potential of this location for a condominium association. These developers knew the beauty of the land could be a major drawing point for residents.

Many of the first residents were Canadians that came down for the winter. Why so many Canadians? Pamela Bampton, manager of



Waterside, explains, "The original developers were French Canadians, it was built by French Canadians for French Canadians." Today, about half the population consists of "snowbird Canadians" and half full-time residents from various states. Yet, all the services that this resort provides employ bilingual personnel who speak French and English, making this a truly cross-cultural experience right in the heart of South Florida.

Waterside Village began its resort duties about fifteen years ago, and boasts a population of about 700-800



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people in the wintertime. During the summer, the resort's population shrinks to about half that size. It consists of 75 buildings that house 412 units, and it sits on about 35 acres. The age of the residents spans a wide range that shifts dramatically with the changing seasons. Those that are only part-time residents are mostly in their 60's and 70's, while those that stay year round are in their 30's and 40's.

Whether they are full-time or part-time residents, there are a number of activities offered to help wile away the hours. There is a tennis tournament provided for those that enjoy swinging the racket, and a number of residents have hit the links and joined a golf league. The seasonal residents enjoy getting together for an end of the season party. This provides an opportunity for these residents to get to know their neighbors and enjoy each other's company.





Waterside Village is set apart from its neighbors because of the size of its property, and the surrounding open spaces that make it seem even larger. Pamela states, "Once you get inside the community, it's like its own little island. It's very private, and you don't really know if there is an outside world, but there is."

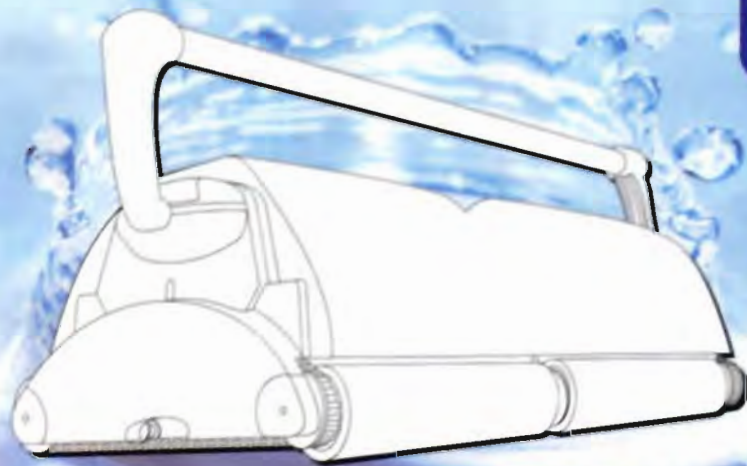
Pamela moved to Florida as a young adult from Connecticut, and has made it her permanent residence. She has been involved in the management business since her initial move. She says, "It's just natural." Pamela has only been manager at Waterside for a few months, but already has several reasons why she loves her new job. Her list includes the beautiful landscaping and the short commute from her home. In her spare time, Pamela enjoys cooking and reading. She admits that if her schedule permitted, she would love to travel more.

Waterside has decided to make the resort a safer environment for everyone

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so that it can be enjoyed for years to come. With this goal in mind, they have been installing white accordion shutters on every building and glass surface, which is about 2200 surfaces in all. This is to ensure safety from the hurricanes that threaten Florida every year.

Waterside Village experienced its own fair share of damage from the three Hurricanes Frances, Jeanne, and Wilma. After the destruction left in the wake of Frances and Jeanne, the community had to re-roof the entire association. After Wilma, a tremendous amount of landscape damage was sustained to the grounds. Awnings were strewn about everywhere, but thankfully, the buildings remained intact, along with the brand new roofs. Now, these accordion shutters are being installed to further protect the residents' homes and lives.

The first order of business for Pamela was to get the residents and board members to agree to go forward with this huge project. After the proposal was accepted, with relatively little resistance (eighty percent of the people voted in favor of the shutters), the next order of business was to find someone to install the shutters. This proved challenging because they had to find a company that could accomplish this project in a timely manner. They eventually found the right company, and the project began in mid May.

The projected cost of the renovation was around \$1,000,000. The homeowners had to pay for the shutters themselves, with more than fifty percent of the homeowners having pre-paid. Homeowners also had the option of paying their portion in monthly installments.

The shutter installation process has required careful planning and organization by Pamela and her staff. They have had to contract out almost all the labor. First, there was a pre-inspector who checked for anything that would hamper the work process. Next, there was an inspection to see if the shutters would close and lock properly. Then came the city inspector, and Pamela has hired a private engineer to go through to make sure everything is operating smoothly. In short, Waterside has all its bases covered and is prepared for any problems that can arise.

Hopefully, the shutters will help bring about a feeling of security around the

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association—especially for those that experienced the wrath of the hurricanes in person. Pamela relates, “At our meeting (we had some special meetings to present this to our population) one of the residents who was here through Wilma had made a very good videotape of the hurricane in action. It was really something, you got an idea of how terribly, and deafeningly noisy it was, with awnings ripping off buildings and trees coming down, you got a good look at what went on here, and what it looked like after the hurricane. For those that didn’t stay through it, they got an idea of what it was like.”

Pamela admits that this shutter project has been one of her biggest challenges since coming to Waterside. However, she says that her board of directors is wonderful and was helpful in getting her through this challenge. Yet, one thing that she has learned in her years of being a manager is that not everyone will be happy with the job being done. Pamela does add that these people are a very small minority, and that the majority have been happy thus far.

Pamela offers some sound advice to both board members and managers that are just getting started: managers must get to know the board and keep the lines of communication open; thus, establishing a good relationship. Likewise, a board must be able to communicate clearly with the manager as to what their needs are. They must be able to work

together to be able to effectively accomplish their plans. Pamela sees the good in both sides of a community. She says, “You really need both in order to get things done. You need the board to vote on the things, and then you need the manager to take those votes and make things happen.”

As for the future of Waterside Village, Pamela envisions many beautification projects taking place. She wants to update the entrance in order to make it a more attractive welcoming point, and give the fountains that are around Waterside a facelift. Five years from now, Pamela sees Waterside as being basically the same only better. She wants Waterside to be a well-maintained community that will attract many people who want to live there. ■



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