

## **Is Laurel Park living right for me?**

Laurel Park is a condominium community run by its homeowners, who are members of the Homeowners at Laurel Park Condominium Trust (HALP). Every homeowner has a voice in what HALP does. HALP's budget, rules, and policies are voted on by the HALP homeowners. Volunteers do most administrative jobs, although some of the officers receive small stipends; therefore service fees are lower than in many condos. Many people find here a sense of community that isn't found in ordinary neighborhoods. The questions and answers below stress some of HALP's restrictions because we want you to know about them before you make your decision. We don't mean to discourage you. Laurel Park isn't for everyone--but many people find it a great place to live.

The realtor or the seller of house should give you a copy of the HALP Declaration of Trust (DOT). Please read it carefully. Numbers after each paragraph in this brochure refer to the relevant sections of the DOT. This brochure is meant to serve only as a brief overview and guide to the Declaration of Trust. PLEASE NOTE that in the case of any error on this brochure, it is the DOT, not this brochure, that stands.

## **What is this place, anyway?**

Laurel Park got its start in the 1870s as a Methodist camp meeting site. From that time through the 1930s, it was a popular summer destination as thousands of people came to religious services and to hear the best-known speakers and entertainers of the day. But as other kinds of entertainment became more popular, interest in camp meetings waned. In 1968 the Springfield Camp Meeting Association turned ownership over to the cottage owners as the Laurel Park Association, which maintained the Park as a religious community. In the 1960s people began to winterize Laurel Park cottages as affordable year-round homes. In 1985, the Homeowners at Laurel Park Condominium Trust was formed, and purchased the land on which the units now stand from the Laurel Park Association.

## **Do I have to have any particular religious affiliation to live in Laurel Park?**

No. The Homeowners at Laurel Park Condominium Trust and The Laurel Park Association (LPA) are two separate organizations. The LPA owns the Tabernacle in the middle of the Park grounds and continues to hold programs. LPA welcomes the participation of HALP homeowners. But ownership of a HALP unit carries no obligation to participate in LPA. HALP does not discriminate against anyone wishing to buy a unit on the basis of sex, age, race, creed, color, marital status, or national origin. (2.5, 2.5.1)

## **Why do I have to attend an orientation?**

For your own protection. Owning a HALP condominium unit is not like owning a single-family home, and carries certain obligations and restrictions you may not be aware of. Your orientation will give you the information you need to decide whether buying a HALP unit is the right decision for you, and will help you to avoid costly misunderstandings. The orientation is not a "screening;" HALP cannot prevent anyone from buying a unit. (11.9, 2.5)

### **Can I rent my HALP unit?**

HALP deliberately makes it difficult to rent your unit. Under most circumstances, you may rent for no more than six months in any twelve-month period. (2.4, 11.5)

### **Why do I have to go through a certain procedure to fix up my unit?**

You must submit plans for alterations to your unit to the Property Committee for its approval. You must also get a City building permit for any work done on your unit and observe all City and State building codes. Why? HALP units are close together, and fire safety is a constant concern. Also, many HALP units are old, and work done on them over the years has been of varying quality. And the land that abuts your unit belongs to all the HALP homeowners. HALP must make sure that any new work done on a unit is safe and sturdy and does not present any risk or inconvenience to its neighbors. (11.7)

### **If I purchase a summer unit, can I winterize it?**

Probably--but you must go through HALP's procedure as well as complying with any City and State requirements. If your septic system is not adequate for year-round use and there isn't a suitable spot available for a new one, you will not be able to winterize easily. If you plan to winterize, please read Section 11.6 very carefully!

### **Is my septic tank adequate?**

You are buying your septic system as is; HALP bears no liability for its condition. Many units have been used only occasionally during the summer, and their septic systems turn out to be inadequate for sustained use. If you need to repair or replace your septic system, you will need to go through HALP's procedure as well as the City's. In approving your neighbors' septic system plans, HALP has attempted to ensure that each unit has room to install a new system, but there are no guarantees. (6.1, 11.7.4)

### **Can I enlarge my unit?**

Because HALP is a condominium, because all the homeowners together own the land around your unit, and because the City zoning code considers HALP units pre-existing nonconforming structures, it's extremely difficult to make any

changes that involve any one unit owner taking up more land. In some cases, with the approval of the Property Committee, you can add an accessory structure (such as steps), but do not count on being able to make changes that involve enlarging the footprint of the unit with a permanent structure.

### **What are my responsibilities for taking care of my unit?**

You are responsible for maintaining your unit, its utility connections, and its septic system, and for maintaining the grounds for 15 feet around your unit (or halfway to the next unit, whichever is less). HALP is responsible for maintaining the common property and roads. (6.1, 11.8.14-15)

### **What happens if I break one of HALP's rules?**

When a violation comes to the attention of the HALP Executive Committee, they may send you a letter citing the problem and reminding you of the rules; they may request that you attend an Executive Committee meeting; or they may impose a fine. The Executive Committee is an elected body of your neighbors, and they will use their judgment in trying to work things out, but they are charged with the responsibility of enforcing the Park rules, which are established by a vote of all the homeowners. (11.1-3)

### **What should I do if I have a problem with my neighbor?**

If your neighbor is breaking a HALP rule, your first step should be to talk with your neighbor directly. If that does not solve the problem, or is not possible, ask for help. If the problem involves the maintenance of your neighbor's property, get in touch with the Property Committee; otherwise, with the Executive Committee. (11.1-3)

### **Can I have pets in Laurel Park?**

Yes--but please note that dogs must be on a leash at all times. Owners of loose dogs and barking dogs are subject to fines. (11.8.4-5)

### **If I go away for the winter, can I leave my car here?**

No. The limit on dead storage of vehicles is 60 days. (11.8.10)

### **Will it be difficult to resell my unit?**

You must notify HALP of your intent to sell, and your buyer must attend an orientation, as you're doing now. But HALP cannot prevent any person from buying a unit. (2.5, 2.6, 11.9)

### **Do I have to pay my service fees?**

Yes--but you have a voice in determining what they are. Each year a Finance Committee made up of homeowners prepares a budget and presents it at the Budget Meeting, held in July. The Homeowners offer their suggestions, and the Finance Committee takes these into account, and presents a revised budget to the Homeowners at the Annual Meeting in September for a final vote. (3.7)

Enforcement of payment is fairly strict--service fees are HALP's only source of income, and it can't afford to let them remain unpaid. The deed to your unit grants HALP a lien on the unit to recover any unpaid service fees. (2.3)

### **How can I have a voice in HALP?**

The most important way is to attend meetings, especially the Annual Meeting. HALP generally has three summer meetings: the Spring Meeting, in June; the Budget Meeting, at which the budget is presented, in July; and the Annual Meeting, in September, when the Homeowners vote on the budget and any other important changes. Special meetings may be held at other times to discuss particular issues; as a homeowner, you'll receive notice of all of these. And feel free at any time to get in touch with officers and committee members and voice your concerns. (3.2, 3.3)

### **HALP COMMITTEES**

The **Executive Committee** runs HALP and makes general policy. It includes a President, Vice President, Clerk, Treasurer, Property Committee Chair, Finance Committee Chair, and one at-large member, who serves as Orientation Chair.

The **Property Committee** oversees HALP's common property and also regulates maintenance of the outside of your unit and any alterations to it.

The **Finance Committee** puts together the budget and recommends it to the Homeowners.

The **Nominating Committee** nominates a slate of officers and committee members to be voted on each year.

**Other Committees** may be established from time to time to work on specific issues.

Meetings of all HALP committees are open to any homeowner. Meeting times and names of the current officers are posted on the bulletin board outside the Laurel Park post office. If you are interested in serving on a committee, get in touch with a member of the Nominating Committee (when it's active in the summer) or the Executive Committee. (3.4-11).