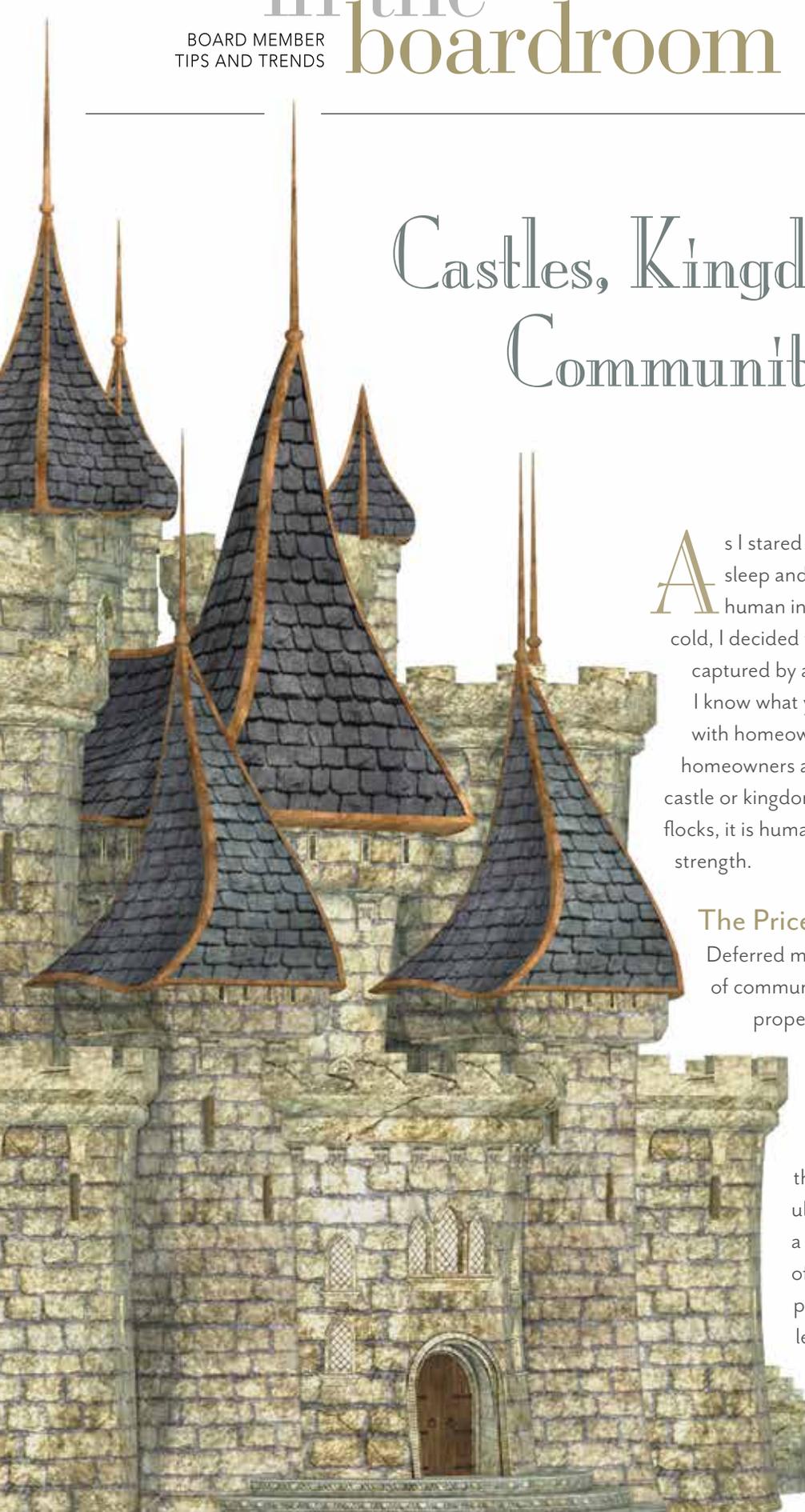


BOARD MEMBER
TIPS AND TRENDS

in the boardroom

Castles, Kingdoms & Community Associations



As I stared at the ceiling the other night, unable to sleep and thoroughly convinced I would be the first human in modern history to expire from the common cold, I decided to channel surf. My attention was soon captured by a program on ancient castles and kingdoms. I know what you're thinking: "What does that have to do with homeowners associations?" In a way, the modern homeowners association is the equivalent of a medieval castle or kingdom. Just as fish live in schools and sheep live in flocks, it is human nature to live in communities for safety and strength.

The Price You Pay to Stay on Top

Deferred maintenance has been a common affliction of communities throughout history. The cost to do a proper repair or replacement is a much tougher pill to swallow than the price of a quick fix. As communities age, we tend to overlook simple maintenance items, such as painting, stucco repair, wood replacement or dredging the moat. These things all add up to the ultimate finale: a crumbling community with a high cost to bring it back to its golden age of glory. While deferring maintenance on the perimeter fencing of the community may not leave us vulnerable to a Barbarian siege, it will leave us vulnerable to special assessments and lowered property values.

Whether your property is a retirement condo for your golden years or a starter castle to raise your growing family, deferring maintenance is never a good idea.

Landscape is the Least of Our Worries

Most communities worry about landscape last, which is completely understandable. However, trees can sometimes be the root of all evil. Certain species at maturity can lift sidewalks, invade water lines and cause other serious and expensive damages to the community. You can plan for the future by investing in the present. Obtaining a four or five year tree plan from a certified arborist can save the association in the long run. Proper maintenance of the landscaping is just as important as proper maintenance of structures. What's the point of installing a new roof if a diseased tree falls on it? Or fixing a lifting sidewalk and not addressing the tree roots that are causing the damage?

Health and Safety

As in the past, maintaining the health and safety of your community is important and will ensure prosperity for the future. Proper maintenance of the roofs, elevators and stairways (just to name a few components) is always important. By following a maintenance manual or having an annual inspection and repair report prepared, the board can set up a game plan for proper care and regular maintenance. The cost of regularly maintaining a roof or elevator, for example, is much less expensive than the cost to completely replace one. Not to mention the domino effect of damage to other components and the impending doom of a special assessment. Of course, a water leak probably isn't going to cause an outbreak of Leprosy,

but if left untreated it can lead to mold and other health related issues.

Investing in Your Future

Throughout time, mankind has fortified and maintained his castle to protect himself and his kingdom from invading forces. The stronger the kingdom, the wealthier the community it housed. Just as in the past, we need to fortify and maintain our communities to protect ourselves from invading forces. Of course, our invading forces won't be carrying battle axes and wearing armor. Our invading force is the economy, and by fortifying our investment with proper maintenance, our property values will increase and the wealthier our community will be.

Whether your property is a retirement condo for your golden years or a starter castle to raise your growing family, deferring maintenance is never a good idea. Procrastination will always lead to loss in property values and impose higher costs over time. We diet and exercise to maintain good health. We have regular maintenance performed on our cars to ensure top performance. Doesn't it just make sense to have the same diligence in maintaining our communities? After all, your home is your most important investment.

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