

# CREEKSIDE CONDOMINIUM

# DISPUTE RESOLUTION

## WHO

Creekside Manor, a 165-unit condominium in Vancouver

## GOAL

To resolve a controversy around the height and the amount of trees in surrounding areas

## HOW

The Ethelo platform served as an online forum open for 3-weeks

## OUTCOME

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Resolving the conflict after reaching an unforeseen decision that satisfied most people's interests

The directors of Creekside Manor, a 165-unit condominium in Vancouver, faced a difficult decision around cutting or not cutting trees. They also needed to factor in how much money were owners willing to spend, and that some residents owned or occupied more than one suite. Surprisingly, new possibilities surfaced during Ethelo's online voting and dialogue experience, leading to an unexpected but broadly-supported decision.

## CONTEXT

# THE DIRECTORS OF CREEKSIDE MANOR, A 165-UNIT CONDOMINIUM IN VANCOUVER, WERE FACING A DIFFICULT DECISION

Some trees in the shared courtyard had grown so tall they were impeding some residents' views. They weren't supposed to grow that high; the wrong species had been planted originally.

It was a divisive issue; those whose views were blocked wanted to remove the trees and replace them with a smaller, slower growing species. However, most residents liked the trees and wanted to keep them; they were beautiful and had taken many years to grow.

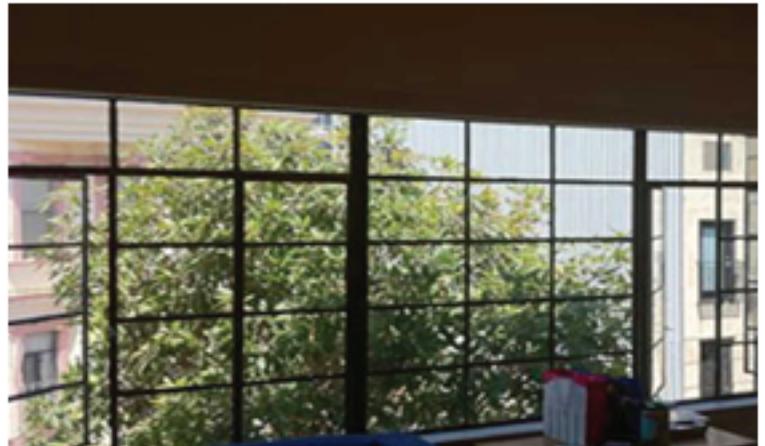
## CHALLENGE

As with most condominium associations, there is no formalized method of polling owners other than the opportunity presented at the AGM. AGMs only occur once a year, many issues need to be dealt with quickly, and often only a minority of owners participate.

Holding a special general meeting is expensive and only viable for the most critical issues. Decisions made in conventional situations often end with owners being divided, causing resistance. In addition, loud voices may dominate and have unfair influence.

## APPROACH

The directors were faced with a polarized debate. However, it wasn't necessarily a binary decision. The decision could be broken down into a number of different sub-issues.



Which trees should be targeted? What interventions were possible? Over what time period should this take place? And - importantly - how much money were people willing to spend on this issue? The budget for spending that year was nearly exhausted.

This information and more was gathered through an interview with one of the Strata directors. The options were identified, categorized into topics, costed, and uploaded into Ethelo. After being reviewed and approved by the directors, invitations (including unique access codes) were distributed by mail to all the residents.

Some residents owned or occupied more than one suite, which under the Strata bylaws entitled them to more than one vote. Ethelo was configured to reflect the different amounts of voting influence that each owner should have.

## RESULTS

Invitations were delivered to all the condominium owners, and the Ethelo Forum was left open for three weeks. During that time residents could comment and vote on the different options and issues. In many cases residents returned to the platform multiple times to engage in what developed into an active conversation. A lot of the residents had never communicated with each other.

During the voting, about 50% of the residents chose “do nothing” as their top choice and 45% chose “remove and replace trees (\$450/tree)” as their top choice. However, both of those strategies also faced strong opposition. Voters were also asked to evaluate other possibilities during their voting.

At the end of a two-week voting period, Ethelo came up with a solution that was “not what we expected,” according to one director. That solution was to prune the trees that were impeding the views. No one had been advocating for this approach, because it was no one’s ideal solution and the debate had been quite polarized. However, Ethelo showed it was a resolution everyone would be able to live with, and one which would receive little or no resistance.

## BENEFITS

The strata council was pleased with the high level of participation of condominium owners by using Ethelo (over 23%). Within the council, there was a clear sense of confidence, and relief when the results showed how well the optimized decision was supported. When asked “What is the best result from using Ethelo?” one council member and resident replied; “It gives us an objective basis for making what is clear now is a very common-sense decision.”

Several months later, the positive impact of the process was clear. Council had proceeded with the recommended decision, and Terry Li, the property manager, reported that there was no further argument or debate. Complaints about the trees dropped to zero. Residents were satisfied that the result had been arrived at fairly, and accepted the results even when (in many cases) they would have preferred a different outcome.



*We were delighted with the recent results achieved by Ethelo. We recommend Ethelo as an effective tool in dispute resolution and decision optimization.*

Terry Li, Rancho Management Services

