

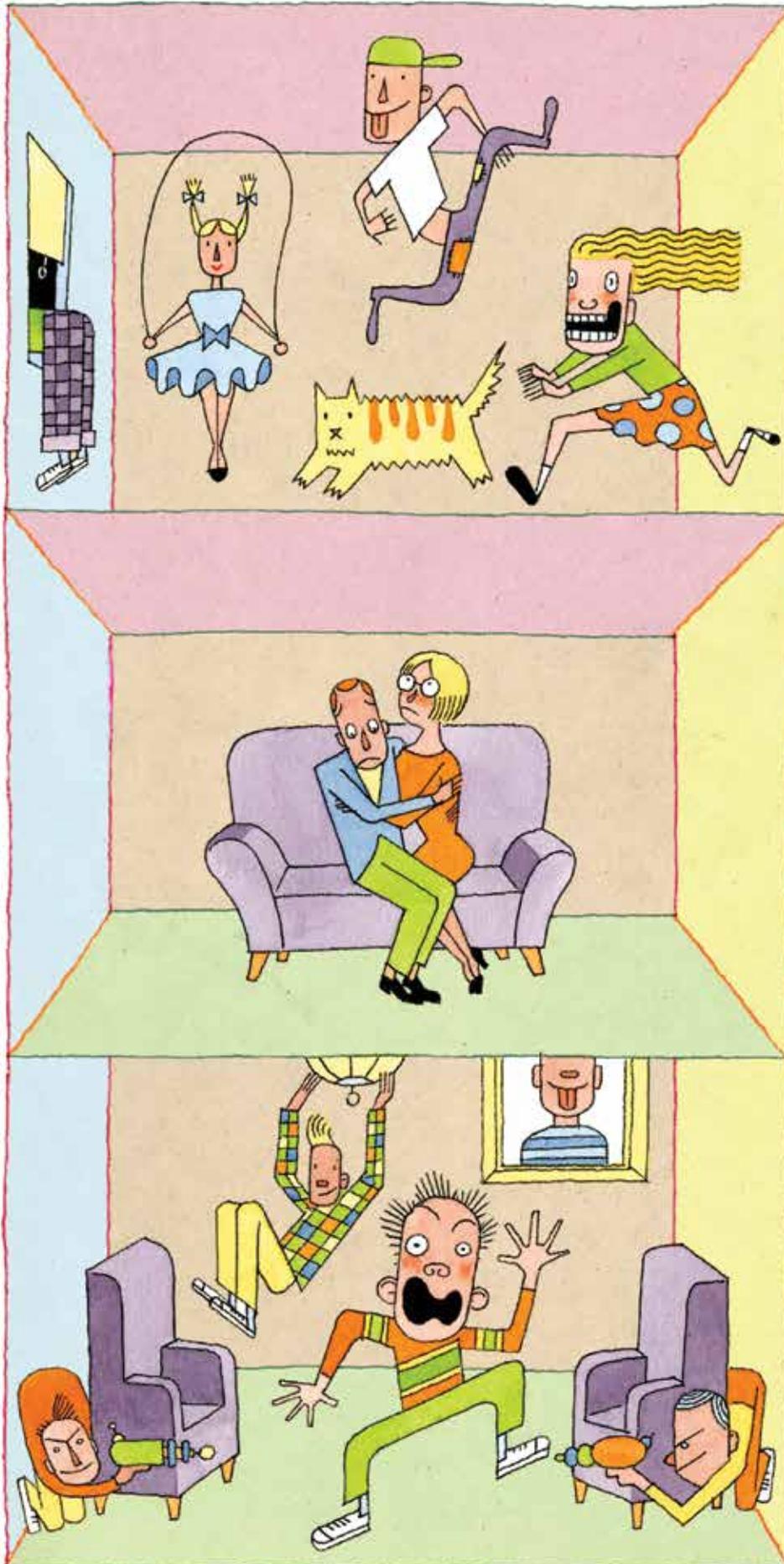
Children are thriving in condominium environments, enjoying the unique benefits they provide

# KIDS IN THE HALLS

**C**ONDOMINIUM LIVING is not for everyone; however, some of the advantages that come with the lifestyle can also be enjoyed by families, particularly families of today. As a result, I have witnessed the make-up of my own condominium community evolve to now inhabit many more children than was the case a decade ago. I, myself, never would have thought that I would be raising kids in a condo. Yet, as my eldest of 3 has now entered her teenage years having only ever known a condominium as home, I cannot deny that I am doing just that.



By Marc Bhalla,  
Condo Dad



Listen to an interview by Sue Langlois with Marc Bhalla as they further discuss the ins and outs of raising kids in condos. Their extended audio interview is available at [www.condopodcasts.ca](http://www.condopodcasts.ca)



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How does one raise kids in a condo? That is perhaps a question best answered by shedding light on some common misconceptions with some facts and by sharing the real life experiences my family and I have had....

### **Condos were not built for kids**

A regular criticism of condominiums in general is that there is often great variance between what a developer envisions (in the course of both sales materials and in crafting the original declaration, by-laws and rules) and what exists in reality once a condo “comes to life”. Each community comes together in its own way due to the personalities it is made up of. There is certainly room for families in this mix, as long evidenced by other high density places like Hong Kong and Manhattan, where kids have been raised in condos for generations. To say otherwise is not only exclusionary but ignores the fact that Ontario has a Human Rights Code which does not allow for discrimination on the basis of family. With “family status”, children have the same right to live in condos that grown-ups do.

### **Kids need room to play**

My tongue in cheek reaction to this sentiment is to point out that the only thing a kid needs to play in this day and age is a screen. Notwithstanding this glitch in modern society, I have failed to appreciate how having a swimming pool downstairs, a park across the street and a skating rink 2 blocks from home does not provide my children with plenty of options to get their fun and exercise. Not to mention that, for my kids, condominium living involves walking to and from school every day.

Condominiums encourage what is referred to as a “walkable city”. This promotes physical activity, along with practices that respect the environment, and allows for a connectedness to the neighbourhood which many fear is being lost on younger generations not able to relate to the Sesame Street classic “People In Your Neighbourhood” as they are driven everywhere. To that end, on the way to school,

my children often stop to look into a local pet groomer’s shop window to see what animals are being pampered that day. Within our condominium, they know the security and cleaning teams as well as fellow residents, many of whom have enjoyed watching my kids grow as they interact daily. It takes a village to raise a child.

### **Kids are noisy. They would create all kinds of trouble in a condo**

When you consider the biggest troubles facing many condominium communities in the GTA these days, few are attributable to children. For example, it is not children who are disturbing their neighbours with second hand smoke or renting out their units on a short-term basis.

This is not to suggest that kids in condos are not without their challenges. Professionally, I have been involved in several mediations where noise generated by little feet and voices has given rise to concern. However, there are solutions available to allow young children to live in a condominium unit without disrupting their neighbours any more than anyone else.

To encourage good behaviour, my kids are reminded that if they disturb our neighbours, they will be asked to themselves apologize in person for doing so. My wife and I feel that this teaches our children to be considerate and respectful of others.

### **Families live in condos because they cannot afford houses**

For me, this is not the case. Nor is it the case for my neighbour, who drives his daughter about town in a brand new Mercedes Benz. Condominium living is about lifestyle. Some call it turnkey living, some a sacrifice for convenience.

My family and I made the active decision to live in a condo in the city over a house in the suburbs. This dilemma is not uncommon for many who start to have children in this day and age. Size and location con-

siderations apply to anyone looking to rent or buy a property. Some opt for space and more of a commute while others reduce their travel time along with their living space. To each their own.

### **Kids who live in condos will stand out from their peers, as most kids live in houses**

The problem is, in fact, increasingly the opposite. In February 2015, I was quoted in a Toronto Star article which spoke to how the Toronto District School Board struggles to accommodate children living in condos. “Condo growth leads to overcrowded schools” was within the headline of News Reporter Daniel Otis’ piece that quoted a local school board trustee explaining that the school board was clearly mistaken in assuming years ago that children would not live in condominiums.

In 2016, it is not considered peculiar or odd for a child to live in a condo. While the proportion will vary by neighbourhood, for my kids, about half of their fellow classmates also live in condos. In fact, a couple of years ago in my daughter’s class, a status trend arose involving being able to go to the movies in your pajamas – that is, awe was sent the way of kids who lived in high-rise condos with direct access to a movie theatre, able to roll out of bed and catch a flick on the big screen. So much so that kids living in houses would have their parents drive them to the theatre while still in their pajamas so they could pretend to also benefit from the luxury of direct access. My, how times have changed!

While parents have many things to consider in determining the best environment for their kids, condominiums are increasingly becoming an option well suited to the fast paced, hard working lifestyle of today. Many children are thriving in condominium environments, enjoying the benefits they provide. As for parents like me, there is also icing on the cake in the thought that once my kids have grown up, they will be less inclined to still live at home! 