



Three Simple Remedies

for Common Landscaping Mistakes that Condo Corporations Make

By Frank Aiello

Having a Master Plan

Perhaps I'm biased, but I have always been amazed at the amount of time and effort people will put into selecting a faucet for their bathroom or which colour their next iPhone should be. Yet, when it comes to designing the exterior of a condominium property, landscaping is typically the last consideration even though it can take up the better part of a city block with a value of tens of millions of dollars.



Frank Aiello

We all understand that curb appeal and property value go hand-in-hand, and that property grounds are the outdoor oasis we all hope to enjoy, so where is the disconnect? Beginning with a landscape master plan is paramount. A master

plan will offer a better visual of the end product to fulfil your landscape wishes, maximize the use of your outdoor space, and take your property value up as a bonus. Elements of a successful master plan include site inventory, site analysis, a detailed wish list, timeline and, of course, budget. (See example image on page 48)

Landscape Designer / Architect / Consultant

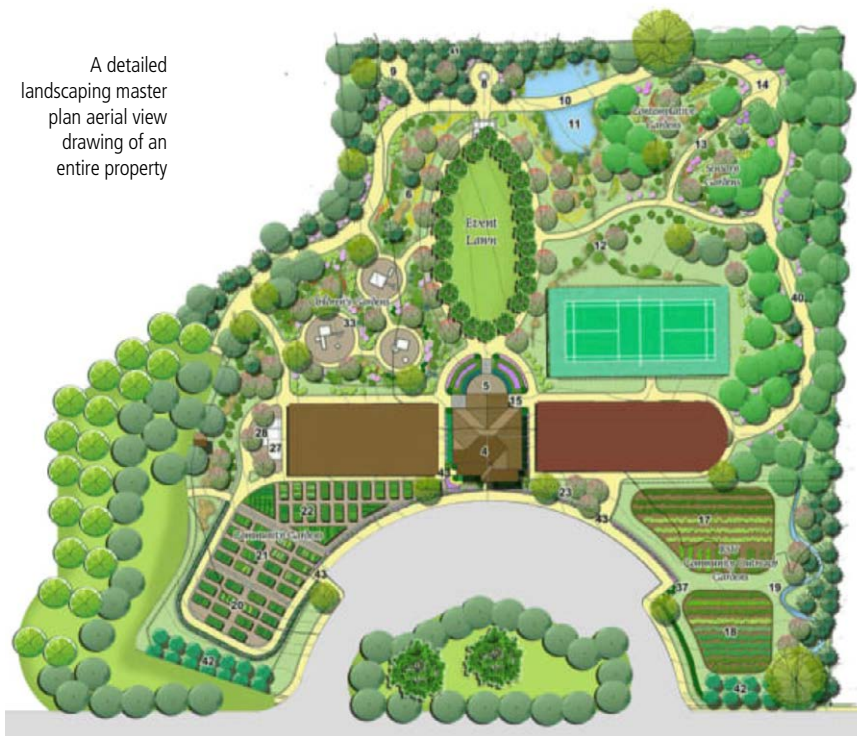
The value of professionalism in any trade must not be underestimated and is also very accurate for landscaping, especially for large properties like condominiums. The combination of years of site experience and educational expertise can significantly benefit the board of directors in deciding how to utilize their property and maximize their budget. Hiring a landscape professional can avoid

the two biggest landscaping mistakes I see in the board room.

Firstly, not properly considering what grows and does not grow on the property. Microclimate, winds, topography, sun/shade patterns, soil composition are only some of the factors to consider to avoid poorly selected plant material that may have to be replaced in only a few short years.

Secondly, some residence and board of directors impose their personal and subjective design opinions, albeit in good faith. They may propose elements from their past home garden that was perfect for them. A professional designer/consultant will consider everyone's opinion as part of the design process and have the skill to direct the overall landscape plan to satisfy everyone. Essential design principles should

A detailed landscaping master plan aerial view drawing of an entire property



consist of variety, simplicity, landscape elements, balance, sequence, and unity.

Combining these design considerations may become overwhelming to non-professionals. However, advanced design technology software is now available that enables the designer to show before-and-after depictions of the property along with virtual walk-throughs. A virtual landscape drawing helps property managers and board members see the designer's vision and make decisions in the best interest of the entire property, long before a shovel breaks ground.

On the right is a before-and-after preliminary virtual design presented to one of our clients. At this stage, we are able to communicate each element of the design in detail and allow for any changes beforehand with a click of a finger, saving costly changes if done once the project is underway or completed.

Proper Budget

Like anything else, renovating and making improvements to beautify property takes money. The biggest mistake that I see with condo landscape budgets is unrealistic expectations, particularly relating to the size and scale of the condominium property, which is often overlooked. Many of our client properties average from 2 to 10 acres and require a lot of something just to make a splash. Again, that's where a proper

master plan will achieve all of the landscape goals in a certain amount of time.

Unlike a typical residential home, the sheer amount of materials and labour required on a large property quickly

compounds. Also, the cost of everything in our industry is rising and 'we've seen 10-20% increases in labour, insurance, and fuel. Landscaping is not immune to these inflationary pressures. When we think of the cost of a single flower or paving stone, we may not be aware of the compound impact on the whole job.

Ultimately, the key to any successful condo landscaping is for everyone to do their job. From the property manager facilitating the project to the board of directors sharing their views on behalf of the owners, a landscape professional will listen to their needs and wants. They will use their expertise to assess the property's current condition and ultimately create a beautiful, healthy and enjoyable landscape to be enjoyed by all.

Be well and happy landscaping. ■

Frank Aiello is the President of Green Leaf Limited, a full-service landscaping company, which has been designing, building and maintaining beautiful outdoor spaces for over four decades exclusively for condominium properties. greenleafflimited.ca



Before



After

A preliminary virtual design allows us to communicate each element of the design in detail to the client and allow for any changes before the project is underway or completed. Photos supplied.