



## **Condo Profile**

**By James M. Russell**  
Newsletters et Cetera

# THE CONCOURSE TO

*“Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.” – Henry Ford*

# CO-OPERATION



PHOTOGRAPH BY RON JOCSAK

## Florence Italy's famous Corridoio

Vasariano connects the Palazzo Vecchio with the spectacular Palazzo Pitti. And while Canada's Villa Giardino's 162-metre corridor is shorter and far younger than the four-hundred-year-old Vasariano,

it is no less magnificent, not for its architecture but for the goodwill that connects Villa Giardino's three condominium corporations, three Boards, three towers, three addresses, and 261, one and two bedroom suites.



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## We had to make a rule that tomato plants and stakes may not extend higher than the resident's balcony railing

A sprawling complex, made up of YRCC 966, 942 and 947, Villa Giardino's three Boards manage this mini-community with a grace and efficiency that puts most corporations, and countries, to shame.

Bearing the postal designation of 2502, 2504 and 2506 Rutherford Rd, the three buildings are perched on a huge swath of former farmland in Concord, just north of Toronto. And although 'Garden Villa' may not be an entirely accurate Italian-to-English translation, some of the residents interpreted the word 'Giardino' so literally that soon after opening in 2000,

balcony plots began sprouting like vines. "We had to make a rule that tomato plants and stakes may not extend higher than the resident's balcony railing," says Villa Giardino's Property Manager Antonella Mardikian. A few years ago, several residents even began illegal garden plots in nearby Waterside Marsh, which is public parkland. Much to the chagrin of those clandestine gardeners, the City swooped in before they were able to harvest their bounty.

The resident's zeal for gardening can be attributed to the fact that more than 95%

of the residents are of Italian heritage, including Italian-born Antonella who not only serves as the complex's property manager, but social director, AGM Chair, office secretary, Chair of all Board meetings, and, because many of the residents do not speak English, Antonella is also Villa Giardino's official translator.

Exactly how did Villa Giardino become an Italian enclave? "The builder was Italian, the architecture is in an Italian style, and the developer advertised it as a 'Mediterranean Lifestyle,'" says Ralph Carlotti, 2504's Board President for fifteen years and one of

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We talk about everything together – maintenance, management, safety, even investments – we don’t keep any secrets

**ABOVE FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:**

**Maria Scodeller,**  
Vice President YRCC 966

**Tony Piarulli,**  
President YRCC 966

**Antonella Mardikian,**  
RCM Property Manager  
and Social Director

**Ralph Carlotti,**  
President YRCC 942

**Ida Rossi,**  
Secretary Treasurer YRCC 947

the first to move in when his building was completed in 2000. “I knew I wanted to live in a condo when I retired. So convenient! When I want to travel, I just lock the door and go!”

Much of Ralph’s peace of mind comes from knowing that his building, as well as the other two that make up Villa Giardino, are so well-managed by the three boards and Percel, their property management company, that day-to-day living is both effortless and refreshingly worry-free.

Villa Giardino’s three Boards hold one

combined meeting a month to discuss subjects related to their individual buildings and common issues. “We talk about everything together – maintenance, management, safety, even investments – we don’t keep any secrets from each other,” says Tony Piarulli, Board President of 2502, “A few years ago we (the three Boards) even discussed amalgamation,” he adds.

Now amalgamation would seem like a good idea since the three Boards get along so famously. But is it? For an expert opinion, I put the question to CCI member, Patricia Elia, a senior lawyer at Elia



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## A small convenience store, located near the centre of Corridoio Giardino, is open four days a week

Associates, who said, in part, about the realities of amalgamation:

“Condominiums embarking on amalgamation need to be aware and thoughtful about anticipating the costs associated with the same. The preparation of a new survey combining the lands into one plan needs to be prepared by a surveyor. For each corporation involved, legal professionals will need to prepare written opinions outlining the process to the board based on a review of each condominium’s documents, draft resolutions, prepare the communication strategy and informa-

tion packages, draft the new constating documentation and negotiate the same, work with the land registry to have all documents preapproved and attend unit owner meetings. Engineers will need to re-value the respective reserve funds and combine the assets so that it is “fair” to all corporations involved based on age and consumption of assets. Other living documents such as the status certificates will also need to be updated. Finally, property management may have to be engaged separately as project manager as this may fall outside the regular duties of the manager.”

Not surprisingly, Villa Giardino’s Boards, consisting of...

- 2502 Rutherford Rd. (YRCC 966) Tony Piarulli – President; Maria Scodeller – Vice-President; Renzo Tanel – Secretary/Treasurer.
- 2504 Rutherford Rd. (YRCC 942) Ralph Carlotti – President; Susie Martino – Vice-President; Dominic Renda – Secretary-Treasurer
- 2506 Rutherford Rd. (YRCC 947) Joseph Galanti – President, Eddie Metal-



lo - Vice-President; Ida Rossi - Secretary/Treasurer

...wisely decided to put off any further discussion of amalgamation partly because, se non è rotto non aggiustarlo...or, in Canadian: "if it ain't broke, don't fix it, Eh!"

And who could blame them, in a landscape peppered with dysfunctional Boards and poorly managed buildings, the three Boards of Villa Giardino represent the gold standard for other Boards and management alike. "Working with the boards is like working with family. The board members are very approachable, and they speak their mind. They are open to the management's suggestions, improvements on the property and what is best for the residents. Management and board have a great relationship," says Antonella, who, with the help of superintendent Leo Goga, employed by all three Boards, two contract cleaners and a grounds keeping company, maintain Villa Giardino's pristine environment.

Of course, Villa Giardino has the usual amenities that grace condominium buildings, but along Corridoio Giardino residents also have available to them the separate offices of a hairdresser, a doctor, a physio-therapist, aesthetician, a massage therapist, and a pharmacy - professional services available to the residents

on various days throughout the week. Villa Giardino even has its own bus to take residents to church, Fortinos, Longos and Walmart. A small convenience store, located near the centre of Corridoio Giardino, is open four days a week for those in-between grocery day purchases.

The hub of Villa Giardino's social scene is their Espresso Bar, which draws about sixty residents every morning, Monday through Friday, from 9:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. The atmosphere is characteristic of every espresso bar I ever visited during one of my trips to Rome, Venice or Florence - warm, loud, and friendly - but unlike other bars, at Villa Giardino a cup of espresso is not only free, but bottomless.

"I like everything about Villa Giardino," says the resident Carmela Pasquale who moved to Villa Giardino, "for the companionship." Valeria Di Girolamo, is even more direct, "I just like it here."

Many residents make the Espresso Bar the last stop of their brisk morning walk up and down the Corridoio, some beginning their daily marathons as early as 4 a.m.

"You always have somebody you can socialize with if you want," says 2506 resident and Board Secretary-Treasurer, Ida Rossi, who moved into Villa

Giardino from Sault Ste Marie to be closer to her children.

Mindful of the need to control costs and reduce their carbon footprint, in 2015 the Boards replaced ten make-up air units that serviced the three buildings. The old units were operating at 55% efficiency, while their replacements are 80% efficient. The cost for the replacement was approximately \$223,000.

This year, Villa Giardino completed two additional capital-intensive projects: a \$307,000 replacement of two domestic hot water boilers and three heating boilers with units that tout an 88% efficiency and the installation of LED lighting in the common areas, an upgrade that will result in improved lighting as well as an anticipated savings of approximately \$26,000 per year in hydro.

Board President Tony Piarulli laughs when he recounts that every time he mentions to people that he lives in Villa Giardino their first question is "How's the food?". "People think that because nearly all the residents are over 65 that Villa Giardino is a nursing home." It isn't. Instead, Villa Giardino is a tiny enclave of safety, security and Board co-operation where residents greet each other in the Corridoio with "Buongiorno!" and condominium life is... in a word... Magnifico! **CV**



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