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City Beat

Fees escalate at tower of power

Monthly maintenance fees at the tony Huntingdon high-rise are about go through the roof.

A majority of residents of the 34-story condominium building at 2121 Kirby Drive have agreed to pony up more than \$6 million to build a new parking garage, install a water well and purchase a back-up generator for the property.

Last year, the building's council of owners acquired a narrow strip of land adjacent to the tower where the two-story parking garage is now being built.

Huntingdon general manager Noel Heneberry says the structure is being specially designed so that additional floors can be added in the future.

The tower already has four levels of underground parking, but Heneberry says the new 86-car garage will better accommodate the financially flush tenants.

"People of this caliber have a lot of cars," he says.

Built in the early 1980s, the Huntingdon became Houston's power tower, where the economic elite migrated when they decided to give up their River Oaks mansions.

Past and present residents include former Mayor Bob Lanier, former Enron Chairman Kenneth Lay, and William Morgan, co-founder of pipeline powerhouse Kinder Morgan Inc.

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The total assessment is being split among the residents based on the amount of square footage owned.

But apparently not everybody is happy with the improvements. A special meeting of tenants will be held on June 10 to discuss a number of questions raised over the original voting procedure.

Stay tuned. - Nancy Sarnoff

Man's best friend mold's latest foe

Teaching a "mold dog" new tricks may be an answer for the toxic mold crisis in Texas.

Max, a one-year-old border collie/Labrador mix, is the first trained "mold detection dog" in the state.

Owner Eric Voss and Max, both from Houston, will begin sniffing out molds after Max's routine physical at Texas A&M University's College of Veterinary Medicine this week.

Max has undergone 1,000 hours of mold detection training to become an expert in his field.

"Dogs are used to detect bombs, narcotics and missing people," Voss says, "Detecting toxic molds was a logical extension of their abilities."

The area of the brain that deals with odors is much larger in dogs than humans, which makes Max a prime candidate for the job.

Max appears to have a busy career ahead. According to the Texas Coalition for Affordable Insurance Solutions, 70 percent of all mold claims filed nationally in 2001 were from the Lone Star state.

Texas leads the nation in both number of mold claims and mold-related lawsuits with more than \$1 billion.

Although many Texas insurers now offer mold coverage, the cost of detection and removal is often left up to the individual home owner.

Max and his singular abilities may reinforce the adage that dogs are indeed man's best friend. - Catherine Spaulding

High school habitat project shines on Somalian family

A Somalian family that immigrated to Houston in 1997 will live in

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