



Liz Bishop relaxes in the living room of her spacious Saratoga Springs condo. Bishop says she enjoys the freedom from maintenance afforded by owning a condo.  
HANS PENNINK/  
GAZETTE  
PHOTOGRAPHER

## Finding a comfort zone

BY CHRIS LADD  
For The Sunday Gazette

Liz Bishop had the American dream in her pocket. Longtime news anchorwoman of WRGB-Channel 6 in Niskayuna, Bishop came home to a beautiful big house in the suburbs — huge yard, lots of gardens, big screened-in patio. And then, one day, it just stopped making sense.

"I was working until midnight and I would come home and the street would be dark and I never saw my neighbors anymore — I was working nights and they were working days," Bishop says. "There were all these families that were all connecting, and I just didn't have anything to do with them, with anybody living on my street.

"I'd been there a long time, maybe a

dozen years," she says, "and that's the point at which I started to consider doing something else."

### MOVE THAT MAKES SENSE

That search for something else led her to where she is now — an upscale condo in Saratoga Springs.

And she's not alone. The market for condominiums is heating up all over the country.

"Condos were thought years ago to be first homes or, in some cases, last homes," says John McNamara, president of the Greater Capital Association of Realtors. These days, he says, the condo demographic is widening, thanks to greater amenities, the rising costs of traditional homes, and busier people such as Liz Bishop.

"What we're discovering as an industry is that people are looking for more square

footage, but they don't want the maintenance," says McNamara, who also runs Coldwell Banker Prime Properties in Albany.

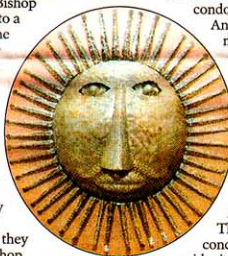
Condo sales, McNamara says, account for 10 percent to 15 percent of his company's business. "They're just, quite frankly, starting to catch on big in this area."

Condo residents fully own their living spaces, unlike tenants in apartment buildings, and then, unlike the average single-family homeowner, they share ownership of common areas like hallways, elevators and the physical property the building sits on. Part of the attraction for potential buyers, McNamara says, is that owners can then share the costs and hassles of maintenance and homeownership with the entire building — 21 families in Bishop's case. "There's more people interested in that type of lifestyle now," he says.

"If your house has a problem, well you'd better find somebody to fix it, and it's not that easy anymore," says Bishop.

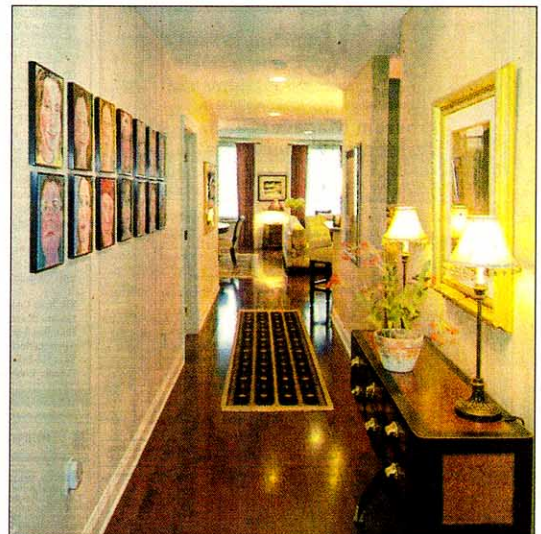
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### News woman Liz Bishop among people who find that condominiums offer convenience, connections and fewer custodial hassles



This sitting area has plenty of windows, a gas fireplace and a flat-screen plasma TV above the mantle.

Above, a piece of artwork from Mexico on display in Bishop's condo.



Bishop's own artwork adorns a hallway wall.

# Condo: WRGB newswoman Liz Bishop enjoys life in the city

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"What I like about this at this point in my life is that I don't have to find the people anymore to do the plowing or the gardening."

When I visited Bishop at her home recently, both seemed in good order — gardens hadn't yet reached full bloom, but that's to be expected this time of year. The sidewalks were immaculate.

Inside, Bishop's building isn't that much different than the average apartment complex — just nicer. Fresh flowers sit on a table in the lobby. The elevator is clean and modern, and it smells nice. Everything is well-lit. All these things are also true of Bish-

op's own unit, just a few floors up.

"When I moved in, it was pretty stark," she says of her home's design, "and everyone said it was going to take two years. I said, 'That's a long time, I can't live like this for two years.' Well, it took me two years to come up with a plan."

And that plan seems to work. The first thing to notice about Bishop's condo is how remarkably open it is — most of the living space flows freely without large walls or doors.

The dining area melts into one sitting area, which is separated from another by a double-sided gas fireplace, and from the kitchen by a sleek granite peninsula. A

flat-screen plasma television sits above the mantle, where others might place family heirlooms or bowling trophies. But, in a way, this makes perfect sense — her life's work is on television.

The style seems very much her own, with lots of deep reds and browns, mixed with lighter shades of cream. Much of the artwork hanging on the walls is her own; Bishop took up painting when she moved to Saratoga.

She shows me a large closet she has retrofitted to house a treadmill. She found she wasn't using it, so she added a small television. Instant home gym.

Walking me through her expanded kitchen, or the part of her bedroom she tells me used to be a hallway, Bishop tells me no other unit in the building looks like hers does. She has obviously made some modifications, each of which, as is customary in most buildings like this one, required approvals from the condo association's board — owners elected by and from the building's occupants to make decisions on their behalf. This marks another major difference between condominiums and other types of homeownership: Just about everything goes to a vote.

"You're really connected, that's what I've learned, and it's both a plus and a minus," Bishop says. "If you live in a house and you want to change the wiring, you just go up into the ceiling, or you do whatever you have to do. Well, that's common space in these buildings."

I ask her to show me the agreement she signed when she moved in, and she finds it buried in one of the kitchen cabinets. It's big — 326 pages — and heavy enough to make a distinct thud when dropped. That's insane, I say.

Bishop won't have it.

"Think of what we're doing here," she says. "We're combining 21 unconnected families or homeowners under one roof. You want to make every protection you could think of to make sure it's a good living experience for everyone."

Bishop — and indeed many condo owners — tends to see



HANS PENNINK/GAZETTE PHOTOGRAPHER

The kitchen in Liz Bishop's Saratoga Springs condo features a granite-topped peninsula.

these mammoth rulebooks as a comfort. Why yell at a noisy neighbor when you could just as easily refer them, politely, to rule 821, section c, paragraph four of their owner's agreement?

It seems like a very cozy life Bishop has made for herself here in Saratoga Springs. The lights aren't all off anymore when she comes home after the 11 o'clock news, she says. Her neighbors hold doors for one another, and exchange hellos in the elevator, in the parking garage, in the hallway. There's a neat little television screen in the phone, and when a Gazette photographer shows up to take her picture for this story, we see him standing out there on the nice, clean sidewalk. It seems like a very nice place to live.

"Would I stay here forever? I don't know," she says. "Some days I look wistfully at these beautiful houses in town, at the gardens and all that. And then I think about it, and I think 'not for me.' I don't think I would ever go back to that kind of life. I think this is much better suited. I picture myself living in a condominium."

One side of Bishop's double-sided gas fireplace.

