

The PanamaMundo Newsletter

An Idea for a Coronado Social Club

The article below is a rewrite of a blog posting from:

http://offshoreliving.typepad.com/retiring_offshore/.

I recommend that you click on the free "subscribe" button for this blog to receive timely articles on Panamanian issues as they are posted.

My blogging comments will increasingly become the preferred forum for interactive comments and discussions on Panamanian issues.

A Idea for Your Consideration

Here is an idea that I believe has some potential particularly in an area such as Coronado Panama but it applies equally well to many other smaller towns and resort areas in Panama and perhaps even in Panama City.

For the sake of simplicity, I will refer to it as the "Coronado Social Club" idea and develop it in the context of Coronado because I know and understand that community best.

The Benefits of an Expat Life in Coronado

As an "expat" living in or around Coronado you can enjoy many advantages in terms of low monthly costs compared to "up north", easy access to first class medical services, wonderful weather year round, a beautiful Pacific Ocean

beach (e.g. Playa Serena), fresh fruit and vegetables every day, and very friendly people.

You can even join the Coronado Golf and Country Club featuring a lush PGA golf course, night tennis and impressive equestrian facilities not to mention four excellent restaurants, a spa and several swimming pools. Your annual cost for full membership can be as low as \$1800 if you are a "pensionado". If you do not golf, play tennis or ride then this expense for social interaction is questionable. In future these fees increase and/or the membership list becomes "full".

The Coronado Country Club offers much of the desired ambience but it is primarily a "business" with hotel guests and members. Most guests stay for a week or just the weekend and then move on.

Volume 2, Issue 8

Date: August 2006

Special points of interest:

- *A Coronado Social Club*



The Missing Thing

The only thing "missing" becomes a place to "hang out" with friends. A place where you can make new friends on a regular basis. A place to relax and enjoy social events on a regular basis.

In one respect, some of these desired "social activities" obviously occur when you invite your friends over for a dinner or when you just "drop by" for a casual visit. But there are certain limitations to this approach. Not everyone wishes to have friends drop in unannounced on a frequent basis. The dynamics of preparing a dinner primarily for socializing purposes can become a bit too much effort (particularly for the chef) and one tends to procrastinate. If you just want to sit around, relax and chat over a glass of wine, then all the work to prepare a dinner or brunch seems somehow counterproductive. Neither does this approach serve to expand your circle of friends ... if that happens to be of any interest.

An Old Concept

The concept of a "social club" is very old. I remember growing up in several towns in southern Ontario with an "Italian Club", a "Cercle de Francais", a "Teutonia Club", a "Polish Club" etc etc. Some of these clubhouses were very impressive and occupied prime real estate. They all seemed to do a booming business by filling a perceived need. They were all "non-profit" organizations and any one could join. If you did not happen to speak Italian, however, that would be your problem. The newsletter in Polish might also be problem but you could still join the club.

Coronado Social Club members would typically have a permanent home in Coronado itself or in a neighboring community.

Expat Monthly Dinners in Coronado

In Coronado, a very successful idea was recently launched by Honey Dodge (living in Altos Del Maria). In early 2005, she organized the first monthly "Expat Nite" including a catered dinner at an excellent local Coronado restaurant "El Rincon" for easy socializing. As many as 140 people have shown up for some of these events in high season.

They provide a wonderful opportunity to make new friends and to maintain existing acquaintances. There is no restriction on who can attend. A similar monthly event is organized in Panama City with presumably larger numbers of attendees. In recent months, it appears that additional



events are being scheduled for the Coronado group from a special fashion show to dining at a new restaurant in the San Carlos area. Such events are excellent for expanding your network of friends.

How would a "Coronado Social Club" (CSC) Operate?

Here are some initial ideas:

1. The CSC would ideally have a permanent location that is owned by its members. It could be initially be leased to determine whether there is sufficient interest and the costs are acceptable.

2. The club facility would be "open" as determined by the members ... probably with longer hours in the high season.

3. The cost to become a "CSC Member" could be very modest in comparison to say the minimum \$1800 charge at the Coronado Country

Club to pensionados. Also, only Coronado residents are exempt from the normal \$10,000 "initiation fee" at the Coronado Country Club which limits membership somewhat more to avid golfers and equestrian types.

4. A CSC would provide a gathering spot for members

(Expats and Panamanians) to chat, have a drink, meet new members, dance, use the swimming pool, work out, surf the web at the internet cafe, make a Skype call abroad, watch a wide screen sports event, attend special "movie nights", take in a specialized workshop or seminar, sign up for a watercolor club or yoga classes, play billiards, take Spanish or computer lessons, or simply attend the regular social events from BBQs to birthday parties.

5. Once the "need for" and potential "advantages of" such a CSC are clear ... if in fact this is the case ... then the next issue becomes the initial cost and on-going financing involved. Of course it depends on how many people are interested. The start-up and annual costs for 50 members are very different than for 250 members. There are also many possibilities for on-going reve-

nue generation from members and their guests.

6. There are several ways to "get started" once there exists a critical mass of interested people ... as few as 15-25 would work in my opinion. The most conservative would be to rent an appropriate property that already has most of the facilities desired such as large shaded terraces, a swimming pool, a meeting area, outdoor kitchen facilities, gazebos etc.

7. Once the group expands to the 100+ range, it may be advantageous to consider purchasing and developing a customized property with clubhouse but it is not a necessity.

8. The bottom line is that such a club could

potentially provide a very interesting dimension to living in Coronado (or wherever) at a very reasonable cost to each member ... compared to the alternative which is not available. On a rental basis, given some care and with modest revenue generating events, my estimate is that it might cost at most \$30 per month for 50 members. With

100 members, the operation might be "self-financing".

9. On a purchase basis, once there are sufficient members, it would probably be necessary to set up a corporation and sell "shares" for perhaps \$1000 each. These shares could always be resold to new members at a later date so they are essentially a "loan" to the CSC permitting the purchase of land and a clubhouse. There would probably still be a small annual membership fee ... possibly \$50-\$100 depending on the success of the "special events", the maintenance costs etc.

10. This "concept" of course could be adapted wherever and there is nothing special about Coronado in this respect. However, I would enjoy feedback on this concept from people in the Coronado area or any others with a view and/or experience.



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More information is available through this free monthly newsletter as well in the new ebook on "[Panama ... Your Best Value for Offshore Retirement](#)" offered at www.panamamundo.com or directly at my e-store at www.shop.panamamundo.com

Give me a call at Skype "panamamundo" or 908 298-7784 (EST) until our permanent move to Panama late 2006.

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Coronado**