

Enhance Your Painting Program With P-A-I-N-T

In the second installment of our series on planning for long term or capital replacement items, this week we'll explore the issues of paint. Again, if your association does not maintain condominium or townhome buildings, you may have perimeter walls that require painting or other amenity structures such as gate houses, clubhouses, pool cabanas, etc. In any case, it is information worth knowing about.

No two painting projects are alike. Types and conditions of materials to be painted, complexity of architectural features, types and degree of weather exposures, impact of landscape features and shade configurations all make a big difference in a well-conceived painting program. Even the purpose of painting can vary from one project to the next. Painting may address preventive maintenance, aesthetics, a waterproofing program, or all of the above. Regardless of the variables, the following acronym "P-A-I-N-T" will enhance your chances of success.

P = Plan.

Inventory every paintable item and decide when it needs to be painted. Prioritizing is particularly important if the painting budget is inadequate to paint everything at once. You can concentrate on short-term needs, and accrue money in reserves for future painting.

A=Ask.

The paint industry changes rapidly, so make no assumptions. All paint companies offer free expert advice on the latest and best products for your particular needs. In addition, they can provide specifications on the project to ensure the product is being applied properly. This is also the time to update your color scheme. Ask the paint company to prepare a color board with 3 different trim, body and accent color options (usually a free service, but worth paying for). Paint colors are like fashion, they do change and updated colors can add value to your community. Display the color boards and invite input or develop a voting process so the owners can participate (if appropriate).

I=Inspect the Work.

In the planning process, walk the site completely. Notice which areas are fading faster than others (typically south, southwest exposures). Determine the condition of the underlying materials to be painted (they may need to be caulked, sanded, pressure cleaned, refurbished or replaced.). Additionally, if it is a building(s) to be painted, inspect the landscaping. Is it too close to the wall to permit good application? If so, arrange to have the shrubs or trees trimmed prior to the project getting underway to provide access.

Note the detrimental effects your sprinkler system may be having on your painted surfaces, and make necessary corrections to avoid premature failure of the new paint. Know what unavoidable damage the painting process may cause to landscaped areas and plan accordingly by making sure that drop cloths will be used to protect the material.

During the job, do not rely on the painting contractor to inspect his own work. Make sure the paint manufacturer's representative inspects the project at logical intervals, such as after the prep work has been done to ensure smooth surfaces for the paint to adhere to. This way, the manufacturer cannot void the warranty for proper application.

Each product has a recommended "mil" thickness which can vary depending on method of application (brush, roll, or spray), ambient temperature, and dryness of surface. It is critical that the right product be applied in the right way.

After the job is done (at least according to the painter), do a walk-through inspection of your project before you pay the final painting bill. There are always, always, always (did I repeat myself?) always corrections, additions and touchups to every job. Get them done before you make final payment while the painter is motivated. Once paid, it's off to the next job and motivation plummets.

After 6 months, and especially after the first rainy period, inspect the whole job to see how it is holding up. There are often areas that begin to flake or crack. In particular, look for painted rails and other exposed horizontal surfaces that get direct rain. All significant failures should be touched up immediately. Do not wait. Always ask for the leftover paint if the association has storage capability. This will provide for interim touchups by maintenance or homeowners.

N=Negotiate.

Get competitive bids from qualified contractors whose references you've checked. All bids should be based on identical and clear specifications provided by the paint manufacturer. Do not automatically choose the low bid. All bids are negotiable and you may get the price you want from the painter you like best just by asking. You've got nothing to lose.

T=Timing.

All your planning and painting needs should take into consideration that most painting is done usually within a relatively small weather window (unless it's interior). Give your contractors plenty of lead time so you don't get caught in the "schedule squeeze". It is common for painters to take on more work than is humanly possible given the weather envelope. The last thing you want is to have the painter working in the rain saying "We always do it this way". Rain is not the only negative to paint. Temperature, especially low temperatures can also impact the application. It would be better to wait until next year than to plan with no time to execute.

There are few community association projects more important than painting. Remember the acronym P-A-I-N-T as you venture into your next round and you should have a successful painting project!