

# THE COMMUNITY BUILDER

## Building Value by Preventive Maintenance

Many community associations are growing old - and not always gracefully. Dry rot, extensive wood boring insect damage, leaking roofs and hefty special assessments seem to be the order of the day. Letting maintenance slide year after year is not the answer. Owner's property in associations that are well maintained will sell faster and for more money. It is a matter of protecting and maintaining the value of the asset, a Board's primary and legal responsibility.

So, how can the association that wants to maintain their assets do so with a minimal amount of funds and energy? There are several keys which may assist in the maintenance journey:

**Get Committed.** The Board needs to first go on record that it is committed philosophically to preventive maintenance. Consider enacting a formal written resolution approved by the Board that mandates professional quality maintenance of the property as a foundation of this commitment. As Boards change, they will be held to this standard.

**Get Organized.** Find volunteers for a Maintenance Committee. If any of the volunteers have experience in construction, design, or architecture so much the better. Next, put together a job description for the committee outlining the major responsibilities and time line for completion of certain tasks.

**Develop a Component List.** Besides the obvious like roofs, paint, paving and so on, there may be other not-so-obvious components. Review your documents to identify all the components that your association is obligated to maintain. If there is confusion regarding maintenance responsibility for limited common areas like a unit's deck, you may wish to consult your association legal counsel. If your community is older, you may want to do this anyway to make sure the documents conform to current laws. Amending them will clarify maintenance responsibility that are vague or absent.

Your insurance agent needs to know which components the association will be taking responsibility for and how that might affect coverage and premiums (Insurance coverage disputes between association and homeowners are common because of poorly written documents and failure by the Board to properly define responsibility). The key is to bring clarity and distinction to those components

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which will be maintained by the Association, as opposed to those maintained by the homeowners themselves.

Physically inspect the components. Many Boards have never taken the time to walk around the property on a maintenance inspection and those that do often do not possess the proper skills.

Choose the people carefully who will perform this duty. In addition, include reputable, licensed, insured qualified contractors, engineers or architectural consultants or certified building inspectors. These people have a trained eye which will pick up potential problems that laymen might miss.

Although they may charge for their time, they will save you money in the long run. Once you have completed your walk-through, categorize all components in the following manner:

Building components: Roofs, gutters, windows, siding and trim, deck, garage doors, heating/AC units, elevators, etc.

Site Components: Pavement, concrete, area lighting fences, entry monuments, etc.

Landscaping components: Time clocks, sprinkler heads, controllers, water features, etc.

Recreational components: Pool, spa, sauna, tennis courts, playground equipment, exercise room, clubhouse, etc.