





COMMUNICATIONS AND CONSTRUCTION

Given the construction and maintenance theme of this issue of *CondoManagement*, I can't help but think of communities that spend a great deal of money on construction projects but skip an important part of the process: communication.

The first step of any association construction project should be selling the idea to homeowners. Association members will embrace maintenance and new construction if the projects are presented carefully and thoughtfully. But keeping members uninformed can have dire consequences. Imagine coming home from work and finding the beautiful lawn alongside your unit is now a giant ditch where the new sewer system is going in. How about seeing your neighbor's roof gone and replaced with a giant blue tarp, or finding that your driveway has been freshly sealed and cannot be used for 48 hours?

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Good communications can replace anger and frustration with knowledge and enthusiasm: that new sewer system means no more septic tank problems. The new roof will give years of worry-free dryness. Sealing the driveway means saving thousands of dollars by not having to replace the pavement it protects. There are always positive reasons for construction and maintenance programs. But without proper communication, these benefits will be outweighed by negativity from ill-informed residents.

Here's what you can do to make sure your next construction or maintenance project builds your community rather than disrupting it.

1. Explain how the construction project will benefit association members. Consult with the vendor providing the service about how best to promote the project. People buy into benefits, not features. Potential benefits include increased property value, cost savings, curb appeal and safety.
2. Explain the process. What will happen and when will it happen? Who will be doing the work? How much is being spent? How will the work impact homeowners?
3. Keep association members updated. Despite everyone's best efforts, material shortages, work delays and other problems are all part of the building and maintenance process. Not knowing why a job hasn't gone exactly as planned will lead to rumors and allegations. Keep the details in the news.
4. Celebrate the project's completion. Be sure to thank everyone involved, especially the homeowners for their patience, support and endorsement of the project.

The end result of a successful construction or maintenance project is an improved facility and a better community. Make the most of this change by using your communication expertise to involve the members of your community. You will be rewarded with more than just a new sewer system, a new roof, or freshly sealed pavement. You will have used communication to build a better community.

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