

Americans who reside in community associations are overall very pleased with their experiences, according to a recent CAI survey. With over 50 million citizens living in some form of association, happy!

This issue of Common Foundations focuses on two of your association's largest and expensive common elements: siding and parking. While some residents' level of satisfaction with their Board may drop when these items are mentioned, it's important to note that they don't have to be a point of contention in your community. Follow these guidelines to ensure a happier and more peaceful new year for everyone.

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## Community Essentials: Are you Reserving for Siding?

As associations continue to discover the benefit of reserve studies and the long-range planning options they provide, some Boards also unearth some less-pleasant realities about their current funding—especially where siding is concerned. The idea that siding should last “as long as the building” or at least in the 40-year range has been a common misconception of Board members and property managers. The truth is, your building's siding takes the brunt of the elements and can deteriorate more quickly than expected.

Unfortunately, because of this lack of foresight, many aging communities are now being faced with the financial hardship of replacing siding without sufficient reserve funds to cover the project. Special assessments just for siding replacement can be avoided with a few changes to the reserve study and maintenance schedule for the community.

In older buildings, the siding may not have been properly maintained over the years and is in inferior condition. The siding will never improve without immediate “damage control” through repair or replacement. Depending on the type of original siding, problems include brittle texture, rusted nails, split wood, knotholes, leaks, and mold. Although these issues start on the exterior of the home, the effects can quickly travel inward in the shape of damage to the wall sheathing or even the interior living areas.

Wood siding requires particular maintenance attention, as it typically is the first to show signs of aging and effects from harsh weather or exposure to the sun. The reliability of stucco siding (or EIFS, synthetic



stucco) relies heavily on the method of installation when the building was first constructed. If improperly installed, stucco's remaining useful life can be greatly shortened.

With all of types of siding, it's imperative to adjust your reserve schedule accordingly. Increased maintenance and as-needed repair or replacement should be expected and not come as a surprise to a prepared community. However, while some deficiencies in your siding may be readily visible to the naked eye, this is not the case for problems in the materials or installation quality.

For a mature association, siding repairs or partial/complete replacements should already be a large part of the reserve funding plan. If your association is new (or has yet to be transitioned), now is the time for a professional inspection of the quality of siding materials and installation.

While older communities don't have the opportunity to start at the beginning, a reserve study will set in place a regular schedule to begin funding for repairs. A regular maintenance schedule will prolong the useful life of any building system.

# Parking: The Never-Ending Quest for More Space

In today's mobile society, many households have multiple cars for adults and teenage drivers alike. Each car needs their own spot, and in association living, this could be as simple as some clever maneuvering in your townhome's driveway... or as complicated as a well-meaning homeowner breaking the CC&R's by parking in the grassy side area of their yard.

As the number of cars per home increases, the issue of parking is compounded by a separate problem: a rapidly shrinking amount of space to put those cars. According to the 2001 Census Bureau American Survey, 52 percent of households in the country have two or more vehicles. The needs of the average American family should be taken into consideration during the design phase of a new association property, but that's unfortunately not always the case.

Developers want to build the greatest number of homes in the space available to maximize their investment, and parking lots greatly infringe on that land. Common solutions to the developer's needs include allocating less land for parking spaces and instead using it for units; constructing a parking garage or lots and then renting spaces to residents; limiting the road width to cut costs and add more land; or, in more urban areas, simply not concerning themselves with the parking issue, leaving residents to rent space from another lot or garage.

However, the developer won't be living (and trying to park!) on the property. The issue of parking becomes one for associations to deal with.

Outdated governing documents may also leave the Board feeling as though they've reached a dead end with the parking

issue. Either the bylaws weren't written by the original developer, and therefore aren't able to fit the needs of modern residents, or the property has aged so much that the parking has failed to keep up with the growing vehicle population.

Associations simply must devote time and money to their parking spaces. To make this a smoother process, ask your Board the following questions:

- Is every resident aware of the parking policy?
- Based on the needs of the community, do we allocate a reasonable number of spaces to each home?
- Are we maintaining what parking space we do have in order to maximize its useful life?
- Do we need to create more parking spaces?

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Your community's CC&R's may need to be rewritten to tailor to specific association needs.

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It's possible that the CC&R's may need to be rewritten to tailor to specific association needs. In this instance, it's best to involve the entire community when making these changes. Some associations have made the wise move to send out a questionnaire to each resident, asking them to rate their satisfaction level on a variety of issues. Parking is almost always on the top of the "controversy" list—either there's not enough, it's not conveniently placed, or the asphalt is in poor condition. Take their suggestions at face value and use them to build a new set of rules and regulations for parking.

If the current parking situation isn't meeting your association's needs—make changes for the better!

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