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Project Manager:

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Management:

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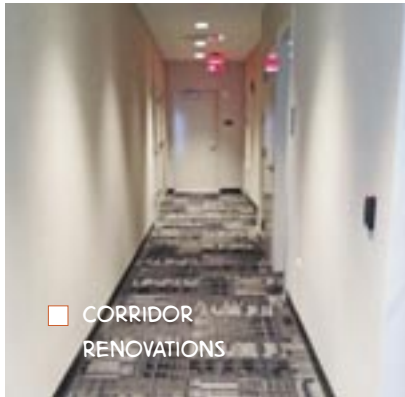
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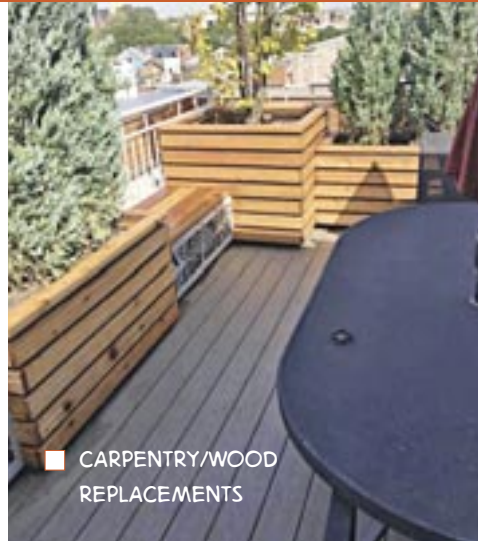
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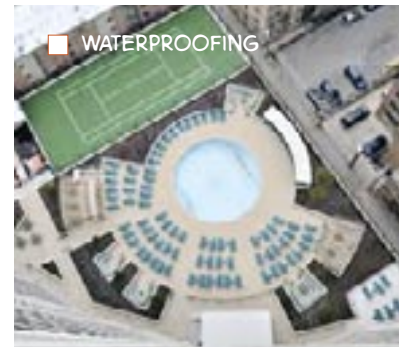
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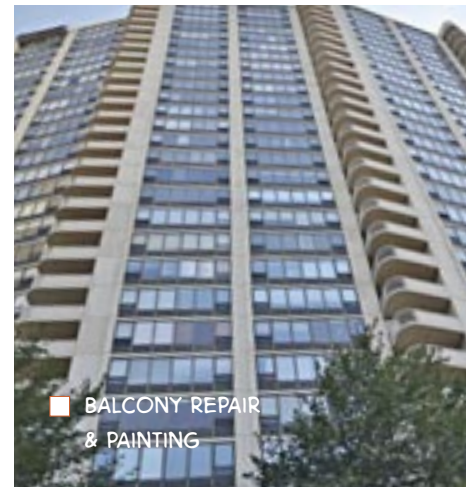
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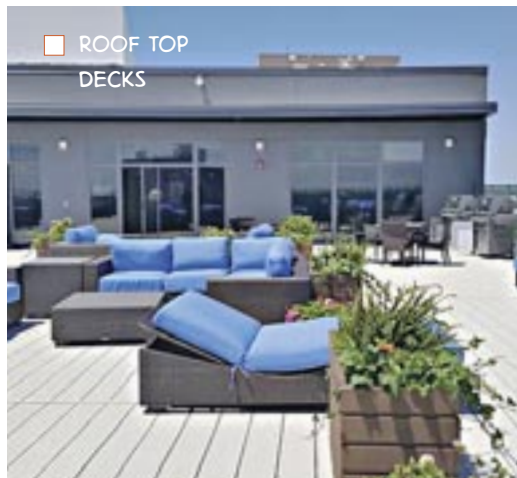
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by Pamela Dittmer McKuen

CAPITAL PROJECTS REPORT 2025

Plumbing risers and EV charging stations lead the way; infrastructure and equipment replacements remain strong as buildings show their age

The year is off to a good start when it comes to capital projects in Chicagoland's multifamily and commercial buildings. Associations and building owners are stepping up to replace aging systems and facades, and architects and engineers expect volumes or revenues--or both--to increase or equal those of 2024. As a nod to sustainability, the installation of electric vehicle (EV) charging stations is notably on the rise.

Though certain challenges remain, as they always do, the outlook for 2025 is generally positive.

Chicagoland Buildings & Environments surveyed a panel of industry pros who are on the

forefront of capital projects to learn the types of work they have on the drawing boards and in the fields. They shared their thoughts on how they are navigating the current business climate, and what they see as upcoming trends and challenges. They also offered their professional expertise to help clients and prospective clients assure their projects run as optimally as possible.

Our participating pros are: Thomas Flynn, senior associate and architect at Klein & Hoffman restoration architects and structural engineers; Adam Sanders, associate principal and practice leader at Elara Engineering; Michael Locigno, vice president and architect at Kellermeyer Godfry Hart architects and engineers; Eric Staszczak,

executive vice president at Westward360 property management company; Frankie Sorrentino, senior vice president at Wintrust Community Advantage financial services; and Adam Kahn, partner and association attorney at Levenfeld Pearlstein, LLC.

Trending Capital Projects

Panelists ranked facade and roof restoration and maintenance, and replacements of plumbing risers, mechanical risers, fan coils and windows at the top of their project lists. Demand is growing for EV charging stations, a highly customized task due to the diverse parking and garage configurations designed for previous automotive eras. Some buildings are looking to upgrade or improve dated building amenities.

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company, executive vice president Eric Staszczak says, "I'd say we've seen a large uptick, honestly, primarily from associations that put a lot of priorities on the back burner during the uncertainty of Covid. There were drop-offs for some communities hit particularly badly by insurance spikes, where priorities had to be realigned, but the overall spend among our customers was much higher than in years past."

Another point Staszczak makes is leaving an election year behind tends to bring a bit more stability in the market, which puts associations in a more confident position to proceed with bigger ticket spending. With interest rates coming down a little bit, borrowing money is slightly cheaper than a year ago.

Condominium buildings of an older vintage are not only replacing deficient infrastructure and equipment but they also are stepping up to meet the needs of a modern lifestyle, reports Adam Sanders of Elara Engineering. Plumbing, mechanical and fan coil unit replacements are on the rise as well as the installation of EV charging stations. As a part of the plumbing projects, many buildings are also discussing the

effect of food waste disposers (garbage disposals) on kitchen waste piping. For large multi-family buildings with cast iron piping in the City of Chicago, the potential for costly projects to replace or repair kitchen waste piping should be considered when discussing the installation and use of garbage disposals.

"Associations are experiencing a higher frequency of leaks, equipment failures and increased maintenance costs, resulting in more projects moving into implementation," he says. "These costly and invasive projects take years to develop and properly plan to help associations obtain the best value."

"We started to see a few requests this year from associations wanting to add EV charging stations, and that may increase in the future," says Frankie Sorrentino, senior vice president at Wintrust Community Advantage financial services. "It seems like every year the volume continues to rise."

No two EV implementations are alike, Sanders says. "Each client is approaching the implementations differently: Quantities of chargers, types of chargers, dedicated versus

shared chargers, phased implementation or installing them all at once."

"We have seen an increase in roofing projects and a decrease in window replacement projects in the past year," says Michael Locigno, vice president and architect at Kellermeyer Godfry Hart architects and engineers. "The number of projects has increased, but the size of the project has decreased. We expect a similar volume of work in 2025."

Thomas Flynn, senior associate and architect at Klein & Hoffman restoration architects and structural engineers, says the firm's most common projects are exterior facade restoration and maintenance, roofing and rooftop deck evaluations and replacements, and window repair and replacements. Also on the list are property condition assessments such as leak investigations and reserve studies, and large terra cotta projects.

In general, he expects fewer projects this year but the same overall spend as last year.

Association attorney Adam Kahn at Levenfeld Pearlstein cites plumbing riser pipe replacements, fan coil replacements, exterior



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facade repairs and replacement, lobby and amenity restoration, and elevator modernization as the top projects undertaken by the law firm's clients.

Confronting the Challenges

Prices on goods and materials are still high, but the increases seem to have leveled out for some. Lead times vary, depending on the product. Despite the challenges, the panelists are finding ways to work with and around them.

"Costs spiked during 2020-2021 and are starting to return to 'normal,'" Flynn says. "Lead times on semi-custom products can be longer than expected, as companies are not stocking specialty items. The availability of standard products seems to be at pre-2020 levels. I have not heard of any labor shortages at this point."

"The supply chain delays have not impacted schedules," Locigno says. "However, contractors still need to plan and account for large material orders. Overall, it seems that the large cost increases realized in the past few years have stabilized. It is interesting to note that material costs for some of the higher priced projects, like

window replacements, have generally higher increases year over year when compared to masonry or concrete materials."

Clients are more likely to postpone their window replacement projects, which then typically result in higher project costs at the time of implementation, he adds.

Fan coil replacements are particularly sensitive to navigate because it impacts so many of the building's components, Sanders says.

"It is important that the fan coil unit performance conforms to the building's mechanical, engineering, plumbing (MEP) systems to prevent shortening the life span of other major equipment and to adequately heat

and cool the building," he says. "We recommend working with an MEP consulting engineer to develop a detailed RFP to obtain pricing from contractors and manufacturers that conform to the requirements of the individual building. MEP engineers should review other aspects of the related systems such as fan coil riser anchors, expansion joints, riser and branch piping to determine the full scope of work for the project."

Flynn comments that changes to the roofing sections of the building code such as new insulation requirements, wind-uplift requirements and changes to egress requirements for rooftop decks have had the biggest impact.

"BUILDINGS OF AN OLDER VINTAGE ARE NOT ONLY REPLACING DEFICIENT INFRASTRUCTURE AND EQUIPMENT BUT THEY ALSO ARE STEPPING UP TO MEET THE NEEDS OF A MODERN LIFESTYLE INCLUDING PLUMBING PIPE RISERS, MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT AND FAN COIL UNIT REPLACEMENTS AS WELL AS THE INSTALLATION OF EV CHARGING STATIONS."



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“Every project has unique challenges including code changes, access, schedule, and alignment of client expectations with project requirements,” he says.

High-Tech Solutions

Technology’s rapidly evolving capabilities enable project teams to perform with greater efficacy than ever. Visual examinations, photography, record-keeping, communication and other tasks are streamlined and accelerated with the advancements in hardware and software. Our panelists expressed enthusiasm for the possibilities both now and in the future.

Drones are an increasingly important instrument in the Klein & Hoffman toolkit, especially for facade inspections. These unmanned aerial vehicles, or UAVs, as they are technically named, can capture up-close, high-resolution imagery without the need for expensive access equipment.

“We have two people in our office who are pilots, but we outsource a lot of that, too,” Flynn says. “Some of the technology the drone companies have can take, like, 1,000 pictures of

a facade and compare it to a picture taken several years ago. You can literally see where cracks have developed over time.”

On the job sites, Klein & Hoffman employs tablet computers to help with remote communications, quantity tracking, and report preparation. Infrared cameras assist with leak investigations while data loggers track temperature and humidity.

“We’ve started to require contractors to utilize 360-degree cameras to better document existing conditions and work performed during invasive projects,” Sanders of Elara reports. “For example, if we are opening a bathroom wall to replace a pipe, we’re requiring them to use not only a 360-degree camera but also punch list software. That gives project team members the ability to review work performed remotely, and it also assists in resolving unit owner disputes. If someone claims a floor was damaged, the 360-degree picture shows everything in that room and whether there was damage or there wasn’t damage.”

Associations also have access to those pictures, so if they want to know what’s inside

the walls, they can find out with a couple flicks of a mouse, he adds.

In some cases, high-tech and low-tech work in tandem to achieve greater results than either one on its own. Facade inspections, for example, may be done via roof access, using the same roof anchors utilized by window washers, Locigno reports.

“I know the installation of roof anchors has been a big cost to owners, but they are very useful for more than the window washers and what the original intent was,” he says. “When I started in this industry, we had to stand on the ground with binoculars or get up close on a scaffold. Now we’ve got two more pieces in the middle where we can look at it with the drone or go down the ropes and get our hands on something. It expands the menu we are able to offer.”

Continuing to leverage technology is essential and invaluable to the success of capital projects, Westwood360’s Staszczak says.

“All of the wonderful tools we use, some of them from vendor partners on this panel, or with how the broader technology landscape has



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changed, are making it easier than ever to communicate efficiently and quickly," he says. "We should lean into being nimble, utilizing video and virtual calls--especially with vendors, saving what otherwise would have been time wasted commuting or standing around onsite--to build a highly efficient machine."

Still Waiting on Decarbonization

Even though little progress has been made in the area of decarbonization requirements for Chicago buildings, the issue is still a concern. We know that rules are coming, and no one wants to spend money on expensive projects that will soon be outdated.

"Currently, we do not have further updates on formal adoption of decarbonization requirements for existing buildings in Chicago," Sanders says. "However, we foresee decarbonization requirements and trends becoming increasingly present in future years as we are seeing in other cities in the country. Local codes are adopting measures which replicate decarbonization elements. Code officials are enforcing the codes in new ways

and requiring more stringent adherence to certain sections of the code."

Sanders' recommendation: Plan for the long term, and consider decarbonization when making investments in equipment and infrastructure replacements.

Money and Legal Matters

There's no debate that capital projects are extremely costly. Regardless of the funding source--whether regular assessments, special assessments, reserves, loans or a combination thereof--these projects are ultimately paid for from the pocketbooks of the individual unit owners.

Wintrust's Sorrentino advises Associations intending to borrow money from a financial institution to bring them into discussions early. A current reserve study will be required, and it takes time to obtain if one isn't readily available.

"Opening communication with the financial institution at the early stages helps ensure minimal delays and sets a clear path forward," Sorrentino says. "Prior to bidding out a project

and pinning a commitment deadline, it's ideal to have the bank start analyzing the association's financials."

Some projects, such as a riser replacement project with branch lines, may call for a division of costs between the association and unit owners. Associations should consult with their attorney to determine who is responsible to pay for what, and also to educate owners and set expectations appropriately.

Attorney input is also a good idea when making improvements or additions to the common elements, say, remodeling the lobby or expanding the fitness center. Your governing documents might limit the amount of money you are allowed to spend.

"Limitations would not apply to the maintenance, repair or replacement of existing common element amenities," Khan said.

Another way to protect the association's interests is via an appropriate and comprehensive contract, the attorney says. The contract should address insurance coverages with the association, board and management named as

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Advice from the Pros

Our panelists offered a few final recommendations to help associations succeed with their capital projects:

Plan way, way ahead. Give yourself extra time for the inevitable issues and delays that come up along the way.

“It is important to start planning early and engaging design professionals and contractors sooner rather than later,” Flynn says. “If, for instance, a building is considering a facade repair project, the investigation should be completed by the fall of Year 1, so that documents can be generated during the winter, bid in late winter to early spring, and construction can start in the spring of Year 2. This is especially important for terra cotta which could have lead times of several months.”

Communicate early and often. Capital projects require an enormous amount of communication and coordination between all the parties. The project team needs to keep on track, and the residents, who are surely inconvenienced, need to plan their daily lives.

Khan recommends frequent, clear written communications to unit owners and residents as well as “town hall” presentations with professionals like management, legal, architect and engineer, contractor and project manager to provide information and answer questions.

“Coordinate and communicate with residents for any planned service outages,” Khan says. “This may be especially important for move-ins and move-outs.”

“We have found that making sure some basic elements are utilized,” Locigno says. “For example, issuing an agenda for meetings in advance allows participants to be more prepared. Including sketches, diagrams, and other simple visual aids can help individuals understand project details and building conditions.”

“We believe a team approach is important for everyone to stay on the same page,” Flynn says. “For most projects, regular progress meetings help turn problems into solutions and setbacks into progress.

Build design consensus. When redecorating or remodeling, matters of aesthetic taste are not only subjective, but they can be divisive as well. Khan offers a strategy for encouraging buy-in: Appoint a volunteer commission of unit owners to research and present options to the rest of the owners for their input via survey or vote.

Section 22.1 Disclosure. Khan reminds condominiums to keep their Section 22.1 disclosure statement updated for unit resales as

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by David Conforti, AMS, CMCA, LCAM

A Day in the Life of a Property Manager for HOAs: Preparing for the New Year

Being a property manager for a Homeowners Association (HOA) is a dynamic and demanding role, balancing day-to-day operations with long-term strategic planning to ensure the community remains attractive, functional, and well-maintained.

This article takes a deep dive into the day-to-day responsibilities of a property manager for an HOA, focusing specifically on the tasks that need to be addressed as the new year begins. From preparing the calendar and landscaping bids to planning budgets and organizing community walks, this comprehensive article explores the variety of duties that go into managing a successful HOA.

The Role of a Property Manager for HOAs

Before diving into a typical day, it's important to understand the role of a property manager within an HOA. An HOA is a governing body for a residential community, typically established to oversee shared spaces and enforce community guidelines. Property managers act as the link

between the board of directors and the residents, ensuring the association's operations run smoothly. Their responsibilities include financial management, maintenance, legal compliance, resident relations, and strategic planning.

As the new year begins, property managers face a host of seasonal tasks and long-term initiatives that will set the tone for the coming months. They must be organized, proactive, and adept at juggling multiple priorities.

Starting the Day: Reviewing the Calendar and Setting Priorities

One of the first tasks for a property manager in the new year is reviewing the calendar of events and operational goals. This is crucial for ensuring all deadlines and initiatives are met. The calendar

needs to be updated with scheduled board meetings, committee reviews, annual homeowner meetings, and key community events such as holiday parties or neighborhood clean-ups.

At the start of the year, the property manager typically assesses:

Board meetings and schedules: Ensuring that the HOA board meetings are planned well in advance, typically quarterly, and that all necessary preparations are made, including posting meeting agendas and coordinating any special meetings.

Annual budget planning: Starting the conversation around the next year's budget. Property managers need to provide input on what's expected in terms of expenses and income. They may already be planning for specific capital improvements, reserve fund contributions, and other financial elements of the association.

Contract renewals and landscaping assessments: Many contracts with service providers such as landscapers, pool maintenance, and security personnel are often on a yearly cycle. A property

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manager will review these contracts and prepare for renewal discussions in the new year, ensuring that services are being provided at the best value to the community.

Vendor schedules: Some vendors may have specific seasonal services. The property manager needs to ensure that the necessary services such as snow removal, lawn care, and tree trimming are planned for the upcoming months.

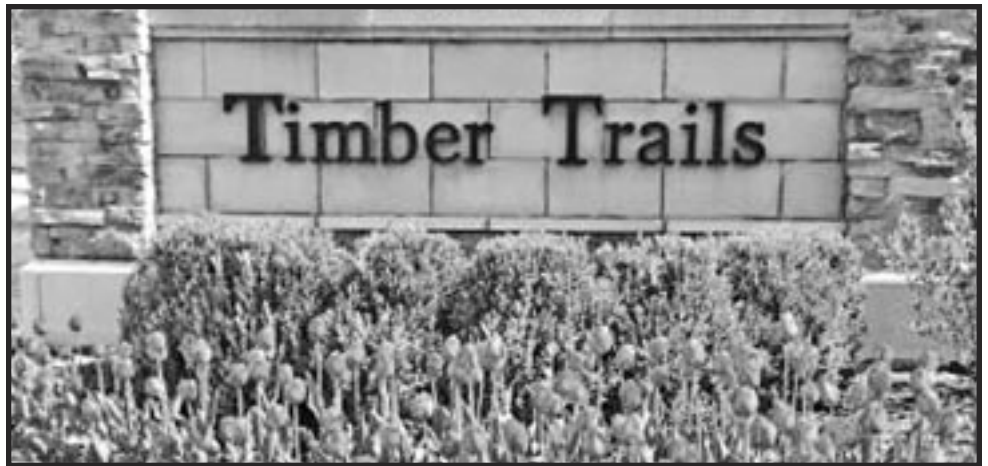
Once the calendar is updated, the property manager will create a detailed to-do list, prioritizing tasks such as preparing for the board's first meeting of the year and addressing immediate maintenance needs from resident complaints or requests.

**Landscaping Bids and Contracts:
Preparing for the Spring Season**

Landscaping is a central component of HOA management, especially in regions where climate plays a major role in the appearance of the community throughout the year. As winter comes to an end, landscaping companies must be contacted to submit their bids for the upcoming year. It may even be a great idea to start this request process during the fall/winter months prior to the new year.

A property manager's responsibilities include:

Obtaining bids: Collecting bids from various landscaping contractors to ensure the HOA receives the best possible service at the most competitive price. This involves creating a clear request for proposal (RFP) outlining the scope of



work, expectations, and services such as lawn mowing, tree trimming, irrigation management, and seasonal planting.

Reviewing the service history: Reflecting on the past year's landscaping performance. Were the lawns maintained to the board's satisfaction? Were there any complaints from residents regarding the aesthetics or maintenance of common areas? This review will help guide the selection of the most suitable vendor.

Budget consideration: Ensuring that the landscaping contract fits within the current year's budget. If necessary, property managers may need to discuss options with the board to adjust

the budget or seek additional funding for landscaping services.

The goal is to ensure that the community's landscape remains healthy and well-maintained, enhancing the aesthetic appeal and overall value of the neighborhood.

**Community Walks with the Board:
Inspecting Common Areas**

In addition to landscaping, community upkeep is a significant part of a property manager's role. The beginning of the year is an ideal time for a community walk with the board of directors. This walk serves multiple purposes:

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Inspecting common areas: A walk through the neighborhood allows the property manager and the board to identify any maintenance issues such as damaged fences, broken sidewalks, or deteriorating amenities. This inspection also provides an opportunity to assess landscaping concerns, evaluate the cleanliness of shared spaces, and check the status of community signage.

Setting priorities for the year: The walk helps determine which projects need to be addressed first, whether that's repairing a pool, upgrading a clubhouse, or addressing parking issues. This list of priorities will feed into the larger budgeting process for the year.

Engaging with residents: During the walk, property managers may encounter residents who offer feedback or raise concerns. These conversations are valuable in identifying any ongoing issues or desired improvements. Additionally, the walk provides an opportunity for the board members to connect with the community, which can enhance transparency and resident satisfaction.

Assessing vendor performance: A community walk is also a chance to assess the quality of services provided by vendors, such as trash removal, lawn care, or pest control. If the services are lacking, the board may decide to initiate contract discussions or seek other vendors.

**Planning for the Year's Budget:
Reviewing Financials and Projections**

One of the most critical tasks for any property manager is the creation and maintenance of the HOA's budget. In January, the property manager will begin early planning for the upcoming year's budget by analyzing financials from the previous year and discussing future projections with the board.

Key considerations include:

Assessing reserves: The HOA's reserve funds must be sufficient to cover future capital projects and unexpected repairs. Property managers review the reserve study to ensure the funding is in place for upcoming major expenditures such as roof replacements, road repairs, or new amenities. In some cases, the reserve study may need to be updated.

Forecasting income and expenses: The property manager works with the board to forecast expected income from homeowners' dues, special assessments, and other sources. At the same time, they project expenses for maintenance, utilities, vendor services, insurance, and administrative costs. This exercise helps identify any gaps or discrepancies that need to be addressed.

Community amenities and upgrades: If the HOA is planning to improve its common areas—whether through upgrading the pool, installing a new playground, or repaving a road—the costs associated with these projects will need to be considered in the budget. Property managers work closely with contractors and vendors to obtain accurate estimates.

Dues adjustments: If the budget reveals a shortfall or if there are new projects on the horizon, the board may need to discuss increasing the homeowners' association dues. This is a delicate conversation that requires careful communication to ensure residents understand the reasons behind any increases.

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Insurance and legal compliance: The property manager must ensure that all insurance policies are up-to-date and meet the requirements for the HOA. This also includes checking for compliance with local, state, and federal regulations.

Communication with Homeowners: Updating Residents on Changes

Effective communication is one of the biggest keys to a property manager’s success. As the year begins, property managers must ensure that homeowners are kept informed about changes in the community, upcoming meetings, and new initiatives. This involves:

Sending newsletters: A well-crafted newsletter can serve as an informative update for homeowners. The newsletter may cover upcoming events, changes to landscaping, safety tips, and important reminders about community rules and regulations.

Online communication platforms: Many HOAs now use online portals or apps to communicate with homeowners. Property managers may update these platforms with important documents, event announcements, and general updates on community projects.

Maintaining Vendor Relationships and Managing Contracts

With the start of a new year, property managers review all active vendor contracts to ensure continued service and satisfaction. This includes:

Renewing contracts: Contracts with vendors for services like security, janitorial services, or pool maintenance are typically on a yearly renewal cycle. Property managers must ensure that these contracts are renewed in a timely manner and that the services provided are meeting the association’s expectations and needs.

Seeking out new vendors: In some cases, property managers may solicit new vendors for specific services if existing ones are underperforming or if cost-effective alternatives are available. This is especially important for high-cost services such as landscaping and security.

Evaluating performance: Regular vendor performance reviews help property managers determine if changes are needed. For instance, if the landscaping company didn’t meet expectations, the manager might decide to explore other options before the next growing season.

Conclusion: A Strategic Start to the Year

A day in the life of an HOA property manager is filled with a blend of administrative duties, community engagement, financial planning, and strategic thinking. As the year begins, property managers play an essential role in setting the stage for a smooth, well-managed community. From preparing calendars, gathering landscaping bids, conducting community walks, and planning the budget, every task is critical to the success of the HOA.

With careful planning, effective communication, and diligent attention to detail, property managers ensure that homeowners enjoy a clean, safe, and well-maintained living environment, making the HOA a community that people are

proud to call home. Whether it’s the beginning of the year or any time of the season, property managers are always working to keep the wheels

of the HOA turning smoothly, ensuring that both the community and the board have what they need to succeed. 🌿

“A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN HOA PROPERTY MANAGER IS FILLED WITH A BLEND OF ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, FINANCIAL PLANNING, AND STRATEGIC THINKING.”



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The winter season has been mild during some periods with many stretches of very cold temperatures and a few snow events that we expect of Chicago area winters. No major snow events yet though. The cold and snowy weather we have experienced certainly was enough to provide the typical challenges of the winter season including difficult driving conditions, icy sidewalks, frozen pipes, ice dams and snow removal.

Economic conditions seem to remain resilient with continued low unemployment and plenty of spending still happening. The housing market has improved somewhat with slightly lower interest rates. High prices continue to challenge many of us and while inflation has cooled significantly, threats of possible increases in inflation still loom large. Just as with the weather, economic conditions are hard to predict, so it is best to be prepared for whatever happens.

Our cover story for this issue of CBE provides our annual report on current trends in capital improvement projects. We mentioned most of the current trends in capital projects in our most recent Condo Lifestyles and we are covering several of those topics in greater detail in this issue. Advance planning and budgeting such as capital reserve fund and/or useful life studies are paramount to success in managing building improvements, restoration or capital projects of any type.

Facade restoration, plumbing system riser replacements, and roof replacements rank as the most common types of projects that the professionals we talked to are working on. Our experts are also seeing a variety of other projects including window replacements, parking garage repairs/restoration, fan coil replacements, balcony repairs, mechanical equipment replacement, and electric vehicle (EV) charging station installation. A related article in this issue is on the valuable role of consultants in capital projects

Our second story is about the annual planning and preparation for HOA's and offers insight from a professional community association manager's perspective on this topic and is the fourth article in a series on "a day in the life of a manager." Interestingly, the budget process never really ends as you should be monitoring this year's budget to make any adjustments needed during the year as well as making notes for next year's budget.

Our Engineering Insight column discusses the impact of chloride ions (salt) on building structures. Preventing chloride-induced damage is crucial for preserving a building's structural integrity and this article offers some practical steps to prevent or minimize chloride damage.

This issue also features a property profile on the historic renovation of the Conrad Hilton being transformed into the Marriott Residence Inn Magnificent Mile. The article also provides an inside look at a successful water heat pump and fan coil replacement project.

Our regular feature on the weather and your landscape also serves as our The Landscape Buyer column article in this issue. This article provides a recap of how the recent past weather is affecting your outdoor landscape and a forecast of general weather conditions for the coming seasons. Our regular Industry Happenings column also appears in this issue and we would like to congratulate Peter Power on his retirement and thank him for his many years of Advisory Board service to Buildings & Environments.

We will continue to explore other relevant building management trends, challenges, and initiatives in coming issues of BE. If you have an idea or story to share, please call us at 630-932-5551 or email mdavids@condolifestyles.net. 🍀

Michael C. Davids
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by James A. Fizzell

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The Weather and Your Landscape

Another La Nina is upon us. The rapid change to winter arrived about New Years Day as expected. Following the generally benevolent summer of 2024, fall also was unusually mild and extended. There was a smattering of 90-degree days throughout the fall, but no extended heat wave. Temperatures averaged above the expected normal levels throughout the period. The first frost occurred on November 21, about a month later than expected.

Precipitation was sparse and fell mostly as sprinkles with a couple of significant wet days scattered throughout the fall. Rain totaled about 4 inches for September, October, and November, a little over half the normal amount.

December was expected to bring some winter weather, but was a disappointment to those who enjoy snow and cold. Most precipitation was rain, 1.73 inches, with one day of cold and snow mid-month. Some 3 inches of snow fell but rapidly disappeared.

Temperatures throughout December remained above to well above the norms.

This scenario was rudely ended as the New Year began with temperatures dropping to what is expected for early winter.

Winters like this seem to be becoming typical lately. We have had La Ninas for four out of the last five years, which may have something to do with it. The late beginning of winter was a shocker to those of us who had become accustomed to the mild weather, and to many plantings as well.

Impact of Postponed Dormancy and Sudden Cold on Plants

Postponed dormancy due to the extended, mild fall can affect plantings in a couple of ways:

Fast-onset cold, with temperatures quickly dropping twenty-to-thirty degrees or more, may not kill twigs and branches but may destroy their immunity to otherwise harmless organisms. This damage shows up in the next season as cankers and dieback.

Or, the sudden absolute cold can kill susceptible tissues outright. These branches will fail to leaf out in spring. This is common in red-twig dogwood, for instance, with selected branches killed all the way to the ground while others are unaffected.

Sudden severe cold can cause frost cracks to develop in trunks and limbs. These are due to moisture in the sun-warmed cells on the sunny sides of trees on very cold days. When the sun is suddenly hidden or sets, the moisture cannot move out of

the cells fast enough, freezing, expanding, and popping the wood apart. I recall while skiing in the Northwoods, hearing loud pops among the trees when the sun went behind the hill. These were the tree trunks splitting open from the frost cracking. A neighbor actually called me thinking that what she was hearing was small arms fire in her wooded property.

Certain kinds, birch, linden, and red maples, seem to be more susceptible to frost cracking. When planting such kinds, look for the evidence of previous cracking. It normally happens on the sunny sides of the trees, generally the South. To avoid more cracks after the trees are relocated, try to orient the trees so the cracks are on the sunny sides of the trees in the new locations.

Usually these cracks close up when the weather warms and may heal over only to crack again the next winter. The danger is that the open wounds could be invaded by wood rotting organisms or cankering fungi. Eventually trees can grow sufficient wood that they are structurally strong enough to resist the cracking. The old scars from the cracks persist.

Dry Conditions & Lack of Snow

It has been dry. The Palmer drought index indicates that our soils are abnormally dry, to moderately-to-severely droughty. With little moisture and little snow, soils freeze quickly and deeply. Adequate snow provides some insulation.

The lack of snow cover also creates a problem for small plants that can be heaved out of the ground during the winter. As long as the ground remains frozen, they will not heave out. When the ground freezes and thaws, it will lift them out until many of the roots can be exposed. As such, they are exposed to the cold, and frozen, desiccated, or killed outright. Turfgrass likewise can be affected.

Freezing and thawing are actually beneficial for our soils, causing them to aggregate, vastly improving their structure. This is particularly evident in spring when the soils are worked after an open winter with rapidly fluctuating temperatures. The



soil feels loose and looks granular, the exact structure needed for our heavy soils to be productive.

Up and Down Winter

By the end of January, the short winter seemed to be over, at least for the time being. Mostly, about-normal temperatures had resumed with short adventures into the lower or higher than average ranges.

The month closed out with a substantial rain. An excess of an inch fell. This up-and-down winter is exactly what our long-range weather prognosticator, Greg Soulje had predicted late last summer. He also predicted above normal precipitation, and mostly as rain, not snow.

Was this just the mid-winter thaw? Was more winter on the way?

Then February arrived. Treacherous freezing rain, not snow, fell the first week of February and again Super Bowl weekend. Network forecasters were predicting multiple ice events for much of the month and colder than normal temperatures.

Weather Outlook is to Continue Up and Down Cycles

So, again we asked our favorite weatherman to provide us with his outlook for the next several months. According to Greg, winter definitely is not done with us yet. The up-and-down weather we have experienced so far this year will continue, a little cooler, with a little more moisture and some

sticking snow. Snow totals will end up a bit closer to normal.

We can expect frequent weather changes with a few "crummy" ones. This will continue well into spring and maybe into early June. These cycles will occur on a fairly regular basis with stormy periods every couple of weeks. Temperatures will trend a little below normal with some arctic cold snaps early, quickly reverting to average or a little above before the next storm.

As the spring develops, lake effect from predominantly easterly winds will result in temperature differences of as much as 30 degrees from the Lake shore inland.

Increased moisture will help recharge soils which still are unusually dry. Spring will have a hard time arriving and outdoor work will be delayed.

Onset of summer will see a quick transition out of the La Nina and a rapid change to more seasonal temperatures. Summer weather will continue its up-and-down pattern but increasingly dry. There will be some spells of upper 80 to 90s, no prolonged heat wave.

By fall there will be areas with water deficits.

More Weather Prognostication

Just for fun, The Old Farmer's Almanac anticipates warmer-than-normal temperatures with increased rainfall. But, infamous groundhog, Woodstock Willie did not see his shadow, thus six more weeks of winter.

The National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center still expects the temperatures to be above the normal for the next several months and rainfall to be sub-par, a continuation of the present La Nina conditions.

Weather folklore is fascinating. When I first started working with the farmers and growers here 70 years ago, they always followed the Ember Days, this year on March 12, 14, 15; June 11, 13, 14; September 17, 19, 20; and December 17, 19, 20. Each day corresponds to the weather the months of the upcoming season, March 12 to April, the 14th to May, etc. If March 12 is cold and wet, April will be too. It is fun to watch these to see how close they are to what happens. Sometimes they are right. We shall see!

Make Best Use of Good Weather Days

As of this writing there is still some winter left. Meteorological spring starts March 1, and the worst of it should be over. But, if Greg Soulje is correct, the good days for outdoor work may be few and far between. Make sure you are ready to take advantage of them when they do happen.


On one of the nice spring days, once any snow is gone, it is important to survey your property to see what the winter has done to your plantings. It might be helpful to invite your landscape and tree professional(s) to accompany you as you conduct the inspection of your grounds.

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INDUSTRY HAPPENINGS



Klein & Hoffman

Klein & Hoffman recently announced the retirement of **Peter Power**, RA, President and Principal, effective December 31, 2024. After 29 years with Klein & Hoffman and over 30 years in the industry, Pete leaves behind a remarkable legacy of leadership, technical expertise, and an unwavering commitment to excellence.



➤ Peter Power

Pete began his journey with Klein & Hoffman in November 1995 as an Intern Architect, bringing a wealth of knowledge and passion for architectural solutions. Over the years, his technical expertise and leadership skills propelled him into pivotal roles, including Principal, President and Chairman of the Board, where he has been instrumental in shaping the firm's direction.

During his tenure, Pete oversaw the growth of Klein & Hoffman's A/E department, specifically the expansion of many specialized services including Window Rehabilitation and Replacement, Reserve Studies / Condition Assessments and rehabilitation projects on prominent / historic buildings.

Pete was also influential in the company's development of the Enclosure Commissioning Group (BECs) as well as the company's general expansion into other geographic locations including Philadelphia, Milwaukee and Kansas City.

Under his leadership and guidance, Klein and Hoffman now serves thousands of property and facility management companies, condominium

associations, Architects, Contractors and Construction Managers across our various locations.

Reflecting on his career, Pete stated, "Klein & Hoffman has been more than just a workplace; it's been a place of growth, collaboration, and opportunity like no other. I'm grateful for the incredible experiences, the talented individuals I've worked alongside, and the trust our clients have placed in me throughout my career."

A Career of Milestones and Achievements

Pete is recognized as a leader in window rehabilitation and replacement, a specialized field he has developed expertise in over nearly three decades. He has served as project manager or principal for over 30 medium to large-scale window replacement projects in occupied buildings. These projects spanned multi-family residential, apartment, dormitory, commercial, educational, and religious facilities, showcasing his ability to deliver innovative solutions while addressing complex challenges.

His career at Klein and Hoffman began in 1995 as an intern architect, onsite at the General Jones Armory where he first gained exposure rehabilitating historic facades and windows. A few years later, in 1998, he honed his window replacement niche expertise with his first high-rise window replacement project at Americana Towers.

Over the years, Pete consistently developed and refined processes that set K&H apart in the industry. His dedication to quality and client satisfaction has left a lasting impact on countless projects and relationships. His window expertise extended to many other high-rise residential buildings in Chicago including 247 E. Chestnut, 3180 North Lake Shore, 2500 Lakeview Condominium, James Kilmer Condominium, Eliot House and Imperial Towers. It also included Hopkinson House

and Kennedy House in Philadelphia as well as Parkway Towers in Kansas City.

Pete's career at Klein and Hoffman had other notable projects that included work on High-profile buildings such as the Museum of Science and Industry, the John G. Shedd Aquarium, Mayslake Peabody Estate and the Philadelphia Public Safety Services Center.

Leadership That Shaped the Firm

As President, Pete navigated K&H through pivotal moments, including the firm's 65th anniversary, rebranding initiatives, and strategic growth both technically and geographically. His decisions to embrace change and prioritize employee well-being have left a lasting impact.

Homa Ghaemi, CEO of Klein & Hoffman, "Pete's leadership and vision have been invaluable to our firm. His dedication to both our clients and team members has set a standard of excellence that will continue to guide us into the future. We wish him the very best in his well-deserved retirement."



➤ Allisia Youngquist

As Pete transitions into retirement, K&H is poised for continued success under the leadership of **Allisia Youngquist**, RA, who assumed the role of President in July 2024. Allisia's appointment reflects the firm's commitment to fostering innovation and upholding the values Pete instilled during his tenure.

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Take a cruise around your site. Look for items that have been heaved out by the freezing and thawing. It is not only the plants that can be heaved out, but also structures such as signage, sprinkler heads, electrical wiring, paving stones, sidewalks and driveways, edging, and ornamental fencing. Notify your maintenance people where repairs will be needed this spring.

Plan to Repair Winter Damage

Freezing-and-thawing damage can be more severe in above-grade planters which can freeze in from the sides as well as from the soil surfaces. Even shrubs in planters can suffer significant damage from roots that are frozen as the soil freezes-in along the sides. Several years ago, we saw heavy losses of ornamental hedge plantings in raised beds throughout the city.

The damage will begin to appear when these plants start to grow in spring. Dying shrubs around the perimeters of the planters are a sure sign that such damage has happened. These plants should be replaced and soon as the soil is workable.

Shallowly-rooted perennial plants such as hostas, iris, or even daylilies can be lifted by the recurring

cycles of freezing and thawing. All of these items need to be carefully reset as soon as possible.

Leaves on boxwoods and other broadleaf evergreens may be dried up, but the stems may still be alive. Freeze damage to deciduous trees and shrubs may not be visible yet. Wait until these plants begin to leaf out before trimming or major removal starts. Obviously-damaged and broken stems and limbs should be removed as soon as they are noticed.

Turfgrass has suffered from exposure and desiccation, killing out large areas. Where still alive, it will green-up normally.

Where it has been killed, it will be obvious, and reseeded as early as possible will reestablish the lawn before the summer gets started. Slit-seeding with turf-type perennial ryegrass is the easiest and quickest repair. Use sod in high visibility or high priority areas.

Salt damage is already appearing. While there was little snow, there was ice. Salting was used on many walks and drives and the leftover salt swept or flushed into the grass. Roadways also were salted heavily during these events. Salty-mist blowing from salted roadways has affected the grass along these thoroughfares. These salty

places need to be leached to remove the accumulated salt before reseeding or resodding.

Blowing-salt also damages trees and shrubs especially along heavily traveled roadways. Hosing off the salt is helpful; providing protective screening is preferable. If you did not erect screens and have suffered damage, plan to do so next fall.

Since there was little snow removal, there is little mechanical damage from blowers and plows.

Be Prepared to Water if Conditions Remain Dry

Should the season remain as dry as it is, there can be substantial injury to the roots of plants from desiccation and actual freeze-drying. It may be wise to haul out the hoses on a mild day and water valuable trees and shrubs. Dry soils freeze deeply increasing the probability of damage to underground roots and structures.

In any event, plan to meet with your landscape and tree professional(s) before the season gets too busy this spring. Contractors are well aware of the challenges such as winter weather presents and should be ready to do what is necessary to prepare your site for the 2025 season. 🌱

by Trey Waldman – Waldman Engineering Consultants

The Impact of Chloride Ions on Building Structures

There are many corrosive elements that impact building structures from water to oxygen to mold.

Today we are going to be talking about one of the elements we are constantly battling: salt.

Chloride ions, found in de-icing salts and marine environments, present a major threat to the durability and strength of building structures. Over time, exposure to chloride ions leads to the corrosion of steel reinforcements, deterioration of concrete, and damage to other critical elements. Understanding how chloride ions impact these components is essential to implementing effective preventative strategies and maintaining structural integrity.

How Chloride Ions Affect Building Elements

1. Steel Reinforcement in Concrete

Chloride ions directly attack steel reinforcements in concrete. When they penetrate concrete, they break down the protective oxide layer surrounding the steel, causing it to rust. As rust forms, it expands, putting internal pressure on the surrounding concrete. This pressure causes cracking, spalling, and ultimately weakens the structure. Over time, foundations, columns, and load-bearing components can lose their strength if left untreated.

2. Concrete Structures

Concrete also suffers when chloride ions infiltrate. They penetrate through cracks or porous areas, reducing the alkalinity of the concrete and allowing corrosion of the embedded steel. This leads to surface cracks, spalling, and delamination, which worsen as chloride ions continue to seep in. Without proper maintenance, the concrete's strength will degrade, eventually requiring extensive repairs or even replacement.

3. Roofs and Foundations

In coastal areas or regions where de-icing salts are used, chloride ions damage roofs and foundations. Roof membranes, particularly those with metal components, can deteriorate over time due to salt exposure, resulting in leaks and corrosion. Foundations that come into contact with ground-water containing chloride ions face similar risks, as the steel reinforcement corrodes and weakens critical support structures.

High-Risk Areas for Chloride Ion Damage

You're most likely to see chloride ion damage in coastal regions, where salt-laden air permeates building materials. In cold climates where de-icing salts are regularly used, chloride ions can splash onto structures like bridges, parking garages, and buildings near treated roads. Buildings exposed to frequent salt contact or those with poor drainage or waterproofing are at higher risk of chloride-induced damage.

Prevention and Maintenance Strategies

Preventing chloride-induced damage is crucial for preserving a building's structural integrity. Here are some practical steps to prevent or minimize chloride damage:

1. Apply Sealants and Protective Coatings

One of the most effective ways to prevent chloride ion penetration is by applying protective sealants to exposed concrete surfaces. Silane and siloxane-based coatings create a water-repellent barrier that blocks moisture and chloride ions from entering the concrete. For steel reinforcements, anti-corrosive coatings can be applied before embedding them in concrete. This forms a protective layer that shields the steel from chloride exposure and corrosion.

2. Use High-Quality Concrete Mixes

Choosing dense, low-permeability concrete mixes helps reduce the likelihood of chloride infiltration. By adding materials like fly ash, slag, or silica fume to the mix, you can lower the permeability of the concrete and slow the movement of chloride ions. Ensuring proper curing and maintaining the right water-cement ratio also creates stronger, more durable concrete, making it less vulnerable to chloride ions.

3. Incorporate Corrosion Inhibitors

Adding corrosion inhibitors to concrete mixes is another powerful way to combat chloride ions. These additives prevent or slow down the corrosion process by neutralizing the effect of chloride ions. Some inhibitors form a protective film on the steel surface, while others modify the electrochemical environment inside the concrete, reducing the likelihood of corrosion.

4. Install Cathodic Protection Systems

Cathodic protection provides an advanced method for preventing steel corrosion in chloride-rich environments. This system applies a small electrical charge to the steel reinforcement, converting the steel into the cathode of an electrochemical cell. This prevents the steel from corroding, even in highly corrosive environments. Though more costly, cathodic protection works well for structures exposed to high levels of chloride, such as bridges and marine structures.

5. Ensure Proper Drainage

Maintaining good drainage minimizes chloride exposure by preventing water and salts from accumulating around the structure. Proper slope grading, drainage channels, and waterproofing measures can significantly reduce the risk of chloride penetration into foundations and other critical structural elements.

6. Perform Regular Inspections and Maintenance

Regular inspections allow you to detect early signs of chloride-induced corrosion, such as rust stains, cracking, spalling, and discoloration. By addressing these issues promptly, you can repair damaged areas before they become major problems. In chloride-rich environments like coastal or road-adjacent areas, frequent inspections and proactive maintenance are key to preventing significant damage.

Consequences of Neglecting Prevention

Failing to take these preventive measures leads to serious structural issues over time. Chloride-induced corrosion, if left unchecked, weakens concrete, rusts steel reinforcements, and reduces the structure's load-bearing capacity. You may face large-scale projects, such as concrete replacement, steel reinforcement repairs, or even full structural rehabilitation, if corrosion progresses unchecked. In severe cases, neglected corrosion can lead to partial or complete structural failure, posing significant safety risks and requiring costly emergency repairs.

Conclusion

Chloride ions pose a significant threat to building structures, especially in areas exposed to salts, such as coastal regions or roads treated with de-icing agents. However, by applying preventive measures like protective coatings, using high-quality concrete, adding corrosion inhibitors, and performing regular inspections, you can dramatically reduce the impact of chloride ions. Neglecting these precautions can lead to costly repairs, loss of structural integrity, and potential safety hazards. Early intervention and consistent maintenance are key to preserving the strength and longevity of buildings exposed to chloride ions. 🍃

by Adam Sanders - Elara Engineering

The Valuable Role of Consultants in Capital Projects

For Condominium Associations, managing large, complex capital projects—such as building renovations, infrastructure upgrades, or significant equipment replacement projects — presents a unique set of challenges.

From planning to execution, these projects require a high level of expertise, coordination, and attention to detail. Given the complexity and potential for cost overruns or delays, many Condominium Associations turn to specialized consultants for guidance and expertise. In this article, we'll explore how Condominium Associations can effectively engage consultants to navigate large capital projects to achieve desired results.

1. Understanding the Role of Consultants in Capital Projects

Consultants provide specialized knowledge and skills that are often outside the scope of a

Condominium Association's internal management team. This expertise and direct experience is particularly beneficial in large, complex capital projects, where the risk of error is higher, and the stakes are significantly greater. Consultants can play a critical role at various stages of a capital project, including:

- **Pre-Project Planning:** Consultants can help define the project scope, set realistic budgets and timelines that consider the specific needs of the building along with identifying opportunities to bundle projects to realize overall savings and/or minimize disruption to building residents.

- **Design and Engineering:** Consultants may bring design and engineering expertise to the table to design improvements that meet applicable building codes, leverage current technologies and energy saving opportunities, as well as reflect the Condominium Association's vision for the project.

- **Contractor Selection and Procurement:** Experienced Consultants can assist the Condominium Associations in identifying suitable Contractors to construct the project including navigating the complex process of securing competitive bids, reviewing the bids, and evaluating any voluntary options presented by Contractors.

- **Project Management:** Consultants that are Project Managers are typically independent of the Design Consultant(s) and may be engaged to help oversee complex projects from start to finish, leading pre-construction activities, coordinating the project schedule,

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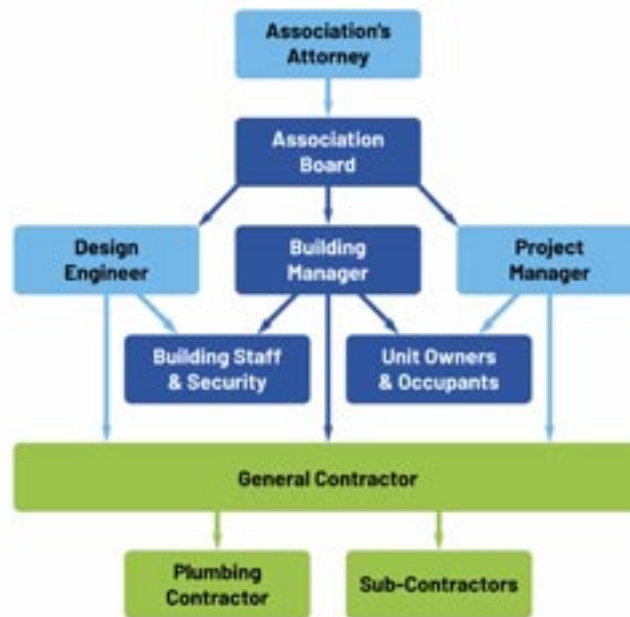
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managing communications within the building, managing the project budget and billing. Project Management Consultants can specifically be effective in reducing delays and cost overruns for the project.

• **Post-Project Evaluation and Follow-Up:**

Once a project is completed, Consultants can continue to be engaged to assist in post-project reviews to promptly address any issues with the Contractor or Manufacturer that might arise during the warranty period. They can provide valuable insights regarding the long-term maintenance requirements of the modified equipment and systems to help prepare the Condominium Association for ongoing upkeep.

1. Below is an example of a project team structure showing how various Consultants can integrate with a Condominium Association for large capital projects. The diagram below shows three consultants (Design Engineer, Project Manager, and the Association's Attorney) working to advise the Association and execute the project at the direction of the Board. While the arrows show the typical flow of communication and direction, at times during a project the arrows may reverse. This structure is meant to be collaborative and, at times, iterative.



2. Determining When to Engage Consultants

While many Condominium Associations may already have in-house staff or management companies overseeing operations, some capital projects may be beyond the scope of routine management. Therefore, it's important to recognize when a Consultant's expertise is necessary. Common signs that it may be appropriate to engage one or more Consultants include:

- **Large Scale or High Cost:** Projects involving significant investment, such as a major renovation, building system upgrade, or structural repair, often require Consultants who can guide the Condominium Association through budgeting, financing, and managing the long-term financial impact.
- **Specialized Expertise:** Capital projects often require specialized knowledge in areas such as engineering, architecture, or construction management. Consultants with experience in these areas can provide the expertise required to implement the project.

- **Complex Project Scope:** Consultants are likely necessary if the project is multi-faceted, phased, or impacts multiple systems within the building, such as plumbing, electrical, HVAC, and structure, requires guidance for budgeting, navigating building codes and permitting processes, identifying legal requirements, decision-making, and managing specialized contractors. Similarly, Consultants should be considered if the Condominium Association and management team are not familiar with the design and construction process.

- **Multiple Consultants:** More than one type of consultant may be required for successful projects which carry more financial impact, increased complexity, and significant impact to building occupants. Projects which result in invasive construction within individual condominium units typically utilize several consultants (Attorney for legal support, Engineer and/or Architect for technical support, Project Manager for coordination and communication, and Contractors for execution).

3. Selecting the Right Consultant for the Project

Not all Consultants are the same, and selecting the right team for your capital project is crucial to its success. To ensure a smooth process, consider the following factors when selecting Consultants:

- **Relevant Experience:** Look for Consultants with a proven track record in similar capital projects for Condominium Associations. Their experience will be invaluable in antici-

pating potential issues, offering creative solutions, and designing to minimize the impact to building occupants. Consultants should be knowledgeable regarding Condominium Association operations, able to directly answer questions about the project, and speak from experience.

- **Specialization:** Depending on the project, you may need multiple Consultants who each specialize in a particular field. Ensure each Consultant has deep expertise in their specific area that is central to the project and recognize when such expertise is warranted.

• **Reputation and References:**

Research potential Consultants by checking their reputation within the industry. Speak to other Condominium Associations, review case studies, and request references from previous clients to gauge performance.

- **Communication Skills:** Effective communication is critical when managing a large capital project. Select Consultants who are responsive, clear, flexible, and collaborative. The Consultant's working style should complement the Condominium Association and its staff.

- **Cost Knowledge:** The right Consultants should be able to provide reasonable budgets and provide insight into bid results and strategies to obtain competitive pricing. Consultants with specialized knowledge of the capital project may be able to offset their cost through a well thought out design,

project approach, and recommendations. These cost-saving measures may take time to develop in the pre-construction phase of the project but help to produce a successful project within budget.

- **Impact to the Association and Building Occupants:** Knowledgeable Consultants should be able to conceptualize the implementation of the project and speak to the impact to the Association. As Condominium Associations have increasingly become more occupied during business hours in recent years, unit occupant impact has become a greater focus of discussion, and Consultants should be able to speak to daily life in the Association.

4. How Consultants Can Reduce Risk

Large capital projects inherently come with risks, from construction delays to unexpected costs, among others. When engaged early on, Consultants can help mitigate these risks in several ways:

- **Planning and Budgeting:** Consultant expertise contributes to a well-planned project, with a realistic budget that includes contingencies for unforeseen issues. Consultants may be able to assist in forecasting the financial impact of the project on the Condominium Association's reserve funds and suggest phasing strategies to accommodate budgetary limitations, if needed.
- **Managing Contractor Relationships:** By serving as intermediaries between the Condominium Association and Contractors, Consultants can help manage expectations, negotiate contracts, and hold contractors accountable for deadlines and quality standards. Their experience in contractor selection aids in ensuring that reputable, qualified companies are brought onto the project.
- **Maintaining Schedule:** Large projects often face delays attributed to a variety of factors which may include weather, supply chain issues, or other unforeseen circumstances. Consultants can actively monitor the project's timeline and collaborate with the Contractor to minimize delays and keep the project moving.

- **Owner Advocacy:** Each Consultant should be an independent third party working directly for the Condominium Association and solely representing their needs throughout the project's design and construction.

5. Tips for Successful Consultant Relationships & Projects

Due to the complex nature of capital projects and the many players involved, the following are recommended for a successful project and Consultant relationships:

- **Adopt a Collaborative Approach:** Emphasize a team approach and recognize the Consultant's value, expertise, and independent opinion.
- **Conduct Regular Meetings:** For large projects, schedule regular meetings to exchange information and updates as well as manage expectations. Topics discussed and decisions made during the meetings should be documented in writing so they can be referenced later as large projects may last several months and even years before they are completed.

- **Be an Active Team Member:** Specific Board members and/or Association members should be assigned to the project, remain engaged throughout, and participate in meetings with the Project Team. Building management and maintenance staff should also actively participate in meetings and support the Project Team as needed.

Conclusion: Consultants can be Key Players in the Success of Capital Projects

Large capital projects are a significant undertaking for any Condominium Association. With the complexities involved, from budgeting and design to contractor management and compliance, Consultants provide an invaluable resource to deliver projects on time, within budget, and according to the Condominium Association's goals. By leveraging the expertise of specialized Consultants, Condominium Associations can reduce risk, avoid costly mistakes, and enhance the value and functionality of their buildings for years to come. Whether you're undertaking a major renovation, infrastructure upgrade, or sustainability initiative, the right Consultant team is key to your project's success. 🌿

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by Michael C. Davids

RENOVATION TRANSFORMS CONRAD HOTEL TO MARRIOTT RESIDENCE INN

Situated in the heart of Chicago, the Residence Inn Chicago Downtown Magnificent Mile offers a prime location for both business and leisure travelers in the city’s River North area.

Developed by the joint venture of Prime Group and Wanxiang America Real Estate Group, the property was transformed from a Conrad (Hilton) Hotel, which closed in 2020, into the new Marriott Residence Inn. The 289-key Marriott Residence Inn, at 101 East Erie Street, opened April 30 of 2024. The renovation project showcases an urban redevelopment trend in Chicago architecture along with the resurgence of the hospitality sector.

The building was originally built in 1985 as a high-rise office building and renovated into a Conrad Hilton in 2016. One of the significant challenges in redeveloping a former five-star hotel into a luxury extended-stay facility is balancing the need for extensive upgrades with the preservation of the building’s iconic elements. This challenge provided an opportunity for innovative construction techniques and materials that facilitated this transition while adhering to budgetary and time constraints.

The current developers preserved the distinctive orange travertine marble in the building’s lobby, maintaining a link to the property’s historical essence. However, the interior underwent a complete overhaul with new furniture and decor, striving to blend luxury with comfort. The design philosophy extends to the exterior, where the building’s facade was revamped to resonate with the top shelf branding of Marriott Residence Inn, while also complementing the urban essence of River North.

Historic Renovation with Modern Amenities

The renovation process included a comprehensive “major redo” of the existing structure. Every facet of the building was considered and some of the highlights included a major renovation of the elevators including new elevator cabs, “Yacht-style” kitchens in each room, Two restaurants and a rooftop bar. The hotel’s restaurants are run by

Roanoke Hospitality. A Mediterranean-inspired restaurant is located on the first floor, dubbed 101 Patio Bar & Grill. Located on the 20th floor, the 101 Room features an American restaurant with an adjacent Jazz themed, 25-seat rooftop bar, offering skyline views. The restaurants have become a culinary destination that offers new social spaces for both residents and visitors.

When you enter the downstairs lobby, the security personnel radio your name up to the front desk which is located on the 20th floor. When you get up there, the staff is ready to get you all checked in. The lobby is essentially untouched from the Conrad, with a really striking 2-3 story window that looks out onto the city below. Additional property amenities at Residence Inn Chicago Downtown Magnificent Mile are: all-suite rooms complete with a kitchenette, free WIFI, free full hot breakfast, fitness center, meeting space, dry cleaning/laundry service, wake up calls, daily housekeeping, dual vanities, and other comfort touches that help create a very “bougie” feel for an extended stay hotel. Another feature that helps make the hotel upscale is all the technology controls. At the room entry, they have digital

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buttons for the lights, privacy signs, and even a tray pick-up sign. Guests can also control the sheers, blackout curtains & room lights from the buttons next to their bed.

More on the Renovation

Sustainability was a key consideration in the renovation. The development team and owners are committed to green building practices, from implementing energy-efficient lighting and HVAC systems to water-saving fixtures, ensuring the project not only revitalizes the space but does so

with a reduced environmental footprint.

Dan Paxson, Vice President of Construction for the Prime Group over saw Residence Inn by Marriott Chicago Downtown Magnificent Mile brought life back to a vacant 5-star hotel located just off Michigan Ave. Along with Lamar Johnson (architect) and General Contractor Skyline Construction, we created a luxury extended stay all-suite hotel that features studio, one-bedroom and two-bedroom suites including connecting rooms with each room having a full kitchenette with yacht style finishes. Each suite has a fully-

equipped kitchen a coffeemaker, microwave oven, residential-sized appliances and a 65” flat-screen televisions with access to your streaming accounts.

Onsite amenities at the pet-friendly hotel include a well-equipped fitness center, 10 meeting rooms with a combined 8,150 square feet of functional meeting space with natural lighting. The 20th-floor lobby features 360-degree views of the city and offers an elevated and personalized check-in service. The hotel also offers three unique dining options offered by the 101 Club as well as a rooftop bar.

The renovation work was completed in Spring of 2024 just before the opening in April. There were numerous challenges that presented themselves during the renovation of installing kitchenettes within an existing post tension slab building and one of the contractors employed by the Prime Group to make the building ready for its guests was AMS Industries. Patrick Meinke is Senior Client Manager for AMS Industries and served as the point person and coordinated all the work that AMS did before, during and after the building renovation was completed.

According to Patrick Meinke, “AMS had some early involvement with the property prior to the hotel opening during the renovation phase, and before a major heat pump project that was needed after the renovation. The work by AMS done prior to the hotel opening included various airside and waterside mechanical and plumbing jobs to bring outdated and inoperable equipment back into

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service. “Some specific projects included the replacement of various kitchen exhaust equipment, the cleaning/sanitizing and repair of all 14 ice machines on property.” The ice machines were also retrofitted with Marriott’s water filtration standard, the “Triple Clear Forcefield” water filtration system. The elevator equipment cooling systems were also repaired prior to opening. Lastly, the heating and domestic water boilers were put under a full maintenance and inspection to bring them to proper and maintainable operating conditions. “We also completed the repair of various plumbing piping leaks and the replacement of the condensate neutralization piping/housing/media.” There were all important measures to ensure the hotel would be ready for their guests and provision of reliable domestic hot water. “To date we are still maintaining the heating and domestic hot water systems,” added Meinke.



Water Source Heat Pump Project

Shortly after the hotel opened, an unexpected challenge came in the form of a water source heat pump (WSHP) repair/replacement project. “The cause of the WSHP issues was due to the hotel sitting dormant for a period and with the cooling tower & WSHP systems not operating, says Mr. Meinke. All the equipment went to an unmaintained state. Once the cooling tower (condenser water) loop was started in order for the heat pumps to operate, due to the lack of flow and routine chemical treatment, sediment and “sludge” in the

system was circulated throughout the piping, causing build up in the water coils of the WSHPs. “Once those coils become partially restricted, the system starts to work harder, compressors/motors work harder than they are designed, and ultimately fail mechanically, often tripping the overload but causing damage as well. These WSHPs did not have individual water strainers so the entire filtration for the system was/is reliant upon the main and side stream strainers for the cooling tower (condenser water) loop.”

The fan coil and heat pump issues came to light

in May when AMS Industries was performing scheduled Spring PM (Preventive Maintenance) inspection work, Spring startups, and initial mechanical cooling season repair work. “The initial challenge was ensuring we would be able to mobilize sufficient manpower during the peak spring start up period when it was unknown how many heat pumps were going to continue to fail and how much man power we were going to have to dedicate on an unscheduled and emergent basis,” contends Meinke. “By the time it was all said and done, we ended up spending nearly 1800

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man-hours to repair and restore over 100 heat pumps.” These are not hours that are typically “on the bench” and available during such time or any time for that matter. “Once we had an idea of what this was turning into, we expanded our resources outside of our HVAC service to include our sheet metal, pipe fitters, and electrical trades to support the efforts and man the job.”

“The biggest challenge throughout the project is access to the heat pumps,” remarked Meinke in explaining the situation. “These heat pumps are all located in the drywall ceilings with a small panel for access. This does not provide enough access to repair anything while its up in the ceiling so any unit that required a major repair (compressor, motor, coil, etc) would need the ceiling opened, the unit completely disconnected from the duct, water piping, drain, and electrical, lowered down, and brought down to the parking garage for repair. Once we went through that process, we worked to ensure that the unit was completely ready to go with the new components to ensure its reliable operation.” Any refrigerant leaks were repaired, tested, and properly charged to the specification of the unit. It was imperative to expedite this process as quickly as possible, so they formed an assembly line and executed the repairs in groups of units. During the re-installation of each unit, AMS installed a Y strainer on the inlet water piping to ensure there is the ability to service and clean the strainer as it is providing filtration to the coil before the water enters the unit. “We wanted to do it the

right way and make sure the unit was setup for successful operation in the future.”

Parts availability became a challenge as well. The manufacturer of the heat pump units installed is in Canada and does not provide for readily available parts. AMS needed to work with the manufacturer for certain components and take information to other vendors that could support the provision of certain parts. “We needed to source LG compressors that were manufactured for a different heat pump manufacturer but used the same LG compressor. Our vendor was able to assist with this and get us the bulk order of compressors in a timely manner. These units also have ECM (electronically communicated motors) and have a special 277/1PH voltage requirement that is not extremely common so we ended up with having several different vendors provide the motors throughout the work based on pricing and more importantly, availability. There was a lot of creativity that took place to source the parts and materials in a timely manner that would allow for us to continue working and avoid any stand stills with no labor onsite working towards complete resolution.”

Communication Was Essential

“Communication was essential for this project,” stated Meinke. “As new guest rooms came in as “no cooling” we needed to react, diagnose, and determine if it was a unit that was going to need to be removed for repair. Doing this all while the hotel was open and approaching the Democratic

National Convention and other high occupancy times was no easy feat. We needed to track each room and ensure it was on the appropriate list for repair, or repaired, ready for installation and completion. The units were moving through the assembly line and it was important to communicate with the hotel operations team as they had the ceilings opened for the work to be done, and needed to close them up as soon as we installed the unit to get the guest room back on the market.” All of this was for speed and efficiency to allow the hotel to get the room back online as a source of revenue. “There were daily check-in calls with the technicians onsite in which I would then relay to the hotel operations team so we had an understanding of progress and the scope for the next day, remaining week, and target towards completion. As we would drive the number on the list down, more units would surface, he added. “It was just a constant tracking of knowing where each unit was at in the process and the forecasted return to operation so the hotel could plan to sell the room accordingly.”

Mr. Paxson concluded, “AMS was a critical component to success of the Fan coil replacement project and to get out of order rooms back online in a quick and efficient manner when the hotel was running at a 100% occupancy. Through the leadership and communication from Pat Meinke and to all of employees who performed the work in a professional manner they have earned the trust and continued partnership with The Prime



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“our strength lies in transforming existing structures through adaptive reuse and renovation, creating a seamless blend of history and modernity across new construction and renovation projects. Recognizing the importance of culturally relevant spaces, we blend tradition and innovation, anticipating future needs with cutting-edge technologies and sustainable practices. We go beyond development, shaping transformative experiences while merging tradition and financial acumen in urban landscapes.”

The company was founded in 1982. Over the years, The Prime Group has grown into a leading force in the industry, developing office buildings, luxury high-rises, and resort communities, always with an emphasis on top-notch planning, world-class architecture, and timeless design. “We believe that quality should be a hallmark of our projects, proving that it doesn’t have to come at a premium.”

Chairman of the Board and CEO, Michael Reschke adds, “our commitment to architectural innovation and excellence is evident in our landmark developments, including 77 West Wacker and 181 South Dearborn (Citadel Center), which have become defining features of downtown Chicago. We are proud to have played a pivotal role in rejuvenating the city’s hospitality sector with projects like the J.W. Marriott Hotel, the Residence Inn Chicago Loop and The LaSalle Hotel, part of the Marriott Autograph Collection. Among our recently completed projects are the RIU Grand Plaza Hotel, the conversion of the former Conrad Hotel into a Residence Inn, and the transformation of the former BMO-Harris office campus at 115 South LaSalle into a new home for the State of Illinois and 111 West Monroe into a dynamic mixed-use residential and hotel development. Our most recent endeavor is the acquisition and redevelopment of the James R. Thompson Center, soon to be the Midwest headquarters for Google.”



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