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condominium manager

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FINANCIAL LONGEVITY
Why Annual Appraisals Are
Essential Maintenance

MINDSET MATTERS
Proactivity vs. Reactivity
and the Cost

Maintenance Records
as Legal Protection

Building Longevity

Smarter Maintenance
for Lasting Value



The award-winning lobby of a high-end condominium in west Toronto. When the porcelain flooring began to show premature soiling, the corporation acted quickly, working with the Design+BUILD firm and manufacturer to identify and correct the maintenance issue – protecting the appearance and value of the refurbishment.

Beyond Refurbishment

Protecting the Investment After Project Closeout

By Pam Sexsmith

You have just completed a major refurbishment project. You selected your Interior Designer and build partners, turned reserve fund allocations into a workable budget and scope, settled on a final design, and guided the project through resident communications, demolition, construction, deficiencies, and the final walkthrough. The building looks gorgeous, the community is proud to come home, and another major project needs your attention.



Pam Sexsmith

Before moving on, close one final loop: put a preservation plan in place.

When New Starts Looking Old: A Case Study

A condominium had recently completed a lobby refurbishment that included new porcelain flooring that transformed the space, but within months, it began to look permanently dirty and stained, making the newly renovated lobby appear old and tired.

The building had conscientious staff and a comprehensive cleaning program, so the Design+BUILD firm that specified and installed the flooring was

consulted. The firm arranged for the tile manufacturer to visit the site and test several areas.

The manufacturer determined that the problem was not the tile, cleaning equipment, or cleaning frequency. The cleaning solution being used was not appropriate for the tile's textured surface. Once the building switched to the manufacturer-specified cleaning product, the floor—and the entire lobby—again looked brand new. It was a small correction, but it illustrates a larger point. A refurbishment is protected by a complete system, not simply by frequent cleaning. Product-

specific maintenance, accurate records, staff training, warranty tracking, and timely repairs must work together.

Start with the Closeout Package

Once deficiencies have been corrected and the project is officially closed, the design firm or general contractor will provide a closeout package. It should include:

- A final finishes schedule
- Paint manufacturers, product

names, finishes, and colour codes

- Labour and material warranties, including expiry dates
- Manufacturer care and maintenance instructions
- Recommended cleaning products, methods, and equipment
- Supplier and manufacturer contact information

This package becomes the foundation for maintenance, warranty administration, repairs, and future refreshes.

Turn Manufacturer Guidance into Scheduled Maintenance

Incorporate the manufacturer's care instructions into the building's maintenance program. Create a schedule for routine care, deep cleaning, refinishing, and minor repairs. For each task, define what must be done, how often it must be completed, which products and equipment must be used, who is responsible, and how the work will be documented.

Review the warranty requirements at the same time. Some warranties require specific maintenance methods, inspection intervals, or written records. Add these requirements to the maintenance plan before a problem arises.

Make Instructions Easy to Use

A detailed manual is not helpful if cleaning and maintenance staff never see it. Create short, plain-language instructions for major finishes, and keep them with the building's operating procedures. Where useful, include photographs of the finish, approved product, or equipment.

Repeat training when staff change, a new contractor is hired, products or equipment are replaced, or a recurring problem appears.

Put Warranties and Reviews on the Calendar

Record what each warranty covers, its maintenance conditions, exclusions, claim process, contact person, and expiry date. Add important dates to the building's calendar. Schedule inspections early enough to investigate concerns and submit claims before coverage ends. The first formal review should occur before the labour warranty expires, with additional reviews before major product warranties end.

Continue with a documented condition review each year. Look for lifting wallcovering, loose hardware, failing caulking, damaged transitions, chipped finishes, lighting irregularities, and recurring stains. Photographs and brief notes create a useful history.

Act While Problems are Small

When a material changes in appearance or performance, investigate before using a stronger chemical, more aggressive equipment, or an improvised

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repair. The wrong response can make a manageable problem worse.

A small repair, refinishing program, or targeted replacement can restore the space without triggering a larger capital project. The original interior designer, design firm, manufacturer, supplier, or qualified restoration specialist can help identify the cause and recommend the right response.

Preserve the Design, Not Just the Materials

Minor repairs, adjustments, and replacements are inevitable. The challenge is making them without gradually losing the design integrity of the space. A replacement can be functional and still be wrong. A different paint colour, metal finish, light temperature, carpet pattern, or furniture style may seem minor. Over time, unrelated substitutions can turn a coordinated design into a patchwork of finishes.

This is often clear when visiting completed projects years later. Where manufacturer recommendations have been followed, and repairs have

respected the original specifications and design intent, the space can still feel coordinated, fresh, and cared for. Where decisions have been made without reference to the original plan, the difference is often visible as soon as you enter the building.

Use the finishes schedule and project specifications to guide repairs and purchasing. When an exact product is no longer available, consult the original design or construction team, manufacturer, or supplier for a compatible alternative.

A Manager's Preservation Checklist

1. Confirm that closeout information is complete, accurate, and accessible.
2. Convert manufacturer care instructions into scheduled maintenance tasks.
3. Give staff and contractors clear, finish-specific guidance.
4. Track warranty requirements, and schedule inspections before coverage expires.

5. Conduct and document a site condition review each year.
6. Use the original specifications and design intent to guide repairs and replacements.
7. Investigate concerns early, and consult the right specialist.

Keep the Good Work Going

The hard part is done, and you've got another successful project under your belt. Protecting the result does not mean becoming an expert in every material or finish. With good records, clear routines, timely inspections, and the right professional support, managers can catch small issues early and keep the original design looking its best. A little attention along the way helps the refurbishment stay fresh, perform well, and continue to look and feel like a smart investment. ■

Pam Sexsmith is Director of Marketing at The Wiklém Group, which has more than 30 years of experience and has completed more than 400 condominium refurbishment projects. www.thewiklemgroup.com



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