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Denver Office: <http://www.DenverHomeLiving.com> - (303) 816-9199 Office

Selecting the Right Paints



When it comes to maintenance of a building, painting is among the most costly and important maintenance items an association must attack regularly. The first factor to consider is which type of coating is best for your building.

What Type of Coating to Apply

In almost every case, water-based acrylic latex products are the best choice for surfaces because they dry and cure to a plastic-like flexible film. A flexible coating is very important in temperate climates - - climates which are characterized by having equally long winters and summers - - to allow the paint to expand and contract without cracking.

Water Vapor and How it Affects Paint

In temperate climates, it is critical for the exterior finish to allow moisture vapor from inside an office building/home to travel through the paint coating. In fact, the majority of paint peeling and wearing problems in older structures are attributable to this vapor travel.

Water vapor travel occurs predominantly during the winter months when the temperature and humidity inside a building are much higher than they are outside. During the summer months, water vapor travel occurs less often. In colder months, water vapor inside a building moves

toward the outside, but in the warmer months, the water vapor outside does not try to get inside. Whatever the reason, peeling problems are due to water vapor traveling through the coating. When a structure gets wet on the outside, such as during a rainstorm, the moisture only temporarily soaks into the side of a structure, and partially wets the surface layers of the coating. Whether it is water vapor or rain, it is important to use a coating which breathes so that the moisture can travel through the coating easily.

Color and Paint Life

Another factor that favors water-based acrylic latex products is their strong color retention since the degree of color retention also determines the life of the coating. In most cases, acrylics hold their color longer than oil-based coatings. This is especially true if the color is dark. Also, the more acrylic in the paint, the longer the color will hold. While coatings containing a higher percentage of acrylic are more expensive, they last longer and maintain an attractive appearance for a longer period. Choosing acrylic paint will result in more time between paintings.

Coating Thickness

The thickness of the application is also important in terms of the life of the coating. Two coats of a finish will last longer than a single coat. Two coats will not only provide more protection for the structure, but it also provides for a more attractive appearance. The more porous areas of the exterior are sealed by the first coat. The second coat creates an even texture and fills in any porous areas missed by the first coat.

Product Choice

All paint is not created equally; paint quality varies widely from one manufacturer to another and each manufacturer offers a wide variety of quality lines as well. Many contractors will often use the lower-quality lines to reduce their material costs. An association should do their homework before requesting bids from paint contractors. Such homework would include visiting a paint consultant at a local paint store to seek advice on what type and color of coating is best for the association's building. Pricing and volume discounts should be discussed. Beware that the store representative may promote their own store brand name, so ask for the top two to three brand names so that price differences are clear. Once it is time to receive an estimate from your list of contractors, be product specific. Make sure the bidders understand what you want, and price their services accordingly. Generally, contractors are able to receive better prices for their paint purchases, but ask for a "labor only" proposal also for comparison purposes.

In Summary

Painting association property is a critical and costly maintenance task. It is important to spend time on this task to choose a high quality coating even if it costs more. The result will be that the property will look better and cost the association less in the long run because the coating will last

longer. You may have to put a little more time into this project than you would like, but in the end, the job will have been done right, will look great, and as a director, you can feel that you have done the right thing for your association.

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