CC&R: The enforcement process, not the rock band
(Part three of three)
By Kim Hockings, CCAM

LANDSCAPING
A Creating a beautiful landscape - All within budget
By Craig Ruppert

C Technology in the landscape
By Jim Parry

G Confronting challenges via smart landscaping
By Dave Hanson

PEST CONTROL
F Enlist your staff in the fight against pests
By Ron Harrison, Ph.D

SNOW REMOVAL
1 Homeowner expectations during the most extreme snow events
By Ryan Kampff

MISCELLANEOUS
3 Ad Summary
The “Perfect Storm” is a term that has become cliché, but in looking back on the three-day Christmas Storm of 2009, the term seems to fit perfectly. Such a rare event that occurs only once every decade or so offers a great opportunity for vendors, managers and association board members to really assess their service plan and their expectations. While the Twin Cities has certainly had storms that have brought more than the actual nine to 16 inches of accumulation, the duration and variety of weather components were such that news outlets and snow removal professionals could only compare the Christmas storm of ’09 to the Halloween blizzard of ’91, mostly due to the amount of work it took to clear it.

**THE CHRISTMAS STORM OF ‘09 -**

**EXPECTATIONS DURING THE MOST EXTREME SNOW EVENTS**

Extraordinary circumstances

A long holiday weekend – people were off work, at home and running last-minute errands as they tried to salvage their holiday plans. This meant that during each phase of the storm, many cars were in driveways when contractors arrived and the constant flow of traffic compressed the snow into what we call “hard-pack.”

Enter freezing rain – the last phase of the storm brought a mix of rain and snow, which was still being driven on by residents and visitors. These four to six inches were so heavy that 1-ton trucks were stopped dead in their tracks while pushing, often leaving snow piles short of their ideally intended storage locations.

Flash-freeze it! – within hours of the freezing rain, the temperatures began to plummet fast, going from the low 20°s to 0°, with overnight lows of -10°. Everything quickly froze solid for the next week straight. Among the worst areas were properties with parking lots, as residents had brushed off their cars in between occupied stalls where equipment could not reach until a scheduled clean-out was performed – after having been driven on repeatedly. Theses nasty ruts and ridges did not sit well with residents, yet the contractor could not control it, as even the largest equipment is unable to scrape that amount of ice that has bonded with the pavement.

Comparing properties

I learned long ago that I cannot judge the performance of my competitors simply by looking at the condition of their customer’s lot, as each property has its own service contract with specifications designed for its own needs and budget. Except for Class A commercial properties, virtually every property that had traffic throughout the weekend was left with a few inches of ice pack. Generally, these types of properties have zero tolerance for unsafe conditions and give their vendors free reign to do what is needed to resolve the issue, which is usually billed at “per-occurrence” or at “time and materials” rates. While you may have noticed a mid-sized medical center or nearby retail plaza that was neatly cleared to bare pavement by Monday morning, it may surprise many managers and board members to know that these properties were salted between six and 10 times, and for just this storm, they may have incurred bills that nearly totaled that of an entire winter.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 3**
The basic association maintenance contract

There are two broad categories of flat-rate winter service contracts:

**Basic Service:** Most homeowners’ association contracts are designed to provide good basic service at an economical flat monthly price, which often leaves out things like salting and loader work, which are only performed upon request or with your authorization. This gives your association complete budget control, since it is the board that decides when it is too slippery or if the snow piles are encroaching enough to pay to have them moved. However, this limits your contractor’s ability to react exactly when the weather demands it. This can lead to frustrated homeowners and higher costs to resolve an issue later when less favorable conditions exist. It is important that all parties are aware of where the line is drawn between included services and billable extras. Having this discussion before winter will ultimately save everyone a lot of lengthy discussions.

**Semi or All-Inclusive:** Some management companies utilize a standard contract with “unlimited” extra services built into the flat monthly fee. This is certainly done with the intention of keeping to a strict budget, but intense competition for these contracts has, in some opinions, already kept prices artificially low, and an extreme winter can lead to the temptation for a vendor to skimp in other areas of this type of contract, like summer maintenance. A multi-year contract is one way to give your contractor the confidence that their extra effort and expense during a heavy-snow year may be recouped during a lighter year within the contract. Since many associations cannot sign a multi-year agreement, many contractors may submit their bids with caps on extras, such as salting or loader work, which will limit potential losses.

**Homeowner expectations**

Generally, neither of these contracts will produce bare pavement during an event like the Christmas storm of 2009. Most boards were reasonable, and they understood the circumstances and their service specifications. But some were not quite so reasonable despite the news reports and poor conditions of public roads. Even vendors who were able to substantially exceed their contracted requirements were not able to bridge the gap between the contract specifications and unreasonable expectations.

It is my hope that this specific event will prompt more face-to-face discussions between managers, board members and contractors. Attacking ice pack and frozen snow banks during sub-zero temperatures a week later is reactive. The big question is, does your service plan have provisions that empower your contractor to be proactive, or do they limit what can be done during extreme events and ultimately fall short of homeowners’ expectations?

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**Ad Summary**

**ELECTIONS**

The Inspectors of Election

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**WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT**

HOA Web

SEE OUR DISPLAY AD ON PAGE J
As the manager of a condo property, you are constantly faced with needing to identify ways to reduce energy and other operating costs, maintain buildings and keep grounds looking their best, all within the condo association’s budget. But as the economy continues to decline, keeping property values steady or even helping to raise them a bit is of the utmost importance. Residents and potential buyers alike are looking for curb appeal when they drive up to their home or into your property. So it’s important to figure out ways to stretch your landscape dollar without jeopardizing your landscape’s appeal.

The good news is that there are prudent and proven approaches to maintaining your condo’s landscape and enhancing its value even in the most difficult times. Here are some tips that will help you keep the high standards residents expect and will make a positive impression on potential buyers, all without negatively impacting your bottom line. The first step in managing the cost of grounds keeping is to seek a trusted landscape partner who will work with you to customize a plan to address the needs of your specific property. (See “Tips for Hiring a Landscape Contractor.”) You’ll want to identify a landscape contractor who can provide you with creative solutions for maintaining your property, while at the same time meeting your budget. Discuss the following tips with him or her to see how they can best meet your needs.

High-traffic areas – High priority
Use your funds wisely by prioritizing the landscape around the most traveled areas of your property. Building entrances and pedestrian walkways are the most visible areas and make the first impression, so they are typically a good place to start. Keeping these areas visually appealing can set the tone for the rest of your property. Giving them a splash of color with clusters of seasonal annuals or flowering bulbs can add the desired life and impact to make your association’s property welcoming. If these areas are somewhat large, perennials, which last for several years once planted, can provide an array of colors and textures. Perennials are sometimes more costly initially, but they require less maintenance over the long-term, ultimately creating a cost-savings.

When less is more
All plants are susceptible to insects and disease, so limiting the types of plants used for your property will generally help minimize potential issues and the need for treatment. While this will help to save money, it can also be more attractive, as it will create a tidier look and feel for the property. Planting greater numbers of one plant variety can also create a time savings due to less maintenance requirements, versus the considerable pruning necessary to maintain a sense of order among plants of several different varieties. Larger masses of the same plant in a bed will require your landscape contractor to prune only along edges and sidewalks, eliminating hours of additional labor.

Easy and efficient
Consider incorporating large, flowing beds and sweeping areas of turf into your landscape. These are less costly to maintain per square foot than smaller areas, as your landscape contractor will be able to use larger, labor-saving equipment for mowing and maintenance, and the need for trimming and cleanup will be minimized.
Naturalize to generate savings

As your landscape moves away from the main traffic areas, consider implementing landscaping elements that require minimal maintenance. By allowing native grasses to grow to a meadow height, the need for cutting will be reduced to just two to four times a year. Outlying areas can be seeded with wildflowers, which will also reduce the necessary maintenance and can even turn that area into a visual asset.

Reduce water, reduce costs

Noticeable savings can result when your irrigation system is appropriate for your property. Various climates and plant types will require different watering techniques. Speak to your landscape contractor about how you can maximize water efficiency for your specific property. The amount of water needed and the time of day the watering is done are also important considerations and should be discussed to identify the best cost-saving solutions.

Don’t remove, recycle instead

Try to minimize the amount of debris that has to be removed from your site. Grass clippings do not have to be removed, and if a contractor uses mulching blades on their mowers, the clippings can be cut into finer pieces that won’t clump or lie on the top of your turf and detract from its appearance. Leaves, when distributed into wooded areas, provide a natural leaf litter that creates a manicured appearance for the natural wooded areas, help keep undergrowth down and ultimately save you money.

More value from your landscape contractor

Each property is unique, and there will be customized ways for you to save money while still maintaining aesthetically pleasing grounds. Challenge your landscape contractor to be creative, giving you more for less money. This could mean removing plants that detract from your property’s overall aesthetics or are costly to maintain, and adding ones that could possibly create energy, labor or other types of cost savings.

Speak to your landscape contractor about your end goal without specifying how exactly you think it should be done – they should use their expertise in advising you on what will work best within your specifications. By partnering with your landscape contractor, you should be able to find many creative ways to save money in
Though it might seem that landscaping would be largely unaffected by new technology, nothing could be further from the truth. Irrigation systems have changed dramatically in recent years, and in fact have incorporated many new technologies. We are no longer limited to controllers with mechanical dials that are set to a specific number of days and minutes. Today’s irrigation controllers are sophisticated enough to gather data from remote weather stations and satellites, either wirelessly or via the Internet, and they can be programmed to automatically revise their watering schedules according to the data they receive. They can also diagnose and react to problems. Many such systems can adapt to site-specific irrigation needs with minimal input from operators. Irrigation controllers do not eliminate the human factor, but now the operator of the system has to be as technology savvy as he is irrigation savvy. Systems can be managed remotely, and highly detailed reports containing information regarding water usage, flow rates, weather conditions and a variety of other data can easily be downloaded from them.

The primary method that these state-of-the-art systems use for evaluating a landscape’s irrigation needs is the measurement of evapotranspiration, commonly referred to as ET. ET represents the amount of water loss in soil via the combined processes of evaporation and transpiration. As a landscaped area matures, generally the amount of water lost via evaporation diminishes, but the amount lost via transpiration increases. This is due in part to the shade cover provided by the plant material and the surface area of the plants. The rates of decrease and increase do not necessarily move in lock step with one another; therefore, the ET rate may change over time. It is not hard to see how a controller with the ability to continuously monitor ET and make program changes based on the readings can provide optimum growing conditions and prevent overwatering.

Today’s sophisticated systems can deliver everything an association board and a landscaper need to manage a large-scale irrigation system landscape. They can calculate ET; apply water at a rate that will prevent runoff; regulate pressure to each head to get maximum uniformity; allow adjustments to be made according to sun and shade conditions; allow for differences in sloped and flat areas, soil types and root zone depths; and perform myriad other functions. They can even notify you when and where an irrigation break has occurred.

The reduction of water costs as well as liability associated with overwatering – not to mention the environmental impact – are key elements to focus on when considering the replacement of older controllers. Most of the systems that offer these capabilities require a significant investment of both time and money, but invariably they end up paying for themselves. Provided that they are managed properly, “smart” controllers typically produce water savings ranging from 20 percent to 45 percent annually. It is fairly easy to calculate the return on investment in such a scenario, and as an added benefit, some water districts offer rebates for installing such systems. When applicable, this alone can greatly reduce the ROI period.

Most systems fall into one of two categories. The first category includes those that utilize a site-specific centralized computer that communicates with individual irrigation controllers via hardwiring or wireless signals. A small weather station located at the site is also integrated into the system, and the data gathered by the weather station is communicated in real time to the computer, which then
calculates any necessary changes in the irrigation programs and sends the information out to each 
controller. The second category consists of systems that operate via the Internet, with no need for 
a dedicated computer at the project site. In this case, information is gathered wirelessly or via the 
Internet from regional weather stations operated by a variety of state agencies, universities and 
other such entities. It downloads the ET or weather information automatically and sends it to the 
controllers, which adjust their programs accordingly. The automatic programming features can be 
reviewed or manually overridden, if required, from any computer with an Internet connection.

“Smart” systems consist of a variety of integrated components beyond the controllers and 
weather stations. Master valves, flow sensors and remote-control interfaces are all commonly used. 
Master valves and flow sensors are installed on irrigation mainlines upstream of the remote-con-
trol valves that control the watering of different zones. Flow sensors monitor the amount of water 
flowing through a mainline, and should they detect abnormally high flows (such as those associ-
ated with mainline breaks, malfunctioning remote control valves or broken sprinkler heads), they 
signal the appropriate master valve to close, thereby shutting the system down. This information 
is fed back to the controller, which can be programmed to send out a message to the system man-
ger detailing the time, location and nature of the problem. Not only does this save tremendous 
amounts of water, it saves the landscaper’s irrigation technician time in locating, assessing and 
fixing the problem. It is necessary to engage the services of an experienced landscape contractor 
to implement these systems because every leaking or malfunctioning component in the delivery 
system (consisting of mainlines, lateral lines, remote-control valves, sprinkler heads, etc.) must 
be fixed so that the system can “learn” the proper flow rates. Once this is done, the timer has the 
data necessary to distinguish the difference between proper and improper flow rates. If a lower-
than-average flow rate is detected, it may mean that there is a broken remote-control valve or 
other obstruction. Remote-control interfaces are usually installed so that an irrigation technician 
in the field can test the system from anywhere at the site, without having to be near the control-
ners or a computer.

Retrofits of existing systems usually do not end at this point; in fact, the startup of the new 
controllers often exposes additional inefficiencies elsewhere in the system, such as sprinkler heads 
that are out of adjustment or incompatible with one another. Unless these deficiencies are cor-
crected, it is still possible that the right amount of water could be flowing through the system but 
not reaching the correct areas in the correct quantities. Once this last piece of the puzzle is put in 
place, the water savings are immediate and the appearance of the site often improves. Potential 
irrigation-related liabilities are minimized, and management-reporting tools that were previously 
unavailable are now easily accessed.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

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The third and final installment of “The Enforcement Process” will address the daunting yet crucial task of training community board members. Community connection is vital to maintaining an excellent relationship not only with existing homeowners but with others in the community as well. Naturally, this protects the value of the property and enhances the overall reputation of the community. How can this be done effectively?

(PART THREE OF THREE)

CC&R: THE ENFORCEMENT PROCESS, NOT THE ROCK BAND

Investing in training and education

Many times, board members are new to their role in serving on a board. The best way to make sure it is a positive and rewarding experience is to examine the training and education process. Board member training, direction and support should be provided through the management firm to ensure a thorough understanding of fiduciary obligations as they relate to enhancing community property values.

In addition to individual board member training, treasurer training is suggested to ensure that the board is educated regarding the fiscal impact of their decisions. Board members should also be encouraged to join affiliate organizations such as the Community Association Institute (CAI) to acquire knowledge relating to association operations, and they should exchange ideas based on the experiences of other community board members.

The board is charged with the duty of appropriately enforcing the CC&Rs, rules and regulations and architectural guidelines. They must do so in a non-subjective fashion. Fairness and uniformity in the enforcement of the rules is paramount. Board members may not subjectively select which homeowners will receive penalties. Conjoining the involvement of committee members, management representatives and board members ensures objectivity in the decision-making process.

Homeowner education, understanding, compassion and responsiveness are key approaches to encouraging homeowners to comply with community regulations. There are a number of ways to accomplish this. Homeowner education may be delivered in the form of informative and well-produced newsletters and on community websites to reinforce the information. “In person” conversations with the board, or management representatives, explaining association operations and the reasoning behind imposed rules and regulations may translate into a benefit for the homeowner.

Other methods, such as special community meetings designed to provide information and education regarding specific issues such as future landscape renovations, water management programs and other pertinent topics are also beneficial. Question-and-answer sessions should follow each community meeting to provide homeowners with a clear and comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. Another vehicle that is typically well received is the development of community social events that not only bring the community together but also serve as a forum for conversation to educate and build trust amongst neighbors, board members and committee members.

Board members are typically volunteering their time for these positions, which can be challenging. Without a thorough understanding of how the CC&Rs, architectural guidelines and rules and regulations relate to property values, homeowners may be resistant to compliance. While these
If you’ve ever lived in a condominium or an apartment setting, you probably remember firsthand how your neighbors had a variety of lifestyles and living habits – some you may have liked and some you may have wanted to escape from at times. As a property or association manager, while you can likely still relate to many of the same issues, you may now see them in a different light. For example, that upstairs partier who kept you up ‘til three in the morning may actually keep their unit the cleanest. That quiet, shy neighbor you had may be the same person with overflowing trash and dirty dishes in the kitchen sink.

REDUCE UNWANTED “NEIGHBORS” AT YOUR PROPERTY

ENLIST YOUR STAFF IN THE FIGHT AGAINST PESTS

By Ron Harrison Ph.D

When it comes to condominium settings, what you see isn’t always what you get, and the same goes for pest management. It’s important to choose a provider who will be your partner in the fight against pests. This means going beyond traditional pest management practices to offer value-adds like training for your staff. The good news is that some pest management companies will offer training on Integrated Pest Management (IPM), an environmentally friendly approach to pest control that focuses on reducing pests through proactive solutions like sanitation and maintenance techniques.

First, it’s important that your employees know the most common pest “hot spots” around your property – or areas most likely to attract pests. These may include laundry, storage, pool, cookout or waste disposal areas. To help keep pests at bay on your property, talk to your provider about getting your employees on board with the following sanitation and maintenance tips.

Eliminating attractive elements

Before employing any exclusion practices, you should take a look outside to make sure your property is not attractive to pests. Work with your pest provider and landscaping crew to identify and remove any elements that might be attracting pests to your property, such as bright, fragrant flowers and fruit-bearing trees. For light fixtures affixed to the buildings and illuminating outside walkways, use sodium vapor lights, which are less attractive to flying pests.

Exclusion

Exclusion focuses on preventing pests from ever entering your property. Make sure to seal any unnecessary holes and cracks in floors, walls, and ceilings in your property’s units with weather-resistant sealant. Place screens over windows and install door sweeps under all residences’ exterior doors.

Sanitation

To reduce elements that attract pests – food and water – make sure to sweep and hose down

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3
Operating properties in today’s economic climate requires managers who truly know how to remove every last unnecessary dollar out of a budget. An area that can make a significant positive impact on a bottom line is landscape maintenance. A smart landscape maintenance partner can show managers exactly how to achieve cost reductions, and in many cases, identify the expected return on investment for each area of a landscape budget – whether for a new or existing property.

Increasingly, water and conservation are becoming synonymous with a smart landscape plan that achieves savings for those who own or operate properties or homeowners’ associations (HOAs). The pursuit of sustainability has created a shared concern between managers and landscape professionals for energy conservation, lower carbon footprints, recycling and other green practices that require cooperative, team-based solutions. Landscape service providers and managers now communicate more often and earlier to address this new state of affairs. This is showing up in the technologies being introduced and the strategic planning that is taking place. Irrigation systems are being improved. Grids of inline drip are replacing spray heads on small landscape areas. Decorative turf is being removed, and only turf on which people sit or play remains. Recycled water is increasingly available and being utilized for landscape needs. Regardless of the situation, when managing the landscape needs of a new or existing property, a major component of the landscape plan today is managing water and the expenses associated with repairs or upgrades to irrigation systems.

Involved from the beginning

Property and landscape managers are encouraged to become involved in the new landscape design and planning process to avoid landscapes that are costly and difficult to maintain. Any landscape undergoing extensive rework typically involves designers who understand aesthetic appeal. By involving the landscape maintenance team in the design process, property owners can receive input about the cost impact of the design so any potential long-term maintenance problems can be addressed while still delivering the desired quality and curb appeal.

Because outdoor landscaping is one of the first impressions a property makes, it is important to make this a priority early in the design process. This includes allocating the proper budget and establishing an installation time frame that is in line with expectations. In doing so, conflicts can be reduced and value engineering can be introduced earlier.

Establishing a water program

Once the new landscape is installed, one of the common challenges is correctly watering a mix of large plants, trees and small specimen plants as they become established. Even if the irrigation system was designed properly, there are adjustments that an experienced maintenance team knows to make. An incorrect water balance can inhibit the establishment process. Another issue is that trees with large root balls may not get enough water when the irrigation system is set to deliver water for plants with shallower root systems. The reverse is
A certified irrigation specialist can analyze which areas of a landscape use the most water, and they can create a customized plan that achieves the highest level of water conservation through improved scheduling and reduced maintenance. In these cases, maintenance experts might recommend the practice of hydro-zoning, which simply means grouping plants with similar water requirements on the same irrigation valve. It also points to the importance of plant selection in the design process.

**Top 10 smart irrigation tips**

Irrigation can account for more than 50 percent of a property’s water consumption. Here are some ways to water smarter:

1. Water early in the morning right before dawn. This reduces losses to wind and evaporation.
2. Water only when needed.
3. Adjust sprinklers to avoid waste and ensure uniform distribution.
4. Test the spray patterns of sprinkler systems; check for clogged lines and a mixed nozzle size of sprinkler heads. Be sure to repair leaks.
5. Use drip irrigation for ornamental shrubs to reduce water usage.
6. Install rain shut-off devices or in-ground moisture sensors.
7. Set lawnmower blades higher to increase ground shade and water retention in soil.
8. Mulch around shrubs and planters to reduce evaporation and cut down on weeds.
9. Use a broom, rather than a hose, to clean driveways or sidewalks.
10. Use a hose with an automatic shut-off nozzle.

On the left, an irrigation specialist is measuring the uniformity and distribution of an irrigation system. Practicing smarter water conservation might include switching from overhead irrigation to a more efficient drip system in planter beds, as in the photo on the right. Public programs can provide rebates or credits for upgrades on controllers, efficient irrigation, drip conversions or rain shut-off sensors.

Photos courtesy of ValleyCrest Landscape Companies © Jay Graham, Graham Photography
Creating a beautiful landscape...

this uncertain and trying economy while still showcasing a landscape that will be pleasing to residents and potential buyers alike.

Craig Ruppert is the founder and CEO of Ruppert Companies, based in Laytonsville, Md.

Tips for hiring a landscape contractor

Hiring the right landscape contractor can make or break your project, so it pays to spend the time upfront to ensure you are working with someone who is qualified, reputable and a good match for your project. To do so, consider the following:

» Ask to interview the field manager who will be your primary point of contact on the site. Even great contractors can have weak field managers. So it’s important to know who will be there weekly to maintain your property and if they are capable of meeting your needs. Your contractor’s front line person is critical to your landscape’s success, so find out if he is educated about proper landscape procedures, is easy to communicate with and trustworthy enough that you want to work with him.

» Is the contractor capable of handling multiple projects? In the event that you decide to use them on more than one project, does she have operating procedures in place that will ensure continuity on multiple projects so that you won’t have to re-create the wheel with each new addition?

» Does the contractor have the ability to properly manage your property? Do they have the expertise to manage a comprehensive package including turf fertilization, weed control and snow removal to irrigation maintenance, tree pruning and mowing? Having multiple contractors to handle related areas of your landscape maintenance can lead to significant finger pointing, which can be eliminated by having a contractor who can handle it all.

» Can the contractor provide you with design ideas in addition to just cutting your grass? Landscapes evolve over time, so you want to be sure that you are hiring a contractor who can not only maintain what you currently have but can improve it with ideas for enhancements as well.

» Does the contractor have structure and systems in place that will ensure quality, safety and reliability? Most contractors have the best of intentions, but asking them to tell you about their company’s safety program or infrastructure may help ensure that they will be able to follow through with the plans you develop.

» Does the contractor have a stake in your project’s success? It’s a good sign when a contractor you are considering is performing work right next door to your site and is well known in your community. It increases the likelihood that he will do the right thing if you have a problem with your job, as they will be invested in keeping their reputation within the community in good standing.

It all comes down to positive communication

Managing agents and board members have a fiduciary duty to apply all association policies consistently in order to maintain property values. This is best executed by utilizing creative and compassionate enforcement methods. Should we enforce association rules and regulations, CC&Rs, and architectural guidelines? The answer is absolutely! Remember, however, blending creativity and compassion when considering enforcement procedures will go a long way toward creating a harmonious, highly valued neighborhood. This, in itself, will make the community a great place to live.

Kim Hockings, CCAM, is a district manager with Keystone Pacific Property Management in Irvine, Calif.
parking areas and walkways daily. Eliminate standing water around your property, such as rooftop puddles and clogged rain gutters. Keep garbage in covered dumpsters, preferably at a distance from the building.

**Property maintenance**

Even the smallest improvements to your property's maintenance efforts can help avert a pest infestation. Trees and shrubs should be trimmed away from the building, since they can serve as a highway for pests – right into a resident's unit. Monitor for any moisture leaks around HVAC units, and contact a maintenance professional to make necessary repairs.

**Partnership**

It's important that you and your staff provide another set of eyes and ears along with your pest management provider. Make sure that your staff reports pest sightings in a timely manner. To go a step further, get your residents involved – the more they do to help with sanitation in their units, the more the overall property will benefit.

Remember, while you can’t control all the “pests” at your property, you can help keep the real ones in their place. Get your staff on board today, and rest easier tomorrow with a clean, welcoming property for your residents.

**Incorporating green into greenery**

Properties seeking to incorporate more environmentally friendly landscapes may look at ways to reduce the amount of overall water used. Today, water conservation measures typically include the use of recycled water for irrigation. An unintended consequence of this practice is the fact that recycled water contains nutrients and salts that may negatively impact the original landscape because it was dependent on potable water. The result is a property that may have to change its plant palette over time to adjust to recycled water usage. Planning for this early on can save time or significant expense later.

**A strategic landscape management plan**

By paying closer attention to some of these simple yet easily identifiable challenges, a board and manager can achieve positive bottom-line results for HOAs. Landscape may not be the first place a board looks to find efficiencies and savings, but it is an area where a strategic landscape management plan can help meet corporate and financial objects in times of increased sustainability awareness and amidst difficult economic conditions.

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