



Top 5 Tactics to Prevent Vandalism in Community Associations

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TOP 5 TACTICS TO PREVENT VANDALISM IN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS

Written by Christopher M. Cobb, Esq. - 6/13/18

Vandalism has been an issue with both condominiums and homeowners associations for as long as these communities have existed. As you can expect, instances of vandalism seem to increase during the summer months when kids are out of school. Vandalism can be relatively minor and easily repaired—like soap suds in the community fountain. Or it can cause serious damage to common elements requiring closure and extensive repairs—like graffiti. Many communities with an entrance gate will experience some form of damage to the gate. Please note that there is no full proof system to prevent vandalism, but with these tips maybe your community association can prevent serious and repetitive damage from occurring. This blog will address the top five tactics for your community association to combat and prevent vandalism.

Install Security Cameras

Security cameras can be a useful tool to prevent vandalism. Most deviant souls are more likely to pass on criminal conduct if they know that their actions will be on video. Significant improvements in technology make installing closed circuit video monitoring more attractive than ever to control maintenance and repair costs related to vandalism. Closed circuit cameras can now video record on demand after detecting motion. These smaller, less cumbersome cameras with built-in communication devices can create a significant deterrent to would be vandals. If your cameras are monitored, talk-down technology enables the monitoring service to

talk to the vandals to let them know police have been dispatched to the area. Even fake cameras can be a deterrent.

However, there are rules associated with placing security cameras on common elements. Make sure your governing documents allow for the alteration and the board obtains the required approvals. Also, be sure to direct particular care to the installation contract and monitoring contract.

Install Bright Lights

Light can be the vandal's biggest deterrent. Vandals want to remain unseen. Therefore, keeping areas well-lit makes it difficult to commit acts of vandalism without detection. Because in their world, light is only good after they have done their damage. Consequently, proper lighting is the easiest and most important step to prevent vandalism. It is important to ask the opinion of an electrical contractor about your lighting to get the right lighting solution for your particular environment. Illuminating the conduct will most likely stop it.

Additional Physical Barriers

Easy ingress and egress to a location makes the possibility of vandalism greater. When possible install fences and security gates around the perimeter of your common element locations to discourage intruders. Be sure to post no trespassing signage on them as well, along with signs that indicate video surveillance (whether you actually do or not!). Plant shrubs and bushes to make it more difficult for criminals to reach their targets. Be sure to use plants with thorns and sharp jagged leaves and branches.

Clean Up Quickly After Damage

Vandals want to commit their act and have others see it. This is particularly the case with graffiti. Quickly removing the evidence of their acts eliminates their ability to take credit and embolden their conduct. Clean it up as soon as you see it. Repair or remove damaged items immediately. Don't let them feel the pleasure of seeing their work. Get it off or move it as soon as possible.

Call The Police

Many communities make the mistake of thinking acts of vandalism are "too small" to report to the police. This is false. Always remember – large or small report it all. After all, the police are charged with protecting law-abiding citizens from criminals. When crimes are committed, police are responsible for capturing the suspects. The police can only respond to reported crimes. Promptly reporting the act can result in the vandal's arrest. At a minimum, timely reporting allows the police to increase presence in the area, to protect your neighbors and prevent your location from being hit again.

You can also ask for police to increase their patrol presence in the community. One community that I used to live in requested that if a police officer was filling out paperwork, that they park at the front of the community. This actually worked and the instances of vandalism disappeared with the presence of the police. Also, hiring a private security firm can be an effective crime prevention solution.

Do What You Can To Prevent Vandalism

To conclude, vandalism is an unfortunate reality in community association living in Florida. Apply some of these tactics to reduce the events of criminal activity in your community and prevent vandalism.

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