



# Ways To Prevent Vandalism In Community Associations

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# Ways To Prevent Vandalism In Community Associations

**By Christopher M. Cobb August 31, 2020 Posted in [Community Association Law](#)**

Vandalism has been an issue with both condominiums and homeowners' associations for as long this type of community and lifestyle has existed. With the current status of Covid-19 and school closures, vandalism may increase with more of our youth being required to stay home. Instances of vandalism can be relatively minor and easily repaired (toilet papering a tree or soap suds in a fountain), or it can cause serious damage to common elements requiring closure and extensive repairs (like graffiti or mailbox destruction). Many communities with an entrance gate will experience some form of damage to the gate with irresponsible or aggressive drivers forcing access.

As board member for a community, you should note that there is no full proof system to prevent vandalism, but with this guide, your community association can curtail and maybe even prevent serious and repetitive damage from occurring. This blog will provide strategies for your community association to combat and prevent vandalism.

1. Install Security Cameras – Security cameras can be a useful tool in preventing vandalism. Most deviant souls are more likely to pass on criminal conduct if they know that their actions are being videoed. Maybe people carry

cameras with them in their cell phone. 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, when a motion is detected. 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. There are, however, rules associated with placing security cameras on common elements so make sure your governing documents allow for the material alteration and the board obtains the required approvals from the membership. Also, particular care should be directed to the installation contract and monitoring contract.

2. Install Bright Lights – Lights can be the vandal's biggest deterrent. Vandals do not want to be seen. Keeping areas well-lit makes it difficult to commit acts of vandalism without being detected. If they are going to act during the day, then this will not be any sort of deterrent. Proper lighting is the easiest and most important step in preventing vandalism at night. It is important to ask the opinion of an electrical contractor about your lighting to get the right lighting solution for your particular environment. Motion sensor lights may provide the illusion

that they are being monitored. Illuminating the conduct will most likely stop it.

3. 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. Also consider break resistance glass.
4. 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.
5. 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* The police are charged with protecting law-abiding citizens from criminals. When crimes are committed, they are responsible for capturing the



suspects. The police can only respond to crimes that are reported. Promptly reporting the act can result in the vandal's arrest. At a minimum, timely reporting can allow 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.

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.

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