

Case Study

How to Save Your Community a Million Bucks:

An Old HOA Repipe

The Problem

The project was a 40 year old condominium complex with 158 units in 23 buildings. It was originally constructed as apartments and converted to condominiums 30 years later. At the time of conversion, the entire project was in terrible condition; the owners had recently had the exterior building walls repaired and repainted. But the mechanical systems were at the end of their service life, including the galvanized steel water supply lines that were failing regularly.

The Home Owner's Association (HOA) hired Pete Fowler Construction to assist with the re-pipe upgrade from the original to a modern system. The HOA had already spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on leak repairs and re-piping using a unit-by-unit, "break-fix" strategy that was going to bankrupt them. It was time for a new plan.

The Solution

It was our intention as the Owner's Representative / Construction Manager to minimize the total project cost while ensuring maximum quality of materials and workmanship, thereby maximizing the service life of the new plumbing system. As always, we followed our 4 phase Building Rehabilitation Process:

1. Evaluate Property
2. Define, Budget, Schedule (aka Program Management)
3. Pre-Construction
4. Coordinate Construction

Once we collected and analyzed all of the information, including leak maps, we composed our plan. As always, there was more work than just re-piping. The electrical systems were grounded to the steel pipes that were being replaced and the buildings were full of asbestos. The system replacement also required interior painting, exterior painting, and drywall work. We needed to find an appropriate piping manufacturer with a family of products that would give us a warranty, and then find contractors who were capable of meeting requirements for that warranty and also interested in bidding this job.

As part of the Request for Proposal (RFP) package we required a progress schedule in a standard form that we supplied. The specifications sections included:

1. Electrical Grounding
2. Asbestos Abatement
3. Re-piping
4. Siding Repair
5. Painting Exteriors
6. Drywall Repair
7. Painting Interiors

During the detailed planning of pre-construction (Phase 3) we strategically decided where pipes would run, to minimize damage to finishes. It was a challenge due to the many different configurations of floor plans and building types. We had managed the earlier siding project so we knew the high performance paint specifications and integrated those, so the primer, top coat, and color would all match and maximize performance over time. The RFP included hold points for quality control, and comparison of the progress schedule and budget at every payment application.

We finalized the RFP, identified qualified and interested contractors, and solicited bids. We received and evaluated the bids, contacted references, made recommendations to the HOA, and executed the contract.

Phase 4 began with the on-site project kickoff and the project ran according to plan. We inspected at quality control hold-points, processed minor change orders, and processed monthly payment applications and schedule updates.

This project saved the HOA many times our fee, and re-set the clock back at least 40-years on their water supply system.

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