

Maintenance 101

Best Practices to Maintain Your House of Faith's Property

An easy to follow checklist



Bricks & Mortals Guidance Documents for FBOs

Best Practices to Maintain Your House of Faith's Property

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Introduction



What are these checklists for?

Creating a comprehensive checklist is a useful starting point to understand the different parts and functions of your faith-owned property. It can provide useful information for conversations among your leadership, facilities team or board about the future of your property, whether you use the space for congregational activities or open it up to the community.

If you notice something on the list that does not seem right— a leak, a broken step, or anything that might be unsafe or not working properly—be sure to write it down and let the right person in your congregation know. You may also want to think about hiring a consultant or expert if the problem is too complicated for the in-house staff to handle.

**Need help hiring a vendor?
Access our “Questions for Your
Vendor Guide” here.**

We’ve put together this guide to help you look at the key parts of your space—things like safety, repairs, accessibility, and how well the building is working for your needs. You don’t have to be a building expert to use this checklist. It’s a simple way to spot issues early, plan ahead, and make sure your space stays safe, welcoming, and ready for whatever’s next.

Compliance and Documentation

Make sure you regularly check and maintain your documentation with the City to prevent incurring fees or paying for damages.

- Fire Department Inspections
- NYC Building Code Compliance
Annual Safety Inspections
- Insurance Policy and Liability
Coverage
- Maintenance Log Updates

Vegetation

Vegetation significantly impacts first impressions of your property. Well-maintained plants enhance beauty and can even function as community gardens.

Unchecked vegetation growth transforms from an eyesore into a serious property risk. Vegetation can trap moisture, leading to structural damage, become a fire hazard, and create ideal living conditions for pests and rodents that can enter the building or bother visitors.

Managing or removing unwanted vegetation and weeds is crucial to prevent long-term structural issues that could endanger the property and its occupants.

- Are all the caulking joints between sidewalks, stairs and adjoining masonry filled?
- Did you clean all the open joints of dirt and debris? If the joints are damaged, think of filling them with self leavening sealant (silicone or urethane based).
- Have you cut the plantings around buildings, like weeds or ivy? Plants can often hold water and their roots can damage the material of bricks. Cut ivy and remove with care so as not to damage the walls.

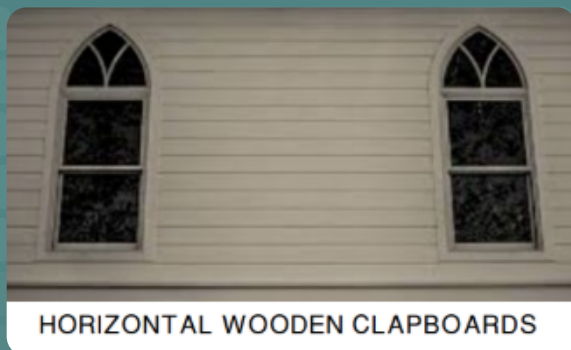
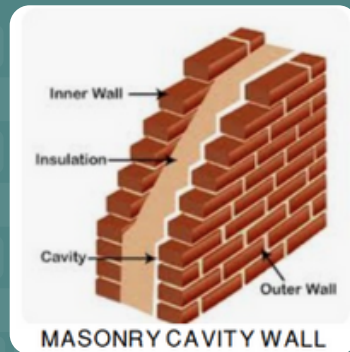
Exterior Wall

The exterior walls of your building(s) separate the outside from the inside, and **protect your building(s) from water, wind, and outside elements.**

They also help bring in light and fresh air. The walls will be impacted differently depending on their materials and intervals between maintenance.

Exterior walls are also referred to as Cladding/Siding/Masonry.

- Have you surveyed the walls for deterioration and spalling (peel, chip or flaking concrete)?
- Are there any missing bricks that need to be replaced?
- Do all the masonry joints look smooth? Do any of them need repointing (removal and replacement of joints)? Are water and/or rain collecting around the base of the building(s)?



(Source [L to R] Harristone, Constructionor and Getty Images)

Three examples of common types of siding are shown on the left; these are **stone** and **stucco**, a **brick cavity wall**, and wooden **clapboard** horizontal siding.

Exterior walls can be made of many different materials but the most common will be stone, brick, and/or wood framing. In some cases, you might find a steel frame with an exterior face of brick, stone, or wood. The inside, the finish that faces the occupant, can be brick, stone, or plaster.

Interior Wall

Interior Walls Checklist

- Inspect walls, ceilings, and floors for cracks, leaks, or sagging
- Test emergency lighting and exit signs
- Inspect wiring, outlets, and circuit breakers for wear
- Clean HVAC filters and inspect vents
- Schedule seasonal servicing of HVAC System
- Test smoke detectors and fire extinguishers
- Ensure security systems and alarms are operational
- Carpet for fraying or delaminating
- Confirm radiators and air registers are not obstructed

Water Damage

Water damage is your building's greatest enemy.

Building occupants and owners are often focused on ways they can improve the immediate experience of occupancy - providing fresh paint, remodeling and refreshing seating, replacing floors, adding new or improved lighting, renovating the kitchen, or other interior finishes that are aesthetically pleasing.

While these elements are important, if there is water leakage and other internal damages to the exterior, the overall sustainability of the structure can be at risk. In some cases, property issues can render a building to a point of non-occupancy.

The presence of water inside could be an indication of water damage to the exterior, whether it involves the pooling of water on the ground or on the walls.

This is by no means an exhaustive list, but it is a starting point to observe different aspects of a faith-owned property that may require maintenance or a serious intervention.

- Did you check for dripping or pooling water anywhere in the building?
- Is the water pressure in the sinks regular?
- Can you smell any unpleasant odors? Do you see any rusty or corroded pipes? You may have to replace them if they are too old.
- Do you see water stains on any of the walls or corners of the building(s)?

Foundation

While not all buildings will have a basement or cellar, most **buildings have a foundation**. The foundation, whether it is part of the cellar, basement, or is a **stand-alone item**, is what **holds up everything above the ground**. Many buildings will have a full basement where there can be activities and uses such as kitchens, cafeterias, and meeting spaces.

The foundation or basement is another part of the building envelope that **requires examination and maintenance**. Along with the roof, it can be **one of the first places for water and moisture penetration into the building**.

Because it is often one of the least occupied spaces, it can be ignored when **water begins to collect**.

Foundations are particularly tricky because the ground that surrounds our building's foundation always has some moisture in it.

Depending on local conditions and the drainage of water from the roof and siding, the surrounding ground can be completely saturated with water at **certain times of the year**.

During times of **rain and snow**, the surrounding ground can be full of water to the point in which it applies pressure to the materials of the foundation wall and pushes in through cracks and openings.



Foundation Checklist

- Did you check the foundation walls for water infiltration?
Once again, look for pooling or wet walls
- Is there any spalling masonry, ruined mortar joints, cracks and settlements in foundation walls?
- If parts of your foundation are made of wood, are there any surfaces that may be rotting, warping or showing signs of water damage?

Interior Wall Checklist

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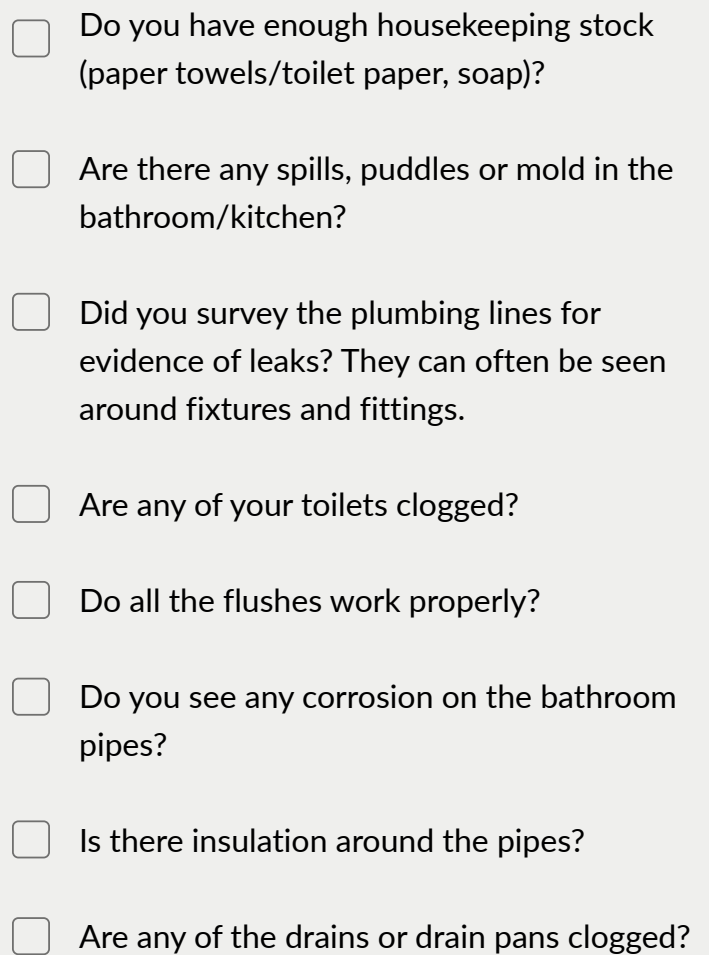
Plumbing and Bathroom

Plumbing and bathroom fixture issues are **frequent concerns** for faith-based organizations.

Regular inspection of these fixtures is **crucial**, as hidden problems can lead to **significant building damage**, including water contamination and mold/mildew growth. These issues **pose serious health and safety risks** to visitors and staff.

Maintaining functional bathrooms is **essential** for preventing expensive long-term repairs and extending the lifespan of the entire plumbing system. It provides a **clean and comfortable environment** for everyone and minimizes disruptions.

Furthermore, ensuring clean and functional bathrooms aligns with good stewardship and promotes hygienic practices that are **important in all religions and faiths**.

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- Do you have enough housekeeping stock (paper towels/toilet paper, soap)?
 - Are there any spills, puddles or mold in the bathroom/kitchen?
 - Did you survey the plumbing lines for evidence of leaks? They can often be seen around fixtures and fittings.
 - Are any of your toilets clogged?
 - Do all the flushes work properly?
 - Do you see any corrosion on the bathroom pipes?
 - Is there insulation around the pipes?
 - Are any of the drains or drain pans clogged?

Roof

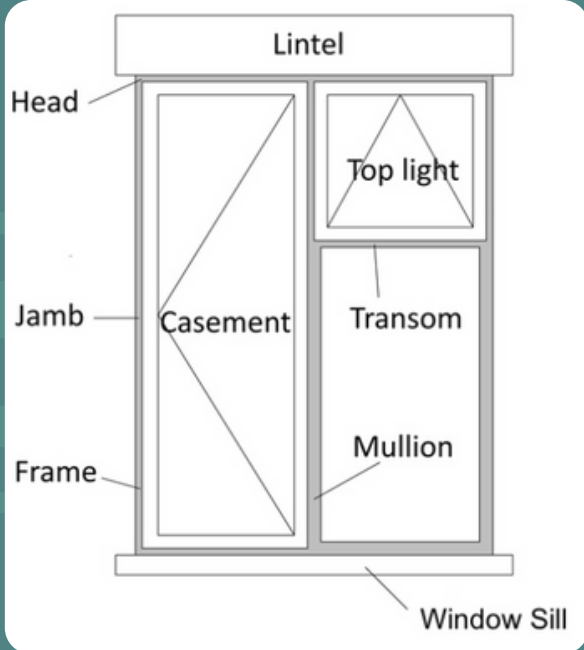
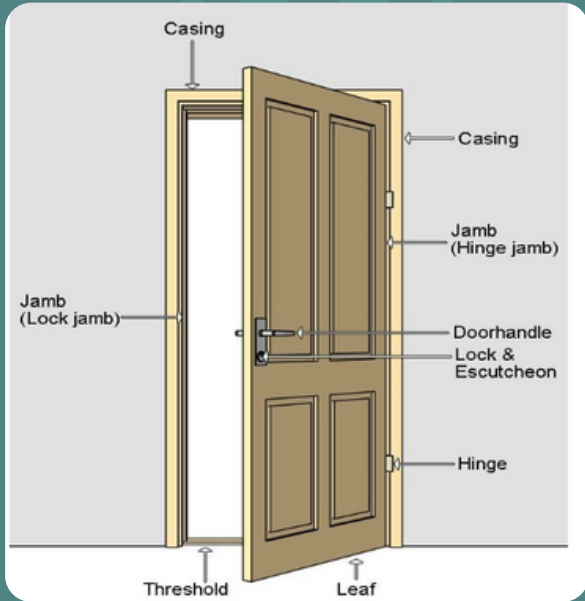
Note: Before inspecting the roof, it is important to check if the roof is safely accessible. This may be a job for a professional (Architect, Engineer, Facilities Consultant or Contractor).

- Is there pooling water or is water leaking from anywhere?
- Is there any debris that needs to be removed? Is there any kind of plant, moss and/or lichen that can hold water?
- Are the gutters and downspouts clogged or damaged?
Tip: You can test them by running a little water down the gutter and ensuring it reaches the ground
- Is there any galvanized or rusting metal on the roof or in the gutter/downspout?
- Are there holes near the chimney or the valley, from where water can reach the ceiling?
- Are there any lifted seams or tiles on the roof? This is referred to as "Alligatoring" because it looks like the skin of an alligator
- Are there any cracked or deteriorated roofing and flashing at parapets, penetrations, equipment curbs and other upturns?

(Source: Roof Scope)



Windows and Doors



(Source [U to D]: Decosoup and Designing Buildings)

- Are the doors and windows operating properly?
- Are there leaks and/or drafts anywhere?
- Can you see any broken glass or damaged frames?
- Look around your windows, can you find rotting or damp wooden trim?
- Are all your seals airtight? Loose seals can often lead to heat loss, water damage and vermin infiltration
- Are the locks, latches, hinges and hardware all working properly?
- Did you inspect all the windows, lintels, sills, casing/trim? Note: A casing/trim is the mold that surrounds the window, typically installed to cover the gap between the window frame and the wall.
- Do you notice chipping or flaking on the exterior and interior paint?
- Have you found traces of peeling lead paint anywhere on the walls? Note: This is a hazard so if this is indicated, make plans to remove it immediately

Need help maintaining your property?

Please schedule a meeting with us by emailing info@bricksandmortals.org.

You can also refer to Bricks and Mortals' "**Best Practices for Property Management of your Faith-Owned Property.**"

If you are unsure what to ask a potential vendor, you can consult Bricks and Mortals' "**Questions for Your Vendor**" guidance document to help find the best possible solutions to manage your property.

Find professionals to help on the Bricks and Mortals' **Member Directory**, available exclusively to members, and search for "Construction and Facilities Managers."

