

Property Management 101

Best Practices for Property Management of Your Faith-Owned Property

Faith-owned property management refers to the upkeep of all property and equipment that belongs to a faith-based organization.

This could include everyday management tasks like cleaning the floors, to larger developments like changing an HVAC system to keep your space functional, safe and presentable.



Bricks & Mortals Guidance Documents for FBOs



INSIDER TIP

Ignoring maintenance can make things worse over time. Little issues become big problems, costing more to fix and putting people at risk.

Why is maintenance important?

- It helps avoid big, costly repairs down the road.
- It makes sure everyone using the building is safe and secure.
- It builds community spirit when people help out.
- It keeps your building looking good and working well.
- It stops "deferred maintenance," when repairs have been ignored or put off longer than necessary.

Best Practices To Plan For Maintaining Your Property

Keep a maintenance schedule: Plan ahead! Knowing when things need to be checked or fixed will help you avoid surprises and keep everything running smoothly.

Check your building regularly: With lots of people using your space, things wear out faster. Walk around and see if anything needs fixing or replacing. Make a list to keep track.

Keep costs in check: No matter how limited the budget is, facilities always have to be functional and safe. This means maintaining strict control of your property budget.

- Get quotes from different suppliers before hiring them. Compare prices and choose the best deal. (Need help selecting a vendor? We have a checklist for that!)
- Watch your energy use. Make sure lights and heating/cooling are turned off when not needed.
- Use energy-efficient lightbulbs and equipment.

Provide building security: Many houses of faith are open 24/7 and some are even open for tourist sightseeing. It's crucial to create a secure environment to preserve all the valuables and keep people safe. Some safety and security tips are:

- Create a comprehensive security plan for emergencies like break-ins, theft, robbery, physical altercations, fire, etc.
- Provide training for congregation leaders on how to respond in emergency situations.
- Invest in security cameras and alarms.
- Keep member donations in secure areas; digital donations can also reduce cash on hand.

STEP 1: Research

Look around your property: Walk through your building and grounds. Note anything that needs attention, like cracked walkways or peeling paint.

Here is a checklist to help you get started.

Identify potential hazards: Look for safety hazards, such as loose handrails, uneven flooring, or damaged electrical wires.

Prioritize maintenance tasks: Create a comprehensive checklist that includes preventive and reactive tasks, assign responsibilities, and schedule regular inspections and maintenance.

Here is a checklist to help you get started.

Seek professional help: Know your limitations and get the help needed from a licensed contractor who is insured and bonded. Bricks and Mortals members have access to our Member Directory - search for “Construction and Facilities Managers.”

Keep accurate records: Keep track of the tasks performed, when, and by whom.

STEP 2: Planning

- Create a comprehensive maintenance checklist that includes all essential tasks, such as HVAC maintenance, fire alarm system inspections, plumbing, garbage and cleaning schedules.
- Determine the frequency of each task. What can be done daily, weekly, monthly, yearly and seasonally? Make it easy and manageable for yourself.
- Do the most important things first: Make sure deadlines are met.
- Regularly review and update the maintenance schedule.

STEP 3: GETTING THINGS DONE

- Make a list of issues that need fixing on a regular basis.
- Make a list of primary contractors that might be required to handle issues that can't be handled by the house.
- Select the best value for on-call experts who are cost-effective but ensure quality work.
- Have emergency contacts for repairs so they can be there in times of emergency.

In House

Facilities Managers are often designated personnel responsible for property management and maintenance. This can be part-time or full-time, depending on the size and budget of the faith-based organization.

Typically, their responsibilities include:

- Unlocking and locking entrances.
- Interacting with maintenance vendors and suppliers.
- Vacuuming carpets and sweeping floors.
- Cleaning offices and other premises.
- Making minor repairs and supervising large repair projects.
- Handling landscape tasks (watering plants, mowing grass, shoveling snow, etc.).

Volunteers

If your organization doesn't have the budget to hire someone, you can still make a game plan. One option is to get volunteers from your congregation or your community.

Keep in mind:

- Most of them would be amateurs at maintenance work. Manage your expectations – don't expect professional-level results immediately. Taking care of a faith-owned property is different from taking care of a house.
- Focus on building their skills gradually, with patience.
- You can also organize half-day volunteer events to allow many volunteers to come together with small tasks that need to be done around the building.

External experts

Alongside a team of in-house experts (or volunteers), it may be useful to have outside consultants/contractors/vendors to help with larger and long-term projects.

Depending on the capabilities of the in-house team, you may need to set aside some money for outsourced experts. Benefits of engaging external experts include:

- **Less Responsibility:** Outside experts allow the congregation to focus on their most important mission: worship and community.
- **Staffing Flexibility:** It is difficult to find in-house facilities managers, so you can always have someone on hand to fix your property issues while looking for a permanent manager.
- **Free Training for Community Members:** By working alongside outsourced specialists, a faith-based organization's staff can learn, develop, and upgrade their own maintenance-related knowledge.

Need help managing your property?

Check out Property Maintenance 101!

If you need help finding vendors, please contact us at info@bricksandmortals.org. If you are unsure what to ask a potential vendor, consult Bricks and Mortals' "Questions for Your Vendor" guidance document to help find the best possible solutions to manage your property.