



Sub-Association Exterior Paint Guidelines

Purpose

Recently the Architectural Control Committee was asked for assistance in selecting exterior paint colors by some of our sub-associations. These sub-associations had experienced some situations where homeowners were having a difficult time selling their properties. Feedback from potential buyers to realtors revealed that the community itself was playing a large part in the buying decision. A lack of cohesiveness in the community via differing architectural styles and too many paint colors was causing buyers to shy away.

We have many different styles and sizes of sub-associations, but they share a commonality in that they are all multi-million-dollar complexes. As such, the choice of paint color can have long term financial as well as visual impacts. The process of choosing paint colors for a whole community is complicated, and personal preferences often need to take a back seat to what is best for the community. Your goal is to choose paint colors that will enhance your community visually as well as support resale values for individual homeowners.

To assist in the process, the ACC has developed some guidelines that we hope will prove helpful. In addition, we have staff and volunteers available to assist you as needed.

Starting the Process

Since making decisions within a committee can take some time, we recommend that you start this process about four to six months before you plan to paint. If you have decided to enlist the help of a designer, we ask that you supply them with a copy of these guidelines.

As you start meeting and discussing your painting project, it may be helpful to consider the following questions:

- **Is the current paint color scheme working well for your complex?** As mentioned above, it is helpful to have a discussion to see if there are any homeowners having trouble with resale. Also take into consideration if there are any maintenance issues connected to the paint colors – such as white gutters or trim that are difficult to clean.
- **Does the current color scheme work well, but everyone wants something fresh?** If this is the case, consider changing just part of the palette – a new trim and front door color can show off a siding color in a whole new light.
- **Is the architecture of your buildings being enhanced by the current paint scheme?** This is the time to see if improvements can be made by applying the paint differently. For example, if your

buildings have bay windows and they are currently painted the same as the siding – you could change the trim around the bay windows to the trim color and give your complex a whole new look. Conversely, if there are too many pieces of trim painted in an accent color you could change some of them to the color of the siding for a simpler look.

- [Will there be any other changes made to the complex soon?](#) If a new roof or gutters or garage doors are upcoming maintenance items, those should be taken into consideration. Your paint choices should coordinate with the roof, and the garage doors should match your siding color.

Overall, try to reach consensus on what is working well now vs. the things you would like to see changed. As you move toward paint color selection, try to establish from the start that expressions of individuality will not work well on a project of this type. It is important that your committee work well with each other to develop a plan that will enhance your complex, please most of your residents, and stand the test of time. Due to the magnitude and expense of an exterior painting project, most sub-associations will go much longer than a single-family residence between paintings. Therefore, we encourage you to choose classic, timeless colors for your paint palette that will not look dated in just a few years.

Keeping the Same Colors

On occasion, an HOA Board will decide that everyone is happy with their current color scheme and they do not want to change anything. If this is the case, there are just a couple more things to consider before proceeding:

- If everyone loved the color when it was first painted but have been less pleased over time, consider keeping the color but painting it one shade deeper. Paint will fade, especially buildings that take a lot of direct sunlight.
- It would be beneficial to tour your complex and make note of those buildings that have faded the most. Over time the complex can take on a “two tone” look, of buildings that are in direct sun and have faded vs. buildings in shade that are holding more of the original color. Your painter can assist you in taking steps to help correct this problem.

Choosing Paint Colors

The ACC has compiled the following recommendations to assist sub-associations in choosing a paint palette that will help your community look its best, and will streamline the approval process with the ACC. There are many aspects of a property that are sometimes overlooked in choosing paint colors. These include the landscape, architecture, windows, and garages. All these elements have a big impact on not only choosing colors, but in how they are applied. The following is a breakdown of these elements, and what to consider:

Landscape

The amount of greenery easily visible in a complex makes a big difference in choosing paint colors for the buildings. If your complex has a lot of plantings and surrounding lush greenery, then neutral colors like gray, taupe, brown beige, etc. will work very well. On the other hand, painting the building in green tones can cause it to disappear as it blends in with all the greenery. Conversely, if your community has a lot of asphalt and parking spaces that stand out instead of greenery, you will want to avoid colors like taupe and gray, which will blend in with the asphalt and can create a cold and harsh atmosphere. This is

a time when you should consider green tones, or paints with a green undertone to give some life to your complex.

Architecture

The structure and style of the buildings will play a significant role in paint selection. If your complex style is N.W. contemporary, you will want to look to earth tones that complement that style. If your buildings have a more traditional style you can be open to including classic tones of red, blue or green. Again, keep in mind the color of the roof and gutters and choose tones of paint that will coordinate well with them. Trim paint should match the gutters, or the gutters should be painted to match the trim. Downspouts are not an architectural feature and should be painted the color of the siding so that they visually disappear.

Garages

Garage doors should incorporate the color of the body or siding color, not the trim. There are some complexes where the garage doors are all facing the street. If the garage doors are painted the trim color as an accent, you would then see literally dozens of square garage doors as you drive through the community. An exception to this would be classic white “carriage style” garage doors that enhance the architecture, or a wood garage door on a contemporary building.

Windows

Whether the windows are bronze or silver metal or white vinyl, they play an important role in choosing the overall palette. Give this process time and consideration, some complexes literally have hundreds of windows facing each other around a central common area. If you can match the trim to the window frame it will always give a richer, seamless look. If another color is chosen for trim around the window it needs to look deliberate, for example, deep gray trim around a white window frame. Avoid choosing another white that does not match around a white window, it will look like a mistake has been made. Always look at the frame around the glass, not the color of grids inside the window. If there are grids, their color can be distorted by different types of glass.

Variety of Color

The ACC recommends that you choose no more than three main body colors, a unifying trim color, and up to two accent colors for front doors, stair railings, and architectural accents. Too many colors can make a community look busy, especially if there is a variety of architectural styles within the complex. This number of color combinations should provide enough visual interest for any community.

Buildings with units that share a common wall should all be painted in the same color. There should not be an attempt to “divide” the units by paint color. This will cause your community to look mis-matched and possibly cause problems for homeowners when they try to sell their home, as we mentioned in the introduction. Additionally, this can create a lot of problems for your HOA when all the owners want a different color. For example: If you have 5 units all in a row with adjoining walls and the first 3 units going left to right all want gray paint, the 4th unit wants blue and the 5th wants gray again – the resulting look will not enhance the value of the property, and you have the potential to upset homeowners who are not granted their color choice.

Paint Finishes

From a maintenance standpoint, this is more important than the color of paint chosen. The ACC recommends an eggshell or velvet finish for the siding which allows dirt to be easily cleaned from a building, while a totally flat finish allows dirt to bond to it and makes cleaning more difficult. There will not be any noticeable shine from these finishes, they will appear flat. For trim and doors, it is recommended that you use a satin or semi-gloss finish, especially for gutters. These finishes have good dirt repelling properties.

Color Approval Process

If you find that your committee is having difficulty in choosing a palette, we are here to assist. Let us know and we will send out one or two members of the ACC to assist you by meeting with your committee, to answer questions and offer additional insight.

Once your committee has chosen a palette of colors, please go to the MCCA website for [the Sub-Association Paint Application form](#). Fill out the application, attach your paint color samples, and deliver it to the MCCA office.

Make sure you have large swatches of the paint samples completed for viewing by the ACC. These samples should be 3 ft by 3 ft for the body colors, and 1 ft by 3 ft for trim and accent colors. They can be painted on the side of a building, or on sample boards that you make available for viewing.

Our goal is to help you maintain or increase your property values by selecting a color scheme that highlights the architecture and landscape of your community, as well as providing your homeowners a sense of pride in the exterior of their homes. We look forward to working with you.