



Learn Why the Best Investment Is Condominium Carports for Your Association



by Glen
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Not long ago, I attended a board meeting with a Carport Committee. After inspecting their existing carports, I asked them how old their carports were. I was told the carports were between 25–30 years old. I told the committee that carports that have lasted that long have made for a great investment.

Unfortunately, these carports were now in great need of replacement. The roofs were galvanized and looked like Swiss cheese; they also leaked on the residents' vehicles. Carport posts were steel three-by-threes, and I could stick my finger between the post and the asphalt. Often carports

consist of two layers of asphalt, and the carport posts rust out between the two layers. All of the screws that held down these roofs to the support beam were almost gone. The community was quite fortunate that they had not had any type of wind event. In fact, I have heard several hundred times from condominium boards, "We are just waiting for a storm to blow the carports down so we can collect on the insurance, and then we will build new ones." Does this sound familiar?

Due to several changes that have occurred over the last few years, condominium boards and management companies are feeling the pinch from higher insurance premiums, more stringent building codes, and requirements for carports to withstand higher wind speeds. As of March 15, 2012, the latest wind speeds took effect in Florida, and now there are drastic changes in the way carports are being built.

The best carport designs are built around the different



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wind speed and building codes that each area or coastal region requires. Ten-inch round or square concrete columns should be used, so there is no more need for replacing aluminum or steel posts. In addition, the usage of insulated composite roofs stops the sweating of water dripping on your vehicles. Because there are so many different roof styles on existing buildings, contractors have had to include designs that include applications for asphalt shingles, tile, and metal roofing.

Cost has always played a big part in carport replacement and renovation, but, unfortunately, current building codes and wind speed resistance now dictate higher cost. So a contractor must walk that fine line and be able to come up with several price points for clients without diminishing design and style because of it. Yes, you can spend from \$2,800 to \$8,000 per carport parking space, depending on your resident's needs. But, again, it is vital to look at the investment versus the overall return. Most of us lose that much money just driving our new vehicle off the dealers' lot. So, when you put it all in perspective, your condominium carports are a great value.

It is only a matter of time before insurance companies begin scaling back accessory structures like carports for condominiums to help reduce their loss exposure. It is already happening with high-end homes in coastal regions. So, it's very important, right now, to have your carports updated to meet the

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latest building codes and wind speeds.

There is good news about completing the upgrades, the resale value of your condominium and carport will increase. The Excelsior Beach to Bay Condominiums on Siesta Key in Sarasota, Florida experienced this bonus firsthand. When Ron Ditch took over as manager in 2007, he toured the property, which had 104 existing carports. The property was awesome looking, but the carports were the complete opposite. In Ditch's own words, "In 2007, when I was first interviewed to manage here, I took a tour of the property with the board of directors. The first thing that struck me was the poor condition of the 104 carports. They were made of rusted four-inch steel posts and rusted corrugated roofs that looked like Swiss cheese. All I could picture was those roofs blowing off in a category-two storm and slicing through the air like razor blades! On an otherwise beautiful, oceanfront property, they made the place look cheap!" At that time, they had 16 units for sale, nearly ten percent of the properties' units, and in his opinion, the poor condition of the carports was the main reason the units were languishing on the market for so long. Ditch determined the carports would be the first thing he fixed on the property.

In 2008, the board of directors agreed with Ditch's assessment, and they embarked on the design and bid process in order to replace their 104 carports. After meeting with Ditch and the board, the best

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advice I could give them was to write a “scope of work.” This enabled them to circulate the same scope of work to all interested contractors in order to receive apples-to-apples bids. By doing this, it sped up the process and kept everyone focused on the approved design by the board.

Absolute Aluminum was selected to build the carports after a lengthy bidding process. Ditch is pleased with their decision and remarks, “Those new carports improved the looks of the property tremendously. Now, we

have one unit for sale. When one comes on the market, it usually sells within weeks, sometimes days. Three units came on the market in the last three weeks. All three are sold. I believe the great looking carports are a very important reason why we are appealing to buyers and why they are selling so briskly.”

So, stop waiting for that wind event to blow down your existing carports. Now is the time to start building a carport reserve fund and developing a plan for new carports.

Glen Kohlenberg is a sales consultant for Absolute Aluminum, Inc. in Venice, Florida. For more information, call (941) 497-7777 or visit www.condominiumcarports.com. ■

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