

Introduction



A Reserve Study is the art and science of anticipating, and preparing for, an association's major common area repair and replacement expenses. Partially art, because in this field we are making projections about the future. Partially science, because our work is a combination of research and well-defined computations, following consistent National Reserve Study Standard principles.

The foundation of this and every Reserve Study is your Reserve Component List (what you are reserving for). This is because the Reserve Component List defines the *scope and schedule* of all your anticipated upcoming Reserve projects. Based on that List and your starting balance, we calculate the association's Reserve Fund Strength (reported in terms of "Percent Funded"). Then we compute a Reserve Funding Plan to provide for the Reserve needs of the association. These form the three results of your Reserve Study.



Reserve contributions are not “for the future”. Reserve contributions are designed to offset the ongoing, daily deterioration of your Reserve assets. Done well, a stable, budgeted Reserve Funding Plan will collect sufficient funds from the owners who enjoyed the use of those assets, so the association is financially prepared for the irregular expenditures scattered through future years when those projects eventually require replacement.

Methodology



For this [Full Reserve Study](#), we started with a review of your Governing Documents, recent Reserve expenditures, an evaluation of how expenditures are handled (ongoing maintenance vs Reserves), and research into any well-established association precedents. We

performed an on-site inspection to quantify and evaluate your common areas, creating your Reserve Component List *from scratch*.

Which Physical Assets are Funded by Reserves?

There is a national-standard four-part test to determine which expenses should appear in your Reserve Component List. First, it must be a common area maintenance responsibility. Second, the component must have a limited life. Third, the remaining life must be predictable (or it by definition is a *surprise* which cannot be accurately anticipated). Fourth, the component must be above a minimum threshold cost (often between .5% and 1% of an association's total budget). This limits Reserve



RESERVE COMPONENT "FOUR-PART TEST"

Components to major, predictable expenses. Within this framework, it is inappropriate to include *lifetime* components, unpredictable expenses (such as damage due to fire, flood, or earthquake), and expenses more appropriately handled from the Operational Budget or as an insured loss.

How do we establish Useful Life and Remaining Useful Life estimates?

- 1) Visual Inspection (observed wear and age)
- 2) Association Reserves database of experience
- 3) Client History (install dates & previous life cycle information)
- 4) Vendor Evaluation and Recommendation

How do we establish Current Repair/Replacement Cost Estimates?

In this order...

- 1) Actual client cost history, or current proposals
- 2) Comparison to Association Reserves database of work done at similar associations
- 3) Vendor Recommendations
- 4) Reliable National Industry cost estimating guidebooks

How much Reserves are enough?

Reserve adequacy is not measured in cash terms. Reserve adequacy is found when the *amount* of current Reserve cash is compared to Reserve component deterioration (the *needs of the association*). Having *enough* means the association can execute its projects in a timely manner with existing Reserve funds. Not having *enough* typically creates deferred maintenance or special assessments.

Adequacy is measured in a two-step process:

- 1) Calculate the *value of deterioration* at the association (called Fully Funded Balance, or FFB).
- 2) Compare that to the Reserve Fund Balance, and express as a percentage.



Each year, the *value of deterioration* at the association changes. When there is more deterioration (as components approach the time they need to be replaced), there should be more cash to offset that deterioration and prepare for the expenditure. Conversely, the *value of deterioration* shrinks after projects are accomplished. The *value of deterioration* (the FFB) changes each year, and is a moving but predictable target.

There is a high risk of special assessments and deferred maintenance when the Percent Funded is *weak*, below 30%. Approximately 30% of all associations are in this high risk range. While the 100% point is Ideal (indicating Reserve cash is equal to the *value of deterioration*), a Reserve Fund in the 70% - 130% range is considered strong (low risk of special assessment).

Measuring your Reserves by Percent Funded tells how well prepared your association is for upcoming Reserve expenses. New buyers should be very aware of this important disclosure!

How much should we contribute?



RESERVE FUNDING PRINCIPLES

According to National Reserve Study Standards, there are four Funding Principles to balance in developing your Reserve Funding Plan. Our first objective is to design a plan that provides you with sufficient cash to perform your Reserve projects on time. Second, a stable contribution is desirable because it keeps these naturally irregular expenses from unsettling the budget.

Reserve contributions that are evenly distributed over current and future owners enable each owner to pay their fair share of the association's Reserve expenses over the years. And finally, we develop a plan that is fiscally responsible and safe for Boardmembers to recommend to their association. Remember, it is the Board's job to provide for the ongoing care of the common areas. Boardmembers invite liability exposure when Reserve contributions are inadequate to offset ongoing common area deterioration.

What is our Recommended Funding Goal?

Maintaining the Reserve Fund at a level equal to the *value* of deterioration is called "Full Funding" (100% Funded). As each asset ages and becomes "used up," the Reserve Fund grows proportionally. **This is simple, responsible, and our recommendation.** Evidence shows that associations in the 70 - 130% range *enjoy a low risk of special assessments or deferred maintenance.*



FUNDING OBJECTIVES

Allowing the Reserves to fall close to zero, but not below zero, is called Baseline Funding. Doing so allows the Reserve Fund to drop into the 0 - 30% range, where there is a high risk of special assessments & deferred maintenance. Since Baseline Funding still provides for the timely execution of all Reserve projects, and only the "margin of safety" is different, Baseline Funding contributions average only 10% - 15% less than Full Funding contributions. Threshold Funding is the title of all other Cash or Percent Funded objectives *between* Baseline Funding and Full Funding.