



5 STRATEGIES FOR A SUCCESSFUL RESTORATION

Michael Pond of RJC Engineers shares valuable ways to minimize mistakes when undergoing parking garage upgrades

When it comes to property upgrades, few are more expensive—or more disruptive—than parking garage restorations. Given the significance of these major undertakings, apartment owners and managers should plan well in advance before the shovel meets the dirt, to ensure their project unfolds smoothly, on schedule, and on budget.



“Repair or upgrades to underground parking garages can be a massive undertaking,” warns Michael Pond, Principal, Building Science and Restoration with RJC Engineers. “We regularly see certain aspects of these projects that are commonly overlooked or not fully considered.”

To avoid being caught off guard, Pond recommends implementing the following five strategies:

1 Get the real numbers
It’s common for property stakeholders to rely on generic building studies to budget for parking garage work. While comparable data and ballpark figures can be

beneficial, a more comprehensive condition survey will reveal the true anticipated cost.

“Invest in your own study,” says Pond. “It’s the only way to ensure you will get the level of detail you need. A comprehensive survey gives property owners the granular detail to create accurate tendering drawings and specs that are geared toward the current condition. That way, when you go to tender the work, you know exactly what you’re looking for.”

2 Plan for overages
You know what they say about planning for the unpredictable?

The same rings true for any major renovation, repair or retrofit. That’s why it’s best practice to add extra room in a project’s budget to accommodate for any surprises.

“We often recommend clients carry a 10% contingency allowance for this type of work in order to handle any unforeseen conditions that may arise,” Pond says.

3 Time your tendering right
There are good times and costly times to tender a parking structure project. Around mid-summer, for example, most contractors will already have their year planned out and be busy with current projects. As such, it’s likely their quotes won’t be favourable.

The winter, on the other hand, is when contractors are planning their next year and want to keep seasonal workers on the payroll. That can make a weather-proof project like a parking garage restoration more appealing, leading to more competitive bids.

Overall, Pond says, "Whenever possible, our advice is to tender late in the calendar year or early the following year when everyone is trying to secure next year's work. For example, tendering in January and doing the work in August is better than tendering in July and doing the work in August."

4 Have a phasing plan


When it comes to completing the work itself, remember to phase it accordingly and consider the full impact of the restoration on all building occupants.

"You're likely going to need to shift cars around or find some limited offsite parking, so having a phasing plan in place from the beginning is important," says Pond—adding that it's equally important to remember that work on one floor of parking garage can affect the one below. "If you have a multi-level underground parking garage and you want to do concrete repairs and replace waterproofing system on P1, for instance, you have to close the P2 level because you're going to be dropping concrete and removing protection for the cars below."

5 Stay vigilant with maintenance and inspections

Whether your parking garage is relatively new or old, it's a good practice to routinely assess its condition.

"You want to keep up on maintenance and inspections, and that includes getting your parking garage assessed by a structural engineer on a regular basis," says Pond. "If you let that maintenance work slide, or you just fix it and forget it for years, you'll be opening up your tenants and residents to safety risks."

Parking garage restorations are never cheap. But with solid planning, accurate budgeting, and ongoing oversight, you'll be setting the foundation for a smart investment. 

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