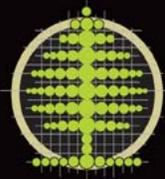
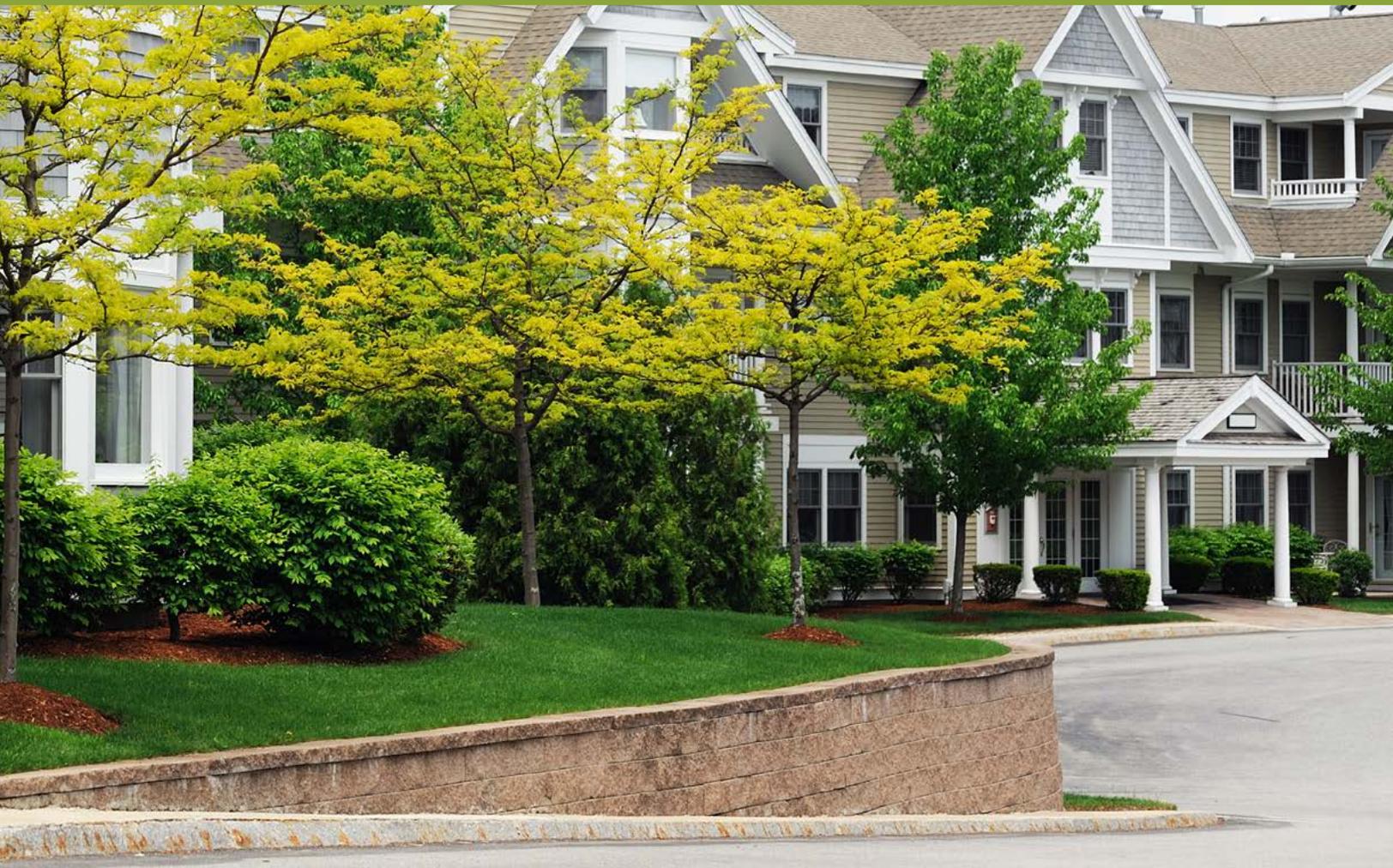


The Property Manager's Pre-Bid Checklist:

Setting the Stage for a Knockout Landscaping RFP



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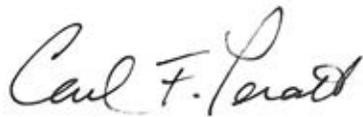
A Note from Fred:

As a commercial landscaping company, it's our job to make office buildings, shopping centers, and community properties stand out. Your job is to find a landscape service provider who can do that for you. To help you get ready for the selection process, we have prepared ***The Property Manager's Pre-Bid Checklist: Setting the Stage for a Knockout Landscaping RFP.***

Use this guide as you begin the process of searching for a new landscaping service provider—whether through an RFP or as a sole source. We'd be honored to get your consideration, but no matter whom you decide to work with, we appreciate this opportunity to offer you some thought-starters.

I sincerely hope you enjoy this guide, and if you have any questions or need assistance, feel free to reach out to us. We're here to help.

Best Regards,



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Your goal in the proposal process is to select the most qualified and fairly-priced company to manage your property's landscape. To achieve this, you will need to conduct some prep-work before you sit down to draft an RFP. If you do your homework upfront, by the time you are sorting through vendor proposals, you will have sufficiently qualified your respondents. Getting the pre-bid process right will allow the clear winners to emerge in the end.

Following are some key steps for you to take before drafting your RFP:

Walk Your Property

Perhaps you plan to work from your company's RFP template, and every landscaping service you could possibly request is already on it. But the template wasn't written for your properties. Spend an afternoon visiting your properties and take stock. Make a list of issues specific to your grounds, hardscapes, parking lots, trees, shrubs, and gardens. Be a detective so you aren't blindsided later by a critical service you didn't budget for.

6 Key Areas to Pay Attention to on Your Walk:

1

Look and feel. Imagine you're a prospective tenant, driving up to your building, complex, or HOA community for the first time. Are the lawn and gardens properly edged and trimmed? Are there any dead trees? Fallen limbs? Overgrowth of weeds? You only have one chance to make a first impression. Pretend this is it.

2

Safety. Check lighting fixtures—are there enough? Are they functioning properly? All sidewalks and pathways should be clear of debris and overgrown foliage, and dead tree limbs need to be removed. Is there standing water attracting mosquitos, or wooded areas that harbor ticks? Do you need tick and mosquito control?

3

Trouble Spots. Look for brown patches in the grass or withered leaves on a cluster of shrubs. Is a particular area overgrown, or is it unsightly because it looks too bare? Does the design in any area of the property lack cohesiveness, feel disjointed? Is there evidence of disease in any of the plant material?

4

Water. If you have an irrigation system, your grounds should look pretty healthy throughout the growing season, but only if the system is properly functioning and regulated. Have you scheduled at least one summer inspection? (And if you don't have an irrigation system, is it time to get one?)

Be sure to check for areas that are kind of 'swampy'—or even growing mold. You may have a run-off problem that requires a drainage solution.

5

Enhancements. How could your property look better? Would a brick walkway be a good investment to create a more upscale presentation? Perhaps you could use some additional shrubs for lining pathways or ornamental trees for a splash of color in the spring. Do flower beds need to be refreshed more frequently? Think about ways you could improve your tenants' customer experience that would fit into your budget.

6

Proposal Add-Ons. You might want to consider some of the items that are often left out of RFP's, such as aeration, over-seeding, liming, fall mulch, and debris pickup from stairwells and basement areas. While these items may seem like an unnecessary expense, the state of your property may be telling you they are more important than you originally thought.

“Be a detective so you aren't blindsided later by a critical service you didn't budget for.”



Meet the Players

Early on, start gathering a list of companies you might be interested in doing business with. If you see a landscaping crew working on a nearby building that always looks neatly manicured, snag a business card. Visit websites of local landscaping companies to find out what services they offer. If a colleague raves about a provider, find out who he or she uses. Don't just invite the usual suspects to submit a proposal. Handpick your list!

Once you've selected your candidates, ask someone from each company to walk your property. Invite them to add their professional expertise to your own assessment. Are they forthcoming with recommendations—or withholding? Are they willing to tell you what you DON'T need? Consider this meeting as an opportunity to explore what it would be like to work together. Take note of candidates who demonstrate a passion for what they do and show a genuine interest in your property. Bonus points if the provider brings a team—employees in design, operations, and/or specialty applications—to give you a better feel for your support network.

Then return the favor. Visit the company's location and ask for a guided tour. Any company you choose to work with should be happy (and proud) to show you around.

“Don't just invite the usual suspects to submit a proposal. Handpick your list!”



Don't Be Afraid to Ask

For each of the candidates under consideration, I recommend you do a deep dive into how they measure up against the qualifications listed below. You'd be surprised how often property managers fail to drill down on these important criteria, simply because they don't know to ask. If the candidate you're interviewing grows uncomfortable with your line of questioning or vague in his or her responses, I would suggest you say this to yourself: Next!

7 Key Areas to Ask Your Prospective Landscaping Company About

1

Company Values. Just because a company owns a truck and lawn care equipment doesn't mean they're running a reputable business. Challenge your prospective provider to tell you about his or her company: history of past clients, attitudes toward customer satisfaction, and investment in employee training. What does the company value as an organization? How do they communicate those values to employees?

2

Experience. How many years has the company been in business? Who is on the management team, and what is their area of expertise? Landscaping covers a broad spectrum of services: landscape and hardscape design, installation, maintenance, tree work, irrigation, tick & mosquito control, snow services, drainage, and lighting. Don't just settle for a "We do that." Make the company tell you what type of experience and certifications they have in each area.

As an aside, many landscaping companies do not have an in-house designer. A designer can help you develop a master plan to be phased in over 3-5 years, and if this capability is not inherent in a provider's services, you would want to know that.

3

Licensing/Certifications. Unfortunately, the landscaping industry is rife with sub-par suppliers who operate in a haphazard fashion. Does the company you're interviewing have the proper certifications? Chemical applications licensing? An adequate amount of liability insurance? Drill down on these key qualifications so the lack of them doesn't come back to haunt you later.

Ideally, your company-of-choice will be a member of landscaping associations and networking groups, which indicates they are staying abreast of the latest technologies and best practices.

4

Safety. Most likely, all companies you interview will tell you they incorporate safety into everything they do. But don't take their word for it. Make them describe their standard operating procedures, how they take care of their equipment, and how they plan to ensure the wellbeing of your property. If they can't give you a detailed rundown of established safety controls, they probably don't have them.

5

Property Monitoring. You don't want a company that will get you to sign on the dotted line and suddenly become scarce. You need your landscape provider to take ownership of the health of your property grounds. How often will they check on your properties? Do they conduct audits and report back to you what's working—and what's not? Are they going to check in with you on a regular basis to make sure you are happy?

6

Communications. How quickly does a company respond to calls? Will they keep you apprised of updates and let you know when you can expect them to be working on your property? Given the latest advances in technology, there is no excuse for making a client sit around all day waiting for a service call. From the outset, let your company know you expect them to respond quickly when you initiate a request for service.

“Ideally, your company-of-choice will be a member of landscaping associations and networking groups...”

7

Complaints. How responsive will your prospective client be to your concerns? Problems? Damage to the property? Accidents happen, but how they are handled vary from company-to-company. Don't accept a simple: "If it's our fault, we'll fix it." A strong candidate should have a system in place for dealing with the unexpected. Going back to company values, your ideal provider will place a top priority on conscientiousness and safety among employees—and be willing to take responsibility when something goes wrong.

In summary, make your prospective landscape provider work hard to impress you. But don't stop there. Go visit some of their client properties and see for yourself. Be sure to visit different types of properties—ideally, one or two that are similar to yours. Ask for references and call them. If the company is hard-pressed to provide names of happy clients, be wary. A reputable landscaping company should have a long list of raving fans: clients, employees, and if all goes well—you.

“A reputable landscaping company should have a long list of raving fans: clients, employees, and if all goes well—you.”



About Environmental Enhancements:

Since 2001, Environmental Enhancements has been providing complete landscaping services for commercial properties in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. Our core principles are founded on trust, accountability, and a high standard of excellence in service.

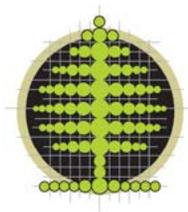
We begin all our commercial client relationships with a face-to-face meeting because we care about what's important to you. We take time to listen, and to develop a plan that serves your needs—not just for today, but over the next three to five years.

Here's what you can expect when you work with us:

- A phased approach to **fit your budget** and your needs
- **Honest recommendations** about what you DON'T need
- Clarity on how to **optimize services** within your budget
- Guidance on **how to 'fix' what's not working** for you today
- A **professional design** that attracts businesses and residents to your property
- An eye for aesthetic and function that **increases your property value**
- Long-term **maintenance planning** and associated budget
- Trained landscaping professionals **caring for your property**

We value your business, and we'll make sure you know it. If you are looking for a landscaping partner who cares about what's important to you, you've come to the right place.

We offer complete landscaping services: design, maintenance, irrigation, and snow & ice management. We also offer organic options. If you are located in the Washington DC metropolitan area, call us to find out how we can help.



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