

# A SCI-FI RESERVE STUDY SITE INSPECTION



by Bryan Farley, PE, RS  
Project Manager  
Association Reserves, Inc.

February 2014

[www.reservestudy.com](http://www.reservestudy.com)

Recently, I was on my way to perform a Reserve Study Site Inspection for a mid-rise condominium in downtown Los Angeles. I was able to spot the building due to the faint resemblance the structure had to the photos we had on file from 1984, the last time we had been on site. Unfortunately, it did not look like the building had been touched since.

Upon entering, I was struck by the resemblance that the building had to the set of [Blade Runner](#), a 1982 sci-fi movie depicting a dystopian Los Angeles. The movie has been lauded for creating a raw industrial set design, an aesthetic style you would not call 'welcoming'.

The association's building interiors were dilapidated, the light fixtures were rusted out, the siding was rotted and warped, and the courtyard planters were leaking into the garage below. Overall, the place was in need of serious tender love and care. It truly did look like the set of a dystopian sci-fi flick.

## Deferred Maintenance Can Accelerate & Worsen Component Deterioration

The reality is, it did not have to end up this way. If the association would have taken the proper measures beforehand, the building would not be in the state it is in today.

Let's take the courtyard planters for example. Planters are a nice addition to an association to help add a dash of color and vegetation to an area that would be otherwise left empty. The problem with planters, especially with these particular planters that were located directly above a subterranean garage, is that the water from the planters needs to drain somewhere.

If the planters are not properly waterproofed and drained, water will seep into the underlying concrete slab and cause structural damage. This was the case for this association, and the water was seeping through the porous concrete slab and creating large cracks in the ceiling of the subterranean garage.

Due to the deferment of the waterproofing, the planters are unsalvageable, and the association will now have to levy a [special assessment](#) in order to completely remove the planters. The once attractive focal piece has now become a major liability.

## Avoiding Deferred Maintenance at Your Association

So what turned this association's future into a dystopian reality instead of a utopian one? It all had to do with proper planning.

One of the board members that I met with explained that the association did not want to spend the money to perform the necessary maintenance. The association could have been making smaller evenly distributed contributions into the Reserve Fund to offset the ongoing deterioration of the building, but instead is now facing a large special assessment.

The association decided to put its collective head in the sand and pretend that the consequences do not exist. Expenses don't go away. They accumulate, and even get larger due to delays. This lack of responsibility is extremely obvious to potential buyers as well, which is unfortunate due to the great location of the building.

The association had adopted a [Que será, será](#) mentality, but this attitude ultimately led to the building to now look like it belongs in *Blade Runner*.