

FAQ regarding balcony/deck inspection and repair project

July 24, 2024

Good afternoon Queen's Landing Community,

We are grateful for the questions you have posed regarding the balcony/deck inspection and repair project. Members of the Board and of the Maintenance Committee have been collecting information and want to share what we have learned. Therefore, we hope you will find the following helpful.

1. What if I have a deck but did not get a report?

Answer: You may send an e-mail to office@queenslanding.org and ask for a copy of the report.

2. If my deck is rated 8, 9, or 10, must I replace it?

Answer: The rating correlates with and indicates a risk of safety; the rating does not in and of itself indicate the need for a complete replacement of the deck. For example, in a different situation, if a staircase is missing a riser, which is a safety hazard, and all that is required to make the staircase safe is to replace the riser, then a complete replacement of the staircase is not necessary. Each deck is unique should be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

3. Are repairs mandatory for only the decks with 8, 9, and 10 ratings?

Answer: The Association will require remediation of decks with 8, 9, and 10 ratings. Further, for all decks with itemized deficiencies, we recommend that issues be addressed promptly so they do not grow into a larger safety concern. *More information on this point will be forthcoming.*

4. How quickly must these repairs be made?

Answer: The Association anticipates this will be a multi-year process but the goal is to get these repairs under way within the next year. *A firm schedule has not yet been determined.*

5. There is no apparent damage to the deck. Why am I being told not to use it?

Answer: Safety issues may arise from specific damage, which can be seen readily, or from the overall condition of the deck, which may not necessarily be seen readily. The inspection consisted of visual observation and moisture readings, the latter of which revealed issues that could not be seen readily.

6. The report did not include photos of my deck. Does that indicate I have no deficiencies?

Answer: No. Photos were NOT taken of each and every deficiency. The photos in the report were for illustrative purposes. The specific deficiencies for each deck are noted in the prepared table.

7. My home inspector told me my deck was fine. Must I still make repairs? Can I get a second opinion?

Answer: The consultant that inspected the balconies did so for a specific purpose and utilized different criteria than a standard home inspection. A second inspection may be conducted. However, to be comparable to the consultant's inspection the second inspection must be conducted with at least the same level of scrutiny and criteria as the consultant's inspection. As for repairs, at this time the Board recommends following the consultant's repair recommendations.

8. What are the criteria for a second opinion?

Answer: The criteria are:

- The inspector must be
 - a home inspector licensed by the MAHI (Maryland Association of Home Inspectors),
 - an architect, or
 - a structural engineer.
- The inspector must perform
 - Visual Assessment – including removal of vinyl soffit to observe interior framing, connectors, fasteners, and water damage,
 - Structural Integrity Check - assessing the framing, support columns, beams, joists, metal connectors, fasteners, and decking materials, and the railings attachment points and associated blocking,
 - Safety Features Inspection – railing stability, connections, and fasteners,
 - Material Condition Analysis – condition of wood checked for rot or decay, metal components assessed for corrosion, and moisture meters utilized.
- The inspector must attest
 - s/he has reviewed the QLCUO inspector report, and
 - in his/her opinion what deficiencies must be corrected to render the structure safe, and in good repair.
- Finally, the unit owner must
 - submit the second opinion report to the Association for review.

9. My deck was rebuilt ten years ago how did it get into this condition?

Answer: Many factors contribute to deterioration – weather, penetration of the membrane surface, or flashing failure. In the future, the Board may recommend more frequent inspections of the decks to so small problems do not grow into large issues.

10. Did the Condominium receive a warranty for rebuilt balconies several years ago? Was a life expectancy attached to those repairs?

Answer: The Condominium received a time-limited warranty and made a claim with the contractor that included issues reported to the Condominium within the warranty period. Issues reported to the Condominium within the warranty period will be reviewed and addressed accordingly. With regard to a life expectancy, the Board's records do not indicate receiving such information from the contractor.

11. Can I get copies of the county inspections of former rebuilds of my unit?

Answer: County generated documents can be requested directly from the County.

12. I was surprised the deck inspection fee of \$108.75 per structure was charged to the unit owner.

Answer: In April, we distributed a document titled "*Process to Inspect and Remediate Balconies and Decks*" in which we advised: "It is anticipated that the investigative inspection cost will be about \$150 per balcony or deck. That cost will be billed to the individual unit owner. The engineering/specification development cost will be borne by the Association. The repairs and final inspection will be borne by the unit owner."

13. Are deck repairs a common expense, i.e., paid from the assessments collected from all owners?

Answer: No. Balconies and decks are limited common elements. Per the QLCUO Bylaws, while the Association is responsible to ensure these structures are in good working order, the cost to maintain, repair, and replace these components is an expense borne by the individual unit owner to whom exclusive use of the deck is made. Information about this assignment of responsibility under the governing documents was shared in February 2024.

14. Will the Association hire a contractor to do all the recommended repairs so that a better rate may be negotiated?

Answer: *The Board is exploring this option and will provide more information in the near future.*

15. Question: Can I hire my own contractor?

Answer: Yes. Once we have the engineering specifications, please follow the Architectural Change Request process to do so.

16. What will the engineering specifications tell us?

Answer: We anticipate the specifications will include recommended repair and replacement products, design of flashing and connections, and structural components. We are asking for specifications to appropriately plan for unit owners asking to choose between repairing their deck using the current design (membrane) surface or replacing the deck with a decking type of surface. *We do not yet have the full scope of work for the engineer.*

17. After the repairs are completed, what will be the frequency of this type of inspections in the future?

Answer: Once we have more information, the Board *will consider adopting* a formal inspection schedule for future use - which will depend on the extent of the repairs made based on the consultant's report.