

HOUSE UNVEILING SEMINARS

By Bob Yapp & Preservation Resources, Inc.

What the heck is a house unveiling? It is a modern day version of a barn raising. The community shows up and helps a homeowner remove non-original siding from their historic home. House unveilings are one of the most fun and productive events preservation and neighborhood organizations can do for their communities. It involves all facets of the community including; governmental agencies; neighborhood groups; local businesses; all kinds of preservation organizations; the media and individual homeowners. It is a public/private partnership in its truest form.

Unveilings attract a lot of attention from the media and the population at large. If done correctly, the benefits to everyone in the community are huge and include:

- The removal of non-original siding such as vinyl and aluminum, which has been covering the original exterior of houses for many years. Original exteriors in historic neighborhoods make your house worth more money and bring back the original architectural detail, massing and texture that made these homes so unique.
- Non-original siding removal stops damaging moisture from being trapped inside the wall cavity of a home.
- Unveilings create a sense of community when everyone works together for a day to remove the siding.
- Print and electronic media are always looking for events that bring the community together. You can usually count on the newspaper and one or two TV stations to do stories about your event.
- Show the community positive visual change. Many historic neighborhoods with blight make the residents at-large feel bad. This is the type of event that shows progress and puts a smile on even the most grumpy, anti-preservation advocates.
- Local businesses can be involved by donating time, money, materials or equipment and get some positive public relations from the event.
- Preservation groups get to put the truth out on the streets about the ill-effects replacement siding have on the health of a home and the financial benefits of an original exterior.
- Local vendors make money by supplying the event and/or displaying their wares.
- The local citizenry learns how siding is removed properly, how to perform exterior repairs as well as how to get a 12 to 15 year paint job that can be done twice, in 24 to 30 years, for less money than replacement siding with a maximum life of 18 years.
- The list goes on and on.

HOW TO STAGE A HOUSE UNVEILING EVENT

- Identify a homeowner that is willing to have the siding skinned off their home. This homeowner needs to be prepared to spend the money necessary to make the needed siding and trim repairs as well as get the house painted in the same season the house is unveiled. Homes with blown-in insulation are generally not good candidates for this effort. Blown-in insulation traps moisture and usually causes permanent paint failure. This insulation can be removed but usually not during the event.
- The event should be scheduled for early to mid-Spring. Once unveiled, the house needs a chance to dry out through the summer while the needed repairs are made. House painting is best accomplished in the Midwest during the fall. The entire event and the credibility of your endeavor depend on this timing. If the house is skinned and sits un-repaired and unpainted for several years it creates a negative impression of all the hard work that was put into the effort.
- Volunteers usually come from the neighborhood the house is in, but not always. Sometimes you can get other neighborhoods to pitch in as well as service clubs and corporate sponsor employees. The maximum number of people actually able to work on the physical unveiling should not exceed 40 or be less than 10. This does not include all the people that can and should be at the event helping with other things. Don't just send out a flyer and hope people will come. Get on the phone, go to meetings etc., and get people to commit to the event. Encourage families and their kids to come. Be sure you have at least 5 people that can work high on a ladder
- If possible, get a permit from the city to close off the block that the house is in. This makes it more of a festival atmosphere. You should plan for a lunch potluck served on tables in the middle of the street. Kids can bring their bikes and local clowns and/or magicians can be hired to entertain the kids and adults. There should be all kinds of drinks available for the thirsty workers.
- Be sure you have adequate event insurance in case anyone gets hurt. This may seem a little tricky but this type of one time insurance is fairly affordable through a 501C3 not-for-profit. People will be on ladders. Yapp will train all unveiling participants in the safe use of ladders; pry bars and other safety issues before the work begins.
- Encourage local companies that sell preservation oriented products or services to pay a fee for a table at the event. People are hungry for good products and information.
- There should be plenty of seating, in the shade, for worker breaks.
- Try to get the local tool rental, hardware and lumber stores to donate equipment and materials. Get as much donated as possible. Participants can usually bring some of the tools needed
- Prepare a one page Press Release for the media and distribute it to all local media 4 weeks ahead of the event. Newspapers may do a pre-story so write the release like an article with contact names etc. Yapp can help with this. The day before the event call the Assignment Editors of all the TV and radio stations and then fax them your press release.

TOOLS, EQUIPMENT & MATERIALS NEEDED FOR AN UNVEILING

All of this information is predicated on a medium sized historic house.

- Five 30' extension ladders. Aluminum ladders in very good condition are important. Wooden and fiberglass ladders are too heavy for most people to handle. Fiberglass ladders will work but they are heavy. These ladders should be rated for 250 lbs.
- Five 24' extension ladders. Aluminum ladders in very good condition are important. Wooden and fiberglass ladders are too heavy for most people to handle. Fiberglass ladders will work but they are heavy. These ladders should be rated for 250 lbs.
- Five 16' extension ladders. Aluminum ladders in very good condition are important. Wooden and fiberglass ladders are too heavy for most people to handle. Fiberglass ladders will work but they are heavy. These ladders should be rated for 250 lbs.
- A quantity of 8' step ladders for the balance the rest of the workers. For instance, if there are 40 workers 15 are on extension ladders so you would need 15 step-ladders. That leaves 10 workers on the ground pulling siding and putting siding into a trailer or cleaning up the ground.
- Enough blue tarps to tarp-off the ground around the entire house. This will catch the thousands of nails that will be pulled.
- Tool aprons for all workers. This will give them a place to hang their hammer & pry bar as well as pouches to put the pulled nails. Hardware stores love to donate these with their logos on them.
- Four 5gallon paint buckets to put the nails in.
- A large trailer to put the siding in. Disposing of aluminum siding is a matter of taking it to a recycler. They will give you the going rate in dollars for whatever aluminum is bringing at that time. If the siding is vinyl, it is more of a challenge to get rid of. In larger communities there are some PVC recyclers but they usually want far bigger loads that what one house can provide. Check with your landfill about their regulations on PVC. If the siding is asbestos, there are special dumpsters you can order. NOTE: If the siding is asbestos or you suspect it's asbestos, don't freak-out, let Yapp know and he will tailor the event for these safety issues. Asbestos can be removed safely for minimal extra costs.
- 10 yard dumpster for insulation that is sometimes on the back of removed siding. Most siding also has a building paper under it that needs to go into the dumpster.
- Enough 2-strap dust masks for all workers to have three each during the day.
- Safety glasses for all workers.
- One 16 ounce claw hammer; one flat, "Blue Bar" type pry bar and one multi-screwdriver for all workers. The workers can bring some of this.
- Four rolls of duct tape.
- 2 gallons of Abatron's 2 part LIQUID EPOX & 2 gallons of Abatron's WOOD EPOX. Also, plastic beer cups and wooden tongue depressors to mix in.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

I can't stress enough that to take full advantage of a house unveiling it will take a lot of planning. All of the tools, supplies and coordination are critical. I have seen houses completely skinned in 2 hours. Most will take 6 to 8 hours. I have also seen poorly planned events that never completed the skinning process. It all depends on whether you have planned and executed the event properly. My job is to help you with this.

PRE-UNVEILING SEMINAR

The day before the unveiling, Yapp holds a seminar that gets everyone up to speed on what and why we are taking this on. He will give verbal and written material that reinforces why this is important and how we'll be doing it. Yapp will also give thorough talk, with props, on how to get a 12 to 15 year paint job for a 5 to 10% more money than a cheesy power washed and sprayed paint job that last 3 to 5 years. He will also put on demonstrations of siding repair and epoxy repairs at the house site the day of the unveiling.

This seminar is usually done indoors, in the afternoon, the day before the event.

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