

Bellingham Painting Co.

UPDATED 2026-08-04

Commercial painting in Bellingham, a property manager cost and scope guide

Square foot pricing, substrate systems, night work, turnovers and Washington compliance

WHAT IT RUNS HERE

Commercial painting in Bellingham, WA runs \$2.20 to \$6.60 per square foot for a typical office or retail space. The low end is an open-plan wall and ceiling repaint with light prep. The top end is heavy prep, mixed substrates, or night and weekend work in an occupied building. Scheduling is built around your hours. Workmanship is covered for 2 years. Call (360) 383-5454 for a walk and a written scope.

Free estimate, written scope

<https://bellingshampaintpros.com/guides/commercial-painting>

(360) 383-5454

START HERE

What matters most

- Bellingham commercial work runs \$2.20 to \$6.60 per square foot, with the spread driven by prep and access rather than paint.
- Downtown and Fairhaven buildings are largely brick and Chuckanut sandstone from the 1890 to 1915 boom, which rules out film-forming coatings on the masonry.
- Buildings built before 1978 fall under the EPA RRP rule once more than 20 square feet of exterior paint is disturbed.
- Uncoated CMU can absorb a gallon or more of paint per 100 square feet, so block filler at 10 to 15 dry mils is a line item, not an upsell.
- Washington charges retail sales tax on the contract price, and public works jobs carry prevailing wage filed through L&I.

THE NUMBERS

Commercial painting price ranges in Bellingham, WA

SCOPE	WHAT IT COVERS	BELLINGHAM RANGE
Office or retail interior	Walls and ceilings, low-odor coatings, scheduled to your hours	\$2.20 to \$6.60 per sq ft
Open-plan repaint, light prep	Sound drywall, one or two colors, daytime access	From \$2.20 per sq ft
Exterior wash before a repaint	Soft wash of siding, soffits, entries and walkways	From \$0.30 per sq ft
Break room or reception millwork	Cabinet doors and drawer fronts sprayed	From \$85 per door
Restaurant or hotel deck restained	Clean, sand and stain a standard deck	\$770 to \$2,000
Small residential rental exterior	Wash, scrape, prime bare wood, two coats on a typical home	\$4,200 to \$9,350

Access and prep set the number, so night work, partitioned floor plates and multiple substrates inside one scope push a Bellingham job toward the top of the range.

The number to start from

Office and retail repaints in Bellingham run \$2.20 to \$6.60 per square foot. Access and prep set where a building lands, not the paint.

Define whether the bid unit is floor area or wall area before bids go out, or the numbers you get back will not be comparable.

- Office or retail interior: \$2.20 to \$6.60 per sq ft
- Open plan, light prep: from \$2.20 per sq ft
- Exterior wash: from \$0.30 per sq ft
- Millwork sprayed: from \$85 per door
- Standard deck restrained: \$770 to \$2,000

Know your building type

Downtown and Fairhaven are largely brick and Chuckanut sandstone from the 1882 to 1915 boom, built to breathe. Film-forming coatings on that masonry trap moisture and spall the brick.

Bakerview, Irongate, Barkley and Cordata run to tilt-up concrete, CMU, pre-engineered metal and EIFS, which take conventional commercial systems.

- Historic masonry: paint the storefront, cornice, sash and doors only
- Fairhaven district is 13 primary buildings, mostly 1888 to 1904
- Strip retail mixes fascia, canopies and painted CMU in one scope

Scheduling and occupancy

Daytime work in an empty suite is the cheapest version. Occupied space, after hours and short overnight windows each add cost.

Buildings on winter night setback slow waterborne recoat times. Suspend the setback on work nights or lengthen the schedule.

- Agree keys, codes, elevator access and the alarm callout
- Name what must be back in service by open
- Lockable overnight staging for material and equipment
- Low-odor low-VOC coatings for tenant-occupied space

Coatings by substrate

Most commercial disappointments are the right coating on the wrong surface. Break prep out by substrate in the scope.

- CMU: block filler at 10 to 15 dry mils, sprayed and back-rolled
- Ferrous metal: rust removal, then DTM acrylic or industrial urethane
- Galvanized: cleaned of mill oils, system rated for galvanizing
- EIFS and stucco: elastomeric, roughly half the coverage rate
- Occupied interiors: low-odor acrylic, scrubbable in high-touch areas

Turnovers and tenant improvements

Turnover paint is priced on speed and repeatability. One standard wall color and one trim color on file at the paint store does more for cost than any negotiation.

Paint before finish flooring, then touch up after other trades clear. Masking a finished floor is labor you pay for by the hour.

- Standard scope so nothing is decided on the day
- Punch walkthrough before the unit is listed
- Written agreement on who patches post-paint trade damage
- A real recoat window in the construction schedule

Washington compliance

Contractors must register with L&I. Specialty bond is \$15,000 with liability at \$200,000 plus \$50,000 property damage, or \$250,000 combined. Bond amounts rose July 1, 2024.

Pre-1978 buildings with housing or child-occupied space fall under the EPA RRP rule at 6 square feet inside or 20 square feet outside.

- Verify registration, bond and insurance free through L&I
- Public works means prevailing wage, intent filed before work
- Bellingham sales tax is 9.2 percent on the contract price
- RCW 18.27.114 disclosure applies from \$1,000 to under \$60,000

Failure modes to price out

Every one of these shows up as a change order or a callback, and every one is cheaper to prevent than to fix.

- Coating over unwashed chalk peels in sheets
- Block filler skipped gives blotchy walls and a third coat
- Painting to a deadline instead of a recoat interval leaves soft marking finishes
- No mil thickness in the spec means nothing to measure
- Unresolved water destroys new coating the following winter

Maintenance cycle

Walk the property in October before the wet months and again in April after them. Damage found in April is a repair, the same damage two winters later is a repaint.

- South and west elevations fail on UV, north on moisture and moss
- Wash on a schedule from \$0.30 per sq ft
- Keep touch-up paint on site labeled by building and elevation
- Corridors and lobbies come up before offices do

What to settle before you award a commercial painting contract

- ☐ The bid unit is defined, floor square footage or wall square footage, and every bidder used the same one.
- ☐ The coating system is written coat by coat with product names and a target dry film thickness.
- ☐ Prep is broken out by substrate: drywall, CMU, ferrous metal, galvanized, previously coated.
- ☐ Exclusions are listed, including ceilings, exposed deck, door frames and mechanical equipment.
- ☐ Work hours are stated, with who holds keys, codes and after hours access.
- ☐ The HVAC night setback plan is agreed, because a cold building slows recoat times.
- ☐ The certificate of insurance names your entity and the L&I registration shows active with a current bond.
- ☐ If the building predates 1978 and has a day care or preschool tenant, the firm is EPA Lead-Safe certified.
- ☐ If it is a public works job, prevailing wage is priced in and the intent filing is the contractor's responsibility.
- ☐ Washington sales tax is itemized on the bid rather than assumed either way.
- ☐ You have the RCW 18.27.114 disclosure statement if the contract runs between \$1,000 and \$60,000.
- ☐ A touch-up allowance and a punch walkthrough are in the contract, with who patches post-paint trade damage.

Want a real number for your place?

We walk the job, measure it, and put the scope in writing. Free, and there is no pressure attached.

(360) 383-5454

bellingshampaintpros.com

Bellingham Painting Co. · Bellingham, WA

Full guide: <https://bellingshampaintpros.com/guides/commercial-painting>

Prices shown are the ranges published on our website at the time of writing and are a starting point, not a quote. Every property is different. Figures update when the site does.