



# I SAW THE SIGN



- ✦ (Top) Village Green began an extensive renovation and renaming of its Wilmington, N.C., community in 2006 and installed a new sign program as a final step in 2008 to tie the repackaging plan together.
- ✦ (Middle) Carolina Crossing in Rock Hill, S.C., consolidated two adjoining communities to create one, unified community with a new name.
- ✦ (Bottom) By renaming and therefore redesigning signage, a community can rebrand itself and create buzz. The Park at Kingsview Village in Germantown, Md., is one example.

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BY ERNEST DWIGHT

Sign programs in multifamily housing communities have to meet both obvious and subtle needs. Signage provides visual identification from the road, promotes name and brand recognition and guides and informs residents and visitors. The primary goal of community owners and managers is the public's positive perception of the community, and signage directly impacts that perception. A properly designed, clearly thought out and carefully executed sign program is an essential element for creating an inviting property.

A community's visual appeal attracts prospective residents while reinforcing a positive image for current residents. An effective sign program provides for a strong first impression to repeat throughout the community. A clean, appropriately designed entrance sign immediately evokes images of a tasteful community. Easy-to-use directional and regulatory signs that follow the theme of the entrance sign indicate attention to detail and care for both the community and its residents.

### Required Rebranding

By renaming and therefore redesigning signage, a community can rebrand itself and create buzz. The Park at Kingsview Village in Germantown, Md., is one example.

Recently sold, its new ownership insisted on a new name and logo and then rebranded itself with the new logo and tied it into other collateral marketing materials such as brochures, business cards and marketing artwork.

"The signs enhance the curb appeal of the community by creating an updated, attractive, colorful and noticeable entry," says Community Manager Nancy Barton, Stellar Advisors.

Barton says The Park at Kingsview faced challenges during the rebranding process, including county requirements that they relocate a sign that had not been properly permitted by the previous owners. The response to the new signs has been overwhelmingly positive.

"Prospective residents have seen the new signs and have come into the office to see what other changes are being made," she says.

Barton's reports showed that 57 percent of its drive-by traffic during the next three months was generated from the new property signs.

Signage is about more than curb appeal. Curb appeal comes from a neat, refined, even impressive front entrance with landscaping that matches the setting. Signage, while benefitting from and adding to curb appeal, specifically identifies and brands the community, and then directs and informs. Signs serve as the community's introduction

# Maintenance Mania House

to the public and set the tone for all that follows. The emotional effect and sense of place that signage establishes at the entrance carries through the community, helping to reinforce its unique characteristics.

## All in the Details

Village Green, which began an extensive renovation and renaming of its Wilmington, N.C., community in 2006, installed a new sign program as a final step in 2008 to tie the repackaging plan together.

“One of the primary goals of the new signage,” says Community Manager Pam Bettner, “was to re-label our community by introducing a new name and new logo that would appeal to a broader range of prospective clients.”

Bettner says that its previous prospects normally were college aged, and “obviously were drawn in by our proximity to University of North Carolina at Wilmington and our previous name, College Green.

“Now that we have prominent signage indicating our change to Village Green, I have seen a dramatic increase in traffic—from graduate students all the way to retired couples—expressing interest in our community.”

## A New Identity

Carolina Crossing in Rock Hill, S.C., faced challenges when the owner consolidated two adjoining communities to create a single, unified community. Regional Manager Debbie Morgan says that the signage at both properties was so old and ugly that the owner almost preferred to have no signs at all.

The communities were acquired at different times in 2007. Each had apartment homes that were built in the early 1970s and others that were built in the late 1990s. The communities were in close proximity to each other; however, there was no way to get from one community to the other without exiting one community, driving down the road and then turning onto a side street for the other property.

Morgan says that the layout and proximity of the two communities and identifying the common amenity areas were the biggest challenges when developing a new sign program. Carolina Crossing used signage to create a cohesive sense of place as one of the final steps in a renovation project that spanned two years.

“People from the area or those who have been here for some time continued to refer to the communities by their old names,” Morgan says. “We wanted to eliminate any connection or history to the previous identity. The new signage has given us better visibility and people who have never been to the community now find it easier to locate us.” ■■

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