

Fore Properties' Groveton Green, Owings Mills, Md., displays excellent curb appeal.



# GROVETON GREEN

pet-friendly  
residents  
apartments

# Do *Judge a 'Curb' By Its 'Cover'*

BY MARY GWYN, CPM

**W**e've always been taught not to judge a book by its cover, but when it comes to real estate, that's exactly what is needed. Studies show that the majority of prospective residents will not get out of their cars if they do not find your property's curb appeal attractive. To make a solid first impression, it's important for onsite staff to see what others see.

However, after working at a community for a while, some problems we used to see become "white noise"—and we no longer notice and sometimes even ignore them. Working at a community day after day, little things can slowly become old or dirty or unkempt, occurring so gradually over time that they may go unnoticed. Therefore, it is critical to periodically look at your community with a fresh set of eyes.

**To ensure that your community is picture perfect, follow the curb appeal checklist below.**

- Drive past your community from both directions. Is there any impediment that would prevent prospective residents from seeing the community? Are trees/overgrown shrubs in the way of your sign? Can prospects see the entrance prior to reaching it?
  - Evaluate your sign/entrance. You should have bright, big and bold flowers planted at all times, and differentiate your entrance plantings from those of your competitors. Make sure it's all clean, weed-free, mulched/needled and provides that "wow" factor.
  - Is the sign clean, freshly painted, washed (if mildewed) and beautiful?
  - Are sign lights timed correctly, pointed accurately and working properly?
  - Is there grass where grass goes? If not, get your landscaper to spray some sort of fertilizer and scratch the soil and reseed that area. Even if the lawn is less than perfect in other places, make the entrance perfect.
  - Do you have fresh flags? If not, put up new ones, clean the old ones and change up the colors frequently.
  - Put out fresh balloons daily (if legal). It is fun to color coordinate them with your flags, too.
  - Is your office difficult to find? If so, post directional signs—even paint a yellow brick road if you have to. Just make it easy to find.
  - Is there clearly marked guest parking at the leasing center?
  - There should also be big, bold flowers at the entrance of the leasing center. If there is no space to plant flowers, make sure you have fresh, big pots full of beautiful, colorful splashes.
  - Are there appropriate banner and/or bandit signs—not too many and not too few—that state the community's primary marketing message? Keep it simple, classy and attractive.
  - Sweep, dust and wipe away cobwebs at the entrance of the leasing center. Make it clean, clean, clean!
  - Ensure that your doormat is clean and in good condition. If it's dirty, clean it; if it is old and faded, replace it. Local retailers sell cool ones for as little as \$10. Do you have an information box outside your door, packed with good marketing collateral? If not, get one and keep it filled.
  - Can prospects/residents communicate with you after hours? Consider having a secured mailbox or mail-slot that is attractive and well-marked. And, if it's reasonable, have paper and a pen where residents can leave non-emergency service requests or other messages for you.
  - Make sure the front door of the leasing office is freshly painted, clean (remember, Windex is your friend) and new looking—not to mention ADA compliant (door knob, lock and hardware). When people touch the door knob, there shouldn't be anything sticky or scratchy on it. One of my property management sayings is, "Where the hand goes, the eye goes!" If the hardware finish is peeling off or looks dated or mismatched, replace it.
  - Does the leasing center look welcoming and not overgrown, weedy or messy?
  - Are your office hours posted? Does the sign that reads so need cleaning, repainting or replacing?
  - Is there a clear clock or sign that indicates you've left the office and when you'll be back? "Back in 30 minutes" doesn't help your prospect or resident because they don't know if you left a minute ago or 29 minutes ago. Consider a dry-erase board with a friendly note and the time when you'll return. ■■
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