

Community Curb Appeal

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Purpose: To ensure that National Apartment Association (NAA) members understand the importance of curb appeal and the effect it has on a community's chance of attracting potential residents. Creating a lasting first impression affects the leasing process, overall community occupancy and bottom-line net operating income.

Applies To: All NAA Members working at the property level.

Overview: Curb appeal is a term that rental housing professionals use to refer to the overall appearance of an apartment community. The attractiveness of a property and its surroundings when viewed from the street may include landscaping, signage, building exteriors, outdoor amenities, lighting, and trash disposal. The goal of curb appeal is to make sure the outside appearance of the apartment community, and its interior common areas, always look attractive to those who see them. Areas to focus on for maximum curb appeal include the entrance(s) to your community, leasing tour path, and other locations easily visible from the neighboring exterior roads. It is important that all employees develop a careful eye for curb appeal by learning to see the grounds through the eyes of current residents, prospective residents, and those of your owner or management team. Topics and recommendations made below are to enhance your community curb appeal for a positive prospect and resident experience.

Questions to ask yourself:

- Is this a place resident(s) can be proud to call home?
- Does our community present a positive first impression to passers-by and guests?
- Is our community's curb appeal a great advertisement for prospective residents?

Guidance:

1. **Signage** – All community signage should be easily visible, legible, appropriately placed and clean with no damages. Incorporating your brand into your signage is a great way to build character for your property and for prospects to feel a part of the community. A monument sign is recommended for any property housing 10 or more units. This sign will make it easy for prospective residents to find your building and will assist with advertising for all traffic. If you use sandwich boards, bandit signs or banners in the surrounding neighborhood to help people find your community, ensure they are clean, professionally designed and clearly placed. Signage improves branding, and good branding improves rents and increases leasing lead capture. Some community signage should include a mobile-friendly call to action for those visiting after leasing hours or whom may not want to commit to visiting the leasing office. Ensuring your community website is mobile friendly will encourage after hour visitors to view additional information while self-touring onsite.
2. **Landscaping** – Potted plants are an easy way to enhance landscaping in any area of a community. Consider hardy plants that do not need much water to avoid spending too much time caring for them. Substitute perennials in some areas instead of annuals for year-over-year cost savings. Fresh mulch around all flower beds, especially in front of the leasing office, model apartment and main community

entrance, is encouraged. Trim overgrown bushes and trees to keep your landscaping clean and allow for better safety through increased visibility. To keep plants, shrubs and grass green, sprinklers are a low-cost investment to consider that keeps your trees and your lawn watered.

3. **Building Exterior** - Cleaning the outside of your property can do a lot for the appearance of your community, and it is one of the most cost-effective things you can do. Spend extra time on walkways, porches, doors and fences because residents will spend more time there. Aging doors, window frames and shutters can give an unappealing look of deferred maintenance to prospective residents. A new coat of paint can make a world of difference. Pressure washing annually to keep building exteriors free of cobwebs, dirt, pollen and other stains. Clean and inspect all gutters and downspouts and make sure that they are not clogged with debris nor channeling rainwater toward the building. All patios and balconies should be kept clean, free of any debris and follow rules and regulations concerning placement of furniture, grill, bike and other storage items.
4. **Building Interior** - All interior furniture should be in good repair. Interior signage should be easily legible and up to date. It should include any community rules for that area and hours of operation for usage. Interior areas should be well maintained with routine cleaning, stain-free flooring, damage-free walls, adequate lighting with no bulbs out, proper temperature that correlates with outdoor climate and free of odors. Trash should be removed daily, and bathrooms should be checked throughout the day.
5. **Trash** – Outdoor spaces should be clean and free of debris to include trash, pet waste, cigarette butts and the like. Walk your property daily to pick up trash and inspect all outdoor areas to help ensure a clean and well-kept community. All site team members are responsible for ensuring a clean community. If your community employees a groundskeeper, this should be their first duty each morning. It is important to remind all team members that if they see it, pick it up and properly dispose of it. Provide waste bins around all your common spaces, especially near any outdoor cooking and dining spaces or where pets may walk. Ensure that these receptacles are adequately serviced and give clear instructions for your residents to clean up after themselves both on property signage and in your lease agreement. These areas should be inspected regularly by the maintenance staff to ensure cleanliness and safety. Larger trash disposal areas such as compactors and dumpsters should be emptied regularly and have an enclosed gate to keep unsightly trash unseen. This area should be inspected regularly to ensure large pieces of furniture and trash are disposed of efficiently.
6. **Sidewalks and Parking lot** – Walkways are one of the first places that show signs of wear and tear, and one of the places where you will spend the most time on maintenance. Budget annually for repairs to keep sidewalks safe and well maintained. Check the parking lot for any damage like potholes or cracks. Re-striping the parking lot to have clean and bright lines. Ensure the curb paint is in good condition. It is safe to expect curb paint to peel, crack and show black tire marks, so plan accordingly to annually repaint in the spring. Make sure “no parking” areas are clearly marked in yellow and fire zones in red. Make sure all ramps and steps are clearly marked. Dedicate space in front of the leasing office for future resident parking. Doing the above indicates management is concerned about resident and guest safety.
7. **Lighting** – Prospective residents may drive through your community at night to envision how it feels to live in your community. Replace burnt-out bulbs, make sure walkways are well-lit and consider investing in additional lighting that both highlights architectural features and creates a sense of security. The use of LED exterior lighting can create a serene ambiance without a large increase to your property’s utility bills. Using motion-sensor lights on buildings or near pathways and parking can also add to your residents’ comfort by conveying a sense of safety. To ensure all lights are properly working, it is recommended for a team member to inspect all lighting after dusk.
8. **Hardscapes** – In addition to well-kept landscaping, adding hardscapes like rocks and stones will create a pleasant and relaxing look while cutting down on seasonal cost with low maintenance. Installing gravel walking paths or paver stepping-stones promote your community as a natural, peaceful place for an outdoor stroll. Large boulders, smooth stones, and multicolored pebbles are a great addition to outdoor space because they look attractive regardless of age or season. The same is true of sculptures that can withstand the elements, such as those made of glass, ceramic, or metal.

9. **Outdoor Amenities** - Inspecting your property and immediately scheduling anything that looks old or worn for replacement, repair or removal is important to maintaining your curb appeal. In the case of lawn furniture and outdoor decorations, it is better to not have any than for it to be in poor condition. Invest in new grills or a sleek fire pit every few years to give your outdoor space a facelift. If new furniture isn't in the budget, brighten the look of existing outdoor furniture with a fresh coat of paint, and be sure to repair and repaint any rust spots on metal furniture. For wooden furniture, a good scrubbing and a fresh coat of oil can give a clean and refined look. Outdoor amenities include a resident garden, dog park, outdoor lounge, swimming pool, bike rental, outdoor fitness area and even open green space.
10. **Memorable Moments** - Modern consumers are placing a larger emphasis on memorable experiences – and are willing to pay more for personalized engagements over other services and products. With the average prospective resident visiting multiple apartment communities prior to making an informed decision on their new home, it is important that your community provide a lasting first impression. Adding a water feature, engaging welcome sign, colorful bench or personalized branding to your community exterior provides an opportunity to shine.

Related Links and/or Forms

Sample Curb Appeal Checklist

Sample Building Exterior Checklist

About NAA

The National Apartment Association (NAA) serves as the leading voice and preeminent resource through advocacy, education and collaboration on behalf of the rental housing industry. As a federation of nearly 160 affiliates, NAA encompasses over 82,000 members representing more than 9.7 million apartment homes globally. NAA believes that rental housing is a valuable partner in every community that emphasizes integrity, accountability, collaboration, community responsibility, inclusivity and innovation. NAA thanks its strategic partners Maintenance Supply Headquarters and Yardi. To learn more, visit www.naahq.org.