

How merging branding with architectural design can elevate apartment community developments.

How merging branding with architectural design can elevate apartment community developments.

“Gone are the days of slapping a name, logo and a few coordinated colors on a project and calling it branded. Today’s customers have moved beyond that superficial mindset into a more authentic experience. Start asking yourself, ‘Am I aligned, or better yet, ahead of my customers?’”

– Christian Christensen
Bluestone Development

The customer experience is no longer confined to retail stores and entertainment venues. People shopping for a place to live, specifically apartment communities, are demanding more than a sign at the front entrance. Today’s renters are seeking out properties that offer a unique experience that reflects their lifestyle and personality. This shift creates a strong need for greater fusion of branding and architectural design.

Bringing these specialists together, along with interior designers, as part of the overall development plan, the opportunity to create a fully immersive experience for residents becomes easier—ultimately leading to more positive referrals, longer-term agreements, and higher profitability.

Bridging the gap between branding and architecture begins with location.

You could argue that location is just as important to developers as it is the people moving into the space. While those involved in the project may be seeing the area through the lens of opportunity and profitability, it's important to consider how branding can further elevate the appeal of the space. Consider the following as you begin to envision your next project and who might live there:

Get familiar with the surrounding neighborhood.

Get familiar with the surrounding neighborhood:

Spend some time exploring the area and create lists that you can refer to when solidifying the apartment brand. Your lists should include: local amenities such as restaurants, entertainment options, parks, schools, services, and major employers. As you review the lists, is there a particular renter that comes to mind?

Describe the ideal renter.

Describe the ideal renter:

Based on the neighborhood, a vision for the type of renter who might be interested in living in this area should begin coming to mind. Either using a list or more descriptive language, begin to describe your potential renters. Where are they likely to go? What profession will they likely be in? You could go even further and describe age range, income level and any other variety of demo- and psychographics.

Consider what matters most to your prospective renters.

Consider what matters most to your prospective renters:

As mentioned previously, more consumers are choosing to purchase from businesses whose values align with their own. Based on the description of prospective renters, take deeper consideration of their values, and your own. Do you lean toward using environmentally sustainable materials in certain properties? Are you more focused on creating community spaces that help renters connect with one another? Do you focus on philanthropy and utilize your properties or team members to give back to the neighborhood or greater community in some way? Add any similar values you might have with prospective renters to their description.

Having a deeper understanding of how the location and company values might impact renters will go a long way in establishing the right brand and overall look and feel for any apartment community.

Branding can influence architectural design, interior design, marketing, and more.

Core brand elements:

Promise

Values

Personality

Audience

Core Competitors

Differentiators

Big Idea

Renters are no longer satisfied with a sign at the entrance and office lobby. To create a living experience they feel good about, intentional branding throughout the property is necessary. After all, current renters can play a significant role in selling the property to others, especially given the power of social media.

However, the most challenging part could be taking your thoughts and developing them into a brand that reflects the company's goals and resonates with prospective renters. The core elements of the brand to include are: Promise, Values, Personality, Audience, Core Competitors, Positioning, Clear Differentiators and Big Idea. These elements will lead the overall look and feel of the property's brand.

- **Promise:** In its simplest form, the brand promise describes what this apartment community will give its audience.
- **Values:** 3–5 core values (written in a way that aligns with the audiences' values)
- **Personality:** Describes how the apartment community sounds and looks. What should people feel when they see the brand and step onto the property?
- **Audience:** Briefly describes who should live at this property. Elements of this description should align with both the company's values and the property's personality.
- **Core Competitors:** Being familiar with other area apartments and their personality or promise can make it easier to create differentiation.
- **Positioning:** Speaks to what this company and property offers that no one else can.
- **Differentiators:** These should be supporting statements to the positioning. They identify other key selling points that can be used in marketing materials.
- **Big Idea:** A snappy, interesting idea expressed consistently to keep the brand in the hearts and minds of prospective renters.

After an initial brand strategy is formed, this thinking can be brought into the space itself. Because branding is what people think and say about a company when they're not in the room, it's imperative to weave the brand throughout the space and in every possible touch point with prospective renters and anyone else you might be working with. Without a clearly defined strategy, it can be nearly impossible to do this consistently. Consumers need repetition—captivating repetition—to begin recognizing and believing in the brand.

Creating a name and brand identity that draws attention.

Once a brand strategy is created, it becomes easier to name the space and start identifying the core color palette. Partnering with a branding agency who can develop the brand identity can add value to each project as this work easily translates into what your interior design partners are working on. This is another area where consistency can make a difference in your ability to attract and retain renters. From the furnishings in common areas to the design of the apartment numbers, the more you can lean into the brand identity, the more impactful the experience becomes.

As an example, if the apartment community is located in an up-and-coming neighborhood with a younger, highly active demographic, a more playful name and vibrant color palette likely resonates better than more earthy and serious tones. Our recent work for Hello reflects this scenario.



Creating a moodboard with name ideas, colors, typography, and other visual elements that can help express the brand and values in a simple, easy-to-digest way. Bringing each element together serves as a gut-check to make sure that what's being created reflects what it needs it to. For instance, if you're designing a luxury apartment community, everything from the name to the carpet should exude an elevated feel. The details can truly make or break a prospective renter's experience, which can either help or hurt the developer's ability to gain maximum rental income potential.



This is another area a branding agency can add value. By offering an "outside" perspective, these experts can identify additional opportunities as well as potential challenges. Their goal is to help connect the dots so that, from initial introduction to the brand through signing the lease agreement, people feel trust in what's being said and shown to them. When they feel a connection and sense of belonging, they're more likely to extend their contract.



Intentionally integrating brand into apartment spaces.

Spaces for branding:

Exterior signage and wayfinding throughout

Entryways

Hallways and elevators

Public restrooms

Indoor and outdoor common areas

Door numbers

Welcome packets and key rings

Any communication materials

As you think about the overall feel of the property and how renters and guests might wander through the space, collaborating with a branding agency can help to identify opportunities to elevate your work. Some spaces that can easily incorporate branding include:

- Exterior signage and wayfinding throughout
- Entryways
- Hallways and elevators
- Public restrooms
- Indoor and outdoor common areas
- Door numbers
- Welcome packets and key rings
- Any communication materials, directed toward prospective and existing residents

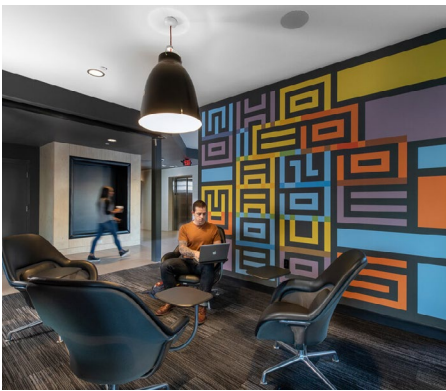
As mentioned, being consistent with colors, typography and tone can go a long way in helping people feel like they belong. Bringing in elements that speak to the company's values goes even further in making the audience and the greater community feel a connection to the property—possibly even beyond this apartment community.

Adding environmental branding as a line item on multi-unit residential projects helps create a well-rounded offering to developers and can, in many ways, simplify the overall process. From architectural elements to interior design to naming and marketing, weaving a clearly defined brand throughout will help tell a more compelling story to the right audience.

Having a partner who has experience working alongside other specialists working on these projects further adds to the overall experience for renters, and creates additional revenue for your firm. And, it supports developers' need to fill units quickly, achieve longer lease agreements, and receive maximum profitability.



⚡ We're a pivotal-moment brand agency



Connect with Daake



Stay in touch with our latest work, our thinking and rebranding news and trends.
daake.com/our-thinking