

Maintaining A Market Leadership Position:

The interiors of your community can play a key role

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If the interior commons or resident areas of your community are outdated, no longer reflective of your mission, or more importantly not helping to ‘sell’ your lifestyle and image to new customers, it’s time to plan for a change. Now more than ever, your community needs to “stand out” from the competition.

In today’s tight capital markets, industry lenders look for a strong history of well-planned and executed physical plant improvements when evaluating communities for financing development, renovation or expansion. Lenders want to see that your operating budget is setting aside adequate cash to reinvest in the physical plant and that your focus is to stay relevant in your primary market area by keeping your product fresh and attractive.

studioSIX5 has collaborated with Life Care Services (LCS) of Des Moines, Iowa to forecast, plan and implement interior improvements and upgrades for many of their continuing care retirement communities across the country. These experiences have been so valuable and cost-effective for LCS that we have now developed an affordable Interior Design Audit Program to assist other clients seeking a competitive edge.

The goal of this program is to provide a roadmap for identifying the best opportunities to achieve up to date, functional, and attractive interior spaces. We have found the program critical in helping to achieve successful renovations that avoid time delays and budget breaking detours and missteps. Correctly phasing renovations into your operations also eliminates the need to implement changes to previous improvements to accommodate future construction.

At Ginger Cove in Annapolis, Maryland, studioSIX5 worked closely with CEO & Executive Director Dr. Ed Mallick and a resident committee to formulate plans and budgets for a new addition, and renovations of the health center and independent living commons areas. Subsequent to studioSIX5’s community audit, capital improvements were phased and are now under construction. Dr. Mallick has told us “including residents in the initial design process enabled them to help shape the big picture and created support and confidence throughout the whole process.” Rave reviews are now coming in from both existing and prospective residents at Ginger Cove.

Brandon Woods at Alvamar in Lawrence, Kansas recently completed community commons areas upgrades that integrate imaginative innovations with sound financial decisions. Executive Director Jason Kohler describes the studioSIX5 process as collaborative and creative. “They took the time to understand not only our capital limitations and current needs, but also helped us envision the needs of future clients.”

The original designs I created for Claridge Court in Prairie Village, Kansas stood the test of time for almost 20 years. Executive Director David Randazzo realized changes were necessary to ensure the communities' market leadership position and requested studioSIX5's assistance in identifying the upgrades and associated costs required to implement resident centered care models for their skilled nursing center. Following the audit and ensuing improvements, Randazzo had this to say, "The response to our updated health center, Somerset, has been overwhelming! Residents, families, and visitors love the new warm color scheme, upgraded lighting, and more residential atmosphere. We replaced the traditional nurses' station with a residential lounge area to encourage social interaction, transformed our assisted bathing into spas, and generally gave our community an aesthetic that matches Claridge Court's commitment to the highest quality care and dignity of our residents."

A typical studioSIX5 Interior Design Audit takes three days on site and results in visual and written observations that ensure goals and budgets accurately allocate resources for the future. The audit costs between \$3500.00 to \$5000.00 and expenses, and provides the following services:

- An introductory focus group meeting to discover and define community goals.
- A visual and photographic record of all audited areas.
- A follow up meeting to share preliminary findings.
- A written report documenting observations and outlining recommended action items with accompanying budget estimates.

Our design recommendations are always creative, but we never lose sight of the bottom line. Often, as result of going through the audit process, a more comprehensive Masterplan will be requested, or selected renovations will begin immediately.

Most of us know first impressions matter. In the first five to ten seconds, a prospective resident will make either a positive or a negative decision about your community. Battling negative first impressions already puts your marketing program at a disadvantage, not to mention the communication dollars required to regain that prospective resident's interest. Creating and adhering to an interior design improvement plan will ensure the aesthetic and functional elements of your community work together to make you "STAND OUT."