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Re-energize your shopping center - Quincy Granite Shopping Center case study - by Richard Poyant

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What does your signage say about your brand? Is your signage outdated and in need of a makeover? You may be sending out the wrong message to your tenants and their customers, one that says your brand, your business, your shopping center is outdated, tired and irrelevant. Don't let your signage send out a message that you're not proud of.

In today's competitive retail environment, the strength and relevance of your brand image is more important than ever. Signage and "streetscape" plays a major role in your business, and an untapped opportunity to take advantage of the power of visual communications.

How can shopping centers best provide a worthwhile experience for the consumer to come out rather than shop on-line? Creating a vibrant, fresh, bright, and eye catching environment will attract new business and provide potential and existing customers with confidence in your brand.

Creating an effective visual solution may be the first step in an overall business strategy that conveys a clear message of what your customers will experience interacting with you. Strong visual branding is the most cost effective way to increase your recognition with shoppers.

When considering different visual design options, keep these tips in mind:

- Keep it consistent, visible and legible – Your “streetscape” is your “first impression” and it must project the positive image you want the public to have of your center.
- Tell your own unique story – Consider what it is that your tenants, visitors, and customers value about your location, tenant mix, unique property features and what it is that they will like about the products and services that you offer them and leverage those characteristics in the new design. This is how to keep your brand alive and flourishing.
- Design – One of the most important factors in updating your shopping center brand is the design development. Your design must make a powerful statement. A design that can be read and understood with just a quick glance will create the most effective sign. Keep it simple.

Your updated “streetscape” will make thousands of impressions every day creating top of the mind awareness. A well-researched and well-engineered branding program will promote a better visitor experience, improve traffic patterns to your location, and reflect your overall brand image.

When David Grossman and the team at The Grossman Companies approached Poyant in 2013, they were looking for a dramatic way to leverage the high visibility and traffic exposure for Granite City Place Shopping Center located at the gateway to downtown Quincy off of Burgin Parkway.

When the center was first conceived and built-out in the 1980’s, the city of Quincy put restrictions on shopping center identification, partially due to the mixed use neighborhood surrounding the property. At the time, Grossman came up with a creative solution to draw attention by featuring two 20’ square, 40’ tall, freestanding tower structures, one located at the Burgin Parkway side and one on the backside facing the residential area. The towers were internally floodlighted and the roofs were made of translucent fiberglass panels to provide a “glow” to the towers.

Poyant’s project team re-purposed the existing infrastructure to update and enhance the property, incorporating new visual features. Together, the Grossman and Poyant teams collaborated on the goals and the solutions:

- Provide some way of creating a name identity to the shopping center that can be easily recognizable and would allow Grossman to tie this in with other means of marketing the center.
- Create a new look that conveys an exciting shopping experience that appeals to the tenant’s target audience.
- Provide increased capacity for addressing the increased number of tenants in the shopping center.
- Work within a cost-effective budget.
- High durability and low maintenance of the new elements.

With these goals in mind, the Poyant team developed a fresh design concept adding visual lifestyle graphics communicating and eliciting a new appealing appearance to the center. It elevates the center from just another strip mall to being more contemporary and customer focused.

Poyant looked at the existing shopping center color scheme, landscaping and lighting so as to prepare a comprehensive recommendation. We also reviewed the current sign code restrictions in Quincy and took those into consideration.

Poyant also recommended removing trees that limited the exposure of the upper sections of Tower A and modifying the existing landscaping. The team also recommended updating the existing floodlighting to provide more nighttime punch to the “roof glow.”

The design team developed a new color for the existing tower steel framework and the new design elements of the tower that would blend the tower into the existing color scheme of the shopping center and compliment the new design elements.

Design elements include new internally illuminated ID Cabinets for each tower with the name of the shopping center featured with dimensional, edge-lit and face-lit graphics, three on Tower A and two on Tower B. These ID Cabinets clearly brand and identify the shopping center and are highly visible to the surrounding traffic.

9 – 6' x 6' Lifestyle Graphic Image Cabinets were installed on Tower A that elicits positive feelings with vibrant, high resolution, full color, back-lit images and targets a diverse customer base. These cabinets were inserted into the geometric pattern of the tower and created a natural flow for the eye to follow.

The final element are 3 new enlarged tenant cabinets replacing existing tenant cabinets on Tower A utilizing a new tenant layout and cohesive color scheme to further enhance the overall presentation.

“The Grossman Companies approved the design and the budget and gave Poyant the green light. “I am proud to be part of such a great project that will enhance the beauty of not only the shopping plaza but the locality,” said Christine Stonis, project manager for the Grossman Companies.

Since the proposed design would exceed the city of Quincy Sign regulations, Poyant worked with landlord legal counsel and sought a variance approval with the zoning board and received favorable approval for the creative approach that was presented.

The project has just been completed in August of 2015, on-time and on-budget and is considered a success by all involved; landlord, city officials, tenants and retail customers.

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