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Preserving your building & cultivating the first impression - by Mark Aquilino

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When you arrive for that job interview either in person or via Zoom, and your tie is askew or your suit is ruffled, well, I wish I could tell you no one was going to notice. I would be lying to you though. They are definitely going to notice. In a job interview or a business meeting, you are presenting yourself and you want your personal presentation to be professional, neat and tidy. It is not about dazzling them with your stylish wardrobe, but one way or the other, you will be sending a powerful message with your attire—so make it a good one. Business owners and commercial property managers should think about their grounds in the same way. When someone approaches your property or your campus, the first thing they will see are your grounds: Your grass and your trees and your shrubs. The condition of your landscaping—like it or not—says a lot about who you are as an institution.

If shrubs and trees are overgrown or your lawn is patchy, people take note, if not entirely consciously. In the same vein, if your landscaping is meticulously and thoughtfully maintained, people notice that as well. And isn't that the impression you want to make? That your institution is neat, tidy, and detail-oriented? That says professional. That says impressive. That is powerful. It also says valuable.

Landscaping is not just about having some pretty flowers in the springtime, it is about managing your commercial property's appearance to maximize your property's value, both for your current tenants and employees and future ones. Even with businesses beginning to welcome back employees, there are fewer and fewer people in the office now. According to a survey by Prudential released this spring, 87% of respondents wanted to be able to continue working remotely post-pandemic. That is forcing businesses to adapt.

It is easy to assume larger facilities, campuses and office parks will go by the wayside now that companies are downsizing but when one company downsizes, it opens up an opportunity for another business. A building that once held one big company now can hold several smaller entities. Property managers may ultimately have more tenants and that only reinforces the importance and impact of your grounds—and making that strong first impression. Now is the time to invest in your property's appearance. A commercial landscaping provider should be playing a crucial role in managing your building asset. That is why it is critical your landscaping partner is a partner in the truest sense. The right company will help identify and follow through on short- and long-term objectives—and they should be helping you find areas to save money. The right company will rely on best practices to ensure your building asset maintains esthetic value and curb appeal reflective of your brand.

Proper grounds management adds value in terms of actual dollars. Any real estate agent will tell you a well-maintained property is likely to sell faster and for more money.

At Outdoor Pride Snow and Landscape Management, we take a hands-on approach to every property. We work collaboratively with property managers and building owners to provide guidance and ideas to help achieve their goals—through sound, collaborative decision-making that positively

impacts esthetics and financial operating budgets. It is our responsibility to be a partner who helps preserve properties as the assets they are.

Take a look outside. Is there room for improvement? Probably. Are your shrubs overgrown? Can you see out the windows of the first floor? Kidding, probably. Does the lawn look fresh and green? Do your grounds offer people anything visually? Flowers? Trees? Stonework? Is your property offering a landscape or a blank, boring canvas?

We are constantly talking to our clients about how we can make improvements and enhancements to their grounds. Yes, it is possible your landscape has become so outdated or overgrown that a complete overhaul is necessary.

More likely, your landscaping provider or your own, in-house grounds team, can just make a few strategic tweaks and adjustments to better preserve your building and property assets to maximize value.

You can add a few flowering trees and perennial flowers for some springtime beautification. Clean up the flower beds and the edges of the lawn. Trim and prune hedges and trees. Wash your walkways for a cleaner look. Pay close attention to your entryways—remember, first impressions. A few simple but strategically placed plantings might go a long way.

Clothes do not define the person and grounds do not define an institution. But clothes and grounds can similarly play an important role in making sure others view people and property through the appropriate lens. Now is the time to put a critical eye on your grounds to ensure you are making the right first impression to help you preserve your asset.

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