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Houston, Texas



Research Is Backbone of CS Design Group's Work

By Kathy Bowen Stolz

For Rick Clarke and Dick Clarke, principals of CS Design Group, their work always starts with research.

This full-service Houston design company specializes in multifamily and commercial properties, offering interior design, architectural detailing, procurement and project management.

About 95 percent of its business is in multifamily development. CS Design Group becomes part of the project team (working with the principal, clients, architects, contractors and consultants) to create the final vision for the project.

The company's work always starts with market and demographic research, which dictates the design focus. "That's why we do such an up-front study," Rick stated. "We want a property that attracts and speaks to the tenants of who will be living and working in the demographic area."

Their research encompasses a "whole litany of things,"

explained Rick. They seek information from multiple organizations in the multifamily housing business as well as from other data sources, including conversations with competitors and others in the field. All told, CS Design looks at 20 types of studies. It is part of the company's Smart Design™ process.

According to Rick Clarke, the stay-at-home orders as a result of the Covid-19 coronavirus pandemic will just increase what is already becoming a new way of life. Tenants will need to "live, work and play" in their own apartment communities, which should provide "one-stop shopping" for its residents.

"A lot of people will be working from their homes in the future. They can 'office' in the amenity's spaces, which give them a place to work, have meetings and also be a place to throw events. The amenities' building will have a WiFi café and huge exercise rooms. Everything they need will be right there," he continued.

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Many people are going to need this type of housing immediately, Rick predicts. “People are leveraged to death. They’re having to make big financial decisions. They will find it harder to keep up with house payments along with car payments and student loan payments. That is a situation that’s good for apartments that are priced right – in the \$1,200 to \$1,800 a month range. That’s the hot spot coming up for the housing market.” And that hot spot happens to be CS Design Group’s specialty!

As designers, CS Design Group “helps come up with the final vision for each project,” Rick stated. “We work with the architects, owner and developer to design all visual parts of a project from interior to exterior materials, including colors, floors, countertops, cabinets, exteriors and interiors materials, pools, dog parks and walking trails, etc. We select the materials in the architectural design to fit the people who will be living there.

“The idea is to attract tenants and get them excited, to make the design cutting-edge but also inviting. The magic is in mixing the two together to create a space that is inviting as well as a timeless experience.”

The two CS Design principals can also help brand the communities by creating the signage, including project logos, an important aspect to ensure the overall design fits the targeted demographic group, as well as giving the investors a name and brand that can be taken forward to all future projects

Dick Clarke, the company’s lead designer, who studied interior design at University of Texas and Texas State, is the more creative member of the duo. “Dick is a natural designer. He’s great at design, as well as working with our other team members. No one is ever disappointed,” Rick stated.

Rick Clarke said his expertise is on the operation side of the business. With 20 years of designing and managing multifamily and commercial projects, his “secret sauce” is in design concepts, construction documents, coordinating team members, streamlining processes, staying on time and budget and solving problems calmly and efficiently.

“We love what we do, and, with over 20 years in the business, we feel we have that special something that only experience can bring.”

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