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Signs of the times for new condos

Condo marketers adopt guerrilla ads

By Lauren Elkies

It's a sign of the times. Marketing companies are relying more heavily on creative guerrilla-style street-level advertising to kick-off pre-sales at new condominiums.

One approach involves blanketing a location with so-called wild postings or street



Posters for the Edge in Williamsburg.

posters, an outdoor advertising tactic more commonly used to promote album releases, concerts and store openings.

Core Group Marketing is hitting areas in Chelsea, the Lower East Side and multiple neighborhoods in Brooklyn with wild postings for the new residential development 125 North 10th Street in Williamsburg. A series of the same 2-by-3-foot poster is pasted up at entrances to subway stations, on construction fences and on outside billboards.

Doug Bowen, a Core Group vice president and director of sales for 125 North 10th Street, said that in some places, there are as many as 16 posters.

"It has been nothing but wildly successful," Bowen said, based solely on feedback from potential and actual buyers.

For all the sites, hundreds of posters went up in 30-day cycles for between \$5,000 and \$10,000 a blitz, Bowen said. The wild postings went up when Core launched sales in January.

Bowen said the tactic is just about creating traffic, not trying to do deals without co-broking. "We're completely co-broke friendly," Bowen said.

Another new development, Toren, a condo in Fort Greene, is also pasting ads on surfaces in Manhattan, Curbed.com reported.

One problem with any type of outdoor postering is that there is no policing to prevent people from covering each other's posters.

A sign advertising a development at the site of the building to come is permitted, according to the city's Department of Buildings.

Advertising signs elsewhere are permitted only in certain zoning districts, and any poster on a construction fence is illegal.

Violations can result in fines or other penalties.

Postering would not suit all projects — namely ones that are luxury condos.

"This was a perfect fit for this building. We have a very made-in-Brooklyn kind of concept here," Bowen said. But he added, "I don't think if I was marketing the Lucida [on East 86th Street] I'd be using this campaign. I'd be taking out an ad [in a newspaper]."

In other ad campaigns, typical promotions at construction sites — signs with little more than sales contact information on them — are being scrapped in favor of more sophisticated, comprehensive and bolder promotions selling a lifestyle.

"Today, since there are so many buildings competing for the same buyer pool, the signage has to be strong enough to pique prospects' interest enough to motivate them to go to the sales gallery to get more information," said Jacqueline Urgo, president of the Marketing Directors. "They tell a much more complete product story in order to accomplish just that."

At the Platinum at 247 West 46th Street, for example, Marketing Directors used poster-size ads on the base of the construction site with renderings of the interiors and the lobby and a list of amenities.

The more comprehensive visuals "set the tone for the brand so there's consistency in all the promotional materials," Uργο said.

Also investing in signage is the Developers Group, which has posted ads on the outside of buildings and construction sites, telephone kiosks and subway station entrances. The company wrapped the Edge development in Williamsburg in signage. Uptown Partners, the developers of Harlem's Fifth on the Park, hired an actor to ride around the Upper West Side in a rental truck plastered in "Fifth on the Park" billboards. He stopped intermittently and handed out brochures.

After brokers, the greatest amount of traffic is garnered through ads posted on construction sites, Uργο said.

Construction site signage prices can range from \$20,000 to \$150,000, she said. A full-page ad in a high-profile newspaper could run in the five digits for one shot. "It's a one-time payment that lasts a long time," Uργο said, and it can be cheaper than ongoing advertising in more traditional print media and the Internet.

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