

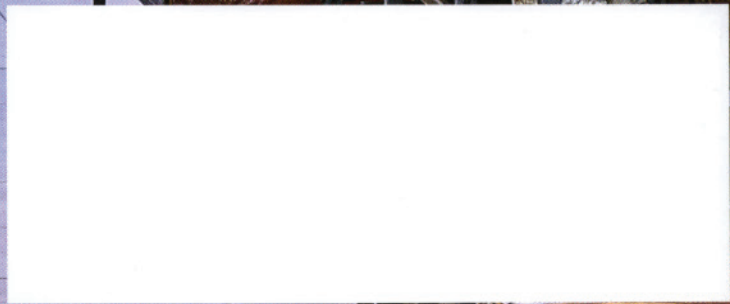
Professional Builder®

CREATING CONNECTION

AWARD-WINNING STRATEGIES FROM THE
2018 NATIONAL SALES & MARKETING AWARDS

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Today's master planned communities (MPCs) track with recent trends that favor neighborhoods where residents can forge bonds and take advantage of amenities that inspire connections: clubhouses, pools, outdoor grilling areas, dog parks, community vegetable gardens, playgrounds, trails, rooftop lounges, coffee shops, and other gathering spots. Standouts in that group are winners of NAHB's 2018 National Sales and Marketing Awards, which celebrate programs and campaigns that appeal to consumers' desires for authenticity and positive lifestyles using fresh imagery, clear messaging, and modern takes on traditional ideas.

The 2018 Community of the Year Award was shared this year by two projects. Ward Village leverages its lush locale, the island of Oahu, inviting buyers to envision life at a vertical MPC in Honolulu. Riverstone built a campaign on inclusivity-for-all, drawing Fresno, Calif.-area residents to an unproven area 10 miles away. Marketing ties the new community to its agrarian past and offers buyers peace of mind with its promise of a sustainable water supply in this drought-prone area. Back East, Riverworks, in Phoenixville, Pa., draws on the property's previous life as a steel mill, encouraging renters to stay and play in its leasing/community center. In Rancho Mission Viejo, Calif., and Calabasas, Calif., Esencia and Avanti show the power of residents and social media bloggers spreading the news. The following selections from this year's winners show an array of ideas that every marketer, regardless of the campaign type, geography, or budget, can get excited about.

AGRARIAN AND AUTHENTIC Master Planned Community of the Year Best Print Campaign Riverstone, Madera, Calif.

Riverstone Development/InterCommunications

Life in Madera County in central California has always centered on agriculture, but the area has seen hard times. Now, the county economy is on the upswing with an estimated 22,000 job openings in the next six years and nearly 140,000 in nearby Fresno County. Riverstone, a new 2,000-acre community being built 10 miles from the city of Fresno, is poised to help change the local housing landscape.

Firmly anchored in the local farming vernacular, Riverstone takes advantage of the undulating property formerly owned by S&J Ranch. At the height of its success, the ranch was the state's largest olive grower and it is credited with developing Madera's pistachio industry. The property is located 6 miles from the San Joaquin River, which residents will have access to. And, through the Root Creek Water District, Riverstone residents will enjoy a sustainable water supply via an underground aquifer—a key amenity in a drought-prone area.

"From the minute you drive through the entrance and see the water tower—a symbol of the agrarian heritage—you feel the project is authentic," says Toni Alexander, president and creative director for InterCommunications.

MEETING A CHALLENGE

"Getting people who live in the existing metroplex to move out of their comfort zone, across the river and into a new county takes a little bit of packaging, if you will," Alexander



says. (Riverstone also won for Best Print Campaign.)

Through focus groups and chat room discussions, developers discovered what people wanted: They came away with a 20-point list that included walkable and connected communities, trails, pocket parks, and a gym, says Tim Jones, owner of the land and co-developer with Nick Bruno.

Riverstone designers responded with 115 acres of parks and trails; dog parks; The Gear Barn, which outfits residents for biking, kayaking, and other outdoor expeditions; community clubhouses; a community farm; historic olive and citrus groves; on-site schools; and a \$7 million main lodge that boasts a state-of-the-art fitness center, flex spaces for gatherings, outdoor firepits, and a terrace overlooking a resort-style pool, spa, cabanas, and a refreshment bar.

And then there's the water. "We have water contracts that provide us 50 years of surface water that will do a water balance with the aquifer," Jones says. The nearby San Joaquin River will be accessible through a trail system still to be built, but the developer also owns 5,000 acres next door that includes about 3 miles of the river. "We're working on entitlements now," Jones says.

The first round of 860 homes in the Lodge District—being built by D.R. Horton, Lennar, and McCaffrey—range in price from \$320,000 to about \$550,000, according to Jones. As the other seven districts are built out, there will be more townhomes and single-family homes (for a total of 6,578 units) on larger pieces of land and at higher price points, but, says Alexander, "it's exciting to see something for hard-working people to come home to at night that doesn't cost a million dollars." There will also be a town center that includes retail and commercial spaces.

COMMUNITY FOR ALL

Riverstone's marketing campaign, which includes an 80-page four-color magazine, tells the story of the pride in the area's agrarian heritage, its proximity to the river, and the community's focus on a healthy lifestyle and amenities available to all. "The print campaign lets people know that everyone is welcome, from the gardener to the yogi to mountain bikers," Alexander says. "This is a community for everyone."

Since breaking ground in early 2017, builders have closed on about 500 lots, Jones says, selling about 30 homes a month.

Riverstone (left) in Madera, Calif., shared top honors for Master Planned Community of the Year for the ways it features its locale, existing resources, a message of authenticity, and the region's agrarian heritage, as seen in the interior details of the sales center (above).