

Before: White Oak Living by Doug S.

If a brand can say “You’ve arrived,” Scott Pryor’s work for the White Oak retirement community does it.

Officially known as *White Oak Living*, the nicely-treed 85-acre developments outside Dayton, Ohio, describes itself as “an active adult, resort-style, independent living, community for residents 62 and over.”

How active? Scott Pryor, Principal at Ann Arbor, MI Pryor Design, notes that all of the photography in the ads, award-winning sales kit and Web site he designed are all *exterior* shots.

Think gated, secure and all-inclusive.

It’s the kind of place that attracts pampered people who’ve earned the right not to worry about much of anything—from cutting the grass to which chef-prepared meal they’ll have in White Oak’s Lodge. As one of the tag lines puts it, the development is “A neighborhood that’s Redefining Retirement.”

Pryor was brought in on the ground floor along with the architects and other core members of the development team. That was crucial to the direction of the brand, since the developers opted for the warm, leather-bound, timbered comfort of the Arts & Crafts Movement...inside and out.

Think Stickley.

You can practically smell red-stained quarter-sawn oak in Pryor’s mark. The type he picked was a heritage-leaning, gracefully serifed, all-caps Trajan, in black with the “W” in “White” and the

After: White Oak Living by Eve

The white oak is a notoriously long-lived tree, so it only made sense that a community designed for the post-Baby Boomer set still in the prime of life chose the hardwood it for its symbol. “This is not the end!” says Scott Pryor of Pryor Design in Ann Arbor, Mich.

At White Oak Living, set on 85 acres near Dayton, Ohio, the emphasis is on living—in fact, its slogan is “Inspired Living. Every Day.”—and retired couples are its main target. (While single retirees are welcome, it certainly isn’t meant to be a haven for the lonely widow or widower to idly while away one’s twilight years.) The message, says Pryor, is, “Hey, you’re still here, you’re still active, join a community comprised of people just like you.” And those people, seeking a high-class, elegant living environment, find it in White Oak’s “healthy, uplifting lifestyle. It’s a very exclusive thing, a Lexus of retirement living.” Pryor strived to convey this richness in White Oak’s marketing materials, including the Web site—which features Boomer couples enjoying such leisure activities as swimming, bicycling and wine tasting—stationery, direct mail pieces and signage at the complex itself.

Like White Oak’s residents, the design also is meant to age gracefully. “It’s timeless,” Pryor says. “We took real care with the color schemes, right down to the primary typeface. Baskerville is timeless, yet romantic.” The logo features a metallic copper—an element especially prominent on its printed materials—designed to convey “a lifestyle that’s uplifting, with very active retired couples doing things. We want to

“K” in “Oak” modified to book-end the wordmark. The strong horizontals and extra weight at the ends “locked in that top level,” according to Pryor. Nestled beneath is Pryor’s tagline——“Inspired Living. Every Day.”——in a coppersy, all-caps Futura with s-shaped dingbats on either side. (Pryor also wrote or collaborated on the rest of the copy elsewhere.)

Pryor’s logo for White Oak is centered below the type. The four strokes of a black “W” have been tapered, thickened and curved, suggesting the hills and vales of southern Ohio. According to Pryor, the two inner strokes of the figure can also be read as a road or path, trailing off to an unseen mid-point and punctuated by a silhouetted white oak tree. Arched in copper above and around the tree form in the logo is the crescent-shaped, top three-fourths of an “O.”

Think warmed by sunrise well into life’s journey.

All things considered, not a bad place at which to have arrived.

inspire people with a richness and a classic [feeling] contrasted with these very vibrant and active people enjoying really wonderful cuisine and having access to a really wonderful spa.” Even though the community resembles more a destination resort than a traditional retirement community, Pryor kept the audience ever in his sight when designing for his market. “While the Web site was extremely important, the sales kit is the crown jewel of the campaign. Remember, [this generation] grew up with books!”

While avoiding the hard sell, Pryor created a logo with an evocative yet distinctive touch respectful of its target. The *w* and *o* join with a silhouetted white oak to form a little scene of this corner of southwest Ohio. “It’s a gorgeous piece of land,” he says, adding that the *w* suggests “not just hills but a pathway leading to it.” As for the copper halo that is the *o* around the tree, make no mistake about which way it’s going. “It’s a sunrise, not sunset,” Pryor says emphatically. “That [sun] form is obviously something used often—dawn versus dusk—but dawn is more appropriate for this audience.”

If each year represents another trip of the earth around the sun, the journey of White Oak’s residents may be long but certainly not downhill. “As we get older, we’re actually getting younger,” Pryor says. “Turning 40 isn’t like it was when your father turned 40. [White Oak’s residents] aren’t sitting around playing bridge—but they may go out and experience a walking trail.”