

MULTIFAMILY PROPERTIES

Quarterly

AMENITIES

Time for a fitness refresh? 3 steps to success

If you're looking to make your amenities more competitive and compelling, a refresh of the on-property fitness and recreation spaces can be an effective upgrade priority with rapid results. Trends in fitness and wellness are constantly changing, and, as one of the top amenities that drive lease rates, being outdated or drab can be akin to disaster. The option to upgrade need not be overwhelming, as the choice is yours to change a little or a lot, and there are a few key considerations you'll want to think through at the start so that the result is all that you hope it will be.

■ **Get it together.** Getting organized is the first step behind any successful refresh, starting with an assessment of how the space in question is currently being used, or not used enough, as the case may be. Getting feedback from current users is crucial, especially if you have avid community members who frequently enjoy the amenity as is, as you don't want to alienate the users you have – you just want to make the experience better and add to your advocates.

Be prepared to share with your design experts what the issues and concerns are, what the unique needs of your community might be, and what you imagine changing to better meet those needs. It's important to have an idea of what you want, so that the team you work with to get it done can meet your expectations.

You also need to be ready with a budget range (as costs for different levels of flooring, equipment or fixtures can vary dramatically), timing expectations and some early stage logistics solutions. Remodeling projects are often more complex than new development projects, as there are so many moving parts to take into consideration when you're dealing with something



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other than a blank slate. Where do you store existing equipment if you're redoing the floors? What equipment and materials will be repurposed, and which will be disposed of (and how)? Ensuring that refresh projects are as least disruptive as possible

requires several layers of logistical coordination.

For both financial and experiential reasons, you may want to consider phased updates as an option that can result in introducing new updates more regularly, creating a continuous sense of excitement around what's next.

■ **Choose your path.** This is where the heavy lifting takes place, all puns intended.

Based on the amount of change desired, you might choose to merely rearrange the space to manage the equipment and flow better. Especially in the fitness and wellness spaces, training modalities have changed significantly over the past few years, and many fitness programs take up more space than they used to. Simple changes to reconfigure your spaces (rearranging machines or creating dedicated zones for different types of workouts) can make them more functional, accommodating and engaging – which is the whole point of the fitness amenity. Remembering logistics, you'll need to make sure that electrical and technological hookups can be adapted or updated to support the refreshed setup.

Small changes like changing the layout can make a significant difference if larger upgrade options are out of budget range. Switching out the flooring can change the entire



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look and feel of the space(s) with a single edit. Elements like wall graphics, lighting, and technology upgrades are also immediately evident when the refresh is complete.

Upgrading some or all of your fitness equipment is a larger investment, but well worth it given the prized asset that a modernized fitness amenity can be for the property.

Fitness-forward communities use state-of-the-art, multifunctional equipment to inspire and engage residents who are passionate about fitness as part of their lifestyle. Beyond the usability of the fitness amenity, it also creates an impression on non-users (or not-yet users). Offering a fitness experience that reinforces or lifts the community brand demonstrates, on multiple levels, that the management cares about the well-being of residents. Refreshing community fitness equipment gives active users the experiences they crave while providing a motivational preview for future leaseholders. Expert fitness consultants can help you design the equipment mix that's right for your community, using existing options and infusing new ones to spark interest in the refreshed amenity from all angles.

Adding programming options or bringing in guest professionals can

also be part of a refresh strategy, especially if you have an unmanned fitness facility. Think about hosting guest trainers to work with individuals or create innovative group fitness options that can get the whole community moving together.

■ **Be flexible.** From the open-mindedness needed to consider new ideas, to bending around construction challenges, to unexpected changes that always seem to occur, a certain amount of flexibility is necessary with any remodeling project. To remain current and relevant, many communities are strategically planning refresh projects to occur in synchronization every few years to keep a consistent cycle of innovation flowing through the community. Especially in an area like fitness where trends change frequently, having a "constantly innovating" mindset is beneficial in creating compelling amenities that keep your properties at the top of the game.

Making something great out of an older or more challenging space can be very rewarding. Look at some of your outdated or underutilized fitness amenities and see how taking a few steps can make them a better asset for the property. ▲

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