

Vandalism Strikes on Poor Landscape Design

In a suburb neighborhood with miles of green grass lining the roads, you're bound to have an occasional immature driver who wants to show off the abilities of his four wheel drive.

The members of the homeowner's association (HOA) who oversee the landscaping in Julington Creek Plantation in St. Johns County, FL, think it's a good idea to advertise the fact that the HOA is going to pay the lawn maintenance company to replace the sod every time this happens. And they want the hundreds of homeowners who drive by this to experience a moment of frustration and loss as they head back to their nice safe homes in the suburbs. Maybe the HOA is hoping that parents will go home and scold their innocent teens.

Every day, a small army of men and women from Nanak's Landscaping arrives to mow miles of grass, trim miles of shrubs, and weed countless flower beds in this large planned development. The homeowners pay for this costly recurring service.

The sign confirms that the HOA is dedicated to keep doing things the way they've been doing them for the past decade. Instead of thinking of more sustainable ways to manage the landscaping, they're going to buy sod and pay Nanak's to make the grass look like new again.

There is no real corrective action on this incident, just an advertisement of the obvious—someone ran off the road. A corrective action would involve adjusting the landscape design to reduce the number of "tear up the grass" incidents, and the cost of repairing them. No problem has been resolved by this sign.

Given the current state of the economy, it would make much more sense if the HOA and its paid vendors focused more time figuring out what landscaping modifications can be made to make the neighborhood landscaping more sustainable and reduce the overall maintenance costs for the customers they serve. I encourage Nanak's and other large landscaping companies to become ISO 14001 certified to demonstrate their commitment to sustainability.

Be careful what signs you post. They often say much more than you intend. If you're interested in finding a long term solution to a recurring problem, or if you're interested in ISO 14001 Environmental Management System certification, contact Dr Lorraine.

If you're aware of other similar issues with signs or greenscaping, please feel free to post a comment. I'd like to hear your story.