

## Serenbe: Changing Perceptions of Suburban Development

### Overview

Serenbe is a 900-acre community located 32 miles south of downtown Atlanta, the first development in the 65,000 acres of protected land known as the Chattahoochee Hill Country. Serenbe combines select principles of new urbanism and conservation communities to create the next generation of responsible development. The hamlet includes home sites, retail shops, office space, restaurants and unique amenities for a true live/work environment. Seventy percent of the acreage is preserved as green space. Led by the vision of one of its founders, Steve Nygren, the community is rising adjacent to the decade-old Serenbe Bed & Breakfast.

### Objectives

Breaking tradition in an area known for urban and suburban sprawl, Serenbe asked Cookerly to turn the tides of public opinion about suburban development in metro Atlanta and beyond. The agency was retained in 2004 to develop a strong brand and generate sales for the community.

### Strategy & Tactics

Cookerly created a program to reach three target audiences:

- Prospective homebuyers, both first and second home
- Future residents and business owners, to create a sense of community as the community developed and homes and businesses were built
- Gatekeepers, including media and potential funders for the non-profit Chattahoochee Hill Country.

To reach these audiences, the agency developed a multi-faceted campaign, focused primarily on media relations. The agency strategically placed stories differentiating Serenbe from other new urbanist developments, highlighting its rural setting, environmental consciousness and arts and culture-focused amenities. In addition, the program focused on obtaining coverage for the Bed & Breakfast (now the Serenbe Country Inn), to draw guests that may purchase homes. Supporting tactics included a bi-monthly newsletter to prospects, stakeholders and committed homebuyers; and an awards program, designed to raise the visibility of the community among thought leaders nationwide.



Media results generated leads for the community, as well as increasing business at the Bed & Breakfast. In addition to ongoing local and regional coverage, the agency secured high-profile national coverage for the small suburban community, including a full-page article in *USA Today* – even before ground was broken. Feature articles also appeared in the *New York Times*, *Southern Living*, *Where to Retire*, *Southern Bride/Romantic Destinations*, and *Plenty*. Steve Nygren was featured as part of *Creative Loafing's* annual Green Team, and recognized in *Georgia Trend's* 2004 issue of most influential Georgians. Awards garnered in the first year included three gold awards from the Greater Atlanta Home Builders Association. The agency also conceived and secured Serenbe as the site for the 2006 *Cooking Light FitHouse* show home.

### Results

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### Highlights

Strategic media relations garnered coverage in *USA Today*, even before ground was broken

Serenbe was selected as the site for the 2006 *Cooking Light FitHouse* due to the agency's work

A two-day NY media tour resulted in meetings with *The New York Times*, *House & Garden*, *Metropolitan Home*, *Travel & Leisure*, and more.