

What's it cost to produce this 4-by-8 site sign?

Tracking the costs for a double-faced site sign

By Dave Correll

Housing-development signs are pretty typical of the work we do in our small, commercial sign shop. They usually have a name of the development, a plat map and all the other pertinent information needed. We usually try to sell the developer on a sign that creates interest and an image for the development.

We often don't get this extreme on the map, but the developer requested that the map they provided be reproduced on the sign—including convex rooftops, addresses and a tan to dark-green fade in the back-

ground. A large-format printer would have been ideal to pull this job off, but since I don't have one, I had to rely on my sign-painter ingenuity.

This double-faced sign seemed to take forever to complete, and I was concerned that this would be one of those jobs that lose money. But after adding up the time and materials, we were surprisingly close to the bid. •

Time and materials:

- Two sheets of 3/4-in. single-faced overlaid plywood ..\$ 92
- 1 quart primer\$ 5
- 1½ quarts enamel\$ 7
- Two 9-in. roller covers\$ 1
- 4½ yards cast vinyl film\$ 18
- 5 yds. 24-in. mask\$ 8
- Total materials \$131
- Total time: 15.5 hours



Dave Correll's shop, Brushwork, is in Faribault, Minnesota.





1. Consultation and design: 90 minutes
My first design had *Carriage* in all caps and *Crossing* in a script. The customer preferred *Carriage Crossing* in the same style in upper- and lower-case letters.



2. Prep, prime and finish: 60 minutes
After the lumber company delivered two sheets of 3/4-in overlaid plywood, Angel sanded the edges and primed it with acrylic latex primer. When dry, I lightly sanded the faces with 220-grit paper, mixed up some tan bulletin color and rolled on a generous finish coat.



3. Apply blend: 75 minutes I let the finish coat tack up for about 15 minutes, then sprayed the dark-green fade with an HVLP sprayer, with air pressure at 30psi at the side of each 4-by-8 panel. HVLP sprayers create little overspray, but you still need to protect anything important nearby. Time includes mixing paint, setup and cleaning the gun.



4. Layout: 30 minutes The next day, I enlarged the outline and roads for the plat map at right side of the 4-by-8-in. panels, and scribed guidelines for the copy.



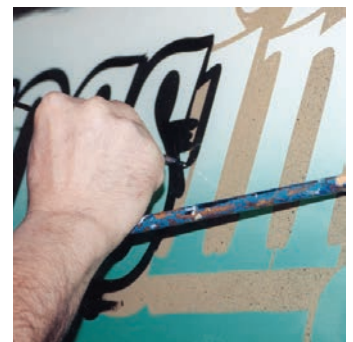
5. Mask main copy: 30 minutes
A mask was then cut for the main text, which included the letter and outline shade. With just the letters weeded away, the mask was applied to the signs.



6. Apply blend: 45 minutes A "roller blend" was then done with a 9-in. roller and emerald-green and white lettering enamel. After blending with the roller, I took a 4-in. cutter and dry-brushed the blend to eliminate bubbles to smooth the blend. Then, with the paint still wet, I carefully weeded the outline and shade.



7. Cut and mask vinyl: 105 minutes
Meanwhile, Angel was busy cutting, weeding and taping the vinyl for the two 4-by-8 panels.



8. Paint outline: 90 minutes About an hour after doing the roller blend, I filled in the outline and shade with black lettering enamel. When I finished, I carefully removed the rest of the mask.

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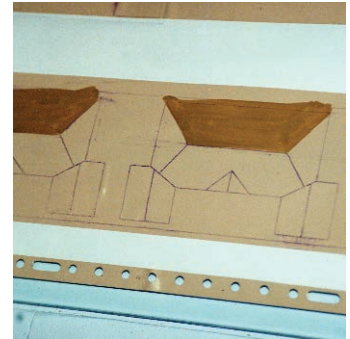
9. Paint map: 45 minutes The next morning I painted the map with a mix of emerald green and medium green. For the streets, I used a mix of medium gray and black.



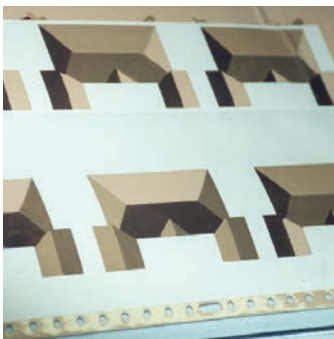
10. Apply vinyl: 90 minutes Angel then applied the vinyl to the two 4-by-8 panels.



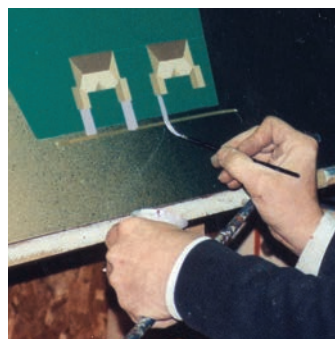
11. Add highlight: 30 minutes While Angel applied the vinyl, I decided to add a white highlight to the main text.



12. Cut the house graphics: 30 minutes Here's where I wish I had a Gerber [Gerber Scientific Products, Inc., 800-222-7446, www.gspinc.com] Edge®—to print and cut things like this. With tan vinyl (lightly swiped with a Scotch pad) in the plotter, I plotted out the houses with the rooflines in pen mode. Then, with the vinyl still in the plotter, I replaced the pen with a knife and cut just the outlines of the houses.



13. Paint the house graphics: 60 minutes Before weeding, I painted different shades of tan to create the convex rooftops. To help the 1Shot [219-949-1684, www.1shot.com] adhere to the vinyl, I added a small amount of 1Shot Speed Dry UV acrylic clear to the paint. With the paint still tacky, I carefully weeded the houses and let them dry overnight before taping and applying.



13. Apply graphics and paint driveways: 30 minutes The next morning I applied the houses after quickly marking their locations with the help of the overhead projector, then I painted the driveways with a mix of medium-gray and black 1Shot enamel.



14. Paint border: 30 minutes With emerald green and a 3/4-in. flat brush, I painted the border.



15. Outline map and apply street numbers: 90 minutes After the border dried, I outlined the map in tan and the streets with medium gray. I added a black drop shade to the houses. At the end of the day we had to apply the street numbers in front of the houses.

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