

Student Housing, Texas-Size: TAMU Park West, College Station, Texas



Faced with a tight deadline and a large student-housing project at Texas A&M University, Servitas Management Group engaged one of its traditional partners, Synergy Fiber, to install and run all IT services. Our thanks to Trey Verbick of Servitas and Doug Karaska, vice president of projects and deployments at Synergy, for gathering the information for this profile.

By Steven S. Ross / *Broadband Communities*

TAMU Park West opened for more than 3,000 students in August. The new development – the largest for student housing in the United States – attracts tenants

with a mix of appealing accommodations and many technology amenities baked in. Cooking time was short – about 16 months.

Synergy Fiber handled all the IT integration. “Our partners are often large universities with high standards for quality deployments,” says Trey Verbick, vice president and director of market research at Servitas Management Group, which runs the complex for NCCD-College Station Properties LLC, a Texas nonprofit. “We have found Synergy to be an invaluable partner, proving capable of even the biggest projects. It is rare in this industry to find a true IT partner capable of handling all these integrations, in addition to providing world-class, 24/7 support for all their services.”

Taking complete responsibility for the technology aspects of the development produced savings, but more important, it was critical given the tight deadlines involved. “Our

PROPERTY OF THE MONTH HIGHLIGHTS

~ TAMU Park West, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX ~

- Largest greenfield student housing build in the United States – more than 3,000 beds
- Gigabit service to every tenant
- One vendor, Synergy Fiber, designed and installed all IT services.
- Additional vendors include Cisco (core distribution), Brocade (access switches, Power over Ethernet), Ruckus (wireless access points), Salto (access control), Sony (surveillance cameras), OnSSI (management system for cameras), DISH (video distribution), G-Hub (energy monitoring) and Seneca (CCTV).



representatives at Synergy are the same people we have worked with from the start of our relationship, and you just don't see that kind of consistency very often in IT," says Verbick. "Their expertise and comprehensive approach have helped us save money on MDUs large and small since 2010."

VITAL STATISTICS

Property Description: TAMU Park West consists of multiple new buildings on a section of a 48-acre tract in College Station. The entire plot is leased by the university to NCCD-College Station Properties LLC, a nonprofit, which engaged Servitas Management Group to develop the property and contracted with Servitas to manage the finished development as well.

Demographics: University students

Greenfield or retrofit? Greenfield

Number of units: 1,320 housing units with a total of 3,406 beds

Style: Mid-rise, garden apartments and townhome units

Time to deploy: About 16 months.

Network infrastructure began to

be installed once the first buildings were ready for it, starting at the end of April 2016.

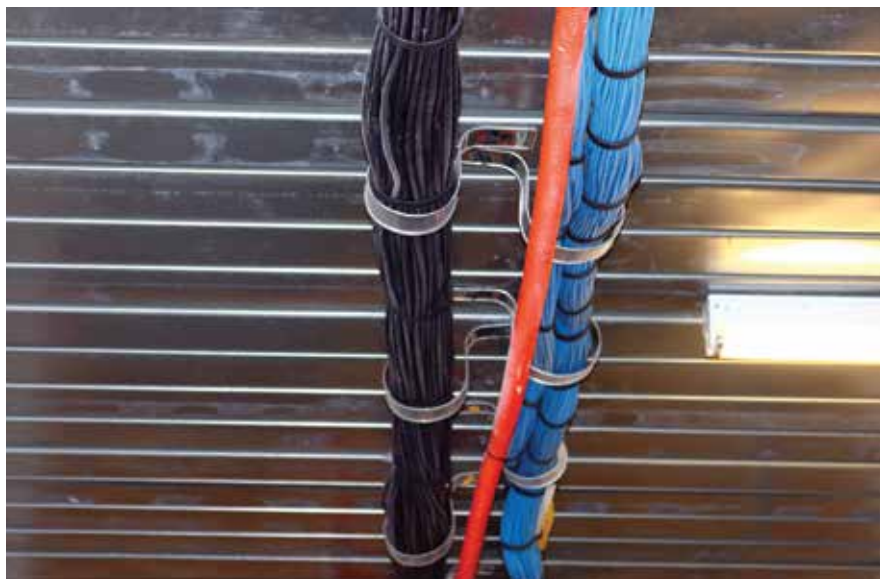
Date services started being delivered:

All services were running in time for the first student move-in, August 16, 2017. Testing started several months earlier.

SERVICES

Services provided over the fiber network include cutting-edge door security and video surveillance, ubiquitous communitywide Wi-Fi, and bulk gigabit internet and video.

Synergy Fiber is the only IT vendor on site and is responsible for video,



A J-hook support system carries data and video cables to the individual units.

PROPERTY OF THE MONTH

data, Wi-Fi, security and access control systems. There are no alternative broadband providers.

Synergy is the sole point of contact for technical support and handles all repairs and maintenance. Residents can contact Synergy's always-open global service desk by calling, texting, using Synergy's mobile app or emailing. Synergy also manages the building IT services, including telephone lines, the door entry system and building access control, wireless and TV delivery.

TECHNOLOGY

Armored fiber runs from the main distribution frame (MDF) to each building. Cat 6 cable is used for vertical connections to intermediate distribution frames (IDFs) and for connections to wireless access points. For horizontal connections from the intermediate distribution frames to the units, a J-hook support system carries Cat 5e cable for data and RG6 and RG11 Quad Shield cables for video.

BUSINESS

Although Synergy manages the network, it is entirely owned by the property owner, NCCD-College Station Properties – everything from the data vertical backbone to the switches on the racks and the surveillance system.

The service provider and owner market the property technology jointly through joint press releases, case studies and trade shows.

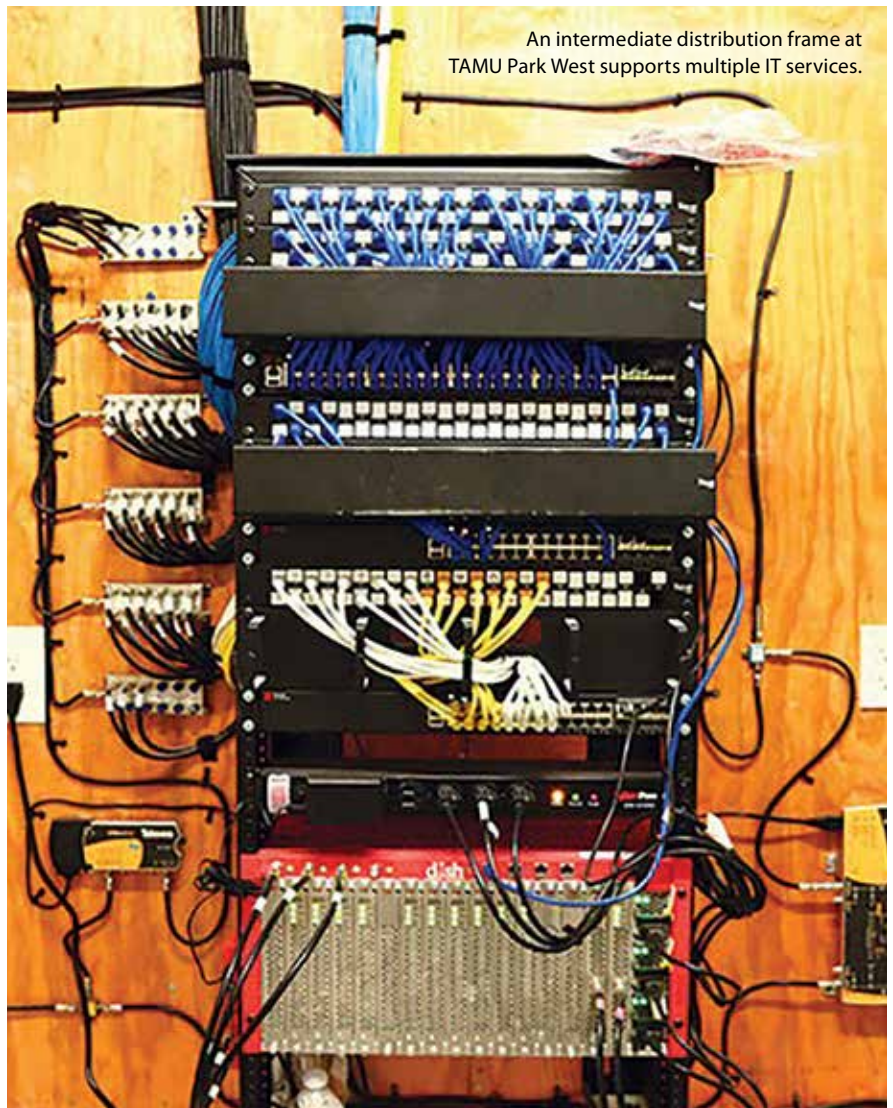
LESSONS LEARNED

As always, the time spent planning the project execution pays off in improved efficiency and timely delivery. On this large, all-inclusive project, the planning phase was intense. This was the largest, most complex deployment for Synergy to date, but the team overcame all obstacles and challenges and finished the project on time.

The major challenges included

Installation scale: The sheer size of the project and the looming student move-in left little room for slack. The scale of integration was enormous, and Synergy was the only IT vendor on the site.

Temporary MDF: Maintaining a temporary MDF on an active



construction site that has frequent power outages is not easy, but it was necessary to accommodate early deployment of the network in the townhome sections and to run tests. Synergy then had to migrate from the temporary MDF to the permanent location with minimal downtime.

Testing: Synergy certified and documented performance of every Ethernet drop, all Wi-Fi coverage, TV services, electronic door locks and video surveillance cameras before the property was occupied.

The greatest success was that, because a single IT vendor deployed and manages all the services, Servitas

realized significant capex savings and network optimization, balancing user demands while ensuring that each user gets a gigabit when needed. There's energy efficiency in the IDFs and in the buildings' energy management systems. Finally, there are expected savings in future IT support overhead, including reduced maintenance effort for the property manager.

Paying a compliment to Synergy Fiber's comprehensive approach to IT design and management, Servitas now refers to the company as its "total technology partner." ❖

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