

Combining Resort-Style Living With Instant-On Gigabit Broadband: Desert Color in St. George, Utah

Desert Color is banking on attracting residents and businesses with its resort-like feel and fiber-based, gigabit-speed internet. **BROADBAND COMMUNITIES** thanks Ryan Coates, marketing manager for Desert Color, and CenturyLink for helping develop this profile.

By Sean Buckley / *Broadband Communities*

After a year of lockdowns around the country, the idea of living in a master-planned, resort-like community in southern Utah with 300 days a year of sunshine, wide-open space to explore an expansive network of trails, year-round golf, and a host of other recreational opportunities at the front door probably sounds appealing. If so, welcome to Desert Color, one of the largest master-planned communities in Utah. The 3,400-acre development is devoted to sustainability and community, and the builder, the Clyde Companies, plans to build 11,000 homes over the next 15 to 20 years.

Part of the development's allure is its location. Traveling northbound on I-15, Desert Color, located in St. George, is the first stop in Utah, making it a gateway for domestic and international visitors to explore the surrounding national parks and monuments, including Zion National Park, and state parks. The development is designed to foster a sense of community; neighborhood design, events and activities will encourage residents to explore outside the four walls of their homes.

The 2021 build schedule calls for 1,600 single-family units, estate homes and 652 multiple-dwelling units (MDUs), including condos and townhomes. It also includes 180

acres of commercial space, 90 rental vacation units, and a 55-plus neighborhood.

Eventually, a mixed-use commercial district will feature recreation and entertainment centers, community parks, shopping and dining, hotels and resorts, health and wellness facilities, a health care clinic, access to mass transportation, schools, a church, a cultural center, a library, a police and fire station and an "innovation park" for higher education research and development.

In addition, Dixie State University got \$15 million in funding from Utah to build an extension campus in Desert Color. The university is set to purchase roughly 183 acres at Desert Color and plans to use the land to house its innovation, entrepreneurship and health sciences programs.

"Dixie State University's extension campus will be twice the size of its current campus," says Ryan Coates, marketing manager for Desert Color. "It is the fastest-growing university in Utah."

Of the development as a whole, Coates says, "It's a full-service community that's cradle to grave."

INTERNET IS ESSENTIAL

By taking what it calls a thoughtful approach to building out the community, Desert Color wants



Desert Color is a 3,400-acre planned community in Utah that plans to build 11,000 homes.

to stand out from other master-planned communities. In addition to building sustainably with a focus on community and nature, it views providing high-speed, fiber-based internet connectivity between residential neighborhoods and commercial businesses as a key way to distinguish itself.

At first, Desert Color had an internet service provider on-site that provided a temporary solution. But the developers later decided to partner with CenturyLink to offer high-speed, fiber-based internet access to all residents, businesses and amenity areas in the development. CenturyLink transitioned residents and businesses and made sure they were equipped and had service available immediately. With CenturyLink's service, customers can choose speeds ranging from 300 Mbps up to 1 Gbps.

"We're brand new and in 2021, you have to have fiber," Coates says.

With the real estate market becoming more competitive, Desert Color recognizes that residents expect their internet connectivity to be ready to use immediately when they move into a new home. Unlike the days when residents had long waits for cable or telco technicians to install equipment and activate service, the new, instant-on approach means residents' internet is installed and configured in advance.

"When residents close the purchase of a new home, they can call or log in and flip on their broadband service," Coates says. "All the hardware is in the house and it's a quick setup, so homeowners can immediately start using broadband for work or play."

He adds that Desert Color was adamant that it needed to find a bulk provider that would give the development "a unique value proposition."

"We talked to multiple groups locally and regionally that we felt could handle a project this large in terms of providing connectivity for residents and guests," Coates says. "Ultimately, we felt that CenturyLink was the best decision for us."

VITAL STATISTICS

Property Description:

Desert Color is a master-planned community on a 3,400-acre property in southern Utah created around a vision of sustainability and community. It will feature 11,000 primary and secondary/vacation residences, shopping, dining, businesses, entertainment, hospitality and recreational development opportunities.

Demographics: Desert Color is attracting a diverse demographic. With apartments, condos, single-family residences and vacation-rental-approved properties, it attracts locals from the immediate area and people from the West Coast and northern Utah who can now work from home.

Greenfield or retrofit: Greenfield

Number of units: Currently, 150 units are occupied; 11,000 doors are approved in the master plan.

Style (High-rise/mid-rise/garden):

PROPERTY OF THE MONTH HIGHLIGHTS

~ Desert Color in St. George, Utah ~

- 3,400-acre master-planned community
- 11,000 homes planned
- 180 acres of commercial space, 90 rental vacation units
- Instant-on broadband service
- 300 Mbps up to 1 Gbps internet connectivity



Desert Color offers instant-on internet from CenturyLink to all residents. Customers can choose speeds ranging from 300 Mbps up to 1 Gbps.

MDUs and single-family homes and 180 acres of commercial space

Time to deploy: Desert Color will be built out over the next 15 to 20 years.

Date services started being delivered: October 2020

Did the property have any special requirements? Desert Color was adamant about partnering with a bulk provider that could offer residents instant-on internet. It vetted several potential providers before choosing CenturyLink.

LESSONS LEARNED

What feedback does the leasing/sales office get from residents/guests? Potential clients are enthusiastic to find out that internet service is built into their homeowners association dues.

What was the biggest success? CenturyLink did a phenomenal job transitioning residents from the previous (temporary) internet service and quickly connecting them. Utah is a hot real estate market, so CenturyLink's ability to scale with the development was very beneficial.

What should other owners consider before they start on a similar deployment? When it comes to bulk internet providers, it's great to have a provider in place before anyone moves into a development. That way, residents can activate internet service as soon as they move in.

SERVICES

Services offered or planned on the network: CenturyLink will offer high-speed internet access to all residents and businesses. Customers can choose speeds ranging from 300 Mbps to 1 Gbps.

Provider choice: CenturyLink, other providers

Do additional service providers operate separate broadband networks on the same property? Yes

On the network described, can residents choose among multiple service providers? If so, how? Residents can choose their own provider. However, if they choose an internet provider other than CenturyLink, they are still charged for CenturyLink's service in

addition to the service of their provider of choice.

Is the point of contact for resident technical support the property manager, the service provider, or a third party? CenturyLink provides technical support.

BUSINESS

Which parts of the network does the service provider own, and which parts belong to the property owner? The service provider (CenturyLink) owns all the fiber networks. The property owner owns any copper run in the home.

Is there a bulk-service agreement? If so, what services are included? Can residents upgrade from the bulk services? Desert Color has a bulk internet agreement with CenturyLink for the entire community. Residents can upgrade to faster speeds if they desire.

TECHNOLOGY

Broadband architecture: Fiber to the home

Where are ONTs placed? ONTs are in low-voltage panels in garages or laundry rooms, depending on builder placement.

Technology used: GPON

Methods for running cables between buildings. All build is underground, mostly to single-family homes.

Vendors/products:

- Calix (ONT, OLT, Wi-Fi modems)
- Corning (optical fiber)
- Clearfield (fiber drops) ❖



Sean Buckley is the editor in chief of **BROADBAND COMMUNITIES**. He can be reached at sean@bbcmag.com.