

Making Instant-On Gigabit Connectivity a Reality: Grand Central at the Junction

Grand Central at the Junction, a new MDU development in Wentzville, Missouri, is equipping residential units with CenturyLink's fiber-based broadband service and its rapid service-provisioning platform CenturyLink ON. Our thanks to Guy Huntley, MDU account manager for CenturyLink, and Tom Kaiman, CEO of Mia Rose Holdings, for helping gather information for this profile.

By Sean Buckley / *Broadband Communities*

When Grand Central at the Junction opens this spring in Wentzville, Missouri, residents will have an amenity that is becoming an expectation in new MDUs: CenturyLink's 940 Mbps symmetrical fiber broadband service.

Mia Rose Holdings, the developer overseeing Grand Central at the Junction, is responding to the fact that homebuyers increasingly cite broadband as an important draw.

According to data from market research firm RVA LLC, 88 percent of people consider high-speed broadband internet service when deciding where to buy a home, and for 91 percent of people, it's a factor when choosing a community in which to live.

CenturyLink also provides fiber and business services to the restaurant on the property, Sugarfire Smoke House.

Tom Kaiman, CEO of Mia Rose Holdings, says that although the developer had various provider options,



CenturyLink's attention to detail made it an attractive partner.

"We found CenturyLink's customer service, responsiveness, willingness to work with us on multiple fronts early in the pre-development, and efforts to make sure what we're installing is going to be compatible set them apart," Kaiman says.

Guy Huntley, MDU account manager for CenturyLink, says winning the Grand Central at the Junction contract shows CenturyLink can more effectively challenge Charter, a dominant MDU broadband player.

"Charter had a good hold on this area, and it's mainly because we had only 100 Mbps fiber capability," he says. "We needed a higher speed

Residents can access 1 Gbps connections.



available for these communities to compete with Charter, but also a product like CenturyLink ON to give residents service five to 10 minutes after they move into a unit.”

He adds, “We’re also grasping that streaming is the wave of the future and lower-cost than cable services, which on average cost \$50 to \$60 per month with no contract.”

Grand Central at the Junction is a 17-acre mixed-use development that will combine 180 housing units with ground-floor commercial space. The property offers 18 rooftop condos, 95 apartments and 6,000 square feet of commercial space with various amenities in a downtown setting.

Housed in a 17-acre parcel in

downtown Wentzville along Highway 70 and the rail line, the development is currently signing leases for the 180 multifamily units, called the Grand Central Modern Apartments. The first phase of the apartment complex should be available in March 2020 and the remaining development will be completed in September.

Residents of the new development will also be able to dine out at Sugarfire Smoke House. This is part of a broader plan to give residents instant access to amenities typically found in the center of a town or downtown in a city.

“In working with the city, we knew they wanted to see a mix of retail and high-density residential,” Kaiman says. “Our plan redeveloped an old

industrial site into what is now the first standalone barbeque restaurant that has sand volleyball courts.”

CONTROLLING COSTS, QUALITY

By choosing CenturyLink as the exclusive provider for Grand Central at the Junction, Mia Rose was able to reduce network buildout costs. Though coax was an option, Mia Rose chose to have each unit wired with fiber.

“After our teams worked together, we saved close to \$40,000 with the path that we ended up taking by partnering with CenturyLink,” Kaiman says.

“Bringing fiber to the unit not only saves money but also increases customer satisfaction rates,” Huntley says.



CenturyLink built fiber to each living unit.

INSTANT CONNECTIONS

Internet speed is only one dimension CenturyLink brings to Grand Central at the Junction. Residents also will get access to CenturyLink ON.

CenturyLink ON allows new homeowners to access a web portal, review and select their desired internet speed, accept applicable terms and conditions, pay with a credit or debit

card, and immediately begin using their internet service. Residents can access their Wi-Fi and broadband service the moment they move in and sign up for home entertainment services.

“We want residential customers to move in and have service capability in minutes,” Huntley says. “What’s also unique to CenturyLink is we have our own outside sales representative to

support and help market services to the community.”

Kaiman claims that although CenturyLink ON is new, it will be a standout amenity.

“We don’t know any people experiencing it yet, but we talked to another developer that has the CenturyLink ON product,” Kaiman says. “Having that property manager spend 45 minutes on the phone with us explaining how beneficial it was for their community really gave us the reassurance that the product will set our development apart from others.”

VITAL STATISTICS

Property Description: Grand

Central at the Junction is an MDU development in Wentzville, Missouri. CenturyLink provides fiber-to-the-unit connection to each apartment and CenturyLink ON service. Opening in late spring 2020, the property will offer one- and two-bedroom apartments located in a mixed-use community complete with a brand-new Sugarfire Smoke House and sand volleyball pits.

Demographics: Young professionals

Greenfield or retrofit? Greenfield

Number of units: Grand Central at the Junction is a 17-acre, mixed-use development that will combine 180 housing units with ground-floor commercial space.

Style: Mid-rise

Time to deploy: It took 120 days to install the network infrastructure and prepare services.

Date services started being delivered:

Services will be available beginning in March 2020.

SERVICES

Services: CenturyLink will offer various fiber broadband speed tiers ranging from 40 Mbps to 940 Mbps. Armed with broadband connectivity, residents will be able to access streaming video services, including Apple TV, Hulu, Netflix, Amazon, Disney+ and others. CenturyLink also will offer its digital home phone

PROPERTY OF THE MONTH HIGHLIGHTS

~ Grand Central at the Junction ~

- 1 Gbps broadband service
- Complimentary Wi-Fi in amenity areas
- Vendors include Calix and Corning
- Resort-style pool and sundeck
- Clubhouse with pool table, fireplace and communal seating area
- Fitness center
- Sugarfire Smoke House restaurant with sand volleyball courts

service, which features a voicemail-to-email application.

Provider choice: CenturyLink has an exclusive agreement with the property owner, Mia Rose Holdings, to deliver broadband services.

Technical support: The CenturyLink ON team will provide support to residents and businesses. An outside sales representative will be the point of contact for technical support.

BUSINESS

Which parts of the network are owned by the service provider and which parts by the property owner? CenturyLink owns the GPON architecture and the fiber inside and outside of each unit.

Is there a marketing agreement with the property owner? CenturyLink is contracted as the exclusive fiber provider for the property.

TECHNOLOGY

Broadband architecture: CenturyLink has adopted a fiber-to-the-unit architecture. CenturyLink uses GPON technology as the foundation to deliver broadband services to each resident. Calix is CenturyLink's GPON vendor for the project and is providing optical network terminals (ONTs) in the individual units. In addition, CenturyLink is using Calix 844 ONTs with Wi-Fi at the ONT so customers who don't want to purchase routers will have them waiting when they move in. CenturyLink will offer gigabit service to each unit via a hub near the development.

Methods for running cables:

Cables are run horizontally within the buildings.

Vendors/products: Calix (ONTs) and Corning (fiber)

LESSONS LEARNED

What was the biggest challenge? The biggest challenge was introducing CenturyLink ON and speeds up to 1 Gbps in an area that has been capable only of 100 Mbps for years. This is a huge breakthrough.

What was the biggest success? Winning the confidence of the Wentzville developer, Mia Rose Holdings.

What should other owners consider before they get started on a similar deployment? Owners should recognize the convenience of CenturyLink ON and instant service. ♦

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