

Multifamily Broadband Challenges

How can providers and owners plan for ever-increasing demand for service and for continual evolution – or revolution – in technology?

By Valerie M. Sargent / *Multifamily Broadband Council*

The last issue of **BROADBAND COMMUNITIES** introduced the new Multifamily Broadband Council (MBC), the trade association that represents independent, competitive broadband providers in the multifamily market, as well as their suppliers. Many of these operators offer customized solutions for their multifamily clients.

The multifamily industry has been slow to adopt technology changes, in part because some companies wait to see which new trends might stick and become part of the multiple-dwelling-unit (MDU) landscape. Additionally, some options that are simple to employ in single-family homes are complex in multifamily communities. Because each building structure and property layout is different, there is no “one size fits all” approach to MDU broadband technology solutions.

MBC has attracted top manufacturers, distributors and content providers to its board and organization to bring the tops in technology to multifamily communities – technology that will draw new residents and resolve ongoing deployment challenges. The council can help manufacturers get products to market quickly by determining what works well in apartment buildings via the customized solutions its service provider members offer.

The pace of technology change makes it difficult for multifamily owners to know what their residents will want in the future. The broadband experts on the MBC Technology Committee will help address these challenges.

Recent innovations have forced providers to play catch up. For example, the core frequency for Wi-Fi has changed from 2.4 GHz to 5 GHz, but because 5 GHz does not propagate as far as 2.4 GHz, Wi-Fi networks designed for 2.4 GHz alone have had to be redesigned for 5 GHz and 2.4 GHz. In addition, the proliferation of in-home devices with huge demand for bandwidth has required more and faster access points and Ethernet switch ports – and faster circuits to the internet. Consumer internet video traffic is expected to be 80 percent of all consumer internet traffic in 2019. How are multifamily communities positioning for this kind of traffic and preparing the broadband pipe for everything coming its way?

To future proof a multifamily deployment requires solutions that are cloud-based, mobile-intuitive, application-

intelligent and – very important – secure. In many cases, infrastructure designed with no data or video in mind 30-plus years ago must be updated for today’s technology in ways that make financial sense for owners and residents. How can these older communities compete with the bells and whistles offered in new developments and continue to attract young people who feel entitled to fast delivery at exceptional prices?

Some communities are debating adding smart technology, such as thermostats, locks and appliance solutions, but aren’t sure about the ROI of such investments. They want to know how to integrate technologies and provide the best options, but many don’t know where to begin.

Fortunately, technology is starting to keep up with the demand. Wi-Fi networks that are designed to 5 GHz can usually have their access points upgraded without repositioning, allowing for faster Wi-Fi speeds. GPON networks can have end points upgraded to achieve faster speeds. Even existing good-quality Cat 5e and Cat 6 copper will be able to run NBASE-T, a new protocol that will allow 2.5 Gbps and beyond.

Networks will continue to evolve as new technology and requirements demand. Proper network design (both wired and wireless) can extend structured cabling life. Core and edge end points will be refreshed to meet ever-changing needs, and this process can be easily managed with proper budgetary and technology planning over preferred time frames.

MBC wants to know: What are your challenges with infrastructure, quality, speed, security and delivery? How can we help? Send your challenges to MBC and let the technology committee work on solutions to your broadband concerns. We may even answer your question in an upcoming issue of **BROADBAND COMMUNITIES**. Stay tuned. ❖

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