

What's Your Connectivity Score?

The launch of a new digital connectivity certification program for multifamily aims to rewrite the rules around the value of connectivity by providing a transparent measure.

By Kevin Donnelly / NMHC

From the moment residents walk into a leasing office to the day they move out, their overall experience and satisfaction are increasingly tied to the availability and reliability of high-quality broadband service and overall connectivity. In fact, according to the 2020 NMHC/Kingsley Associates Apartment Resident Preferences Report, 92 percent of apartment renters surveyed expressed high or very high levels of interest in high-speed internet access, with more than half of those saying they wouldn't rent an apartment without that connectivity.

If reliable connectivity was significant pre-pandemic as a source of resident satisfaction and a driver of industry innovation, it's now absolutely essential post-pandemic. Apartment homes transitioned to workplaces, schools, entertainment hubs and even doctors' offices during COVID-19.

Though we all can look forward to a return to normalcy, the convenience, control and flexibility that came with the dramatic shift to online activities further underscore the desirability and need for strong connectivity while also exposing some shortcomings of infrastructure and services as well as transparency around performance. Is this about to change?

NEW CONNECTIVITY CERTIFICATION SYSTEM

As multifamily developers, owners and operators look to provide truly seamless connectivity and a more positive digital experience to residents going forward, they still must grapple with the unknown of future consumer tech and expectations.

Though technology and its applications always move fast, multifamily firms are betting that the need for faster, always-on connectivity will be key as they consider renovations and new development activity. Moreover, they are growing strong partnerships with broadband providers and other experts who can help guide technology investments.

However, despite this recognition of need and commitment to high levels of connectivity, there's a strong desire for metrics and transparency around what ends up being delivered and the value it brings to a community and its residents.

That's why the National Multifamily Housing Council (NMHC) has been closely watching the growth of WiredScore, a company widely known for benchmarking digital connectivity in the global commercial built environment. Now WiredScore is expanding to U.S. multifamily with the launch of WiredScore Home this summer. We at the NMHC are excited about what it's likely to mean for the industry.

CERTIFICATION A GAME-CHANGER?

First launched in the U.K. and Ireland in 2019, WiredScore Home currently is the only certification for connectivity, digital infrastructure and technology in multifamily residential. The North American launch, set for mid-June, is set to include more than 20 market-leading developers and owners, including the likes of Greystar, Hines and JP Morgan.

The potential upside of connectivity certification for the multifamily industry

appears to be big – with benefits to renters, operators and even investors. At its core, a certification program such as WiredScore Home should provide assurance that multifamily buildings provide a great technology experience, clarity around the core components of high levels of connectivity, and a competitive advantage for companies committed to digital connectivity at their communities.

Moreover, though getting the digital footprint of a community right has always been easier for new multifamily developments, improving connectivity at existing properties has been a bigger challenge with murkier returns. WiredScore certification and benchmarking could be a game-changer in that regard, providing multifamily owners and value-add specialists with a possible road map of sorts for modernizing buildings and networks that, in many cases, were built decades ago.

WiredScore certification and benchmarking could help modernize buildings and networks built decades ago.

Similarly, industry investors will have a helpful tool to assess the true connectivity of a property, which increasingly will have ramifications for its valuation. Connectivity certification also signifies to investors that the industry is heading in the right direction and playing the long game in attracting, retaining and ultimately meeting the needs of residents, assuring the long-term viability of the investment.

For apartment residents, the value proposition is clear. They'll know from day one what to expect of their connectivity and will have information at the ready to guide their

decision-making.

For more background or to join NMHC at the WiredScore Home Launch on June 15, please visit: <https://hopin.com/events/wiredscore-home-north-american-launch>. The event will feature some of the best-connected and most technologically advanced developments in North America. ❖

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