

Showcasing Managed Wi-Fi Potential in Multifamily Communities: Beckert's Park in Washington, D.C.

Beckert's Park is taking a big shot at making managed Wi-Fi a key amenity for multifamily properties. Our thanks to Judd Ullom, director of development for Foulger-Pratt; Herb Sharpe, vice president of multifamily sales for Boingo; and Chris Cauthen, director of multifamily sales for Boingo.

By Sean Buckley / *Broadband Communities*

Beckert's Park is a gleaming, luxury multifamily and retail development in modern Washington, D.C., but it comes by its name from the colorful, centuries-old history of the property. "It's named for the Beckert family, which owned and operated it as a brewery and amusement park during the Civil War era," says Judd Ullom, director of development for the real estate investment and development firm Foulger-Pratt. "We have been trying to preserve the entertainment and amusement elements of the history of the site."

When Foulger-Pratt acquired the property in the heart of D.C.'s Capitol Hill neighborhood, it was a Safeway grocery store. The real estate firm redeveloped the site into a 325-unit, five-story apartment community above a new, ground-floor, slightly larger Safeway and roughly 8,000 square feet of neighborhood retail. Most apartment units enjoy views of the Capitol Hill neighborhood, including the Capitol building.

The development features a mix of studio, one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments, including 33 designated for low-income tenants. Luxury lifestyle amenities include dog grooming

services, a rooftop clubhouse and terrace, a state-of-the-art fitness center, a parking garage, private bike storage and expansive community spaces. It's a short walk from Eastern Market – one of the nation's oldest outdoor markets – a popular destination for shopping and restaurants.

"It's right in the heart of things," Ullom says. "We feel like this project speaks to the history and the iconic Capitol Hill look and feel, but its modern amenities are unusual for multifamily offerings in the area."

MANAGED WI-FI FOCUS

A key feature of the property is that it leverages Boingo Wireless managed Wi-Fi. This means Boingo installed and remotely manages, controls and troubleshoots Beckert's Park's Wi-Fi, eliminating the need for the property to have an on-site IT department.

Foulger-Pratt started talking to Boingo in late 2018. "We were coming off another project where we had another traditional ISP in the building, and we were frustrated enough that we wanted to survey the markets to see what else was out there," Ullom says. "When we started talking to Boingo, it became clear it was a managed Wi-Fi market leader."



Beckert's Park is a 325-unit luxury apartment building in the heart of Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C.

Beckert's Park is one of the early adopters of managed Wi-Fi. When it started working with Boingo, there was only one project with managed Wi-Fi in the Washington, D.C., area.

"We were intrigued by the benefits of a managed Wi-Fi system, and it checked a lot of boxes for things that we were looking for," Ullom says. "In the traditional ISP landscape, the owner often pays for part of the install of the network anyway." Also, Ullom says the owner/developer does not have any control over the experience and the revenue share is "fairly meager."

"Even with a brand name ISP, we as the owner and property manager end up getting complaints about an outage and become the face of it, especially during the move-in process."

RESIDENT BENEFITS

A key benefit of Boingo's managed Wi-Fi service is instant-on broadband: When new residents move in, they can access broadband services immediately. "It's hot on day one," Ullom says. "There's no need to have a tenant call and schedule a time with the ISP for a technician to come to the building and run through the startup issues."

Boingo also offers Wi-Fi throughout all common areas, which include quiet spaces to support residents working remotely.

Managed Wi-Fi services create consistency for residents. Unlike traditional Wi-Fi amenity services, which typically are low-speed and lack the same level of privacy or speed individual networks offer, tenants access secure wireless internet connections in their units and throughout the building.

"A lot of people today are working from home, but they are not necessarily working out of their units," Ullom says. "They want to have that flexibility to go down to the amenity space and maybe work poolside. They can do that now while maintaining a Wi-Fi connection to the building."

The Wi-Fi service also serves as a foundation for Foulger-Pratt's Room2Roam voice service.

To make the service more attractive to residents, Foulger-Pratt prices Boingo's service cheaper than internet service offered by a traditional ISP.

"We're trying to make it simple and easy for our tenants," Ullom says. "The customer experience is much nicer with Boingo because there's a customer service number they can call, and they won't be on hold for 20 minutes."

CONTACT-FREE ONBOARDING

Foulger-Pratt's property management team is utilizing the Boingo network to power a safe, contact-free move-in process with mobile applications and smart software to remotely verify tenant identification, electronically sign leases, and allow residents to document unit inspection results in real time via their smartphones.

The developer uses a mobile doorman for its tenants, which allows it to integrate other property management applications. "This has been helpful from a communications perspective," Ullom says. "Tenants can log service

PROPERTY OF THE MONTH HIGHLIGHTS

~ Beckert's Park in Washington, D.C. ~

- Mixed-use property with 325 apartment units, office and retail
- Boingo Wi-Fi 250, 500 Mbps internet access
- Room2Roam Wi-Fi calling
- Verizon/Gigamonster (video services)



Boingo offers Wi-Fi throughout all common areas.

requests, contact property management, and schedule servicing for each unit. We also use it for check-in lists, which is helpful for onboarding.”

In addition, Foulger-Pratt uses tech for tenants to tour properties. A prospective tenant can conduct a self-guided tour to see a model unit.

“It has been the right place at the right time because five years ago, we would not have had the tools to do that,” Ullom says.

EMBRACING IOT

Foulger-Pratt is keen to use the Boingo Wi-Fi network to manage its properties with internet of things (IoT) applications. High-speed Wi-Fi in each unit enables Wi-Fi-connected thermostats, for example. Becker’s Park also has motorized shades that can be set to different coverage levels throughout the day depending on weather conditions.

Ullom says Foulger-Pratt recognizes that IoT is growing in popularity in the multifamily rental space and there’s more the firm can do to embrace it. For instance, by leveraging the Boingo network, Foulger-Pratt

could consolidate parallel systems for functions such as access control.

Tenants in multifamily homes expect seamless access control from curb to couch. For example, they want to be able to authenticate access control via their smartphones.

“To do this, access control devices have to ride on an internet connection, which is typically a Bluetooth connection with a Bluetooth gateway network throughout the building,” Ullom says. “We would like to see that network ride on something closer to a Boingo system.”

The Boingo system also enables Wi-Fi calling throughout the building. “With Wi-Fi calling, tenants can move seamlessly throughout the building,” Ullom says. “We talked to Boingo to make sure we had connectivity throughout all spaces on our property.”

EASY INSTALLATION, WIDESPREAD ADOPTION

Foulger-Pratt found partnering with Boingo to be much easier and more streamlined than working with traditional ISPs. Boingo’s managed service program allows multifamily

developers to choose how to work with it.

The provider offers a four-part turnkey solution set that includes four main elements: contract and revenue generation, RF planning and design, on-site construction and venue certification, and 24/7 network monitoring and support.

Ullom says that when Foulger-Pratt worked with traditional ISPs, subcontractors performed network installation. “Not only were we paying the ISPs to get in the building, but we were not able to control the installation because of the layers of coordination that had to happen,” he says. “One thing we liked about working with Boingo is that it was a turnkey install.”

“We were an early adopter on the developer side to roll out managed Wi-Fi,” Ullom says. “The landscape is changing and over the next few years, it will become more of the norm.”

Several consultants who work with Boingo see 70 percent of the market in new construction going toward managed Wi-Fi versus the traditional ISP broadband model.

Boingo has been expanding its presence in multifamily housing properties, serving more than 300,000 residents across more than 2,200 communities. It's working on more than 200 managed multifamily Wi-Fi projects now – up 50 percent from last year.

“We're seeing a huge uptick in the number of projects,” says Herb Sharpe, vice president of multifamily sales for Boingo. “A lot of real estate companies are migrating away from cable and choice to more of a managed Wi-Fi network mainly because technology is changing. A future-ready network allows Foulger-Pratt or another client to layer on different technologies to enhance the tenant experience because they have the network that's holistic across the property.”

Indeed. Analysts have forecast strong growth in managed Wi-Fi. Wireless infrastructure analyst firm Maravedis revealed in its Managed Home Wi-Fi Networks for the Smart Home 2020–2025 report that the number of homes with managed Wi-Fi will reach 294 million in 2025. Service providers participating in the study revealed that managing the quality of broadband experience in homes is a priority for most service providers, and Wi-Fi is central to that strategy.

Adlane Fella, founder of Maravedis, said “managed Wi-Fi is a fast-growing market and will reach a 29 percent penetration of the total broadband lines in service in 2025.”

VITAL STATISTICS

Property description: Beckert's Park luxury studio, one-, two- and three-bedroom luxury apartments are located in the heart of Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. The community includes many luxury amenities, such as a state-of-the-art fitness center and a sport court, a rentable clubroom with catering kitchen, a dog park, BBQ and picnic areas, and a Safeway grocery store on the ground floor.

Boingo's communitywide managed network powers the Foulger-Pratt Room2Roam voice

service and is engineered for the 5G era. The network is backed by 24/7 customer service and delivers connectivity to an expansive lobby with private office nooks for additional work-from-home space.

Demographics: Tech-savvy millennials and Gen Zers who prefer luxury living in an urban setting

Greenfield or retrofit? Greenfield

Number of units: 325

Style: Midrise: one five-floor building

Time to deploy: Seven months (March through October 2020)

Date services started: September 2020

Special requirements: Foulger-Pratt required a next-generation, managed Wi-Fi network that could deliver connectivity to residents in their units and throughout common areas. It also wanted a provider that could

offer strong, secure connectivity with ample bandwidth to power residents working from home throughout the entire property.

LESSONS LEARNED

What was the biggest challenge?

Providing connectivity in and around the property's elevators. Because of D.C. code specifications, Boingo was not allowed to install access points within elevator cabs or shafts, so it installed them in the lobbies of the top and bottom floors.

What was the biggest success?

The biggest success the new communitywide network enjoyed was creating passive income for the property. In addition, amid the pandemic, the Boingo network helped Foulger-Pratt's property management team implement a contact-free move-in process with

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mobile applications and smart software to remotely verify tenant identification, electronically sign leases and allow residents to document unit inspection results in real time via their smartphones.

What feedback does the leasing/sales office get from residents/guests? What has the experience taught about marketing, installing or supporting these services?

Residents say they appreciate that they can connect the second they move into their apartments.

Foulger-Pratt and other properties serviced by Boingo appreciate the service provider's dedicated account managers, who take property staff through a comprehensive onboarding process, provide ongoing training, create customized bandwidth reports, and answer questions and concerns.

What should other owners consider before they get started on a similar deployment? Owners considering a managed wireless solution should engage a provider and outline a budget well in advance of property launch. They should rely on the provider's expertise to develop a plan to bring wireless infrastructure to their communities. For instance, providers should weigh in on the best wiring to use so networks have the longest life span, whether there's enough space in all existing telecom closets, areas where it's feasible to cut costs and more. Owners should understand that in general, electronics are not fail-proof; the focus should not be on whether something might break but rather on the provider's process for responding to and resolving any issues that occur.

SERVICES

Services offered or planned on the network: Boingo offers 250 and 500 Mbps high-speed internet access in each unit. Wi-Fi is also available throughout the rest of the property, including common spaces.

Video: Yes, provided by Verizon/Gigamonster. Room2Roam Wi-Fi powered by Boingo also enables streaming platforms if residents have smart TVs or devices such as Roku that turn regular TVs into smart TVs.

Telephone: Room2Roam Wi-Fi powered by Boingo enables Wi-Fi calling.

Common-area wireless: Yes

Access control: Boingo provides an internet handoff to access control.

Other (specify): Boingo provides an internet handoff to Foulger-Pratt IT to use for its Beckert's Park office network and to control its A/V equipment throughout common areas.

Do additional service providers operate separate broadband networks on the same property? If so, how does the property owner/manager keep providers from getting in each other's way? At Beckert's Park, Boingo and Verizon built networks in parallel with no impediments. Only Boingo provides communitywide coverage, so there's no opportunity for Boingo and Verizon to get in each other's way in common areas. In apartment units, where Boingo provides wireless access points, Boingo is always on and available; Verizon does not install wireless access points unless requested by a resident. It's clear to any technicians who need to access a unit's media panels or other equipment which infrastructure is Boingo's and which is Verizon's, thereby decreasing the chance of any kind of disruption.

On the network described, can residents choose among multiple service providers? If so, how? Beckert's Park residents are free to choose between Boingo or Verizon with no restrictions.

Is the point of contact for resident technical support the property manager, the service provider or a third party? Boingo Wireless provides 24/7/365 customer care to Beckert's Park residents.

BUSINESS

Which parts of the network are owned by the service provider, and which parts are owned by the property owner? The network is owned by Foulger-Pratt.

Is there a marketing agreement with the property owner? No

Is there a bulk-service agreement? If so, what services are included? Can residents upgrade from the bulk services? There are two tiers of Room2Roam Wi-Fi powered by Boingo: 250 Mbps and 500 Mbps. Residents can sign up for service or upgrade by contacting their leasing office.

TECHNOLOGY

Broadband architecture: Boingo installed Cat 6 home runs from the living room of each unit back to a telecom closet, and brings fiber to an intermediate distribution frame (IDF) closet on each floor of the building.

Technology used: Boingo provided a switched Ethernet design. It did not provide data drops; it provides only Wi-Fi to apartment units and common areas.

Where is the fiber terminated? Fiber terminates at the IDF closet on each floor.

Technology/medium used to deliver signals to each unit: Boingo uses a mix of VDSL/twisted pair, Cat 6 Ethernet and Wi-Fi.

Methods for running cables between buildings, vertically within buildings, horizontally within buildings: Fiber

Vendors/products:

- Boingo (Wi-Fi internet access)
- Ruckus/CommScope (Wi-Fi access points)
- Verizon/Gigamonster (video services) ❖

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