

Georgia's Covington Town Center Makes Fiber Connectivity a Community Thread

Covington Town Center near Atlanta has adopted AT&T's fiber-based broadband services to create an environment in which residents and business customers can thrive. **BROADBAND COMMUNITIES** thanks Harry E. Kitchen, Jr., president of The Foxfield Company, and AT&T for help gathering information for this profile.

By Sean Buckley / *Broadband Communities*

When real estate development firm The Foxfield Company considers where to build a new master-planned community, it looks for 100- to 200-acre parcels of land that can be turned into real destinations. Covington Town Center, a \$350 million development in Covington, east of Atlanta, is the latest example of Foxfield's focus. Among a host of amenities, the 180-acre mixed-use residential and business master-planned community includes a 29-acre preserved green space, home to a plethora of birds and other wildlife.

Harry E. Kitchen, Jr., president of The Foxfield Company, has a philosophy to attract partners that offer premier amenities for residents and businesses. "We try to get the best-in-class of each sector, whether it's apartments, retail, restaurants or hospitality," he says. "We also try to put in the horizontal infrastructure that provides the best-in-class broadband, fiber and other technology as well as landscaping, walking trails and connectivity."

Foxfield's broadband journey began about five years ago, when it approached AT&T. "We told AT&T what we wanted to accomplish," Kitchen says. "This started the conversation about marrying up and having AT&T be our primary technology provider."

AN UNDERSERVED COMMUNITY

Located about 38 miles east of Atlanta, just off Interstate 20, Covington Town Center is in a part of Georgia experiencing economic growth. Since the mid-1970s, Covington has been known as a manufacturing center; well-known companies such as General Mills, Bridgestone and SKC operate there.

As Foxfield began looking at sites to build the Covington development, Kitchen says his company realized the community "was underserved in every category – retail, restaurants, hospitality, apartments and townhomes." He adds, "We saw the need there but had to find the right property."

Since Foxfield came to the Covington area six years ago, the business community has continued to grow. Facebook purchased 1,100 acres of land for an \$86 million data campus, and Takeda Pharmaceutical built a 1-million-square-foot facility to manufacture two blood disorder drugs.

The area has also been an attractive location for the film industry. "Many industry and movie studio production companies are drawn to Georgia because of the tax incentives," Kitchen says. "Cinelease Studios, less than a mile from our property, has 2,000 people working there."

A TRANSFORMATIONAL PROJECT

To bring Covington Town Center together, Foxfield had to carefully get all the correct elements in place. "The market, the participants, the demand and the infrastructure lined up," Kitchen says. "This is what we would call a transformational project for the market."

Covington Town Center is chock-full of amenities, including 4 miles of walking trails and the 29 acres of green space. The development also includes three popular hotel chains – Courtyard by Marriott, Residence Inn and Staybridge Suites. It boasts \$170 million worth of luxury residential homes – including 100 townhomes and apartments – plus 20 acres of restaurants, a Publix supermarket and a medical office.

"Covington Town Center is a dynamic place for people to come to live or work," Kitchen says. "We're also proud to have AT&T as our broadband partner."

FOCUS ON BROADBAND

After careful consideration, Foxfield selected AT&T Fiber to deliver high-speed broadband to all residents and businesses at Covington Town Center.

AT&T Connected Communities, Mixed-Use supplies AT&T Fiber across the 180-acre development. AT&T Fiber



AT&T Fiber will deliver high-speed broadband to all residents and businesses in Covington Town Center.

will also serve a variety of enterprises on-site with scalable services and security solutions designed to fit their IT needs.

Residential speeds begin at 300 Mbps and can reach up to 5 Gbps for consumers and small businesses. Enterprise customers can order dedicated internet speeds up to 1 Tbps, where available.

Large businesses will also benefit from AT&T's presence. Enterprises inside Covington can access two business services: Switched Ethernet on Demand and AT&T Dedicated Internet. Switched Ethernet on Demand provides dynamic bandwidth through a web-based dashboard with traffic prioritization technology and

provides secure virtual private networks and managed solutions.

In addition to connectivity, AT&T offers proactive internet security to help protect residents and businesses from cyber threats. AT&T Fiber customers get AT&T ActiveArmor internet security features.

Any community entity is a candidate to use AT&T's services. According to Kitchen, AT&T's investment in making its facilities available give it an advantage when developers complete a new apartment complex or hotel.

"When apartments and hotels come online, we will introduce developers doing individual developments within the project to AT&T," he says. "We'll

make the introduction, and it's up to AT&T to go from there."

When it started working with AT&T six years ago, Foxfield met with representatives that handled different elements – one for retail and one for residential. But over time, the telco created one mixed-use team. "It was a turning point because I am not sure we would have gotten there if AT&T didn't have a dedicated team to handle mixed-use questions," Kitchen says. "It was easier when we had a point person to solve an issue. We were the first project that AT&T dedicated a group to for handling mixed-use developments."

VITAL STATISTICS

Property Description: Covington Town Center is a 180-acre mixed-use project in Covington, Georgia. It includes a 29-acre green space that has been preserved and miles of sidewalks and walking trails to enhance the live, work and play experience. The development is 38 miles east of Atlanta, just off Interstate 20. The master plan includes restaurants, a medical office building, 350 apartment units, 270 townhomes, and a 175,000-square-foot retail center

PROPERTY OF THE MONTH HIGHLIGHTS

~ Covington Town Center ~

- Mixed-use property includes a medical office building, 350 apartment units, 270 townhomes, and a 175,000-square-foot retail center
- 5 Gbps fiber broadband for residential and small business
- DIRECTV, DIRECTV STREAM video
- 5G wireless and traditional landline voice services



The master plan includes restaurants, a medical office building, 350 apartment units, 270 townhomes, and a 175,000-square-foot retail center anchored by Publix.

anchored by Publix. In addition, three national hotels are currently under construction: Residence Inn, Courtyard by Marriott, and Staybridge Suites.

Demographics: General occupancy

Greenfield or retrofit? Greenfield

Number of units: 350 luxury garden apartments, 270 luxury for-rent townhomes and up to 360 hotel rooms

Style: Garden-style MDU, townhomes and mid-rise hotels

Timelines for deployment: AT&T collaborates with developers based on defined scopes of work to meet key milestone dates for commercial and residential buildings.

Any special requirements: The Foxfield Company was looking for a technology partner that could deliver the most advanced fiber to meet its commercial tenants' and residents' demands and needs. AT&T offers hyper-gig speeds for consumers and small businesses with competitive pricing, security and service, which made it the natural choice for the development.

LESSONS LEARNED

What was the biggest challenge?

Integrating business and consumer networks to ensure the proper network topology goes to the correct locations and accommodates a phased building plan.

What was the most significant success? Meeting the developers' timelines to provide AT&T Fiber and AT&T Business Fiber services to the applicable buildings ready for service, with provisions for future development.

If the building was already occupied at the time of the deployment, what was done – and what could have been done better – to limit disruption? The advantage of a mixed-use greenfield approach to design and pre-deploy fiber assets to all components/parcels in new developments such as Covington Town Center is that it's possible to use coiled fiber for future developments. This ensures the development can grow and limits disruptions for future developments within the master plan.

What feedback does the leasing/sales office get from residents/guests?

Property management and leasing at the MDU are pleased with the communication, sales support and marketing support from AT&T Connected Communities.

What should other owners consider before they begin a similar deployment? Any developer of a large mixed-use project should contact the AT&T team and get it involved in the planning process as early as possible. AT&T's expertise in working with mixed-use developers can be invaluable in creating an efficient master plan.

SERVICES

Services offered or planned on the network: AT&T offers its AT&T Fiber hyper-gig service, which delivers up to 5 Gbps for residential and small business customers via XGS-PON technology. Customers also can purchase DIRECTV and DIRECTV STREAM video services as well as AT&T's 5G wireless voice and AT&T, its traditional landline voice service. The service provider

also offers common-area wireless service via its 5G macro network.

Provider Choice

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 one another's way? Yes. AT&T is responsible for providing and installing fiber to the units, pre-terminated in main distribution frame/independent distribution frame (MDF/IDF) closets, so no technician installation is necessary.

Can residents choose among multiple service providers? Yes. Residents can choose from any provider that serves the property. AT&T provides support locally via retail stores, AT&T Connected Communities dedicated call center (only for Connected Community supported properties) and Customer Care online or by phone.

Technical Support

Is the point of contact for resident technical support the property manager, the service provider or a third party? If a resident subscribes to AT&T services, AT&T is the direct contact.

BUSINESS

Which parts of the network does the service provider own, and which are owned by the property owner? AT&T provides and installs the fiber network to each residential and commercial location. AT&T Switched Ethernet and AT&T Dedicated Internet are custom orders and installed per customer request.

Is there a marketing agreement with the property owner? AT&T has a marketing agreement with the property owner(s).

Does the agreement include an incentive such as a door fee or revenue share? AT&T's marketing agreements allow for earned income

AT&T offers Covington Town Center its AT&T Fiber hyper-gig service, which delivers up to 5 Gbps for residential and small-business customers.

based on AT&T Fiber internet subscribers.

How do the service provider and owner work together to market the services? What marketing approaches have been particularly successful? AT&T supports the community's marketing efforts through distributing marketing collateral in hard and soft copies, integrating URLs and links online, partnering with local AT&T stores, and providing signage throughout the development. AT&T Connected Communities strives to create mutually beneficial relationships with property owners.

Network Benefits

Is there evidence that the network helps attract residents, retain residents, increase property values, etc.? One of the first questions potential residents ask is which internet provider/service is available at the property. AT&T Connected Communities provides training and sales support for property staff. AT&T's ability to deliver hyper-gig speeds up to 5 Gbps helps developers meet and exceed industry demand.

TECHNOLOGY

Broadband architecture: AT&T deployed fiber-to-the-unit architecture for residents and fiber to the building for business customers.

Where are ONTs placed? Foxfield provided central wiring panels.

The technology used: XGS-PON

Where is the fiber terminated? Business locations place fiber terminals in closets or business suites per customer request/order.

Technology/medium used to deliver signals to each unit:

- AT&T Business Fiber XGS-PON
- AT&T Switched Ethernet on Demand per business customer order
- AT&T Dedicated Internet per business customer order

Methods for running cables: AT&T provides and installs Foxfield's 100-percent fiber network to each residential unit and business customer location.

Vendors/products: AT&T (residential fiber, business fiber, Switched Ethernet and Dedicated Internet) 📶



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