

# Multifamily Connectivity Observations from 2021

From pets to fiber to Zoom, the multifamily industry sure had an interesting year. Some trends will continue into 2022 and beyond.

By Bryan J. Rader / *Single Digits*

**A**s the end of 2021 approaches, I spent the past few days thinking about many of my observations from an exciting year. I list 10 of them here and would love to hear your observations about the past 12 months.

- 1 Moving Beyond COVID-19:** Let's hope a few words from 2021 will recede into the background. Here are some of my suggestions: Delta variants. Stay-at-home orders. Travel restrictions. But let's keep Wi-Fi in the vocabulary.
- 2 Apartment Boom:** The apartment sector has never been hotter. Rents are skyrocketing, occupancies remain strong (even after the risk of a mass eviction issue), and new construction is booming. I am wondering why everyone is running to the same markets – Denver, Nashville, Charlotte. There must be other great multiple-dwelling-unit (MDU) markets to explore. I know Boise is getting some attention, but other MDU markets are hot too.
- 3 Pets:** The number of pets in apartment communities is about to exceed the number of residents! Remember when there were very high deposits and weight restrictions for pets? Now leasing offices offer dog treats – whatever happened to the hot chocolate chip cookies? Amenities for dogs are changing quickly. New communities offer dog running tracks and even pet spas.
- 4 Supply Chain Challenges:** Supply chain issues are real, and developers and technology providers are having difficulties getting inventory on a timely basis. I hope this will be solved soon.
- 5 Big Fiber Bets:** This year, AT&T, Lumen and Frontier redoubled their commitment to pass millions of additional homes with fiber. Many will be MDUs given the economies of scale multifamily provides. Expect more competition.
- 6 Refreshing Super Bowl Halftime:** Why keep messing around with the Super Bowl halftime show? The 2021 edition wasn't the best. Just let Beyoncé perform every year. She seems to get it right. Leave success alone. Maybe **BROADBAND COMMUNITIES** CEO Barbara DeGarmo can get her to attend next year's **BROADBAND COMMUNITIES** Summit – she should become a regular at the conference. After all, Beyoncé is from Houston. Barbara?

- 7 Fresh Amenities:** Though real estate values are incredibly high, many property owners are acquiring older apartment assets and repositioning them with new amenities, innovative home features and other cool updates, including workout studios, pet walking areas, and package delivery centers. I expect this to continue because these upgrades drive rent levels.
- 8 Managed Wi-Fi:** A better understanding of managed Wi-Fi. I talk to many people in the industry every week and am amazed how many salespeople are selling the idea of “managed” Wi-Fi when it is just “in-home” Wi-Fi. This does injustice to companies that offer this feature and is a disservice to real estate clients who may be misled seeking such a solution.
- 9 Remote Meeting Apps:** Zoom. Microsoft Teams. Goto. Google Meets. Enough already. I think everyone's tired of these meetings. It is time to get back into the field and into customers' offices. The efficiencies and intimacies of making these calls are starting to wear off. I will miss the dog barking and screaming babies in the background of virtual meetings. But hopefully, people can zoom back into the office.
- 10 Enthusiasm:** The broadband industry is filled with enthusiasm, which was never more evident than at the **BROADBAND COMMUNITIES** Summit in Houston this year. Though the continuing pandemic affected attendance, those who came brought energy, excitement and great intel about where the growth opportunities are in our business. If this energy is any indication of the status of the industry, 2022 will be even greater than 2021.

I look forward to observing another excellent year for **BROADBAND COMMUNITIES** in 2022. ❖

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