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## Gigabit to the Unit

Multifamily communities rise to the gigabit challenge.

**G**igabit fever has struck. The FCC chairman and the governor of Illinois have both issued gigabit challenges. The Fiber to the Home Council called for a gigabit race to the top. Community networks are “going gig.” AT&T and CenturyLink have gigabit pilot projects under way. Google is rolling out gigabit services in several cities, and C Spire is holding a Google-inspired selection process to choose a gigabit city in Mississippi. US Ignite is encouraging the development of new applications that will run on all these new networks.

Is 1 Gbps Internet access really needed? Let’s just say that those who have experienced it like it – a lot. And that new bandwidth-hungry services, from 4K TV to 3D telemedicine, are appearing every day.

Multiple-dwelling-unit properties (MDUs) have been active in the gigabit game, too, even if they haven’t had their fair share of attention in the popular press. In fact, as corporate editor Steve Ross points out in his article on financial modeling, if an MDU has robust inside wiring, units may get very high speeds even without a direct fiber connection to each unit – which isn’t true in the single-family world, where long copper loops lose bandwidth very quickly.

Recent issues of this magazine have highlighted gigabit services from private cable operators Pavlov Media and Hotwire; this issue features CampusConnect and CondoInternet, two other gigabit Internet providers that specialize in MDU markets.

What enables service providers to deliver gigabit speeds in multifamily buildings? Based on the profiles we’ve presented so far, I see several common threads:

- Tech-savvy customers – students, technology company employees or others who can make use of technology amenities.
- Relationships with property owners who are alert to the potential of gigabit Internet access to add value to a building.
- Ownership of fiber backbone networks in the markets they serve.
- The ability to deliver popular content “on-net” through content delivery networks and/or peering arrangements.
- A standardized in-building technology architecture that brings fiber to each floor of a building (and sometimes to each unit).
- Finally, and most important, a commitment to excellent service. Both CondoInternet and CampusConnect told us that “good enough” wasn’t good enough for them. They are interested in creating great user experiences.

Gigabit Internet speeds are still rare in MDUs – or anywhere else, for that matter – and they aren’t yet economically feasible or even desired in every MDU market. However, the gigabit does seem to be where the broadband world is headed – and it’s gaining momentum.

This issue of Broadband Communities offers many resources for MDU property owners and providers, including the second annual MDU Top 100 Technology Providers list. If you’re involved in creating great user experiences in multifamily housing, I hope you’ll find plenty here to inform and inspire you. ❖

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