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MDU Problems and Solutions

2020 is a challenging year for multifamily broadband, but it presents opportunities as well as dangers.

Owners of multiple-dwelling-unit (MDU) properties may be feeling besieged by the many – and sometimes conflicting – pressures they are experiencing. Their residents need broadband robust and reliable enough to work and study from home – and they need it immediately upon moving in. Residents need to stay safe and socially distanced from property leasing staff, service provider technicians and maintenance crews; property staff need to stay safe and socially distanced from residents, prospective residents, vendors and delivery drivers.

Residents want a choice of service providers, but they also want continuous Wi-Fi coverage throughout a property. In the current environment, many residents may not have money to pay the rent, or any broadband service included in the rent, but localities still need to collect property taxes. Owners need to minimize costs (and keep residents and staff safe) by increasing building automation, but service providers fear they will be blamed for any resulting slowdown in broadband service. Owners and residents want stable prices for video service, but providers are squeezed by rising video content costs.

This issue explores these topics, and many others, in a series of MDU-focused articles as well as in reports from **BROADBAND COMMUNITIES'** first-ever virtual Summit. Authors and speakers agree that the conundrums are real and call for creativity in problem-solving. And because MDUs differ in construction type, age, location, demographics, and existing infrastructure, owners will have to solve

these problems many times over. No one solution will apply in all, or even most, cases. There's no "typical" MDU.

CREATIVITY ABOUNDS

The good news is that creativity abounds, and new solutions are being developed. In part, technology is coming to the rescue. Wired and wireless broadband technologies – and combinations of the two – are leaping forward, giving property owners a wide choice of strategies they can use to upgrade their buildings' broadband services and position themselves for the future. Internet of things technology is also advancing, helping owners automate their buildings and progress toward "touchless" service.

But technology isn't a cure-all, and it can generate as many questions as answers. To resolve those questions, owners, management companies, providers and their consultants and lawyers are working to bring business practices up to date in the light of changing technologies and changing needs.

As challenging as these times are, the challenges are worth meeting head-on. The stakes are high, and there are opportunities both for owners and providers. By collaborating, they can deliver a better quality of life for residents, higher income and asset value for owners, and higher revenue for providers. ❖

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