

MDUs Win with Fiber-Based Broadband

Multifamily property owners, tenants and service providers all benefit from fiber as the number of bandwidth-intensive services and applications rise.

By Kevin Morgan / *Clearfield, Inc.*

Connectivity has become viewed as a required utility, similar to power, water and heat. A recent study by Ronin Technology Advisors showed that “80 percent of [multiple-dwelling-unit] MDU residents rated broadband internet as being more important than other amenities.” For MDU building owners, this means supplying a level of connectivity that helps attract and retain residents.

Building owners have a variety of options available today. The question they need to consider is: Which technology has the best capacity, longevity and revenue potential for them today, tomorrow and in the future? If the choice isn't fiber, MDU owners and providers will have to rip and replace technologies, such as cable or DSL, as emerging applications exceed their capabilities. This process will leave building owners once again required to upgrade infrastructure to recruit and keep tenants and raise rent prices.

Given the rise of bandwidth-intensive services and applications, there's a strong business case for all-fiber MDUs. Service providers, building owners and tenants all stand to benefit.

FEED THEM FIBER

To address the connectivity demand, a three-prong approach of partnering building owners and service providers with solution providers is key. Building owners, designers and installers

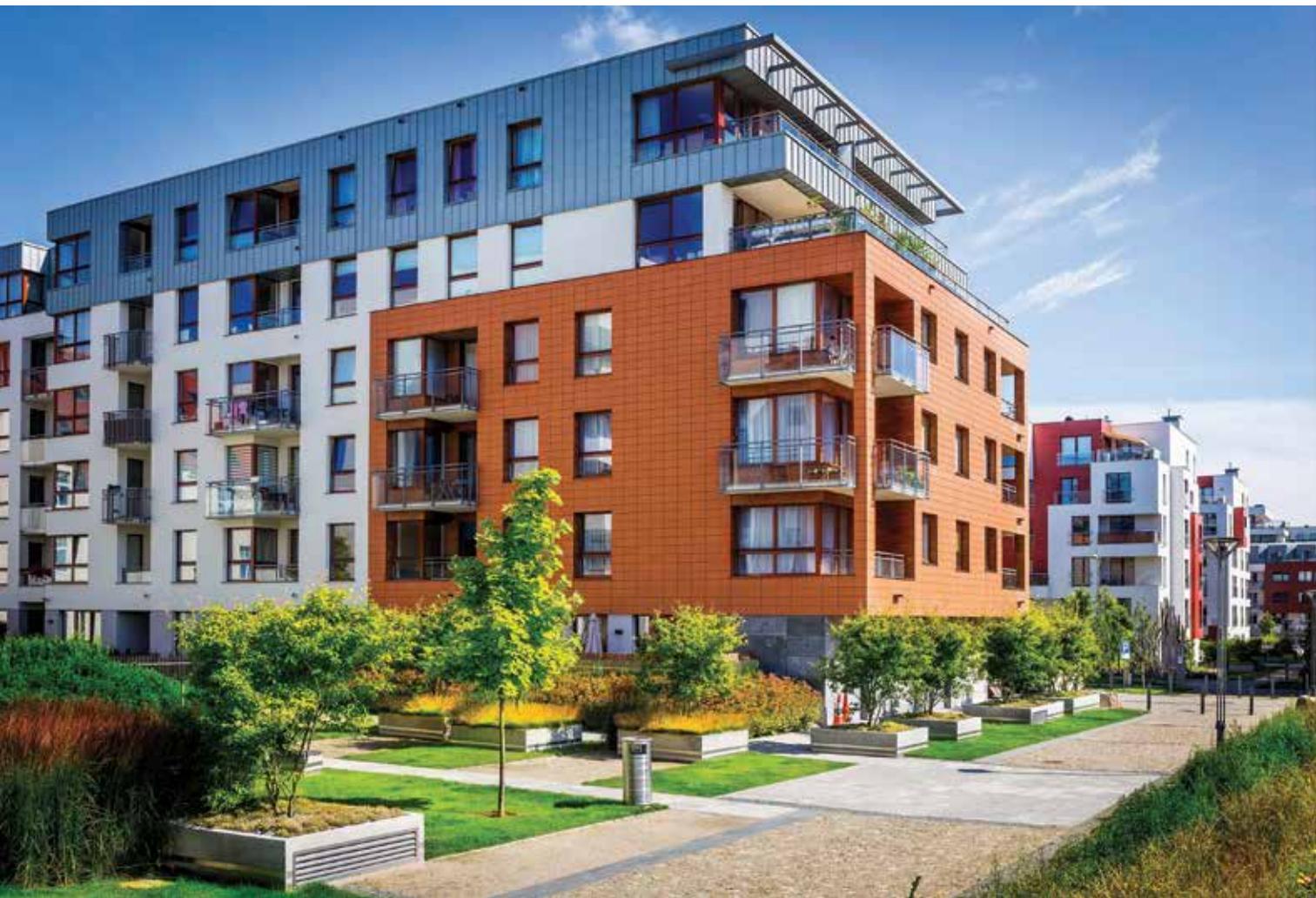
have many building characteristics to consider to succeed with fiber. MDU fiber optic deployments come in many different forms, from single-level, townhome designs to low-rise, garden-style units to mid-rise and high-rise buildings.

Demand for fiber-based internet is high, and renters are willing to pay for it. The Fiber Broadband Association (FBA) sponsored research in 2016 that showed that fiber broadband connectivity can increase MDU owners' and service providers' net income per average unit by as much as 11 percent and can increase the market value of rentals in MDUs by 8 percent.

SIMPLIFY THE APPROACH

Determining the best approach for enabling fiber pathways is what makes each MDU install different. The amount of riser space available, the location of equipment closets, and owner aesthetic preferences play significant roles in determining deployment requirements. Automation is needed to keep pace with demand in greenfield and brownfield scenarios and a shrinking skilled labor force.

Today, plug-and-play has alleviated traditional splicing, protection and slack storage methods. In reducing fusion splices, plug-and-play products minimize fusion machine requirements and answer the need for an automated process to help quickly train technicians and connect units.



THE IMPACT

A service provider reaching customers in Pennsylvania experienced a surge of customers at the onset of the pandemic. They demanded fiber broadband because they were relying on connectivity to work, learn, socialize and receive medical care. Some months, the provider's installs spiked 180 percent, many of which required deploying fiber networks to MDUs. Competing against other service providers in its market, the provider needed to evaluate its MDU approach, a mixed bag of solutions.

By choosing products with plug-and-play functionality and interconnectedness, the provider trained technicians on how to complete fiber installs in MDU environments so they were able to complete any fiber deployment regardless of each property's unique attributes. Reducing install times by 50 percent, the design

of modern fiber optic management and delivery products allowed tenants, service providers and building owners to win by streamlining the time-to-service availability.

GROWING DEMAND AND OPPORTUNITY

Residents will begin demanding gigabit services to access streaming and other entertainment platforms and to work or attend school from home. For building owners, the revenue opportunity does not stop at pleasing tenants. Service providers are pushing to deliver 5G and extend its coverage area in markets where it's available to communities – another money-making opportunity! As fiber feeds all, service providers will look to partner with MDU properties to increase performance and host their 5G equipment.

Fiber is unmatched for future-proofing broadband investments. MDU

owners and operators all have one goal – make the best of their investment and improve the services available to communities that enable them to thrive in the digital economy. Fiber-fed MDUs reduce the need for upgrades and reduce the pain of service interruption as capacity demands increase. ❖



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