



Invest in Getting The Rent Paid

Broadband isn't always an amenity for residents and prospective residents. Sometimes it's a necessity of life – and of work.

What do residents of multifamily communities want, anyway? To look at the ads, you'd think the answer was football. Lots of football.

Maybe it's the season, but I've been barraged with pictures of broadband subscribers sitting on couches, cheering their favorite teams – and with pictures of other subscribers dejected about their favorite sports channels' disappearing in the wake of contract disputes. One could be forgiven for thinking that broadband is all about spectator sports.

For some subscribers, it probably *is* all about spectator sports. But others demand more – and I don't mean video games – from their home broadband providers.

For example, support for home-based work. The Small Business Administration counts about 14.3 million home-based businesses in the United States. Although many are side projects or labors of love that generate little income, about 6.6 million of them provide at least half the household income for their owners, according to a 2009 survey commissioned by Network Solutions.

As for employees, the Census Bureau found in 2005 (the latest year for which figures are available) that about 8.1 million employed Americans worked exclusively from home and another 3.2 million worked from home part time, mostly because their employers required them to.

TO PAY THE RENT, MANY RESIDENTS REQUIRE BROADBAND

Working from anywhere these days requires online access. Another Network Solutions survey found that, for small businesses generally, the use of Internet business solutions is correlated with business competitiveness. Even a business with

local customers probably needs a website, a Facebook page and e-mail. Most employees who work from home must log into company systems or at least share files with colleagues. That adds up to a lot of people who require reliable broadband at home for business purposes.

With 12 percent of households operating home-based businesses and 8 percent of employees working at home at least part time, MDU owners need to consider whether they are providing the basic utilities their residents need to make a living. Delivering inadequate broadband means more than depriving residents of entertainment choices; it may cause some residents to fall behind on their rent and force others to look for new living quarters.

In a survey this year, researcher Michael Render found that businesses operated from fiber-to-the-home households tend to be serious businesses. Averaging \$60,000 in revenue, these businesses add more than \$40 billion per year to the national economy. (See "FTTH Generates \$40 Billion in New Economic Activity" in this issue.) Furthermore, many of Render's respondents said either that fiber to the home is necessary to their businesses or that it helps them operate more efficiently. Render also found that as many as 44 percent of FTTH subscribers had worked from home at some time.

With numbers like these, property owners can be assured that an investment in broadband infrastructure is an investment in the economic viability of their residents and of their communities.

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Broadband Properties (ISSN 0745-8711) (USPS 679-050) (Publication Mail Agreement #1271091) is published 8 times a year at a rate of \$24 per year by Broadband Properties LLC, 1909 Avenue G, Rosenberg, TX 77471. Periodical postage paid at Rosenberg, TX, and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to **Broadband Properties**, PO Box 303, Congers, NY 10920-9852. **CANADA POST:** Publications Mail Agreement #40612608. Canada Returns to be sent to Bleuchip International, PO Box 25542, London, ON N6C 6B2.

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