

CEO

Barbara DeGarmo / barbara@bbcmag.com

PUBLISHER

Nancy McCain / nancym@bbcmag.com

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Masha Zager / masha@bbcmag.com

EDITOR-AT-LARGE

Steven S. Ross / steve@bbcmag.com

ADVERTISING SALES ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE

Irene Prescott / irene@bbcmag.com

EVENTS COORDINATOR

Dennise Argil / dennise@bbcmag.com

COMMUNITY NEWS EDITOR

Marianne Cotter / marianne@bbcmag.com

DESIGN & PRODUCTION

Karry Thomas

CONTRIBUTORS

Rollie Cole,

Sagamore Institute for Policy Research
David Daugherty, Korcett Holdings Inc.

Heather Burnett Gold,

Fiber Broadband Association

Joanne Hovis, CTC Technology & Energy

Michael A. Kashmer, Digital Broadband

Programming Consultant

W. James MacNaughton, Esq.

Christopher Mitchell, Institute for

Local Self-Reliance

Henry Pye, RealPage, Inc.

Bryan Rader, UpStream Network

Craig Settles, Gigabit Nation

Robert L. Vogelsang, Broadband

Communities Magazine

BROADBAND PROPERTIES LLC

CEO

Barbara DeGarmo

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Nancy McCain

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The Hon. Hilda Gay Legg

BUSINESS & EDITORIAL OFFICE

BROADBAND PROPERTIES LLC
1909 Avenue G • Rosenberg, TX 77471
281.342.9655 • Fax 281.342.1158

www.broadbandcommunities.com

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MDU Issue: The Highlights

Nearly a quarter of U.S. housing is now in multiple-dwelling-unit (MDU) properties. These communities serve some of the most demanding broadband users. They also provide profitable opportunities for selling broadband services.

As editor, I always recommend that you read **BROADBAND COMMUNITIES** cover to cover. If you're a multifamily property owner, manager, consultant, service provider, vendor or even resident, you'll certainly want to read this issue in its entirety.

But just in case, here's the short version.

- Construction of MDUs – especially of rental properties – continues to boom even though single-family housing hasn't recovered from the recession. MDUs are being built to accommodate young people forming households and older people downsizing.
- MDU developers increasingly plan for good broadband as an essential utility and finance it themselves.
- In existing MDUs, property owners can usually meet today's broadband needs with high-quality, well-designed copper, coax or fiber to the unit. More important is bringing a large enough fiber optic circuit close enough to the unit.
- College students lead the way in using broadband for study and entertainment, and they have more connected devices than ever. Table stakes for serving student-housing properties is 100 Mbps and managed Wi-Fi (and no rogue devices).
- As students graduate, they move into conventional apartments and bring with them their expectations for reliable service, high speeds and seamless, propertywide Wi-Fi.
- Multifamily residents of all ages

want to be able to work from home. To do that, they need robust, reliable broadband with adequate downstream and upstream speeds.

- Bulk broadband, always standard in student housing and other niche markets, is becoming more widely used in conventional housing – but the FCC has raised questions about it.
- About half of new MDUs are wired with fiber. Really, all of them should be. Installing fiber is no longer expensive, difficult or aesthetically challenging, and deployers now have plenty of options in terms of technology and deployment methods.
- The ROI for retrofitting a multifamily property with fiber is becoming more favorable. Fiber means higher sales price, higher rents and higher net income. With a wireless overlay, it can also mean higher ancillary income.

In both new and existing MDUs, fiber to the unit positions communities for the future. To quote Michael Voll, a visionary technology leader featured in this issue (p. 20), "Decades of innovations need to be supported. Broadband and the internet should not be limiting factors." ♦

Masha Zager

masha@bbcmag.com