

# What's Next?

Look to the future when you plan today's broadband deployment.

By Valerie M. Sargent / *Multifamily Broadband Council*

**M**ature communities face a challenge in competing with the technology bells and whistles in new apartments. The bells and whistles attract people who aspire to trendy lifestyles (high-tech, high-achieving, high-prestige), but residents in mature communities tend to be more interested in living quiet, pleasant lives. But even “Netflix and chill” requires advanced technology.

Residents increasingly demand that owners and service providers offer robust, workable broadband solutions. People constantly seek better, stronger, faster solutions. The days of waiting for a dial-up internet connection are a faded memory – broadband customers want it fast, and they want it now.

Today's residents expect multiple outlets (an easy USB charge port upgrade is an unexpected bonus), great video options, fast and reliable internet access and strong cell phone reception. These amenities exist in multifamily housing, but are they at the levels they should be?

The multifamily industry tends to be a late adopter. It waits to see how new technologies are received in single-family markets or new construction, and by the time existing multifamily communities finally adopt these changes, a newer, shinier, better solution is already on the horizon.

## PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

In the moving world of technology, in which new products are constantly introduced and old ones discontinued (you can tell I might still be bitter about those speakers and stereo components I bought to fit the old iPhones!), how can owners keep up and ensure their less-than-futuristic apartment communities are ready for the future?

A generic broadband solution that works for everyone in the multifamily world would be fantastic. The challenge is that every property is different. Every owner is different. Every budget is different. Every market is different. Every resident is different. What's the best way to minimize variations and provide stability? How can owners do more with less?

Perhaps the solution is truly and simply to plan ahead.

Deploying broadband at a property requires making many decisions. Owners often select a minimalist approach, planning what makes sense for the moment and reinvesting after two years to meet residents' latest broadband needs. Then it's like those shampoo instructions: Rinse and repeat. Every two years, owners and service providers find the cycle

repeating. They need to change to accommodate the moving world of technology.

Is the better method perhaps to *over-engineer* the next solution? Though budget constraints may limit capital expenditures and over-engineering may seem daunting, if you *know* that in two years you will need something else – even though you don't need it now – could it be more cost-effective in the long run to support an existing deployment *and* plan for those changes in advance? Some extra spending now could save additional future costs for further due diligence and re-engineering additional broadband solutions.

Very few owners nail down one and only one type of infrastructure for broadband. All the rest have to make adjustments and be either early, risky adopters or late adopters in a mature technology road map.

But being an early adopter has benefits, too. Extrapolating from current trends, it's clear that video growth is flat or declining, and bandwidth needs are increasing. What if you could provide an enhanced broadband solution that residents didn't even realize they needed – until they had it? What if they could get that enhanced broadband solution only in your community? No nearby apartments of the same age could provide the same solutions. Your community would be unique and desirable because it would be different.

You could promote this broadband advantage in your marketing and leasing efforts, and suddenly you would stand apart from the competition because you anticipated residents' needs, and now they *have* to have it. That's what Apple does with each new model and upgrade. As much as consumers may hate getting new components to accommodate their new technology, they want – and *need* – that new model.

The same goes for apartments. Paint a picture of the future, and prospects will respond. It's as simple as that – well, that *and* an excellent leaser with outstanding customer service skills on the front line! ❖

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