

New Wireless Amenities

Technology isn't all that's changing in multifamily wireless service. Today's new business models are disruptive as well.

By Robert Grosz / *Multifamily Broadband Council and Boingo Wireless*

Nearly 95 percent of consumers say that high-speed internet is their No. 1 home amenity. From smartphone dependency and cord-cutting to smart appliances, lighting and security, residents' connectivity demands have reached an all-time high, and the trend continues upward. No longer is wireless coverage a nice-to-have for multifamily communities – it's a must-have, and buildings that do not embrace this new "fourth utility" will find residents moving over to the competition.

Adopting the right broadband model for a property is paramount. There has been significant disruption in multifamily connectivity, and new solutions can offer building owners key differentiation in the market. When navigating wireless internet for your property, be mindful of the following to ensure that your building's wireless amenities drive resident satisfaction and financial success, now and in the future.

- **Multifamily communities are departing from traditional telecom models.**

Traditional multifamily telecom models have significant limitations. Apartment communities leave residents to fend for themselves for internet access, and owners do not have significant economic participation in services. Owners also have little to no control over the quality and performance of internet services or the customer experiences they deliver.

Next-generation service providers are solving these challenges by rolling out flexible business models that meet the demands of residents and communities with greater long-term profit creation. Binding customers to large bundled packages, contractual commitments, appointment-based installations and monopolistic policies is going the way of the dinosaur. Today these conditions are being replaced by customer-centric concepts such as convenience, complete coverage and reliability.

Modern service providers custom design telecom networks for developers, owners and property managers with resident satisfaction top of mind. Advanced providers design, build and operate telecom networks propertywide, then send a single bill for all residents. The community can elect to charge individual residents directly or include services in residents' monthly bills. This gives owners the option to create ancillary revenue.

- **Think beyond residential units.**

Not only residents need connectivity – so do on-site employees and critical building systems, such as locks,

climate control and cameras. Wireless coverage must extend propertywide to power intelligent systems used for energy management and sustainability. It must go beyond the lobby and residential units to deliver connectivity across the community in the pool, fitness center, elevators and garage. Opt for advanced network solutions that serve all corners of a property and send strong signals even to hard-to-reach areas.

- **Converged wireless networks win out.**

Wi-Fi is the dominant connectivity player for multifamily communities, but cellular coverage is also crucial.

A recent report from the National Multifamily Housing Council and Kingsley Associates found that more than 92 percent of residents are interested in reliable cell reception in their apartment communities. Perhaps more important, 78 percent of those interested wouldn't lease without it. Cell reception scored higher than secure resident parking, secure amenity access, a swimming pool or a fitness center.

Converged network solutions that leverage both Wi-Fi and cellular are imperative for keeping up with connectivity demands while preparing for 5G, the next and newest wireless standard that is being built to keep up with the proliferation of connectivity. It is expected to converge unlicensed spectrum, like that used for Wi-Fi, with licensed cellular networks to power a fast, seamless wireless experience.

High-capacity wireless internet, via both licensed and unlicensed spectrum, is the new foundation of today's most appealing real estate venues. Just as building owners must ensure proper building foundations, safe electrical and plumbing systems and critical life-safety systems, they should also focus on wireless coverage. Owners can develop this new core competency by working with next-generation service providers that push the boundaries in wireless and innovation, delivering resident satisfaction and increased ROI for MDUs. ❖

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