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RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY MANAGERS

FALL 2020



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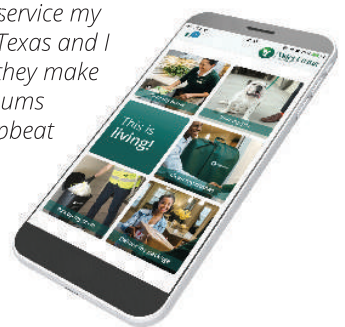
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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

# A MOST UNUSUAL YEAR

BY KATIE WRENN, CAPS | WRH REALTY SERVICES INC.

**I AM SO GRATEFUL** for the opportunity to be writing this. At the same time, I write it with a heavy heart because it is my last President's Message for the Florida Apartment Association. I am so honored to have served the last year as FAA president, especially during such an unprecedented time. This opportunity has been among the highlights of my career, and I feel truly blessed to be able to give back to the multifamily industry in this capacity. While my presidency has been unlike any other year in FAA history, there has been at least one positive aspect. While the apartment industry has always been unique in its level of camaraderie, even among competitors, during this crisis, we really have proved that we can rise and come together in the face of any adversity.

I want to give a special shoutout and thank you to the FAA team: Josh Gold, Ralph Robinson, Rona Long, Laureen Crowley, Amanda Gill, Will Jaycox, and Carina Favale. As COVID-19 challenged our industry and the world, the team at FAA stepped up and served as a resource to the governor's office, the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation's Eviction Mitigation Task Force, the Florida Supreme Court, and countless local governments across the state. FAA became the voice of multifamily in the state of Florida, providing important feedback about potentially harmful effects of repeated extensions of the governor's eviction moratorium. FAA also developed a COVID-19 resource page and established a series of professional development webinars to support our industry.

The FAA team also completed two projects that had already been planned. The 2020 Compensation and Benefits Report compares this year's survey results with 2018 data. The FAA team, together with HR&A Advisors, a consulting firm serving the real estate industry, completed a report on Drivers of Multifamily Housing Costs and Affordability in Florida. The report focuses on Florida's four major metro areas and examines the factors that affect the cost

of multifamily rental housing, as well as possible steps municipalities and state government could take to alleviate the current housing affordability crisis. This research data will enhance the industry's advocacy efforts at the local and state level, and pave the way for industry-focused solutions to address Florida's housing supply needs.

I'm proud of everything FAA has accomplished this year, and I'm very pleased that FAA's excellence has once again been recognized by state and national organizations. FAA has thus far received six awards, recognizing excellence across the communications, events, and government affairs departments. Read more about these awards in the July issue of *Florida APTitudes* at [faahq.org/news/e-newsletter](http://faahq.org/news/e-newsletter). FAA is a finalist for four National Apartment Association Excellence Awards. The winners will be announced at NAA's Apartmentalize in November.

FAA had a strong legislative year in 2020 with the passage of two important pieces of legislation. HB 209/SB 1084 to reduce emotional support animal fraud and abuse has been several years in the making. HB 1339/SB 998 provides local governments with the ability to approve the development of affordable housing on any parcel of land that is zoned for residential, commercial, or industrial use, and imposes annual impact fee reporting requirements. Read more about any of FAA's legislative initiatives at [faahq.org/news/government-affairs](http://faahq.org/news/government-affairs).

While this year has been anything but typical, the Florida Apartment Association has had many great accomplishments. I cannot thank the entire team enough for all they do for our industry and how proud I am to serve this organization.

Lastly, I would like to take a moment to thank Cynthia Haines, Mark Rutledge, and WRH Realty Services Inc. for their support over the past year as I took on this responsibility to serve our industry. I sincerely appreciate not only their support for my role as president, but also their ongoing support of the Florida Apartment Association. **MF**

# Rising to the Challenge

BY JOSH GOLD, CAE, CMP | EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

IT WOULD BE AN understatement to describe the COVID-19 crisis that has gripped our nation and the world since early spring as a challenge. I felt like the universe was throwing one curveball after another. If you're a baseball fan, you know that when a pitcher throws a curveball, the ball seems to be moving smoothly until the direction appears to shift suddenly. If you swing at a curveball, you might miss or you might send it over the foul line. There's also a chance you will get a hit.

FAA and our affiliates have done a great job of rising to the challenge presented by the pandemic. The crisis has caused us to be nimbler and more flexible than ever before in order to meet members' need for information.

For example, FAA had never produced a webinar before this year, but that didn't stop our events team from stepping up to the plate. Between April and August, we hosted more than a dozen webinars, some of which drew more than 600 attendees. Members who missed the original webinars have logged in to the FAA website to view recordings ([faahq.org/webinars](http://faahq.org/webinars)).

The FAA government affairs and communications teams worked tirelessly to produce and keep updated a robust COVID-19 resource center on the FAA website, including a continually updated tracker of COVID-19 policies and regulations of Florida's 67 counties and many of its numerous cities. In addition, email updates kept members informed about state mandates and executive orders issued by the governor regarding evictions, amenities, and more. Not related to COVID-19 but vital for apartment communities are legal requirements regarding human trafficking that will go



into effect early next year, including mandatory training for certain on-site staff members. More than 500 FAA members participated in free online training, which continues to be offered complimentary to FAA members on our website (see Page 24 for details).

The numbers show that our members made good use of the information we have been providing. The average monthly impressions at the FAA website from April through July was 34% higher than the same time last year. The open rate for the *Florida APTitudes* monthly e-newsletter is up nearly 40% and the average click-through rate has doubled.

The challenge presented by the COVID-19 crisis has a silver lining, in that it gave us an opportunity to reconsider our offerings and our value. It's not unusual for a well-established association to become stagnant. There's a fine line between tradition and stagnation. The

FAA Annual Conference & Trade Show, for example, is an extremely successful event that receives favorable reviews year after year. That's a tradition worth building upon, and we have our sights set on a better-than-ever event marking FAA's 50th anniversary in 2021 – even more spectacular than usual, after having to cancel this year's.

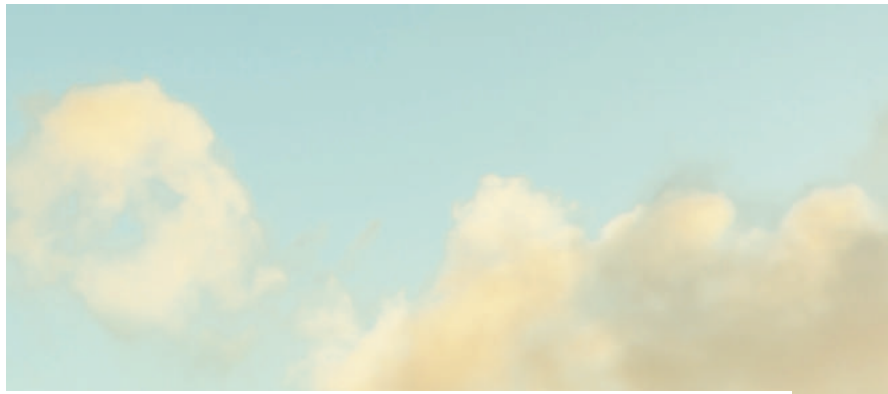
This crisis prompted us to shift how we operate and to look for new and creative ways to serve our members. We hope that providing new resources and responding to your needs has demonstrated to you that FAA is here for you. We will continue to provide you with best practices, information about regulations that affect you, and other resources. As always, if there are other ways we can assist you, please don't hesitate to let me know via email at [josh@faahq.org](mailto:josh@faahq.org) or by calling FAA headquarters at 407-960-2910. MF





FAA staff had been planning for nearly a year for our move into new office space in mid-March. The move had already been slowed by construction delays — something many of you are all too familiar with. The space was finally ready, our boxes were packed, and we were excited to settle in, hang pictures, and implement other finishing touches. Instead, we gathered our computers and office phones and, like many of you, set up work spaces in our homes. We expected we would work from home for a few weeks, but it turned out to be a few months. I'm pleased to report that we have finally completed those finishing touches and have been working in our new headquarters — with appropriate distancing and other precautions, of course. Our new offices are modern and efficient and include a conference room where we will be able to host small meetings when it is safe to do so.





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## MINDFUL MENTAL HEALTH FOR RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY MANAGERS

BY DARLYN FINCH KUHN

**L**ori Agudo was frightened. In mid-March, as businesses closed all around her due to the COVID-19 pandemic, she began working from home, and found that sheltering in place was extremely difficult for her. As director of training and talent development for Royal American Management, Agudo supports 630 employees, and is involved in the Apartment Association of Greater Orlando and the Florida Apartment Association. A social person accustomed to interacting with many people in person on a regular basis, she felt isolated from the world. Watching her own spirits crumble, Agudo turned to a multifamily industry friend for support.

Ashlee Partin of Affinity Waste Solutions, which provides trash removal services to multifamily communities, invited Agudo to participate in a series of video calls that provided both inspiration and motivation. “Participating in ‘Navigating Multifamily’ allowed me to see the industry friends I missed so







very much. This did wonders for my emotional state during this time,” Agudo said. “It gave me the strength to power through and feel like there are better days ahead. I no longer felt alone. ... I had something to look forward to that was positive during a dark time in history.”

### Stress comes with the job

Property managers don't need a pandemic to find stress in their lives. Katie Smith is human resources manager for JMG Realty Inc. She said, “Essentially, our property managers are the eyes and ears and boots on the ground of the community and are responsible for ensuring the company's and owners' visions for the community are achieved. ... There is tremendous pressure to meet income goals while managing expenses. ... In this business, if you are the property manager, there are no true vacation days or weekends. Those who consider themselves the best in the business would agree that managers are on-call 24 hours a day, seven days a week.”

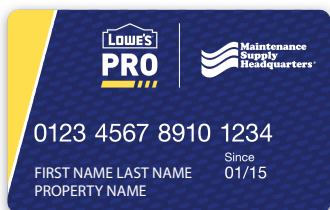
Christopher Koback, regional manager in Tampa for South Oxford Management, immediate past president of the Bay Area Apartment Association, and a

30-plus-year veteran of the industry, said, “Managers in our industry thrive on the daily challenges that end up on their desks. It's in their DNA.” He said SOM's managers are treated like small-business owners. “They are responsible for the overall operation of a multimillion-dollar real estate investment.”

Suzi Smith, director of corporate marketing at Pinnacle, said the company's property managers “face a host of stresses in their job, and no one's stress level is necessarily the same as the others'. As with most leadership positions, property managers are challenged with employee relations, performance effects from shifting market conditions, and time sensitive requests from clients, residents, and supervisors.”

### How stress manifests in property managers

Katie Smith of JMG acknowledged the stress involved in the lifestyle: “A small amount of stress and friendly competition keeps individuals fresh and on their toes. When stress becomes overwhelming, this affects individuals physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Stress leads to bad habits such as eating unhealthily, drinking too much alcohol, smoking, and not sleeping well, which can then result in a lack of



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focus, irritability, aggression, and poor mood. All of this results in poor performance, and can be detrimental to a team.”

She continued, “When bad habits manifest for a long period of time, stress builds up and ultimately leads to burnout. Developing good time management combined with effective leadership and the ability to develop others can reduce the risk of burnout. It’s also important to speak up when help is needed. I believe, many times, managers in our industry are afraid to ask for help and wait until it becomes too difficult to recover from. ... It is critical for HR to develop trust and a positive rapport with site-level managers in order to identify when a manager is in trouble and needs additional support and help.”

Suzi Smith of Pinnacle said, “When people are overwhelmed, tasks can tend to slip through the cracks. Stress can impact production and quality.”

Koback concurred. “Stress can lead to employees rushing to judgment and making snap decisions,” he

said. “There is no worse feeling than having to face these issues all alone or unsupported.” At SOM, that doesn’t happen, he said. “The one important factor that can make or break a manager from being able to handle the stress is having a management company that fully supports its on-site teams. Feeling the freedom to be able to call a supervisor and ask for advice, help, or even just to vent makes all the difference in the world.”

### How management companies try to help

In late March 2020, a couple of weeks into widespread shutdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Katie Smith knew that JMG’s property managers must be feeling the same intense stress as she. So she reached out to property management team leaders to provide coaching on how to deal with the concerns of property managers across the various properties in the JMG portfolio. She said, “Many of our clients immediately wanted to know our plan regarding managing

## Tips for Team Leaders

Katie Smith, human resources manager for JMG Realty Inc., sent an email offering four suggestions to her team leaders for helping multifamily-industry property managers on the front lines cope with the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Create Connection

“When a crisis hits, the deepest and most needful parts of our human nature kick in – we want security. Without the basics, teams will cease to function. Therefore, it’s important to reconnect and to maintain human connection in any way we can. ... Find a way to meet with your teams ... keeping those safe social distancing measures in place.” Smith listed options such as calling into team meetings from home or office, or using video chat or Zoom to stay connected.

- Increase Empowerment

“As a leader, what do you think is your most powerful tool right now? Likeability? Vision? Competence? Believe it or not, it’s TRUST. ... Trust is particularly important in a crisis, when people have a sense of being out of control. Being in control of your life, decisions, and choices is essential for people’s health and well-being. Empowering staff with greater trust at a time when they feel they’ve lost their sense of control is a great thing to do. ... Give them an opportunity

to be creative and shine. ... Extend trust and you’ll discover that your staff will rise to the challenge.” She acknowledged that the tendency toward micromanagement is only overcome by letting go of it, and expressed confidence that the staff would rise to the challenge.

- Improve Communication

“The more uncertainty there is around communication, the less likely communication is going to happen as you would like it to. You need to tie down these uncertainties to ensure good information flow. If your team does not feel there is effective and consistent communication from their leader, they will communicate through other means, thus causing inaccurate information to flow.” Smith suggested an open-door policy (even if it’s virtual) and encouraged leaders to invite property managers to speak up about their concerns, ask for help, and share ideas.

- Show Appreciation

Continue to show appreciation for dedicated employees still hard at work. “Employees may feel scared coming to work, but they choose to do so, for whatever the reason may be. Acknowledging this and thanking them resonates encouragement and shows that you care.”



COVID-19. This was also very stressful for us as information was changing every day as the pandemic erupted in the U.S. COVID-19 has presented a new set of challenges, creating additional stressors for managers and staff as they try to collect rent from residents who have lost employment and field calls from residents due to the offices and amenities being closed.”

Koback agreed that COVID-19 has added a great deal of stress to property managers’ loads. “The rapidly and ever-changing challenges associated with COVID-19 has everyone stressed right now,” he said. “We always thought we really knew our residents, but having to experience this pandemic as essential workers and deal directly with so many people who have been financially and physically impacted has really opened our eyes to what ‘knowing your resident’ really means.” He listed loss of employment and subsequent financial uncertainty, residents’ or residents’ families’ illness, and residents having to work from home while not being used to “apartment living by day” as stressors that impact residents and the property managers who care about them. Koback also acknowledged that entering apartments and dealing with residents who may be asymptomatic has caused concern among property managers about their own health and that of their families and friends.

He added that COVID-19 has resulted in owners needing more information, more often, in order to make smart business decisions for their investments. He said for property managers this means, “The stressful job you already had still needs to be completed, and now, in addition, you have new reports, spreadsheets, and deadlines.”

Suzi Smith concurred. “Client stressors come in many different forms, such as time-sensitive projects or accelerated performance. In addition, unexpected requests to provide data or information can throw a wrench into even the most organized manager’s day,” she said. She also pointed out that, as life becomes more stressful for residents, they can pass that stress on to their property manager. “Rent payments are typically the largest monthly expense for our residents, and when things are not going right, they can become emotionally charged. Our property managers must be able to mitigate that stress and provide solutions.”

### **A new management style for a new normal**

Suzi Smith added that Pinnacle’s property managers have successfully adapted to a different management style during the pandemic. “These professionals are responsible for providing quality service and building relationships. This becomes very difficult without the ability to interact face-to-face,” she said. “The pandemic has created a heightened workload for our





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managers due to additional reporting and protocols and skeleton staffing. Changes in legislation have also increased challenges with collections, leasing, and renewals. Our managers have been forced to shift their operating procedures to fit this 'new normal.'"

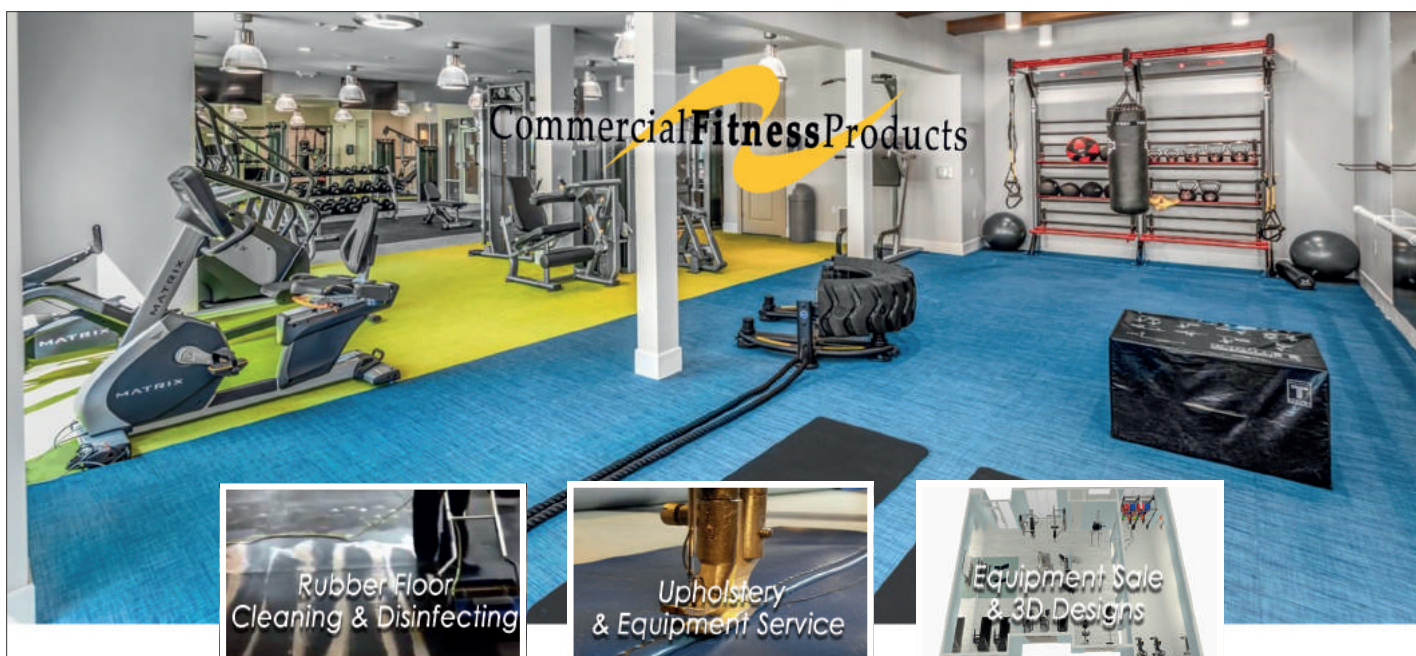
Katie Smith also noted the extreme shift in operations at JMG. In an email to her team leaders with the subject line, "What the heck just happened?" she wrote, "We went from a great start to 2020, with business as usual doing what we love, to operations being turned upside down and somewhat to a standstill. Many of you are probably thinking the same thing that I am right now. What now? How long is this going to last? What else is going to happen? Unfortunately, we don't have the answers to those questions right now. There's not a handbook to refer to for this. And, that feeling of uncertainty is pretty daunting and overwhelming."

By acknowledging her own vulnerability and lack of certainty in what the future would hold, Katie Smith reassured the leaders in her property management department that their fears and concerns were both valid and shared. She also expressed her faith in their ability to handle whatever might come. She wrote, "Studies show 90% of what we worry about

we have absolutely no control over. So, given that we know this fact, let's pledge to focus on that 10% we possibly can do something about. ... Our employees look to their leaders, you, in times of uncertainty, and they need you now more than ever. This, too, comes with an overwhelming amount of responsibility and pressure. However, I have faith in all of you, from what I know about each of you, that you have, and will, rise to the occasion."

### Creative ways to beat the blues

JMG Realty's efforts to encourage stress relief didn't stop with one email, however. Acknowledging music's power to soothe and bring people together, the company shared links to songs like The Beatles' classic hit, "Let it Be," and even produced a music video of its own in support of first responders, including not only medical, police, and fire personnel in the communities they serve, but also JMG's own "first responders" such as maintenance workers and staff. Sporting T-shirts reading "Essential" on the front and "#JMGSTRONG" on the back, they delivered food and other supplies and chanted "NOPE," and "YEP," while holding aloft hand-lettered signs with questions like, "Is the office open?" NOPE! and "Does COVID-19 suck?" YEP! and






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"Can we use the amenities?" NOPE! and "Do we miss our residents?" YEP!

Katie Smith also knew that having information on other resources they could access would help alleviate uncertainty and stress for employees. So she made sure to provide a link to the JMG Employee Assistance Program, which provides help with work-related stress, emotional distress, and choosing appropriate medical care, among other issues. She also outlined guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and provided links to information and videos about identifying signs and sources of stress, along with ways to cope.

Katie Smith said, "I remind our managers that it's okay to have a bad day or to start your day over. We are human. We all have moments when things get to us or we are not at our best. Allow yourself a little grace when this happens. Learn from the experience. Apologize if you need to, and move on."

Koback said SOM also has been extremely supportive of its property managers. "SOM benefits are very competitive and some of the best I've seen. SOM immediately extended 80 hours of 'COVID time' to be used for health, day care, and taking care of immediate family members. The company has

ensured that all employees have proper protective equipment, and the sites themselves have been modified to make sure everyone, including the residents, is in a clean environment." SOM also believes that knowledge is power. "Weekly calls hosted by the company president to review all of the latest and greatest [information] have also gone a long way to keep employees 'in the know.'"

The companywide calls serve another stress-reduction purpose, Koback said. "A small shoutout on a conference call or some small token of appreciation or recognition can go a very long way to making a manager feel appreciated and ready to accept the next challenge."

Hearing from company leadership and seeing colleagues virtually is a definite pick-me-up, and some companies are going even further to promote stress relief and a sense of fun. Dana G. Pate, senior director of marketing at Rangewater Real Estate Group, said the company is mindful of its employees' physical and emotional well-being. "The early weeks of the pandemic had us all searching for a sense of normalcy and connection as we navigated the unknown," she says. "Valet Living Home and Torch Fitness have been valuable partners to Rangewater for years, and



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we found a natural opportunity to reengage our team members by way of their weekly 'Mindful Meditations.' There was an overwhelming response to these virtual experiences, and we're grateful to have brought a sense of balance among chaos."

Nicole McMath, director of fitness and wellness at Torch Fitness by Valet Living said, "The impact of meditation, self-centering, and breathing techniques relates to mental health as it promotes a clear mind and reduces stresses, both of which are essential for effective reasoning, decision-making, happiness, and most daily tasks."

One of McMath's favorite activities during the pandemic has been a creative expression painting class conducted with Westdale Management. Kits filled with art supplies were provided to managers, assistant managers, and leasing office associates, who participated from their homes or offices. McMath said, "We had 10-12 community office teams in three different states participate. This event promoted both team-building and an outlet for emotions – frustration, confusion, happiness. Not only are we dealing with a pandemic, but also long overdue racial tension, so creating a safe space among colleagues to

share their experiences and emotions through art was very meaningful."

### The silver lining in the COVID cloud

All in all, Katie Smith believes there have been some positives from tackling the stresses of the pandemic together. "In a strange way, this has brought everyone closer together," she said. "I have heard more managers commenting on how proud they are to work for JMG now than ever before. Yes, we've had challenging moments. We have had to shut sites down and quarantine entire teams. In general, everyone has responded very well, and we have been able to work through it together. I believe we will come out of this a stronger unit."

Pinnacle's Suzi Smith also sees the current stress-inducing situations as opportunities to improve as property managers and as human beings. "Stress is all around us. How we react and tackle issues is different for everyone," she said. "It is on each of us to raise our hands when we need help. It is on all of us to identify people who are feeling low and offer help. In our industry, we have the privilege of touching millions of lives. We must stay focused on treating everyone with compassion and respect." **MF**

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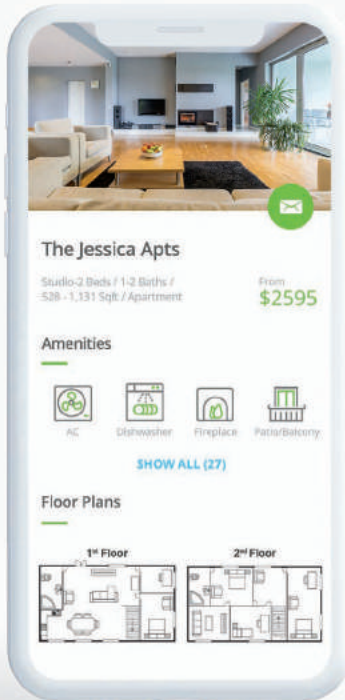
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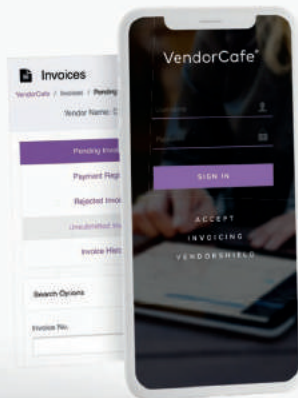
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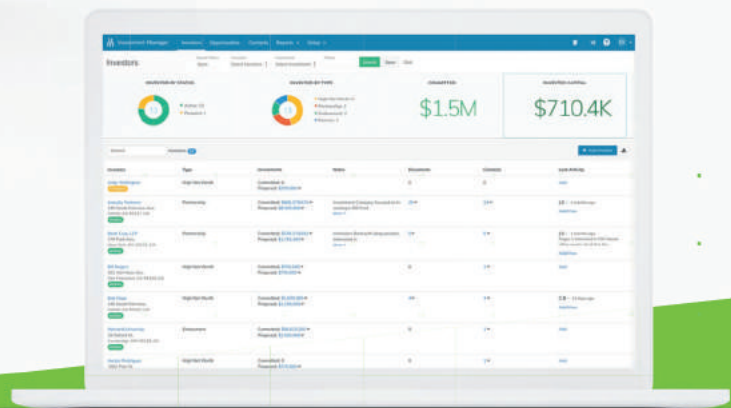


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# STAY CONNECTED THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

BY: CAMILA CAL

**SOCIAL MEDIA IS AN** integral part of daily life for many Americans. We constantly share, retweet, or like posts because it makes us feel connected to the rest of the world. As of 2020, Americans spend an average of two hours and 24 minutes per day using social media apps like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, according to GlobalWebIndex, a market research company focused on technology.

In the multifamily housing industry, social media has become less of a marketing tool and more of an avenue to cultivate a sense of community among residents and the on-site teams, said Lia Nichole Smith, vice president of education and performance for ApartmentRatings and SatisFacts, a resident satisfaction and reputation management company.

Social media is currently one of the top five drivers for the perception of a community's value among current residents, Smith said, as well as a high contributor to their decision to renew and recommend their community. That's why she advises communities to establish a presence on both Facebook and Instagram, the most popular platforms. Other platforms, such as Twitter, YouTube, and TikTok, can also be beneficial to communities looking to expand their reach online.

It is also a useful tool to stay connected, especially now as communities are dealing with limited in-person contact due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many residents have taken to social media to interact with management teams because offices are closed, Smith said, and communities that embrace social media during this time will be rewarded with higher levels of resident satisfaction and greater likelihood of renewals.

Southgate Towers in Miami Beach has learned that engaging with social media platforms through posting contests, giveaways, or photos is key to building a sense of community even while socially distanced. Southgate's community manager, Saide Mlayes, is known as the "social media guru" in her community, reaching about 900 followers on Southgate's platforms.

Prior to COVID-19, Southgate Towers shared photos and videos of residents interacting during community events and often received messages from residents who were excited for future events. Though circumstances have

changed, Southgate remains focused on posting positive content such as online yoga classes, maintenance tips, virtual tours, and a video in which staff working remotely reassured residents that they would get through this challenge together.

"We really wanted to support our local businesses during this time, so we promoted them on our platforms and offered exclusive discounts for our residents," Mlayes said. Southgate also showed its support for first responders and frontline workers by organizing and posting a "thank-you hour" every Friday. Residents stood on their balconies and clapped for five minutes to show their gratitude for essential workers.

Student-housing communities are also active on social media, though most are focusing on Instagram and its stories feature. This feature allows the user to share 15 seconds worth of photos and videos in a slideshow format. Stories are increasingly popular with the millennial and Gen Z demographics, which include many students.

"Social media is a window into every student's world. It influences their fashion, their ideas, what they want to do,

## Social Media Statistics

- More than 70% of the U.S. population has a social media account.
- The number of social network users in the U.S. is predicted to increase to 257 million by 2023, an increase from 246 million users in 2019.
- In September 2019, 90.9% of U.S. mobile users accessed the Facebook mobile app, making it the most popular social networking app in the U.S.
- In June 2018, Instagram reached 1 billion monthly active users.
- The U.S. has the leading number of Twitter users, reaching 64.2 million users as of April 2020.
- TikTok is one of the fastest-growing social media apps in the U.S. In 2019, the app had an estimated 37.2 million users in the U.S.

Source: Statista



where they want to go, and so much more. It is only natural that we realized social media could influence where they wanted to live, too,” said Erica Washington, a leasing professional at Player’s Club Apartments in Tallahassee.

Because of COVID-19, universities moved to online learning and many residents traveled back to their hometowns to finish the semester. Player’s Club relied on using its social media presence as an additional communication tool in order to stay in touch with residents.

“Instagram is the main place that Gen Z goes to for communication and information. They know they can call or email us if there is anything they need, but being active on a platform they use daily helps build their trust in us,” Washington said. “Our emails are read about 40 percent of the time, but our social media posts are viewed by almost every resident.”

Using the Instagram live video feature that allows users to broadcast a livestream, Player’s Club held a virtual open house showcasing amenities, answering questions in real time, and touring their model. After the livestream, viewers who sent a direct message mentioning their favorite part of the tour were entered into a drawing to win a gift card or Apple AirPods.

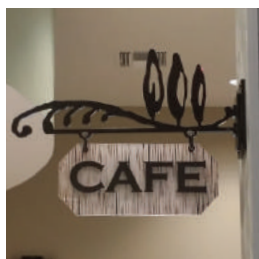
Other student-housing communities like University Park in Boca Raton have also taken advantage of Instagram’s unique features to keep residents informed while limiting in-person contact. Stories are only visible for 24 hours, but users can choose to keep a story on their profile permanently using Instagram’s highlights option. University Park’s followers can easily access information on promotional items, virtual tours, reviews, events, and amenities through the community’s saved stories. And if they have any questions, an answer is a click away.

“We’ve found that our residents and even new prospects have been using direct messaging as a way to contact us rather than coming into the office or calling in. This has been helpful to minimize foot traffic in our office while still answering questions efficiently,” said Allison Canning, University Park’s leasing and marketing manager.

COVID-19 has caused adjustments in policies and procedures, such as closures of amenities, face mask requirements, and different office hours. It has also pushed property managers to find creative ways to bring their communities together remotely. Communities that are active on social media have an additional method to effectively update residents on changes and virtual events.

“The fear of missing out is real among apartment renters – everyone wants to be a part of something great, and social media is the platform that should be used to communicate how great it is to live at a community,” Smith said.

She also shared advice on using social media. Just because a community may not have a large number of followers or likes, it doesn’t mean that residents and prospects aren’t looking. Make the content about them. Think



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of the types of posts that grab your attention as you’re scrolling and transfer that to your community efforts. Play to the resident’s E-G-O: entertainment (photos of events, contests, fun facts), gratification (resident kudos, awards, positive reviews), and openness (what’s going on at the community, new team members, promotions).

“Everyone is on social media. As a community, we want our residents and prospects to know that we’re here, too, and that we offer great customer service. It’s an easy way to be in contact with the entire world,” Mlayes said. **MF**





# Communities Continue to Create Value and Leverage Amenities Despite Tough Times



BY PAUL BERGERON

## SMART APARTMENT COMMUNITIES HAVE

had their creative juices working overtime during COVID-19 to generate ideas on how to create and communicate value for their residents, resident reviews expert Mindy Price of J Turner Research told attendees of a recent webinar.

Some have been so good at it, they've put in place things that aren't going to go away, even when the recovery is at hand. And we're talking more than just virtual bingo.

- Enable residents to show off their brushstrokes – and have a glass of wine – with virtual paint and sip.
- Encourage cooking from home by providing a recipe book; you can call it COVID Cuisine.
- Rent or buy some remote-control miniature race cars and have residents compete in your parking lot.
- Give residents subscriptions to Disney+, Netflix, or HBO.
- Promote a Facebook online book club – these were popular even before stay-at-home policies.

- Provide daily calendars with 31 days of organizing tips.
- Host a virtual talent show in which residents participate.
- Does your community offer outstanding internet speeds? This is a good time to remind them.
- Host a “margarita rocks” virtual event: Hire a bartender who can either share a video or run a Facebook Live event with cool tricks for residents to make their own margaritas. Round out the event with a taco food truck.
- Encourage residents to share their margarita pictures on social media and tag your community. The picture with the most “likes” wins a prize.

### Amenities Remain a Selling Point

If your amenities or services were out of order before the COVID-19 restrictions, and they are still out of order because you haven’t had the chance to fix them, residents will note that in your reviews.

Ideally, residents are commenting about how clean you’ve kept the amenities and that they are open! If

amenities aren’t open, residents are commenting that they are paying the same rent but don’t have access to amenities. Get creative to keep them content.

You have residents who love to grill and who love to use the common area’s grilling station. But it’s closed now. How about giving them an indoor grill such as a George Foreman grill, just to show that you are thinking of them?

If your fitness room is closed, buy some dumbbells and resistance bands and either give them to residents or make them available to share/borrow. (Many online retailers have sold out, so you might have to keep checking their availability.)

Peloton bikes are great, but expensive. So, offer a three-month subscription to the Peloton app, which is loaded with great exercise tools and videos. It costs \$12.99 per month, but you get one month free.

Keep it local: Try to partner with local businesses to help support them.

*Paul Bergeron is a freelance reporter who covers the apartment industry. Reach him at [pbergeron333@gmail.com](mailto:pbergeron333@gmail.com) or 703-434-0280. MF*

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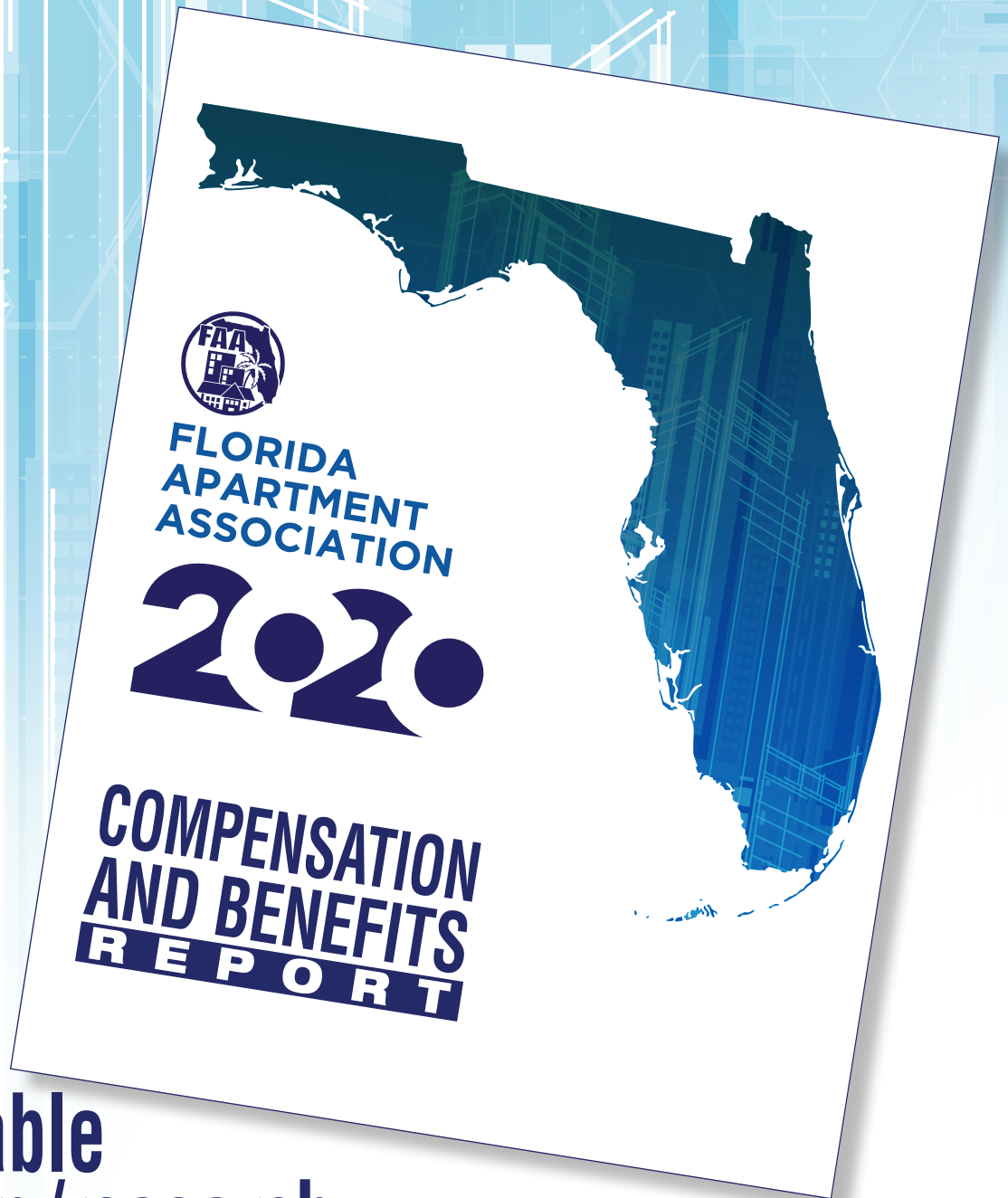
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# New Human Trafficking Awareness Requirements

BY: AMANDA GILL

**HUMAN TRAFFICKING MAY NOT** be something that keeps you up at night in property management, but it should be. According to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, Florida ranks third in the U.S. in human trafficking cases reported by states, behind only California and Texas. In fact, Florida had 896 reported cases of human trafficking in 2019 alone. You may think that trafficking occurs exclusively in transient places such as hotels or motels. However, there are examples of human trafficking taking place in apartment communities

During the 2019 legislative session, language was added to Florida Statutes to increase human trafficking awareness by imposing various requirements on public lodging establishments. It is important to keep in mind that an apartment community is considered to be a public lodging establishment under Florida law. If you are an FAA member on our email distribution list, you should have received several email notices about these statute changes. If you did not receive these updates and want to be on our distribution list in the future, please email [amanda@faahq.org](mailto:amanda@faahq.org).

**The new human trafficking awareness requirements go into effect on January 1, 2021. Are you and your properties ready to be in compliance come January?**

According to Florida law, “human trafficking” means transporting, soliciting, recruiting, harboring, providing, enticing, maintaining, or obtaining another person for the purpose of exploitation of that person. Section 509.096 of Florida law requires all public lodging establishments to:

- Implement a procedure for reporting suspected human trafficking to the National Human Trafficking Hotline or to a local law enforcement agency.

- Post a human trafficking awareness sign in a conspicuous location in the establishment, accessible to employees. The sign must be at least 11 inches by 15 inches in size, and printed in an easily legible font in at least 32-point type. The sign must state in English, Spanish, and any other language predominantly spoken in that area that the department deems appropriate, substantially the following: “If you or someone you know is being forced to engage in an activity and cannot leave, whether it is prostitution, housework, farm work, factory work,

retail work, restaurant work, or any other activity, call the National Human Trafficking Resource Center at 888-373-7888 or text INFO or HELP to 233733 to access help and services. Victims of slavery and human trafficking are protected under United States and Florida law.” You can view and print a sample sign provided by the Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR) on the department’s website:

[http://www.myfloridalicense.com/dbpr/hr/forms/documents/5030\\_083.pdf](http://www.myfloridalicense.com/dbpr/hr/forms/documents/5030_083.pdf).

- Provide annual training on human trafficking awareness to employees of the establishment who perform housekeeping duties in the rental units or who work at the front desk or reception area where guests check in or check out. DBPR has indicated that a leasing office where residents check in or out will be treated as a “front desk.”
  - The training must be provided for new employees within 60 days after they begin employment in a housekeeping or reception area role, or by January 1, 2021, whichever occurs later.

“You may think that trafficking occurs exclusively in transient places such as hotels or motels. However, there are examples of human trafficking taking place in apartment communities.”





- A public lodging establishment can create its own training curriculum or choose an approved curriculum listed on the DBPR website. All training programs must be approved by DBPR to be in compliance with this requirement.

**In an effort to help the apartment industry achieve compliance with Florida's new human trafficking awareness training requirements, FAA worked with the Florida Alliance to End Human Trafficking on FREE virtual human trafficking awareness training, which is now available exclusively for FAA members on the FAA website. In order to view the training video, you will need to be logged in to the FAA website as a member. Please email [amanda@faahq.org](mailto:amanda@faahq.org) for more information regarding how to access this free training.**

This training features a DBPR-approved training curriculum from the Florida Alliance to End Human Trafficking. All FAA members who complete this training will be eligible for a completion certificate, which can be used to confirm an employee's compliance with the new human trafficking awareness training requirements outlined in Florida law in Section 509.096.

As these new requirements go into effect, it is important to keep in mind that human trafficking often occurs in plain sight. In many cases, calls to human trafficking hotlines are made by a community member who observed something out of the



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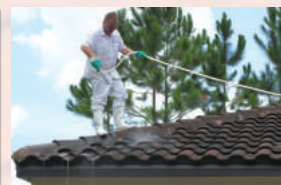
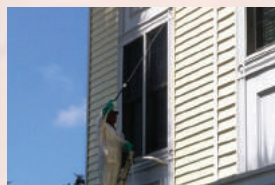


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ordinary. The rental housing industry, which has contact with residents on a daily basis, is in a unique position to notice activity that is potentially linked to human trafficking. FAA is now a proud partner with the Florida Alliance to End Human Trafficking. The association looks forward to being part of the solution to address this horrible crime. **MF**





## Lively Local Living at 1701 Central

BY: CAMILA CAL

**LOCATED IN DOWNTOWN ST.** Petersburg on Central Avenue, 1701 Central is home to a tight-knit, vibrant community teeming with creativity. Despite recently opening in 2020, the community has already become an integral part of the neighborhood.

“Central Avenue is the backbone of downtown St. Petersburg. It’s the focal point for the downtown area,” said Kurt Kehoe, vice president of development with NRP Group. “Our community connects the EDGE Business District and the Grand Central Arts District.” These districts are both designated as national and state Main Street communities and boast hundreds of locally owned and operated businesses like restaurants, breweries, art galleries, antique stores, and more.







“Our residents are people who are interested in living in the city and at the center of it all,” said Zoe Adams, senior marketing manager with NRP Group. “This community is perfect for anyone who wants to meet new people and enjoy a unique area.”

Art is also important to 1701 Central and its surrounding area. In 2019, 1701 Central was the major sponsor for the SHINE Mural Festival, an annual art celebration in downtown St. Petersburg. The apartment community hired local artists Anthony Freese and Jimmy Breen from Wax & Hive, a creative agency, to paint a mural on the west side of 1701 Central’s parking garage to present during the festival. The colorful mural is titled “Lucky You,” and features various

#### ► Fast Facts:

- Opened in 2020
- Size of community: 2.2 acres
- Number of units: 243
- Management company: NRP Group
- Monthly rent: starting at \$1,495
- Apartment size: ranges from 561-1,219 square feet

symbols of good luck. These artists also painted an interior mural by 1701 Central’s pool area, Kehoe said.

“Being at the cusp of both districts and a part of downtown St. Petersburg means the entire area is really





accessible. Residents can conveniently walk to grab something to eat and drink, or go shopping at one of the locally owned stores,” Adams said. “We’re part of a very cool, urban neighborhood and our building reflects that with eclectic furniture, unique light fixtures, and art throughout the community.”

1701 Central offers contemporary units with modern features such as high ceilings, granite countertops, stainless steel appliances, large wrap-around balconies, floating bathroom vanities with under-cabinet lighting, and built-in shelving as additional storage space. A few units have direct access to Central Avenue, which allows residents to walk out of their door right into the heart of the neighborhood.





“While developing this community, the idea was that we are catering to a crowd that is very social. So, while the units are incredible, we understand that our residents want to socialize outside of them and that’s what we are trying to encourage within this community,” Kehoe said. The key was providing an outdoor, social lifestyle with separate, intimate areas where residents can relax.

Some of 1701 Central’s amenities include a parking garage attached to the building, a custom resident lounge with poker tables, 24-hour Amazon package lockers, a fitness center, a luxury dog wash room, a courtyard with fire pits and ping-pong tables, and a resort-inspired pool with a leisure area sunken into the deck.

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“Our amenities have become especially important because a lot of residents are spending more time at home due to COVID-19. We have some really great spaces for working from home as well as spaces that are good for lifestyle and convenience,” Adams said.

Another distinct amenity is 1701 Central’s bicycle rental program that allows residents and their guests free access to beach cruiser style bicycles to ride around



## COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT



the neighborhood. The community provides the bicycles, helmets, and bicycle locks.

"We try to be really involved with the community and take advantage of what makes St. Petersburg fun. COVID-19 has definitely changed our resident events, but we are continuing to find events to host safely. Recently we had a wine night event where residents were invited to come have a glass of wine in a responsible, socially distant way. Using our large outdoor space makes it easier," Adams said.

Before COVID-19, 1701 Central brought a branded airstream trailer to local events where residents could play cornhole, win giveaways, and connect with the surrounding community. They have also partnered with local businesses like The Dog Bar, a private dog





park and full-service sports bar. Residents that are dog owners received a year-long membership.

“As a company, NRP Group develops, builds, and manages our properties. That’s not always the case for management companies. We’re integrated and we care so much about making our residents feel at home,” Adams said. 1701 Central strives to make their on-site

team accessible as a resource for resident questions and concerns, especially during this uncertain time.

“This neighborhood is a very vibrant and prominent growth area in downtown St. Petersburg, and we have a very strong, local community. That’s what we feel sets us apart. We’re just really proud of 1701 Central,” Kehoe said. **MF**



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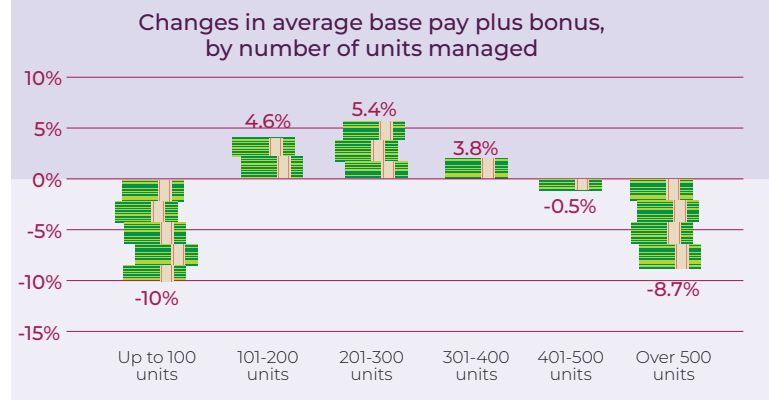
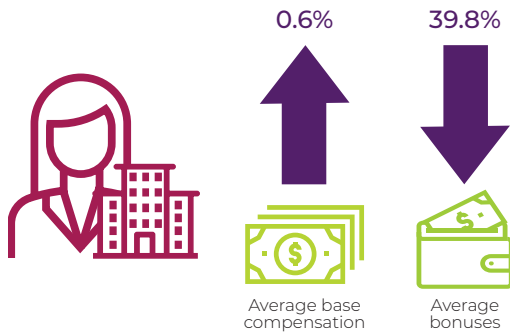
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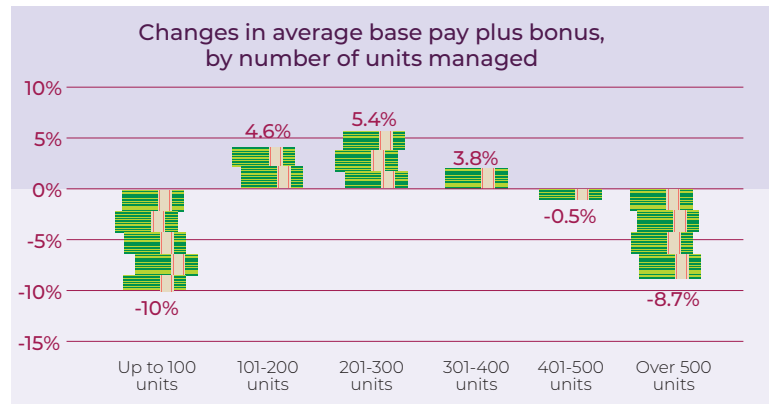


## Compensation and Benefits in Florida's Apartment Industry, 2018 to 2020

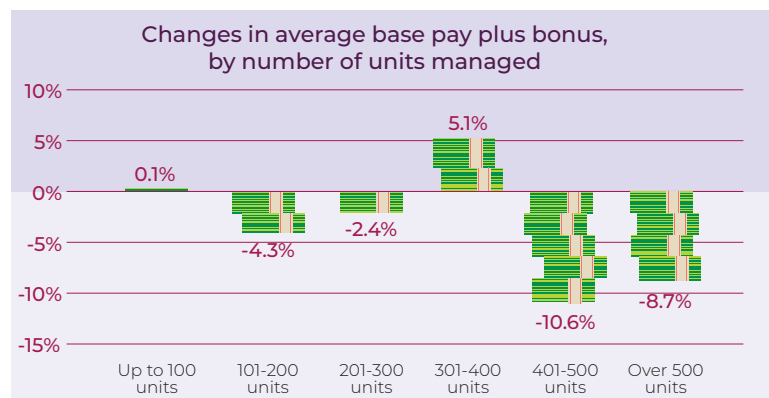
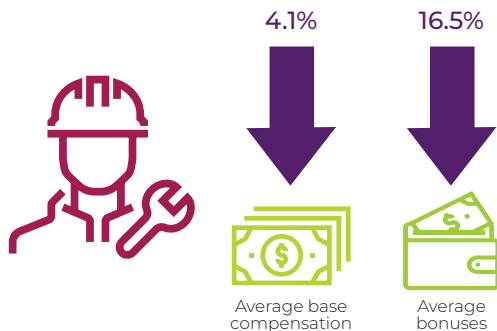
### PROPERTY MANAGERS



### LEASING AGENTS



### MAINTENANCE TECHNICIANS



Source: Florida Apartment Association 2020 Compensation and Benefits Report  
The full statewide report and 10 regional reports are available for purchase at [faahq.org/research](http://faahq.org/research)



# THE TIME IS NOW.



2020 is an important election year, which means having a financially strong Apartment Political Action Committee (APAC) has never been more important. There's no question that APAC protects the apartment industry's bottom line by working to elect candidates, regardless of party affiliation, who understand and value multifamily housing.

## **2019 - 2020 Victories:**

### **FAA passed legislation to prohibit unfunded inclusionary zoning mandates.**

This law prevents municipalities from imposing unfunded affordable housing construction mandates, saving multifamily developers across the state millions of dollars in construction costs.

### **FAA drafted and passed legislation to reduce emotional support animal (ESA) fraud.**

This new law will deter fraudulent ESA requests, saving an apartment community thousands of dollars each year and putting an end to ESA certificate scams.

### **FAA supported legislation to remove the subscribing witness requirement for leases that exceed one year.**

This change simplified the leasing process, saving apartment communities both time and money.

### **FAA blocked more than 40 bills that would have been detrimental to the apartment industry.**

Legislation that FAA opposed would have: prevented evictions during a declared state of emergency, allowed local governments to pass rent control measures, instituted a state renters bill of rights, or made other sweeping changes to Florida's landlord/tenant law to the detriment of housing providers.

**As FAA prepares for the 2020 election and the state legislative session, can we count on your support?**

**Visit [www.faahq.org/APACnow](http://www.faahq.org/APACnow) to contribute to APAC today.**

# INCREASE YOUR PRESENCE

AMONG PROFESSIONALS IN THE MULTIFAMILY APARTMENT DOMAIN

The Florida Apartment Association (FAA) advocates for more than **80%** of apartments and **74%** of all apartment communities in Florida.



## Multifamily Florida magazine

The recently redesigned *Multifamily Florida* magazine is distributed quarterly to all members. Reach all facets of the multifamily housing industry—apartment owners, management executives, developers, builders, investors, property managers, leasing consultants, maintenance personnel, suppliers, and related business professionals—throughout the state of Florida.

### WINTER 2020

Closes October 2020

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