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FALL 2013



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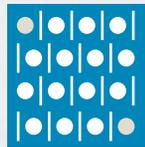


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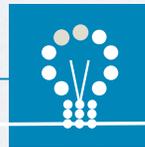
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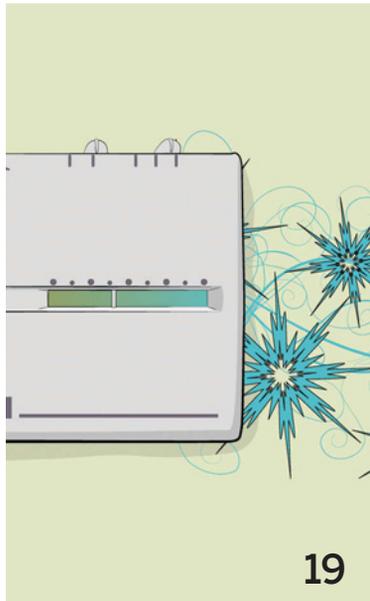
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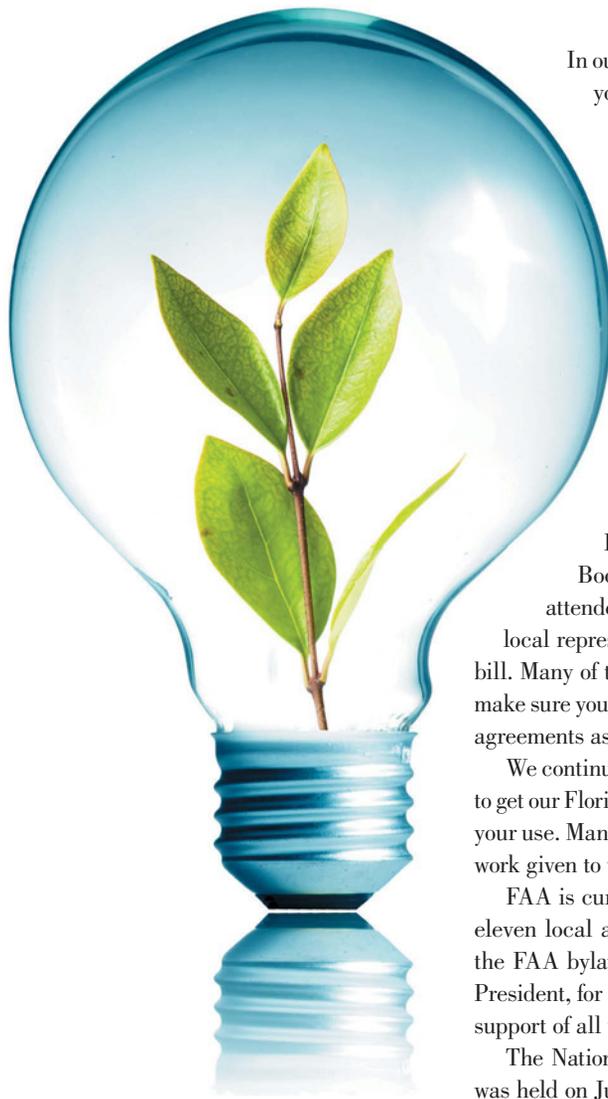
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In our fall publication, which deals with "green" issues, you will find articles that are geared towards both managers and residents about the importance of going green. You will be given instructions and advice on how to do this and examples that can be implemented today. We all need to educate ourselves and stay current on what is happening in our industry.

I would like to update you on some things that have been happening with the Florida Apartment Association:

On June 7, Governor Rick Scott signed into law CS/HB 77, the most extensive change in more than 20 years to the Residential Landlord-Tenant Act found in Florida Statutes, Section 83 Part II. Many thanks go out to Kelly Mallette, Ron Book, Harry Heist and all the FAA members who attended Legislative Days in Tallahassee, talking to their local representatives about the need for them to support this bill. Many of these changes went into effect July 1. You need to make sure you are familiar with the changes and revise your lease agreements as needed.

We continue to work with the National Apartment Association to get our Florida Legal Guide finished and on the FAA website for your use. Many thanks go to Harry Heist for all his hours of hard work given to this Guide. It will be a great resource for all of us.

FAA is currently reviewing our bylaws and the bylaws of all eleven local associations to be sure none are in conflict with the FAA bylaws. I want to thank Brenda Pritchard, Past FAA President, for chairing the Bylaws Committee and her continued support of all things bylaw related.

The National Apartment Association Education Conference was held on June 20-22 in San Diego and was well attended by members from the State of Florida. The highlight of the conference

for me was when our own David Watkins became a member of the NAA Hall of Fame. David is a Past President of the Bay Area Apartment Association and the Florida Apartment Association. David is also a Past Chairman of the National Apartment Association. David has been a strong supporter of FAA for many years and highly deserved this honor. During the Hall of Fame Ceremony at the NAA Conference, David was introduced by our own Marc Rosenwasser. This was truly a great day to be from the State of Florida.

The FAA Education Conference Committee and co-chairs Ron Wenzel and Shad Bookout are busy finalizing all the details for our Annual Education Conference. This year, the Conference will be held on Oct. 16-18 at the Hilton Orlando Bonnet Creek Hotel in Orlando. Mark your calendars now and plan to attend this event.

I am looking forward to seeing everyone soon.



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The Power of the Collective Voice

If you have ever wondered about the true power of industry-led advocacy on the local level, this story will demonstrate the influence a small group of dedicated individuals can have on their government when they join together.

There has been a recent proliferation of local rental inspection programs around the state, with a high concentration cropping up in South Florida. These programs are typically proposed by well-meaning local officials who spot a few neglected rental properties in the single family market and decide to create a program designed to reach those who do not abide by existing code, but instead overreach to include the entire multifamily industry.

As we know, many of our communities go years without so much as a single code violation. We also know that our properties are routinely inspected by the Fire Marshal, the local Building Department, the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, financing agencies, and often private contractors hired by the property management company to protect their asset. The explosion of single family homes being rented by reluctant, absentee landlords has prompted many new local initiatives aimed at keeping our neighborhoods looking good and our property values from diminishing. Unfortunately, although we are not the cause of the problem, we are all too frequently finding our industry wrapped up in the solution. And the solutions are often costly and redundant.

Earlier this year, the City of Lauderdale Lakes, a city situated in the middle of Broward County and struggling with serious financial issues, took steps to institute an onerous local rental housing inspection program. The City Commissioners used an existing ordinance approved by them back in 2000 to bypass the need to present a proposed ordinance and authorize such a program. Instead, Commissioners could simply approve the details of the program and move directly into implementing inspections already lawful under the City Code.

Commissioners quickly approved a framework for the rental inspection program and the fee structure that would be applicable to all forms of rental housing in the City. Over strong objections by property owners and managers in the City, Lauderdale Lakes rental housing owners were to pay \$150/rental unit annually to the City for a duplicative inspection. For reference, a 400 unit apartment community would be subject to \$60,000 in inspection fees annually, regardless of whether or not the property had received recent code violations, been inspected by another government agency or had any reported incidents on site.

The South East Florida Apartment Association responded strongly and fought to repeal the program based, in part, on a state law preempting the authority of local governments to implement such a program already regulated by the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR). Based on the plain language of the Florida statute, the apartment industry believes cities and counties are prohibited from

▼
The explosion of single family homes being rented by reluctant, absentee landlords has prompted many new local initiatives aimed at keeping our neighborhoods looking good and our property values from diminishing.

instituting their own regulatory program outside of working with the state government to be sure property owners adhere to building code and fire safety standards. After several members met with the Mayor and spoke with several City Commissioners, the City remained unconvinced and only agreed to amend the program allowing for a graduated fee structure so larger properties ranging from 10-99 units would pay \$75/unit and properties with 100 units or more would pay a \$50/unit inspection fee, still a very costly and unnecessary program.

With the help of Marjorie Cook, EVP of the Florida Apartment Association, the Florida DBPR exercised their authority to preempt local government and issued a letter to the City Attorney requesting the City repeal the ordinance and cease implementation. The Florida DBPR provided a 90-day window for the City to resolve the issue. Undeterred, the City Commission rejected the request and continued to make provisions to begin enforcement of the inspection program. It should be noted that in 2000, then-Commissioners also met strong

resistance from both the industry and the Florida DBPR, which may have contributed to the City allowing the authority under the ordinance they passed to go unexercised for 13 years, but it certainly didn't stop the Commission from passing the authorizing ordinance over their objections.

Since the industry had been down this path with the City of Lauderdale Lakes in the past, we anticipated that the Commissioners would not retreat. Meanwhile, SEFAA collaborated with several affected community members who wanted to take legal action. As we waited on the 90 days to toll based on DBPR's request, we laid out legal arguments and provided supporting documents to assist their claim, and the apartment industry filed a cause of action in Federal District Court. Less than 10 days later, the City convened an emergency meeting with their City Attorney to discuss the pending lawsuit and repeal the ordinance. As we suspected they would, City Commissioners indicated fiscal constraints as the main reason they needed to avoid litigation. Thanks to SEFAA's assertive advocacy, member activation and collaboration with FAA, the Lauderdale Lakes Rental Inspection Program is gone and the authorizing ordinance has been repealed. If they attempt to resurrect it in the future, they would need to pass a new ordinance and start from scratch, unlike what they were able to do earlier this year.

This was a solid victory for our industry and serves as a perfect example of what we can achieve when our industry sticks together. A community of 400 units could have spent \$600,000 in inspection fees over a 10-year period. There are still several cities with local rental inspection programs currently in place, so our work is not finished. This situation simply underscores the importance of industry advocacy and building relationships from the local to the federal level so our leaders understand our businesses. ▲

Ashley Ligas serves as the Government Affairs Director for the South East Florida Apartment Association representing Palm Beach, Broward, Miami-Dade and Monroe County. Ashley is a graduate of the Florida State University College of Law and worked for several years in the Florida House and the Florida Senate prior to joining SEFAA.

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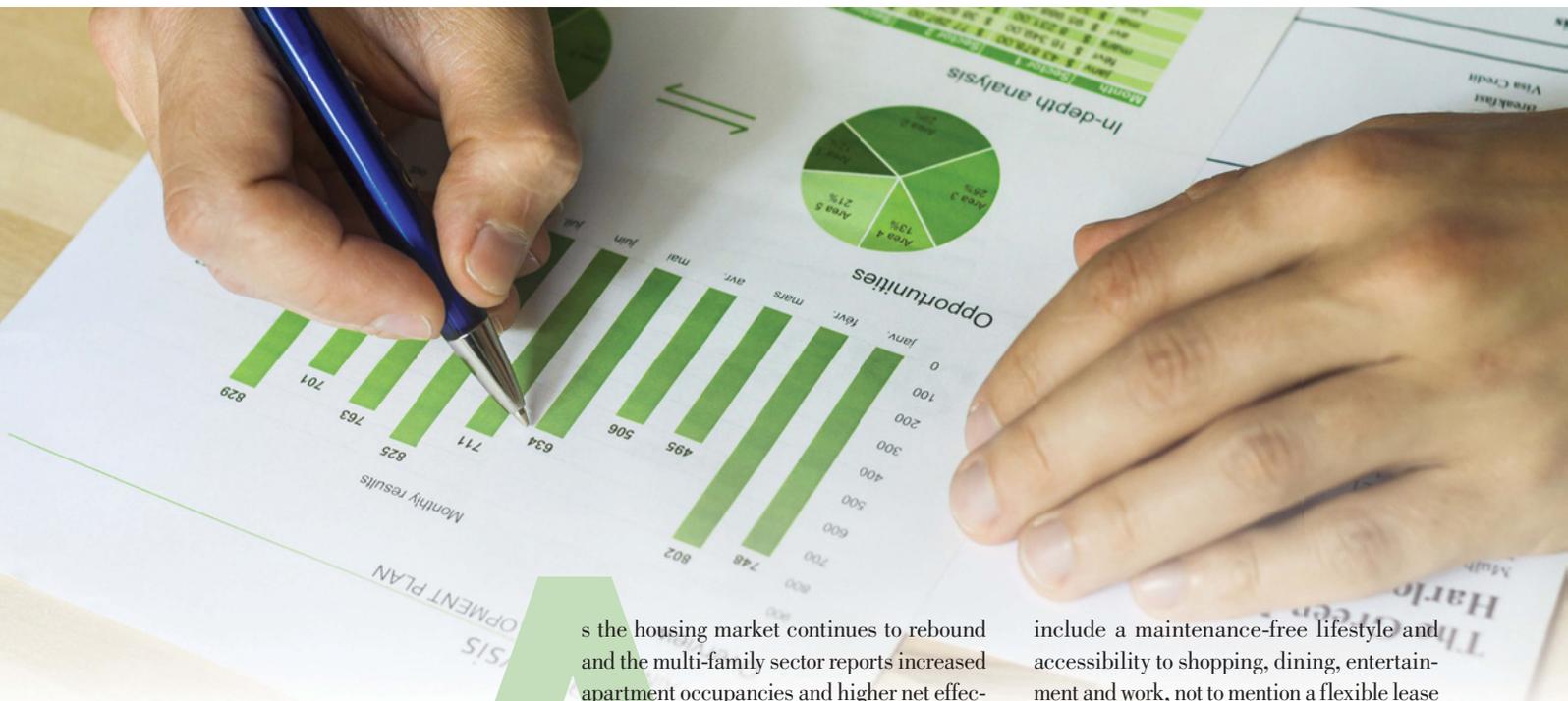
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Making Dollars and Sense with Sustainable Initiatives



As the housing market continues to rebound and the multi-family sector reports increased apartment occupancies and higher net effective rents, owners and operators are still searching for incremental ways to increase Net Operating Income (NOI) and find the perfect “sweet spot” between satisfying “eco-friendly” consumers and controlling operating expenses.

Currently, one-third of U.S. households, or 38 million people, rent their homes, and forecasters estimate as many as 7 million new renter households could be created this decade. This increase in renters is a result of demographic shifts, economic challenges and changing consumer preferences. Today’s renters live in communities ranging from garden-style apartments to luxury high-rises and report that the major benefits of renting

include a maintenance-free lifestyle and accessibility to shopping, dining, entertainment and work, not to mention a flexible lease option without a long-term financial commitment. Household composition continues to become more diversified, with an increase in roommates as a result of Generation Y (80 million strong) entering the market, along with fewer married couples with fewer children and more empty nesters, and there will be an increased demand for apartments combined with specific preferences regarding design of the individual apartment units and communities. From a macroperspective, these trends seem extremely positive from an owner’s point-of-view, until one considers the costs associated with meeting consumer demand while generating consistent returns for the investor.

Any business consultant would typically advise focusing on the “income side” of the business first, before looking at ways to fine-tune operating expenses when developing a strategic business plan to enhance the value of the asset. Today’s owners are interested in identifying factors that increase marketability of their product and find repeated surveys reveal price, security, location, features and benefits to be among the top criteria for choosing an apartment. There seems to be a more refined list of preferences among Generation Y and empty nest renters that lead to their final apartment selection. When surveyed, Generation Y (those born after 1981) renters refer to themselves as being “environmentally responsible”; however, when it comes to paying more rent for a “greener, more eco-friendly apartment,” they would only consider doing so if management could guarantee a reduction in utility expenses. These renters also report being willing to pay slightly more if the community was situated in a great location that would result in opportunities to walk to nearby conveniences and reduce the number of automobile trips. As a result, they are referred to as the “me-green” consumer. In other words, the mindset of a younger renter is that management should already be naturally conscious of reducing waste, good stewards of the resources and focused on offering a cleaner, healthier environment in which to live and play. On the other hand, residents age 45 and older surveyed were also concerned about the environment, but were more inclined to spend additional money for a “greener” apartment, especially if it resulted in improved air quality, connectivity and overall energy efficiency. Both age categories consider energy-efficient apartments – those that offer “Energy Star” appliances, motion sensors and programmable thermostats. Three-quarters of all survey respondents indicate a potential for paying slightly more rent if they could see a savings on their utility bills. Being environmentally conscious is important across age categories, and reducing the carbon footprint, protecting native habitats and slowing global warming are called the “we-green” factors.

Renters from every generation tend to perk up when the leasing consultant points out specific features in the apartment that



lower monthly expenses. This demonstrates the importance of having knowledgeable leasing personnel who are intentional about pointing out the features and benefits of the “green” apartment, rather than only mentioning them when potential renters inquire about monthly utility costs. As mystery shoppers have revealed, the leasing agents don’t always make it a priority to point out the LED lights or other features that translate into savings for the resident. Evidence clearly indicates that there needs to be a compelling reason for any up-charge, otherwise the value proposition isn’t definitive enough to sway a resident to pay more for a more environment-friendly apartment.

Property owners are concerned about how to become “greener,” not only from an environmental perspective, but also from a profitability perspective. Today, there is a heightened focus on “the triple bottom line” that links the planet (environment), people (health and well-being) and profits. Some refer to this as a new era in corporate social responsibility known as “doing well by doing good,” and have created niche opportunities for developers to use their sustainability platform as a way to brand their communities and attract more environmentally-conscious consumers, primarily Generation Y. Researchers at the Pew Center confirm that this generation, commonly referred to as Millennials, have been raised with a civic-minded consciousness to improve their communities by being good stewards of their resources.

Property owners confronting increased utility costs are faced with a plethora of decisions ranging from “How ‘green’ do we build?” to “How long should I wait before retrofitting my community?” Lenders are

also driving many of these conversations, particularly when considering the overall desirability and profitability of the asset, especially as it relates to the overall investment strategy. It is possible for owners and managers to utilize a tiered approach to sustainability, adjusting the extent of green improvements to an existing property, or features to incorporate into a new development, to the level of investment and the overall project goals.

In most climates, improving the building envelope on existing and new multifamily residential properties is the most effective place to start reducing energy usage, lowering building and tenant operating cost and improving indoor comfort. By focusing on limiting air infiltration into the building and improving insulation early in the process of renovation and new construction projects, it is possible to minimize the cost impact of these improvements. Sealing around doors, windows and other penetrations in the exterior walls is a great starting point for existing properties and a very low cost improvement to new construction. Blower door testing and duct blaster testing by qualified home raters are two ways to measure and document the effectiveness of these improvements. A second tier approach would be to use advanced exterior wall framing techniques, increasing the insulation in new stud walls. A third tier approach would consist of adding a layer of continuous rigid insulation outside of the building sheathing and ducting fresh air into the mechanical systems.

Due to increased state and local energy code requirements, nearly all of the major manufacturers offer more cost effective, high performance new and replacement window options for multifamily properties. This investment is most effective when combined with other envelope and mechanical system improvements. There is an incremental cost associated with increasing the efficiency of mechanical systems. By pairing higher SEER (System Energy Efficiency Rating) mechanical equipment with building envelope improvements for new construction is more effective, and makes it increasingly important to “right-size” the systems using calculations based on the envelope upgrades. Envelope improvements can also reduce the new equipment size requirements for existing

properties, which can improve the bottom line for both the property and the renter.

Other opportunities to save on operating expenses, such as reducing power consumption, can be achieved by performing energy audits on existing properties and combining good design techniques with lifecycle cost analysis of common area lighting fixtures and power-consuming equipment on new properties. Additional green options include Energy Star Light Fixture Packages and Water-Sense Plumbing Fixture packages. These features that the resident can see and touch are more

widely understood by the market and can reduce the resident's water and electric utility bills. Using recycled materials in common spaces can also help create a "memory point" during the leasing tour.

Certifying a property in one of the green rating systems will substantiate the property's sustainable features in the marketplace and give tangible results of green investments to renters. Institutional investors and purchasers of rental communities are increasingly seeking green certification for multifamily properties to keep up with

the market in the near future. There are a number of rating systems to select from, and it is important to carefully determine which is best for the project. Professionals in this area, including experienced designers and green raters, can be effective guides through this complex, changing landscape. Since there are fewer existing properties seeking certification, this can differentiate an existing property in the marketplace.

Finally, another differentiator can be involving the residents in sustainability. Millennial renters especially appreciate fostering a community approach to sustainability and promoting a healthy lifestyle. This approach does not require a significant investment in the physical facilities, but relies on innovative programming by property managers. Opportunities to engage residents include a building recycling program that makes it as easy as possible to participate in the process, organic community gardening programs on urban properties, community caring efforts that make a difference in the broader community, as well as incorporating demonstration kitchens, fitness and personal health programming.

When it comes to making dollars and sense regarding sustainable initiatives, the best place to start is to engage all of the stakeholders in the conversation, especially including those closest to the customer. When great minds collaborate, generally common sense adds the most value. ▲

Debbie Phillips, Ph.D., CPM, has focused her current research on sustainability as it relates to consumer preferences within the multifamily housing industry. In her latest work, *"Is Sustainable Attainable?"*, she has identified specific programming for owner/operators to implement at all levels of the organization. For more information, Debbie can be reached at 404-787-4409 or debbie@thequadrillion.com

With nearly 20 years of experience in multifamily residential design, Jay Silverman, AIA, LEED AP, focuses on urban, sustainable housing and mixed-use development projects, including both new construction and the rehabilitation and adaptive use of older buildings located in in-town Atlanta and other urban areas throughout the southeastern United States. Jay can be reached at 404-253-6704 or jsilverman@lasarchitect.com.

Lease Up and Ship Out!



With rental markets on an upswing, apartment owners and managers are on a constant watch for the latest trends to differentiate themselves from other properties. One of the more unique and fastest growing ideas that is attracting new renters, and retaining existing residents, is a cruise vacation certificate!

AIM Cruise Incentives, the # 1 provider of cruise incentives to the multifamily industry, distributes cruise certificates to properties and management companies as a tool for generating new leases and improving resident retention. An incentive used widely in other industries, residents are offered a 5 Day/4 Night Cruise Vacation for Two Certificate, to Mexico, the Bahamas or the Western Caribbean, when they sign a new lease or renewal.

The resident chooses one of several trip itineraries, based on which port of call the certificate recipient wants to depart from. The ports of departure they can choose from are Los Angeles, Galveston, New Orleans, Jacksonville, Port Canaveral or Miami. With over 100 dates in inventory, there are plenty of choices available to residents! The specific cruise ships, itineraries and travel dates are based upon ports of departure and are subject to availability.

All Cruises are booked on luxury super-liner cruise ships, primarily Carnival or Royal Caribbean. Based on double occupancy, the certificate includes a 4A stateroom, all onboard gourmet meals and snacks, complimentary 24 hour room service, a wide range of evening entertainment including Las Vegas-style shows, fun shipboard activities, and travel to exciting international cities to visit and shop.

While the total value of the cruise package is up to \$1798, the cost to properties and management companies is only \$139 - \$169 per certificate, based on quantity. Certificates are transferable, and certificate recipients have up to 36 months to take their cruise and can upgrade their stateroom, length of cruise or

additional guests. AIM also provides each participating property with free marketing materials.

Getting to and from the port of departure is the responsibility of the certificate recipient, but generally the rest is included in the package. Nominal fees of \$39.60 per day/per person to cover port charges, taxes and fees are the responsibility of the resident. Additionally, guests cover their own gratuities, bar beverages, selected spa services, personal expenses and shore excursions.

Terry Ragland, Regional Property Manager, states, "We have had great success with AIM's cruise promotion: 17 leases in one week. The colorful and eye-catching marketing materials made a real impact in the leasing process, and booking the cruise certificate is hassle-free. We found this promotion to be a great way to add kick to our marketing program." Property Manager Rita Funya said, "Excitement from prospects has been good. Response from renewing residents has been even better!"

Barry Lubin, President of AIM states, "AIM's cruise incentive program gives properties a competitive edge over other properties in their market. A cruise vacation is an incentive that others can't easily match, while helping properties to reduce turnover expenses and concession costs. It's also a great tool for lease-ups to lease up faster!"

The concept of offering a fun cruise vacation to residents appeals to all age groups and has been cost-effective with both conventional and student housing properties. It's fun to implement, it motivates residents to lease, and it's a turnkey program with free marketing materials.

AIM is member of FAA, NAA and the National Suppliers Council. For more information, contact **AIM Cruise Incentives at 866-541-9090 or visit www.AIMcruise.com**. □ □ □

Advertorial



FLORIDA APARTMENT ASSOCIATION NATIONAL LEASE PROGRAM



DEPENDABLE

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Did You Know?

As a member of your local apartment association, you're qualified to use the Florida National Apartment Association's rental housing lease!

This powerful and easy-to-use leasing program allows an apartment community to save time and money by speeding up the preparation and printing of legal documents.

In addition to providing **greater efficiency** to the onsite leasing process, prospective residents may fill out a rental application online, and property managers may audit and edit entire portfolios of leases with just a few clicks of a mouse!

The lease and accompanying addenda cover every aspect of the rental process and are **reviewed by expert attorneys** to ensure compliance with state law and local regulation. The language of the lease is constantly monitored and modified to reflect new legislation or jurisprudence.

With the passage of the new landlord tenant law during the 2013 Legislative Session, there are some significant changes to the lease. Thankfully, our Florida lease is consistently updated and, **if you're a lease user, you will have the most current information at your fingertips!**

Eliminate Errors, Increase Efficiency

Improve efficiency and accuracy in the leasing process. The program is designed to **reduce errors** by providing built-in math calculations, default settings for recurring items and charges, automatic data transfers from the main lease form to other forms making up the lease package, built-in error checking, and lease expiration reports.

Integrates With Your Current Software

The National Lease Program interfaces with your existing property management software such as Intuit, Yardi, RealPage, First Advantage, or MRI, allowing you to transfer data between systems and prevent repeat data entry.

Improve Your Security

The Lease Program enables you to:

- **Protect your community** against changing state and local laws.
- Operate with a **uniform lease template** across jurisdictional boundaries (with some minor alterations to comply with state laws).
- Get a team of attorneys who constantly review and update the lease language in each state. Lease program participants benefit from review by the **leading multifamily lease attorneys** in the country.

Join the Club!

The Florida Lease is versatile! Did you know that there are student, small owner and single family leases available? Currently, more than 17,458 communities are enrolled in the National Lease Program nationwide with over 1,500 lease users in Florida!

See what some of our industry's leading executives have to say about the Florida Lease!

“ Lincoln Property Company with residential communities in over 38 states relies heavily on the National Lease program to provide consistency and real time compliance with local, state and Federal laws.

In Florida, Lincoln delivers the national lease Program through our statewide affiliation with the Florida Apartment Association. The National Lease Program provides one of the most valuable benefits of our local, state and national apartment association membership.

As the Manager of over 12,000 units in the State of Florida, I encourage everyone in the industry within the state to adopt the National Lease as the document of choice. It is a platform that provides you with the real time tools to get the job done and done correctly and efficiently. ”

Chris Burns
Senior Vice-President-Southeast
Lincoln Property Company

“ JMG Realty Inc. exclusively uses the NAA Florida lease program throughout our Florida operations. We have found the quality of the forms to be outstanding with easy to read language, which helps onsite teams as well as residents. The program is very user friendly, making implementation throughout our entire portfolio a simple process. The program offers a variety of lease addendums available to meet every need. The State of Florida seems to modify the Landlord and Tenant Law almost every year so it had become very costly for JMG to continually update the JMG Florida lease. The NAA Florida Lease, powered by Blue Software offers a great solution because the leases are automatically updated each time the law changes, at no additional charge to the property. JMG has been so pleased that we have implemented the NAA Lease Program in each state where we operate. I highly recommend the NAA Florida Lease program. ”

Bonnie Smetzer
Bonnie B. Smetzer, CPM®, HCCP®
Partner, Executive Vice President
JMG Realty, Inc.



Redefining Green Multifamily



How do you define green in multifamily? For developers, going green is usually a question of making their new community more marketable. For property owners, it's often a way to assist with lowering operating costs. But for managers, and especially those who operate third-party assets, it is about helping clients incorporate sustainable practices that make and document measurable improvements to future operations – both in cost savings, and in resident attraction and retention.

Next to human resources, utilities are the largest expense for a multifamily community – more than all maintenance, repairs, and turn costs combined. For many owners and managers, utility costs can feel overwhelming, and even uncontrollable. With rates for water skyrocketing, volatile gas prices, and retrofits for electric fixtures costing real capital dollars, it can be difficult to know where to start. But the answer to when is now. And if you've already started, then doing more tomorrow – doing the next thing – is what's important.

After two decades of concentrating on how much we can bill our residents, it's time to focus on consumption. And there's the challenge, how do we know how much we're using? Do we have that data? And what about the residents – how do we get them to help make changes? The answers aren't easy, but here are some tips that can help you begin making changes.

Use the data you have. If you have good historical consumption data, you can benchmark that against like product to point you to the communities that have the highest consumption. Likewise, you can utilize reporting and analysis tools like ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager® and resources offered by your utility billing company to identify communities that may have a consumption problem. If you don't have historical consumption data, look into your utility biller's utility payment programs. These programs track consumption data in an accessible, usable format, with good benchmark

comparison, while relieving your site and accounting staff. You can also use general ledger data to look at the four areas listed below (combining water, gas, and electric):

1. Which properties have the highest per unit costs?
2. Which spend the highest total gross dollars?
3. Which spent the highest net dollars (after resident billing)?
4. Calculate how each property performed this year over last year – which ones went up?

Now, create a focus list – the top outliers in each of these four areas – and take a hard look at each property individually, especially those that made more than one list. You can't help but have the greatest impact when you start with the worst performers.

Focus where the largest cost is. You spend more on water than electricity, and more on either than on gas. The majority of water costs are paid by residents, but water prices are rising fast so you have to decrease consumption substantially just to keep costs the same and residents happy. Most electric costs come from common areas that include security lighting, parking garages, cooling and heating, leasing offices, and fitness centers. It's easy to make small changes in these areas that add up to big dollars.

Find the free stuff. Or nearly free stuff. If I were going to write your property a check each month from now on, and it would get bigger over time as rates increased, would you want it to start today, three months from today, or next year? If a utility company is going to give you free materials or rebates on items that you purchase every day (light bulbs, showerheads, thermostats), you're throwing away that check every month that you delay. Every community should make the time to install cost-saving products that save water and energy while rebates are offered. Utilize sites such as www.dsireusa.com along with state and local

association's websites and encourage every eligible community to take advantage of the programs available.

Combine projects when you look at ROI. If you have some capital to spend, and you're serious about getting operating costs down, don't just do the <12 month payback projects; you'll never get all the benefit you should. Add the costs of a 30-month payback irrigation project with the four-month parking project to an 18-month toilet replacement project, invest in some new thermostats, and combine them into 15-month ROI project. If you start with only the short-term projects, you'll never get to the longer term projects that can have huge paybacks down the road. If you have consumption data, you can estimate your results better; in addition the professionals who do the projects can give you a good idea of your savings. If you don't have consumption data, when you finish the project, just compare this year's cost to last year's to see how you did. You'll never know how much was irrigation, how much was new toilets, and how much was the showerheads, but you might show that together you saved 26 percent of your water bill the first quarter, and isn't that more important than the details?

Do the little things, over and over. Small things add up. Remind everyone on a regular basis – set the programmable thermostat, keep the doors closed, turn off the lights, change the toilet flappers. Thousands of gallons of water a month are lost when toilet flappers fail, and your resident doesn't always know it, or call you. Replace them, for about \$2.50, every time you turn an apartment, and lower that loss tremendously.

Talk about it, talk about it, talk about it. Talking about the savings at one community encourages others to follow along. Let everyone know that the service team that diligently managed their smart controllers along with the provider saved 18 percent in overall water costs. Show the property managers how motion-sensor lighting works in their models, and discuss the benefits that one property achieved with light sensor exterior lighting. Remind everyone, in as many ways as possible, that your company is "green."

What about the residents? Residents can't afford the rising water and utility costs any more than you can. Their usage – whether billed directly or indirectly to them – affects your ability to increase your rents and retain

residents. To help educate them on ways they can save money, make a laminated instruction card for posting on the programmable thermostat, explain the benefits of a ceiling fan and ask them to report running toilets. Let them know that your recycling program saves money – the less you send to the landfill, the lower the bills. Tell them how your new irrigation system saves water. If you don't have resident recycling, explore it. Talk to a variety of landscapers about new technology in sprinkler heads and controllers. Then let everyone know – managers, leasing agents, maintenance, and residents – however you can: messages at the mailbox, bill messaging on your rent/utilities statement, emails, Facebook, Twitter, a company or community blog. Repost information from WaterSense, from ENERGY STAR, and other credible sources, to let your residents know that you pay attention, and you are out to save them money.

Little things, huge results. Surely you've heard that the "low-hanging fruit" are the capital projects like LED lighting and toilet replacements. But there is fruit on the ground, waiting to be picked up; you just have to let everyone know where it is. When they all know, the harvest is bigger than you think. At Greystar, primarily through a company-wide focus, by doing the right things hundreds and thousands of times, we've saved our clients millions of dollars in their second largest expense line. Utility costs are controllable; for more than

two years, year-over-year same-store data shows that our communities are consuming far less electricity, gas and water. Use less, save money. And save more money tomorrow and next year. ▲

Greystar Real Estate Partners is a fully integrated multifamily company offering expertise in property management, development and investment throughout the United States. Headquartered in Charleston, South Carolina, Greystar is the largest operator of apartments in the United States and manages approximately 200,000 units in 100+ markets with over 5,000 team members. Greystar was founded by Bob Faith in 1993 with the intent to become a provider of world-class services in the multifamily real estate business. Greystar's innovative business model integrates the management, development and investment disciplines of the multifamily industry. To learn more about Greystar, visit www.greystar.com.

DeeAnne McClenahan is the Senior Director of Procurement and Sustainability for Greystar, one of the largest owners and operators in the multifamily industry. DeeAnne has focused on controlling costs across the portfolio, including supply chain and utility management. Greystar has raised the focus of energy management, efficiency, and sustainability in multifamily properties as a core strategy of Greystar across the country. A Certified Sustainable Building Advisor (CSBA) and LEED Green Associate, DeeAnne is a member of the National Apartment Association's Green Task Force.



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Milestone Management



This year marked the fifth anniversary of Florida Milestone properties participating in the *Orlando Charity Challenge*, an event which brings together volunteers from the housing and hospitality industries for fun and games in the name of charity. Over the past five years, Milestone has raised \$42,251 for different organizations. This year Milestone will be donating to *Building Homes for Heroes* for the second consecutive year in a row, with donations totaling \$25,501. *Building Homes for Heroes* is a non-profit organization that helps build/modify homes for severely wounded soldiers to help restore their freedom and lead more independent lives. Donations over the past five years include:

- 2009: \$3,000 for *The Hubbard House*
- 2010: \$3,000 for *The Springs of Tampa Bay*
- 2011: \$10,750 for *The Springs of Tampa Bay*
- 2012: \$12,500 for *Building Homes for Heroes*
- 2013: \$13,001 for *Building Homes for Heroes*

On Thursday, July 18, Milestone associates Lori Ohlensehlen and Jordan Petras had the privilege of representing Milestone Management at the Bay Area Apartment Association dinner meeting where they presented a check for \$10,000 to *Building Homes for Heroes*. There were 15 Milestone properties across the state of Florida that worked diligently to raise money. Contributors included associates, residents and supplier partners.

▼ This year Milestone will be donating to *Building Homes for Heroes* for the second consecutive year in a row, with donations totaling \$25,501.

Along with the representatives from the organization, Joel Tavera will be attending the presentation. Joel received his home from *Building Homes for Heroes* in 2011. Joel was deployed to Iraq in 2007 and was the second most severely injured Army soldier to survive since the war in Iraq began.

Milestone Management is one of the country's largest residential property management operating firms, currently operating 35,000 units among 118 communities across the United States. Milestone Management is the residential management arm of Milestone Apartments REIT, a publicly traded open-ended trust on the Toronto Stock Exchange. ▲



Your Prescription for Energy Savings



▼
Did you know, on average, each degree that you raise your AC temperature can save up to 8 percent or more on your monthly cooling cost?

Have you ever dreaded opening your electric bill? Does the thought of your electric meter spinning out of control keep you awake at night? You may be suffering from a condition I like to call “High Summer Consumption-itis.” The good news is there are simple steps that you can take to not only increase your comfort, but potentially decrease your electric bill at the same time.

Florida’s warm, humid climate makes us rely on our air conditioners practically year-round and especially during the summer. The following recommendations, along with opportunities for energy-efficient upgrades by your apartment community, can help keep more money in your wallet where it belongs.

For most people, air conditioning accounts for 50-70 percent of their total summer consumption and presents the largest opportunity for savings. The easiest way to save energy is to raise your thermostat when it’s warm outside.

Did you know, on average, each degree that you raise your AC temperature can save up to 8 percent or more on your monthly cooling

cost? Do the math – raising the temperature from 74° to 78° can reduce AC usage up to 30 percent or more, which equals a total monthly savings of up to 15-20 percent or more. If you’re away from home for four hours or more, consider raising your AC temperature by three to five degrees. Your AC will require less energy to cool your home when you return versus cooling your furniture when you’re not there to enjoy it. Ideally, if you have a programmable thermostat you can set it so that the temperature automatically adjusts higher when you’re away and then cools your home back down before you return. Consider asking your community’s staff if this type of thermostat option is available.

Now, you may be thinking, “Sure, I can raise my AC temperature but I’ll sweat like crazy and be uncomfortable.” As a Residential Energy Auditor, I hear this all the time. The last thing I want for you to do is raise your thermostat drastically, then become uncomfortable and frustrated because you’ll likely revert to your old habits and continue to receive high bills.

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Our Big Dog Party
Thursday 10/17
at 9:00 PM



Do Your Apartments Have The Appeal Of A Cardboard Box?



ARD's NEW FRONTIER In Apartment Living
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1st Rule of The New Frontier:

- “They *lease the Kitchen and Bath...* The rest of the home is free.”
- When they walk into the kitchen they immediately look at *and open the refrigerator.*
- This refrigerator can make *your apartment their home!*

2nd Rule of The New Frontier:

- Today's home *must have laundry,* Doesn't yours?
- Without a laundry it's *just another Apartment.*



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By first starting with raising your thermostat and then gradually adopting some or all the remaining tips you won't have to sacrifice a great deal of comfort to save money.

Use circulating fans in the proper direction to increase comfort and turn them off when you leave the room. This is so important if you want to make up for a higher AC setting. While circulating fans don't actually lower the temperature in a room, they make you feel cooler because they create a wind chill when the air passes over your skin. In most cases, a properly positioned fan can make you feel up to two to four degrees cooler or more. Check to make sure that all of your fans are moving air downwards, which typically means the fan is spinning counter-clockwise. You'll notice an immediate difference between a fan in the correct position versus one going the opposite direction.

In the winter, you can change the direction of your fan blades to move the air up towards the ceiling (typically clockwise and on a lower setting). The fan takes the warm air that has risen to the top of the room and pushes it against the ceiling and eventually down the walls back to you which can help you feel warmer and use less heat (typically more expensive than AC!).

The next tip is to clean or replace your AC filter on a monthly basis. Did you know that your electric provider sends you a monthly reminder to clean/replace your filter? A good rule to follow is whenever you receive your power bill or pay rent be sure to check/change your AC filter to ensure peak performance. When an air filter becomes clogged with dirt it causes your AC system to run less efficiently which can reduce your comfort and increase your costs. Check with your apartment community to learn their policy on changing air filters. Some may require that maintenance staff perform this function.

Use shades, drapes, blinds, or window coverings to keep out summer heat and winter cold. This is especially important during the summer if your apartment has east or west-facing windows. If your apartment has blinds, when completely closed and lowered on a sunny window, highly reflective blinds can reduce heat gain by around 45 percent per the Department of Energy (DOE). Also, during summer days you should close draperies on windows receiving direct sunlight to prevent heat gain. DOE studies demonstrate that medium-colored draperies with white-plastic backings can reduce heat gains by up to 33 percent. This simple strategy can certainly place less strain on your AC and offer increased comfort and savings.

Do you know where your AC thermostat is located? If it's located near a heat source (lamp, TV, computer, etc.) it may be causing your

AC to run longer than necessary. If this is the case, you may need to do some rearranging to keep heat sources away from your thermostat.

Your thermostat operates as the "brains" of your AC. When heat is introduced near your thermostat, it may falsely assume that your entire apartment is warm and cause your AC to run excessively. One unforgettable example I've seen was a television located on a shelf directly beneath a thermostat. The temperature behind the TV was 102°, and even though the customer had the AC set at 80°, her TV remained on almost all day and so did her AC.

Check the temperature settings of your water heater. If your hot water temperature feels too warm the water heater thermostat(s) may need to be lowered. A simple way to check the temperature of the hot water is to find a faucet closest to the water heater, let the water run for a few minutes until it has reached the hottest temperature and fill a small cup with the hot water. Place a thermometer in the cup to check the temperature which should typically be a 125° or less. The higher the water heater's thermostat(s) settings the more electricity is needed to heat your water. Ask your community's maintenance staff for assistance in lowering the temperature if necessary. Another good tip is to turn off your water heater if you're away from your home for two days or more – don't forget to turn it back on before you jump into the shower.

If you have a clothes washer in your apartment consider washing your clothes in cold water to reduce your water heating usage. Also, do full loads of laundry and clean your dryer's lint filter after each use.

In addition to adopting the changes outlined in this article, your electric provider and apartment community may be able to further help you in saving energy and saving money. Most utility companies offer free or low-cost energy audits which can provide helpful recommendations about your usage, analysis of your consumption, check insulation levels if accessible, and make other energy-efficient recommendations.

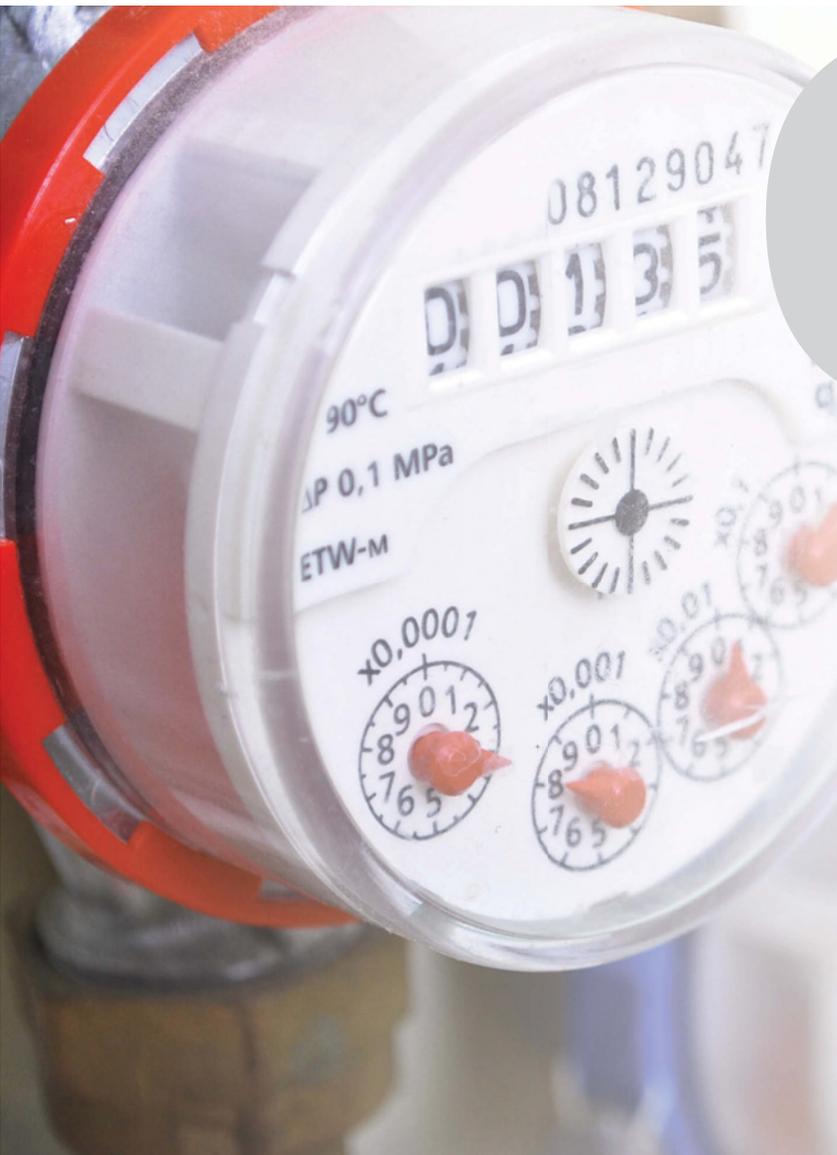
Your community's management staff should consider contacting your electric provider to learn about rebate incentives and efficiency programs that are available. Energy efficient upgrades (additional insulation, new windows, Energy Star appliances, etc.) tend to lead to lower electric bills, when used efficiently, which keep tenants happy and give communities an edge in attracting new tenants. When considering moving to a new apartment community, ask about typical energy bills for tenants and any energy efficient upgrades that the community has made. Also, check with your electric provider to see whether they offer any usage analysis for different apartment communities in your area. In Orlando, we offer an Apartment Energy Shopper tool called "Tools for Tenants" that allows prospective tenants to compare the average electric bill for multiple communities at the same time. This tool can be found by visiting www.ouc.com/rebates and clicking on the "Apartment Energy Shopper" link in the menu on the left side of the page.

For more energy savings tips, visit your electric provider's website or www.energy.gov. ▲

David Mayer has worked for Orlando Utilities Commission (OUC) for more than three years. He is a certified Residential Energy Auditor (REA) through the Association of Energy Engineers (AEE). He has performed more than 900 residential energy and water audits.



Is the Priority Being Green or Making Green?



Charlie McHill* invited me to drive four hours to meet him at 8 a.m. on Friday. Why? He wanted to have fun at my expense – pure evil.

It started three days before when Amy*, a property manager friend, called. Over the last few years, I had been to the multifamily property that she managed three times to discuss submetering with the owner. His residents were using 40 percent more water per unit than a comparable property nearby – I knew that for a fact because the other property was a submetering client of mine.

Although the owner was spending \$23,000 per month on water and sewer, he couldn't bring himself to invest \$75,000 for a submeter retrofit. Even when I offered financing under very favorable terms, he hadn't agreed. Instead of doing something about his water and sewer problem, he listed the property for sale.

Good news – after being listed for almost 2 ½ years, the property had finally sold to a fellow named Charlie McHill. Upon closing on the 315 unit property, Charlie met with the property's on-site manager, Amy. She told him that they should have submeters installed and begin billing residents for water and sewer. When she told him about me, Charlie told her to set up a meeting that Friday at 8 a.m. to discuss the possibility of retrofitting submeters. Charlie McHill told Amy that he believed both in being green and saving money.

I knew what a difference it would make for the property's profitability. Once residents were paying for their consumption, they would conserve, thus reducing the property's overall water and sewer bill and, of course, the owner would recover costs from the residents. I had studied their water and sewer bills. Being conservative, NOI would improve by about \$215,000 per year.

It sounded like a great lead. As the property is a four hour drive from my house, I left at 4 a.m. When I arrived at the manager's office, Charlie asked me to explain how submetering would benefit him and the residents. Using my nifty PowerPoint presentation, I explained the broad strokes first:

- When people pay for what they use, they waste less. National studies sponsored by EPA, MultiHousing Council and various utilities demonstrate 15 to 40 percent less consumption.
- In Charlie's case, since I was familiar with an almost identical property nearby, I had good reason to believe that his consumption would go down about 30 percent.
- About half of his water and sewer bill was related to consumption while the other half was base rates unrelated to consumption. The estimated 30 percent reduction in consumption would translate to an approximate 15 percent reduction in his water and sewer bill – from \$23,000 per month to about \$19,500 per month.
- Once we were billing all residents for approximately \$19,500 water and sewer costs, a realistic goal would be to recover about 80 percent of that number – \$15,600 per month (more on that later.)
- As utilities' water and sewer rates are expensive and will continue to escalate in order to fund needed infrastructure improvements, giving away free unlimited water is going to become even more expensive.
- The most important factors that impact people's choice of where to rent are location, rental rate and amenities offered. Whether utilities are included is not an important factor.

Charlie told me that submetering sounded like a great idea. He offered me some coffee and donuts. Gee, what a nice guy ... but the expression on his face seemed odd. As we spoke, it seemed like he was trying to restrain laughter.

Charlie McHill: My issue is one of priorities. I just bought the property and there is so much to do. We're still putting together a long list of repairs and improvements that can't wait. And we need to train on-site staff about new policies in order to get things running the way we want. I wonder – how soon should I come around to submeters?

Me: In a perfect world, business people would prioritize conservation and other green technologies like submeters at the top of their to-do lists. But let's face it – multifamily operators are always putting out fires. Fixing leaky roofs, evicting bad



Multifamily operators were always putting out fires ... Those things were priorities – submetering was something they wanted to do but they would leave it on the backburner. They didn't recognize the money that they were losing on water and sewer as a priority.

tenants and repairing HVAC systems can't wait.

Charlie: So you agree. I should wait a few months before deciding on a course of action with respect to submeters?

Me: With all due respect, you are seeing your water and sewer costs in the wrong light. Although full implementation of submeters and utility billing will save you \$18,000 per month, that's the wrong way to look at it. It's more urgent than just savings.

Charlie: I like saving \$18,000 per month. In what way is it more urgent than that?

Me: You need to repair leaky roofs and bad HVACs immediately because if you don't, tenants will move out and that will cost you money. You need to evict bad tenants because you need to rent their units to good paying residents. In other words, if you don't put out those fires, you will immediately feel it in your wallet. Losing tenants is not some abstract concept – the loss of a tenant means immediate loss of rent.

Charlie: So you agree, making repairs is more urgent than submeters?

Me: I agree that making repairs is urgent. But submetering is an urgently needed repair, not a means to save.

Charlie: I've got to hear this. (*The strange smile on his face had disappeared as he leaned forward to hear what I was saying.*)

Me: When JCPenny has a 40 percent-off sale on casual shirts, it is an opportunity to save. But since I can continue to wear the shirts that I already own, I don't lose money if I wait until the next sale. Your situation is different. You can't stop buying water and sewer until the point at which you are prepared to submeter. You will be losing the \$18,000 that I can save you each and every month until you have fully implemented submetering.

Charlie: So you're saying that my water and sewer system is broken?

Me: Exactly. Your system is broken. You're leaking \$18,000 per month. You need to fix it now.

Charlie: I have to admit something to you. (*Charlie's funny smirk broke open into open laughter.*) I've been playing with you. I already know everything that there is to know about submeters. I probably know more than you about the mechanics.

Me: Really, how so? (*I was thinking that this Charlie guy was pretty arrogant.*)

Charlie: I was one of the first people in the U.S. to start a submetering company back in the 1990s. But within a few years, it occurred to me that I could make more money buying submeters than selling them. That's when I sold the submetering company and focused on the big bucks – buying submeters.

Me: Wait a second. Are you telling me that the better way to make money was to ...?

Charlie: That's right. Selling submeters and billing services was tiring. I'd lay out the merits of submetering:

- It's green because residents conserve when they pay for their own consumption.
- You make green because your water bill goes down and because residents reimburse you for water and sewer costs.

Managers and owners would agree. But that's when things would get frustrating. Multifamily operators were always putting out fires – fixing roofs, HVACs, potholes in the parking lots, evictions, curing code violations, leasing new units, hiring and



Once residents were paying for their consumption, they would conserve, thus reducing the property's overall water and sewer bill and, of course, the owner would recover costs from the residents.

firing staff. Those things were priorities – submetering was something they wanted to do but they would leave it on the backburner. They didn't recognize the money that they were losing on water and sewer as a priority.

Me: So you decided to buy properties and submeter them. Wow.
Charlie: Take this property for example. You tried over and over again – for years – to convince the prior owner to submeter. I came along three months ago and offered a price for the property. He accepted. I don't need to persuade him of the merits of submetering. I'm going to submeter.

Me: Boy, do I feel stupid! (*I wasn't kidding. I really felt stupid.*)

Charlie: Once all the residents are being billed for water, here's how it will work:

- Just like you said, the water and sewer bill will go down by about \$3,500 per month.
- The nature of the business is that we are always evicting a few tenants. Whoever is not paying rent is also not paying the water and sewer. And I'll give concessions to some tenants who are struggling and who I want to keep. Realistically, of the \$19,500 that we bill for water and sewer, we'll collect 80 percent – \$15,600.

- That's \$15,600 of collections and \$3,500 savings due to conservation – we'll be saving \$19,100 per month.
- As you would phrase it, the system is broken to the tune of \$19,000 per month. To be conservative, you estimated \$18,000 per month. That's a fire that we need to put out right now.

Me: At \$18,000 per month, that's a \$216,000 increase in NOI per annum. If this property is worth an 8 percent Cap Rate...

Charlie: That's right. \$216,000 of NOI adds \$2.7 million to the property's value. The investment to retrofit with submeters will be about \$75,000.

Me: You make a cool \$2.7 million in return for a \$75,000 investment. You don't have to convince managers and owners on the merits. You make your own decisions. Like Mel Brooks says, "It's good to be King."

Charlie: I make properties green and that makes me green...green cash that is.

Me: I have to admit something. It makes me green too – green with envy.

Charlie: Most property owners like the idea of being green but they don't act on it so fast. To be honest, going green is my first priority but not because I'm a conservationist. Don't



get me wrong – I believe in being green. But just like any other landlord, my first objective is to make money. The minute I close on a property, I can't wait to submeter.

Me: How soon do you need the submeters installed?

Charlie: Were you listening to me? I just said that I can't wait.

Me: I was feeling stupid again.

**Names have been changed to protect the innocent.* ▲

Steve Hirsch heads national marketing at Commercial Water & Energy. Having personally experienced rising utility costs with multifamily properties that he owned in the past, he enjoys helping owners and managers reduce utility exposure. Steve can be contacted at shirsch@cwe-net.com or 954-684-9973.

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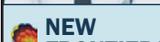
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The Cloud can Increase Efficiency by **75 Percent**



Technology is a wonderful thing, but only when applied effectively. Bill Gates said it best:

“The first rule of any technology used in a business is that automation applied to an efficient operation will magnify the efficiency. The second is that automation applied to an inefficient operation will magnify the inefficiency.” – Bill Gates

While some things are a question of creating an efficient process, others are a question of implementation of the correct tools. The ability for businesses to become more efficient in today's economic environment continues to be at the forefront of operational practices all over the world. As a nation that grew out of innovations such as Ford's assembly line in the early 1900s, finding efficiency in business is just as important today. One hundred years later, the tools are different, but the principles remain the same: finding the right tools and processes that make business practices faster, providing for the ability to complete less physical work while increasing productivity.

Do a quick search online for tools that increase productivity and you will find quite a few options available (of all types). According to TechCrunch.com, the latest trend centers around Software-as-a-Service (SaaS), a software model that takes advantage of the “cloud” to make business run more effectively. SaaS examples include Constant Contact, GoToMeeting, and PackageLog. Constant Contact is a cloud-hosted email management service that assists with small batch or broadcast email marketing, online surveys, and social media. GoToMeeting utilizes the cloud for remote (virtual) meetings, desktop sharing, and video conferencing software-suite that enables the user to meet with other computer users, customers, clients or colleagues via the Internet in real time (enterprise software). PackageLog is a cloud-hosted package management software, for use on-site to manage inbound package deliveries for residents including package tracking, notifications, with a history of all packages delivered and returned to sender (that also includes a resident retention component).

What exactly is the cloud? If you spend anytime online you have probably heard of the “Cloud” or “Cloud-Computing” or “Cloud-hosted” software similar to those listed above; but what does all of that mean? Some people may think they don't have the “cloud” where they live, which is a

common misconception. Your colleagues discuss how great it is and articles tout its many benefits, including cost reduction and increased efficiency, but what are they all talking about? Is it literally a cloud? Or, is it some mystical place in the sky where all of our treasures are stored? Well...actually, that's exactly what it is; only our treasures are files/data and our magical tools, the software. They're talking about our technology living on the Internet (via a remote server), allowing us to save information or access active software that can be used anywhere, on any device with a browser and an Internet connection.

Using the “cloud” is similar to those sci-fi movies (set in the future), where the actor would ask the “ALL KNOWING” computer for some obscure piece of information important to the plot and it would reply with the answer (like Apple's Siri). The idea is similar, only you can't just say, “Computer, where are my financial reports?” but it looks like we are not too far away from that. Instead, any device that has access to the Internet can view or use information on the cloud via your existing device (desktop, tablet, mobile, etc).

Cloud computing helps with efficiencies in your workday. Streamlining the work environment is one of the essential elements in increasing productivity. Using a cloud-computing model in your business can increase productivity by allowing you to focus on operations and leasing. Cloud-hosted software like Constant Contact and PackageLog allows for the abandonment of individual workstations, making for easier access regardless of device (desktop, tablet, mobile, etc.) or operating system (Windows 8, Apple OSX Lion, Linux, etc.). Not only do these applications provide a valuable service to an organization, the very nature of cloud-hosted applications like these offer the opportunity for companies to extend the workspace beyond the physical office, across multiple platforms, without the need to purchase additional equipment. Cloud-hosted software also allows the end-user to optimize their time more





► **Any quality cloud-hosted service likely uses highly secure cloud servers with 99 percent uptime or better to ensure peak productivity.**

efficiently, increase capability, and boost the effectiveness of staff by allowing them to work remotely or via mobile devices giving them more flexibility. Of the examples cited, PackageLog specifically makes great use of this mobility feature, by implementing a responsive design allowing for use on your existing desktops, laptops, tablets and mobile devices. The ability to work on a mobile device to do such tasks as log-in packages, send notifications, and access information gives staffs substantially more capability away from their desktop computers (workstation) when engaging with residents and managing delivery of residents' packages throughout the day.

Why is SaaS and responsive design important? Responsive design is just a new term to describe software that adapts to any device regardless of size, platform, mobile, or

otherwise. According to Google, 90 percent of people use multiple screens sequentially, whether for browsing the Internet, shopping online, managing finances, or planning vacations. Businesses, like PackageLog, are capitalizing on this technology to make working mobile a reality. Using package management software to track packages via any device including tablets and mobile increases efficiency and improves the user experience.

Less up-front cost and more security? With most cloud-hosted software (SaaS), you only pay a monthly subscription, which is substantially less than the cost of buying localized software (stored on a single computer, not shared across all). For example, the Adobe Creative Suite Software Bundle costs \$2,599 or \$49.99 per month for the same SaaS version. At around \$600 per year, your \$2,599 investment provides you four years

of access under the SaaS model, including the latest updates and upgrades. Besides everyone on-site having access to the same secure data, SaaS clearly offers you a smaller overall investment, less upfront costs and to ability to see a return on your investment much sooner.

Any quality cloud-hosted service likely uses highly secure cloud servers with 99 percent uptime or better to ensure peak productivity. This is particularly important as efficient security protocols are also on the rise, with new advancements like the "lock and key" technology coming from HID Global that makes it possible to unlock your doors using a mobile device. Arizona State University recently completed a trial using this NFC microchip technology and found that 90 percent of students preferred the "virtual key" system. For those communities that still use a pen and paper to log packages in and out, they can now utilize package tracking systems to provide them the latest proof-of-delivery technology. Some systems use electronic signature pads (similar to those used at delivery by UPS and FedEx); however, these devices are not designed for nor can they confirm that the individual signing

is actually who-they-say-they-are (as far as the law is concerned). These devices are simply designed to confirm that some person has received the delivered item, nothing more. PackageLog however, offers a state-of-the-art ePOD™ security protocol to ensure security via a resident created unique PIN (personal identification number). On-site delivery now allows only those with verifiable access (or their spouse, roommate, loved-one) to accept packages with certainty.

Finding new ways to implement cloud technology is crucial. Many organizations have multiple sites, but require file sharing to be accessible from each at the same time. Others need permission-based systems for accountability and controlled access, while most prefer both. The ability to designate various permission settings affords management the opportunity to incrementally add responsibility and access to staff from various sites using a logical hierarchy. Yardi for example, can allow for site-level users to see financial information, while only allowing those with accounting permissions with access to make changes. PackageLog offers the same kind of permission-based infrastructure to ensure security and accountability within the system. This means that “John” the Front Desk Assistant (with only permission to log packages in-and-out), “Jane” the Leasing Agent (with added supervisor permissions) and “Nicole” the Property Manager (with full administrative control) can use the system simultaneously for their respective tasks. This flexibility offers properties the right amount of access to their staff that is necessary for each of them. In addition, because it’s cloud hosted, these can be changed from anywhere there is an internet connection, so if the Property Manager on her day off at the beach needs to temporarily give permission to the Leasing Agent, it’s merely a few clicks away right from her mobile device.

A quiet killer of efficiency: The two major U.S. package carriers FedEx and UPS reported record years, citing 13 percent increases in package shipping in 2012. Emarketer is reporting that online shopping is up 17 percent in late 2012 and predicted to see increases through 2016 of 45 percent or more. Management of residents’ packages will not only continue to bog down productivity, but is expected to increase substantially as indicated by these statistics. The latest independent U.S. Postal Solutions



They’re talking about our technology living on the Internet, allowing us to save information or access active software that can be used anywhere, on any device with a browser and an Internet connection.

study found that on average, college students are now receiving 21 packages per year and rising, with multifamily expected to be much higher.

Let’s take a look at your real expenses: A simple five-minute task can cost your site thousands of dollars annually. A quick cost benefit analysis shows that a property management company with 25,000-bed portfolio is spending more than \$437,500 per year managing in-bound packages for residents. This is a non-revenue generating expense that is often overlooked as a traditional cost of doing business. To log, notify, store, retrieve and deliver packages by hand takes on-site approximately five minutes per package (this assumes no resident/shipper/spouse calls or visits your office to inquire or complain, or any packages ever go missing). With 21 packages per bed per year, multiplied by 25,000 beds, the total quickly jumps to 525,000 packages per year. Assuming five minutes to process each package multiplied by the number of total packages, paying \$10 per hour, we’ve reached \$437,500 annually. Breaking down these costs for an individual 1,000-resident conventional multifamily community, the annual costs are approximately \$21,000 per year. Accepting packages is one of those on-site tasks that will never be a zero dollar expense, but it can be more efficient. With a cloud-hosted software like PackageLog, that

same process is cut by 75 percent or more, taking only seconds. How much do you think its worth to that 25,000-bed portfolio to save over a quarter million dollars? U.S. Postal Solutions CEO Craig Meddin comments, “Adding PackageLog™ will increase your net income through efficiencies and is an expenditure that will actually produce an immediate visible return.”

Automation is key in the streamlining process, or as U.S. Postal Solutions/PackageLog USPS Postmaster-Retired Scott Pope states, “Speed through repetition and familiarity of a minimalist process makes all the difference in creating peak efficiency.” Constant Contact, for example, has created a simple user interface with automated email delivery options and templates to streamline the email marketing process. By creating and scheduling emails in advanced, the email marketing workflow can be more easily managed. PackageLog’s notifications are not only automated, but also completely customizable. Translation: that 1,000 resident property only needs to create their notifications once for the 21,000 “You have a package!” notifications, 21,000 “Thank you for picking up your package!” notifications, and all of the automated reminder notifications in between.

Using the proper tools is critical to creating efficiency in the workplace. One wouldn’t use a garden shovel to dig a pool, so it’s important to realize what software tool will be best suited for your needs. Software-as-a-Service has clearly become the front-runner for maximizing expenditures and value. We have mentioned a number of tools in this article that have proven themselves as great tools of efficiency, and recommend doing your own research to find the right tools for your business. PackageLog is our favorite inbound package management software, and the right tool for our business. What’s yours? ▲

U.S. Postal Solutions is the nation’s leader in the student housing mail management industry, for both on-/off-campus mail management services. The U.S. Postal Solutions companies offer mail delivery management and package logging / package management software (PackageLog™). For more information about U.S. Postal Solutions, please call us today at 866-378-8157 or visit us online at uspostalsolutions.com and packagelog.com.



A Discussion on Water Conservation



With water being the most critical component to sustaining life, it is important that we do everything we can to preserve this resource.

With water and sewerage costs doubling in one of every four municipalities over the last 12 years, water supplies dwindling, and other utility costs increasing faster than inflation, the need for conservation is growing and the economics of efficiency have never looked better.

Back in April, I presented at the National Apartment Association's (NAA) Green Conference in Baltimore on this very topic. I was lucky enough to present alongside DeeAnne McClenahan from Greystar and Ryan Delliacocono from AGPM, LLC, on how to identify efficient ROI opportunities for your property, focusing mainly on water conservation. In our presentation we talked about a number of products and practices you can put in place, ranging from inexpensive and easy to needing a little more planning, and now I will give you an overview of a few of them.

I started off the presentation identifying *why* we need to conserve water. Any guesses? First and arguably most importantly, water costs are rising. A survey given by Black & Veatch to 100 municipalities in the U.S. found that residential water bills in at least one in four places have doubled in the past 12 years, with Atlanta increasing the most at 233 percent! Now you might be wondering if median income has also

risen as much during the same time to compensate. Unfortunately, no, it hasn't. U.S. Census data show that median income increased only 16 percent during the same period. Bills continue to climb as the following costs are passed on to us: increased price of electricity that is needed to supply and treat water, repairs to aging water systems, new sewage treatment plants being built, and federal clean water standards being enforced.

The second reason we need to conserve water is because supplies are dwindling. If you've visited NOAA's drought monitoring page lately you've seen that almost half of the country is experiencing some sort of drought conditions. With water being the most critical component to sustaining life, it is important that we do everything we can to preserve this resource.

So now we'll get to the good stuff – identifying areas for opportunity. One of the easiest ways to reduce your water and energy use is to be smart about the products you purchase. Here are a couple of inexpensive examples of products that Ryan discussed that can help you down the path toward efficiency:

- **Low flow aerators.** Replacing a standard 2.5 gallon per minute (GPM) kitchen faucet aerator





Rebates are available for many products like refrigerators, clothes washers, HVAC, and more. Be sure to check your utility provider's website and Dsireusa.org for rebates in your area.

with a 1.5 GPM will save you 40 percent. Replacing a standard 2.2 GPM bathroom faucet aerator with a 1.0 GPM will save you 54 percent.

- **Low flow showerheads.** Replacing a standard 2.5 GPM showerhead with a 1.5 GPM showerhead will save you up to 40 percent.
- **Low flush toilets.** For 1.6 to 3.5 gallon per flush (GPF) toilets that still function, look to products that adjust the amount of water used to flush instead of replacing the whole toilet. This is a water saving alternative at a fraction of the cost and can save you up to 40 percent. When your toilets are broken or need to be changed out, replace 3.0 and 1.6 GPF toilets with a 1.28, 1.0, or .8 GPF model that flushes just as well, if not better, than older, higher-volume flush toilets.
- **Smart landscaping with technology.** By installing smart controllers, ones that detect moisture and track local weather, then change the watering pattern, you'll drastically lower your landscaping bills. In addition, replacing as much grass on the property as you can with native plants and xeriscaping, then properly monitoring for soft spots, can really help.

Look for water conservation products certified by WaterSense®, a partnership

program administered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and labeled "low flow." The WaterSense® program was launched to provide consumers with easy ways to save water, as both a label for products and a resource to people. If you would like to get a better idea of what the impact of upgrading to WaterSense® products could be for your property, you can check out the WaterSense® Water Savings Calculator. After you fill in a couple of fields, the calculator will tell you how much water, electricity, greenhouse gas emissions, and money you would save by replacing your current fixtures with WaterSense® certified fixtures.

WHEN SHOULD I REPLACE INEFFICIENT PRODUCTS?

If you are thinking about making upgrades to your property, the best times to do so are during a major or small rehab, when something breaks or needs repair (sustainability by attrition), if the payback is under one year, or when rebates are available for those products.

WHAT ARE REBATES?

Rebates are typically given by utility companies to customers for purchasing highly efficient products. For example, I recently purchased an ENERGY STAR® qualified, CEE Tier III refrigerator and, after completing paperwork and providing receipts, I was handed a check from my utility company for \$50 for something I was going to purchase anyway! The rebate is intended to help bring the price of efficient products down to the price of standard, less-efficient products. You might be wondering why the utility would pay you to use less of the electricity they provide. The answer is that Americans use enough electricity as it is, and we are at times over-burdening the electrical infrastructure. If usage increases, then the utilities will have to expand their facilities to accommodate – costing them way more than it does to provide rebates for efficient products.

Rebates are available for many products like refrigerators, clothes washers, HVAC, and more. Be sure to check your utility

provider's website and Dsireusa.org for rebates in your area.

ENGAGING STAFF AND RESIDENTS

DeeAnne concluded the presentation with how she gets everyone involved in the process. She touched on the challenges of greening a property, which include training demands (providing timely and relevant education), NOI expectations, and showing residents the value of conservation if they don't pay for their utilities...to name a few. In order to overcome these obstacles she recommends these best practices: Write formal sustainability policies to distribute and include in resident and staff onboarding, appoint a sustainability manager, and make your efforts visible to get people talking.

Greystar recently launched a program called the Green Awards, which gives their properties points for environmentally preferable practices they implement. The totals are shared, and the top-scoring property is recognized for their achievements. In summary, DeeAnne concluded, constant communication is essential, always say "thank you," and small actions times thousands of people equal big results!

HD Supply is dedicated to educating multifamily professionals on environmentally preferable products and practices that will lower utility bills, reduce their impact, and attract (and keep) new residents who care about sustainability. To read about our *ideallygreen* initiative, go to hdsupplysolutions.com/ideallygreen or simply search for "ideallygreen" at hdsupplysolutions.com to find efficient products. ▲

Kelly Thompson is the Associate Manager of Sustainability at HD Supply Facilities Maintenance and a guest blogger at GreenBlogic.com. She is LEED® Green Associate accredited and is the San Diego Green Building Council's Marketing Committee Chair. Kelly earned a bachelor's degree in Marketing from Monmouth University and has participated in various environmental projects such as carbon footprinting, the LEED® building certification process, and corporate social responsibility reporting.



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Green is Sprouting Up Everywhere

Five Practical Ideas to Green Up your Bottom Line One Call Now

It seems that everyone is taking steps to go a little green. So what's it mean for property managers? Is it worth your time and effort to promote a green agenda?

For individuals, going green is a personal choice. For some it comes down to situational decisions. For those more committed to the cause it's a lifestyle choice. And still for others, the choices are financially driven. Participation spans all ages. But the 20-35 year age group is the most committed ... and it strongly influences their decision making.

TO PLAY OR NOT TO PLAY?

It all shakes out to this: yes, the green movement is a trend. It's a cause. But it's not a fad. Businesses have seized the opportunity by producing fit-the-need products. Federal, state and local governments are responding with increasing regulatory requirements and restrictions. Green is a factor that affects purchase decisions... so it stands to reason that it plays a role in rental and retention decisions, too.

HERE ARE FIVE PRACTICAL IDEAS TO PUT A LITTLE GREEN TO WORK ON YOUR PROPERTY.

1. Decide on your light bulbs. In 2014 you will be forced to make a light bulb decision. That's when the federal government's ban on incandescent bulbs goes into effect. For standard fixtures, your new choices are CFL (compact fluorescent) bulbs or LED (light-emitting diode) bulbs. Both deliver huge energy savings over their old fashioned predecessor. LEDs are superior in energy usage and quality of light, but are much more expensive to purchase.



2. Expand on recycling opportunities. In most municipalities, recyclable trash is picked up separately from regular trash. Although often voluntary, in some areas it's mandatory. You may already have separate bins for recyclable trash. Are there enough of them? Are they convenient?

I know a managed community whose residents have curbside pick up, but they take their paper products and aluminum cans to centrally-located bins for pick up. The vendor pays for the recyclable paper and cans and the funds go into the HOA. It's a voluntary program and nearly everyone participates.

3. Ask your utility companies to help. Contact all your utility companies and ask for onsite assessments. Some may charge for the service. However fees are usually reasonable and may qualify you for discounts on upgrades or repairs. They also should have energy-saving tips they can pass on to you, or available on their websites. Pull the ones that apply to your property and publish your own tip list.

4. Increase communications, but conserve your paper. It's time – past time – to make a serious reduction in your paper communications. A message notification service can do the job better and save you loads of time and money, too. Look for one that sends voice and text messages to cell phones and also to email.

5. Foster a green perception. Lots of brands tout green qualities. But the ones that carry strong green reputations do a better job at fostering the perception. Make that work for you. Whenever appropriate, communicate your green efforts.

- *“When you're in the common areas, please use the recycle trash cans for your empty soda cans.”*
- *“Now that it's getting warmer, please adjust your thermostat when you leave, so your air conditioner isn't running up your electric bill while you're gone.”*
- *“Thank you for your positive responses to our messaging system. Last month alone it reduced our paper usage by more than 800 sheets. That's nearly two reams!”*

None of these ideas are large-scale initiatives. They're small changes that collectively make a big difference. They also foster the perception that you're proactively doing your part. Plus, you just might find that your efforts add some green to your bottom line. ▲

Nick Frantz is the National Sales Manager for Property Management Solutions at One Call Now, where he has worked since March 2011. He specializes in Property Management solutions – commercial and residential – assisting in communications between property managers and staff/residents.

For more information regarding resident communication solutions please visit www.onecallnow.com, or call 877-698-3262 to find out how our text, email and voice messages can work for your community.



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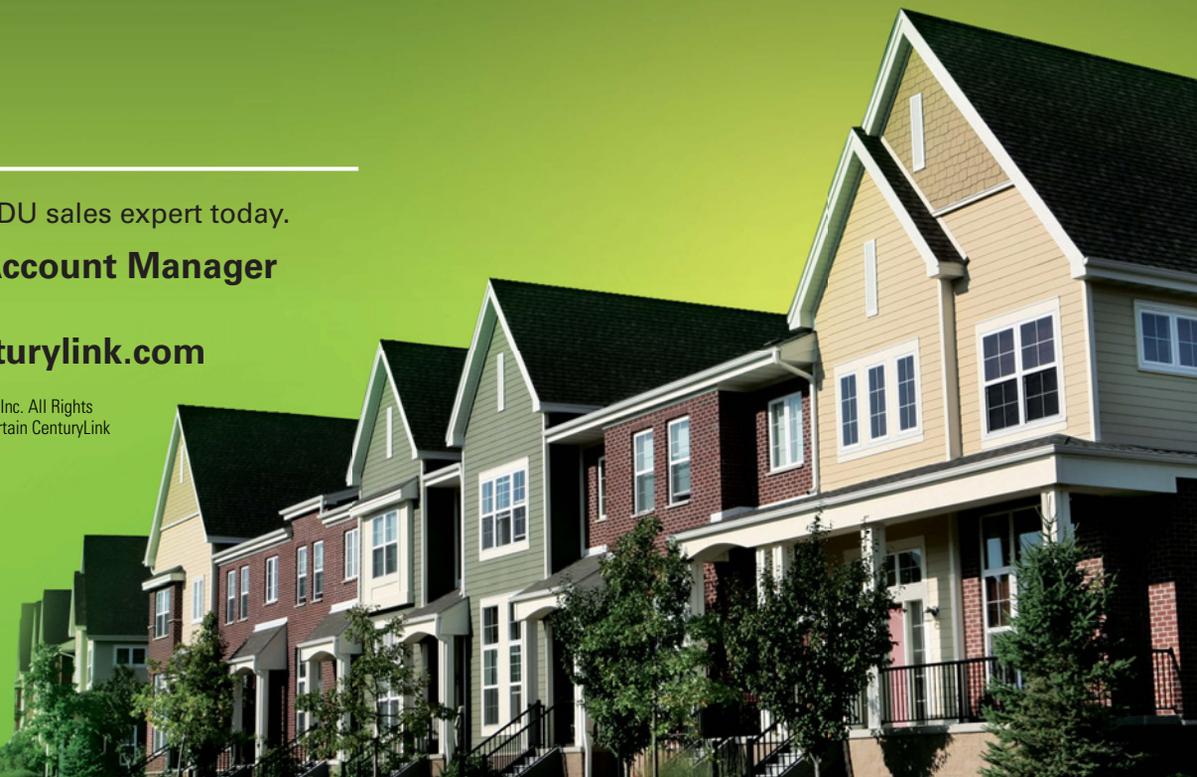
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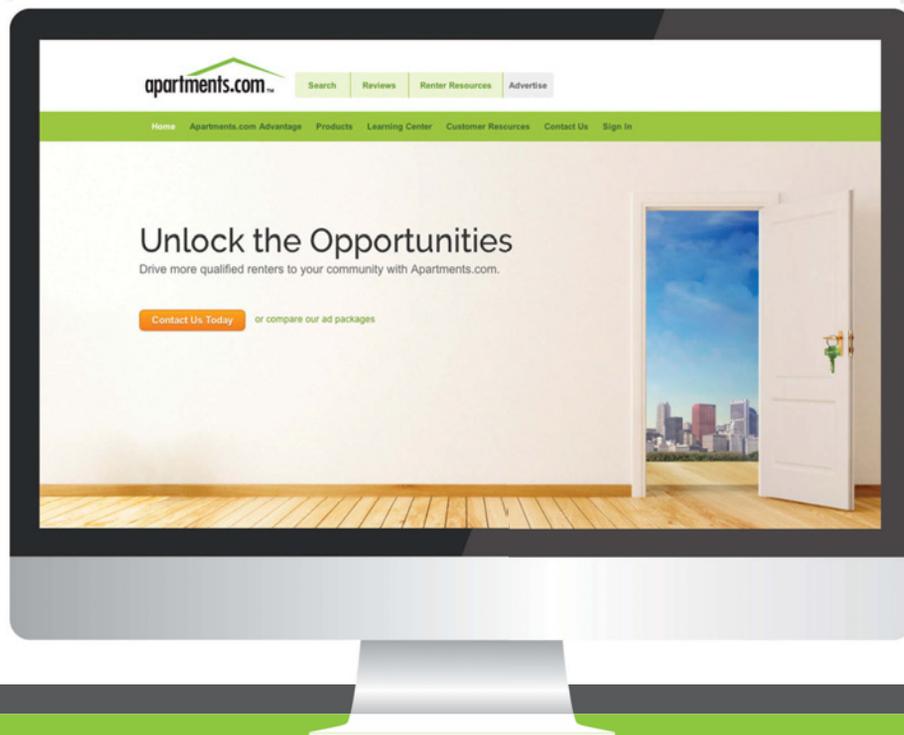


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