

# Apartment focus

ISSUE 1 | 2021

## How to Respond to (and Prevent) Horrifying Online Property Management Reviews

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AND SUPPORTERS

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# Thank You for Your Involvement



## Your Support is Critical to Our Success

The Connecticut Apartment Association (CTAA) is part of the NAA Network – Local, State and National Associations Working on Your Behalf

### **CTAA MEMBERSHIP AUTOMATICALLY GIVES YOU NAA MEMBERSHIP —AT NO EXTRA CHARGE**

CTAA is the local affiliate of the National Apartment Association (NAA). As a federation of nearly 170 affiliates, NAA encompasses over 85,000 members representing more than 9.2 million apartment homes globally.

### **EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS**

Not only does the CTAA regularly offer training opportunities throughout Connecticut for all types of property professionals, but we have also teamed with the NAAEI and VISTO to offer a wide array of online-based courses that you and your team can take from the comfort of your desk or home.

### **EMPLOYMENT LISTINGS**

The CTAA website offers a great place for job posting and job searching within the industry. Our job posting service is available exclusively to our members!

### **LEGISLATIVE VOICE**

CTAA employs a highly-skilled lobbying team that monitors proposed legislation that affects the multifamily housing industry and keeps the CTAA membership informed.

### **CT APARTMENT FOCUS MAGAZINE**

CTAA's magazine keeps members updated with important industry issues and CTAA events.

### **MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY**

This member's only section of the website provides you with a listing of property management companies, communities and industry suppliers that are CTAA members. Complete contact information is included.

### **NAA BENEFITS INCLUDE**

- NAA Government Affairs – Protecting the industry through local, state and national advocacy initiatives and grassroots mobilization
- NAA Click & Lease Program – Customized to protect you locally
- NAA Education Institute – Skill development that maximizes NOI
- Meetings & Expositions – Network, get educated & learn about the new products and services all that increase your NOI
- Industry Resources – National award-winning monthly magazine, newsletters and website, and knowledge-sharing through social media
- The NAA Open Door Program – An exclusive NAA member benefit and not an endorsed product program. Participants in the program are reputable businesses that offer valuable services and competitive prices to our members
- The NAA Resource Center – Quickly find the suppliers, products, and services in the apartment housing industry with the Resource Center.

“Our company's membership in CTAA has provided so many valuable dividends over the years. Utilization of the NAA lease as facilitated through local CTAA chapter membership not only lessens administrative burden for our on-site teams that has a direct impact on operating costs but also provides us peace of mind that the lease meets all legal requirements and will be updated as changes may occur. The opportunity to use this affiliation to network for vendor services helps us meet our firm's competitive bid requirements and find vendor partners who provide quality services at the best possible prices. We have also developed relationships with other member industry professionals over the years and some of those relationships have turned into future team members for our organization. “

*-Lori J Ricci, Senior Vice President, WinnResidential*



# Apartment focus



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# *Hello CTAA Members and Supporters*



**While our events and education format continue to be virtual, please know that CTAA is planning for the day when we can all come back together safely and responsibly, network, gather and share time.**

**H**appy New Year! I hope this note finds you all well as we cruise through the first few months of 2021.

The Legislative Session started January 6th and, for now, is being held virtually. Myself, members of the Government Relations Committee, and TCG Lobbyist John Bailey have met with several legislators and industry partners to discuss our concerns, issues and steps to move forward as we navigate this year's session. You can view our updated Advocacy page on the CTAA website, where you will find links to NAA's Key Contact Survey as well as a link to share how the eviction moratorium has impacted your organization as we plan to meet with the members of our CT Congressional delegation in

March. These stories are so important to share to effectively communicate the impact this moratorium continues to have. For our CT legislative session, we are focused on many bills coming out of the Housing Committee and providing updates to the membership. You may see an Action Alert now and then, and while it only takes a few seconds to complete, the more that participate, the more our voices are heard. Bottom line — we need YOU!

While our events and education format continue to be virtual, please know that CTAA is planning for the day when we can all come back together safely and responsibly, network, gather and share time. For now, we are planning our virtual 2020 (yes 2020) Nutmeg Awards and Board Installation that will

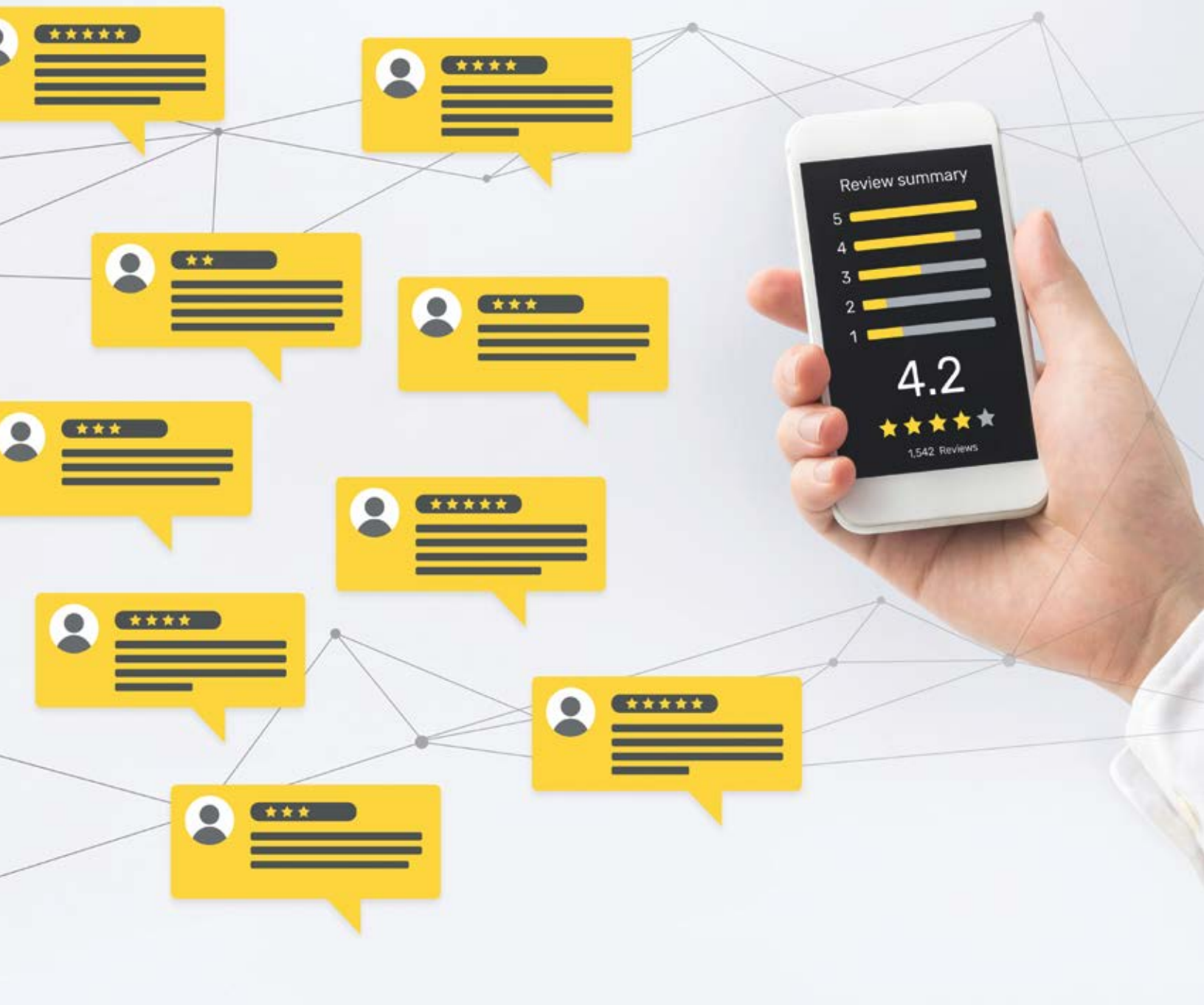
be streamed on March 25th. Thank you, and good luck to all who submitted nominations! More information will be available shortly for registration and sponsorship opportunities. Our Trade Show has been rescheduled to Sept. 9-10, 2021, and will still be held at Foxwoods. The Trade Show Committee continues to plan for a safe, fun, interactive, in-person event!

As always, my email (and virtual door) is open. Take care of yourselves, your communities, and I look forward to seeing you!

Thank you for your continued support. ■

Jessica Olander  
Executive Director





# How to Respond to (and Prevent) Horrifying Online Property Management Reviews



### Review 1: A Frightening Lack of Follow-Through



3 reviews

★★★★★ a year ago

They are all just about promising work is going to be done but nothing ever happens. I don't know how many times I have contacted the property manager about replacing a broken window. It has been 3 month and all that was done ... measurements. That's it. And that took 2 1/2 month. Now wa are getting to 3 month and nothing. But they are very quick on putting 3 day notices on the door even though they know those are false and clearly meant for a different Apatrment since the rent amount does not even match and all rent has been paid & cleared the account one week earlier.

### Review 2: Ghosting The Resident



2 reviews

★★★★★ 4 years ago

By far the worst property management company I have ever dealt with. Impossible to reach anyone, there is never any manager present at the property during posted hours and they don't seem to care that this is the case. It seems there is no one at the main office either and no one returns phone calls and the people you need to talk to are always "out of the office". If you are already in a lease with them, make sure that you photograph and detail everything and that you get a copy of your move out report before you move out! If you have the option of moving into one of their properties, don't.

It happens to even the best property managers — the occasional stinging online review. Sometimes, the resident is justified in their complaint, and it's up to you to make things right. But many times, the review contains false information, or the resident is confused about the facts of the situation. These misleading reviews also tend to be highly emotional, expressing the resident's anger about their perceived negative experience.

Regardless of which type of negative review you've received, the best thing you can do is respond promptly, fix the issue, if possible, and learn from it. In that spirit, we've collected four negative reviews posted online for real property management companies. Let's take a

closer look at what could have been done to prevent each issue and how you, as a property manager, could respond in each scenario to build trust with future customers and protect your business from horrifying reviews like these. Assuming that both of these residents are accurately recounting the situation, in this case, a lack of follow-up on a reported maintenance issue is the root cause of both of these bad reviews.

Following up on maintenance requests can be tricky, but issues like this arise most often when you're using an offline, pen-and-paper system to track and follow up on maintenance requests. It's easy to lose track of an issue that a resident has reported, especially when communication with a property owner

or maintenance vendors is required to resolve the issue.

However, when you use online maintenance tracking tools, you can collect requests from residents in your database where no information can be lost. Within the same system, you can manage communication with the owner if approval is needed, dispatch a vendor to resolve the problem, and stay on top of communication with the resident to keep them informed every step of the way.

Sometimes, it's not always possible to immediately fix an issue, but providing communication with the resident can go a long way towards preventing negative reviews like this one.

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### Review 3: A Lifeless Leasing Process



5 months ago



Terrible experiences with them on multiple properties. Their office hours are very limited. In order to see a property you can't call to schedule beyond 24 hrs, they are not available on the weekend when most people are off of work and they can only show a property between the hours of 9am to 3pm M-F when most people work. This is an inconvenience and has deterred me from working with this company in the future.

Negative reviews like this one are often caused by the resident's lack of knowledge regarding your office's opening hours or communication policies or the resident using the wrong communication channels to get in touch. To prevent this, make sure that all your residents have the right phone number or email address (not the manager's cell phone number) and that they are aware of any policies you have in place regarding communication with your staff. Better yet, take as much of your

communication as you can online — paying rent, submitting maintenance requests, or even getting answers to questions about company policies can all be accomplished via an online resident portal.

If this resident is reaching out using the appropriate channels during open hours, there may be an underlying staffing issue. It's possible that your team doesn't have enough time to adequately handle resident requests or

that the team is understaffed. One of the best ways to increase productivity without increasing headcount is by introducing automation in your business — this allows your team members to provide the best possible resident experience without getting bogged down in time-consuming, offline processes.

If the problem is with employee hiring and training, check out some of our tips to attract and keep a high-performing team.



Staying on top of leasing communication can be one of the hardest aspects of property management. Not only is it difficult to respond to leasing inquiries around the clock, but following up with leads to schedule showings quickly and efficiently can be a major challenge.

If this is an issue your team is running up against, take a look at our tips throughout this article for improving lead-to-lease conversion by following up with leads quickly and efficiently. New advancements in technology have made it possible to reply promptly to 100% of leads, around the clock, by leveraging conversational AI solutions like AppFolio's AI Leasing Assistant, Lisa.

In situations like the example to the right, the owner can reply right away to questions about the property, allow the prospective renter to schedule a showing, and send text messages to remind them of their appointment — all without taking up any of your team's time.

To address the issue of showing properties only during working hours, you can also consider allowing prospective residents to do a self-guided showing. This is made possible with lockbox technology that allows the customer to securely gain access to the unit at a time that works for them. ■

## Review 4: A Hair-Raising Hallway Complaint — Salvaged by a Skillful Manager



2 reviews

★★★★★ a year ago

Probably the worst company that I have ever had to deal with my life. Calling them slumlords is an understatement. Their buildings are beyond filthy. Mine is literally full of trash all over the basement, and lobby. My hall is covered in dog pee and feces as my neighbor let's her dog use the hall carpet as a bathroom. The elevator never works and nothing has been done to perminately fix it.

I have reached out to [redacted] at least once a week for months and months on end and not a single thing has been done and there have been no improvements at all.

Because of all the filth and the health hazards in the building, and my dozens and dozens of complaints left not handled, I asked them if they would allow me to move out before the end of my lease as I feel genuinely unsafe living here, and was told it was be up to almost \$6000 to break my lease 3 months early. They could care less about anyone's health, safety, or well being.

There are not enough negative words to express how awful I find this company to be.

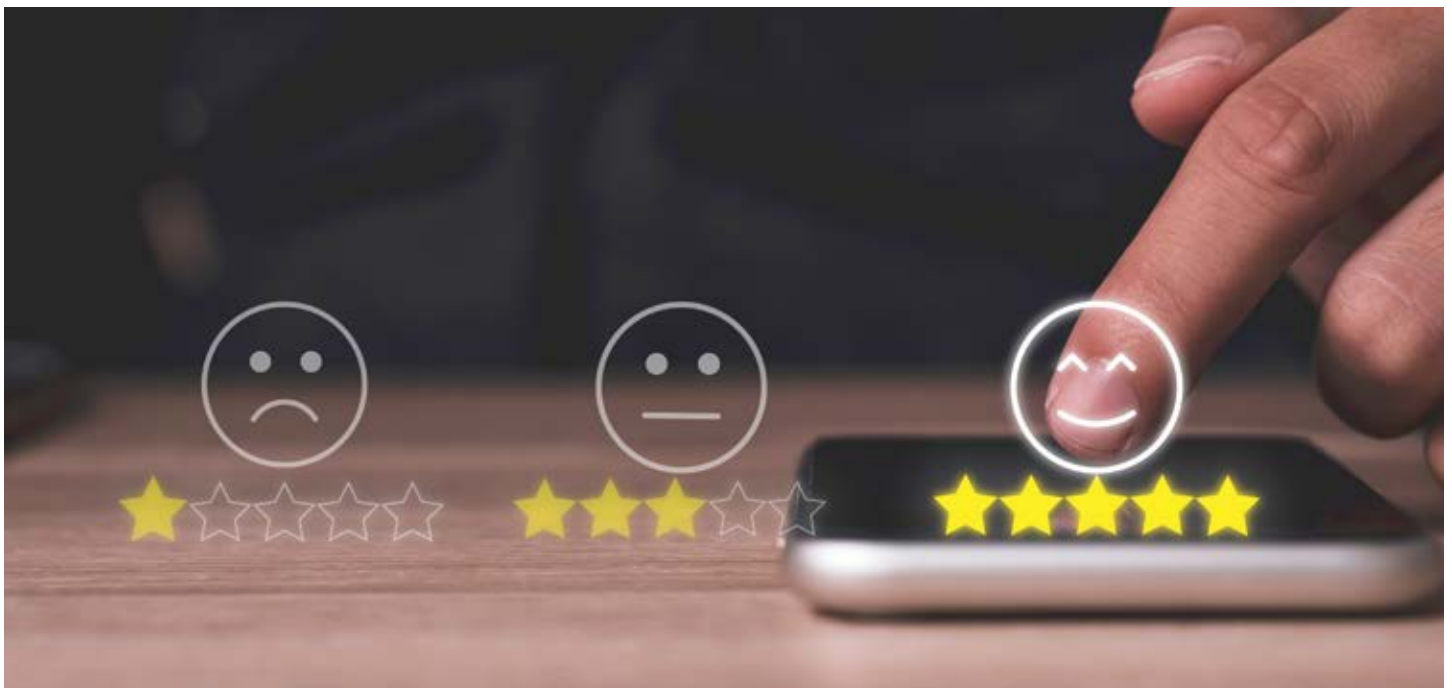


**Response from the owner** a year ago

I understand your frustration and want to assure you that your comfort and experience is our top priority. One of the great things about living in [redacted] is living in these iconic buildings. One of the not so fun things is dealing with older elevators like the one in your building. Though we do promptly fix the elevator when issues arise, please know that we are actively looking for a long term solution with minimal disruption to the residents.

Also, not sure if you were able to attend, but we recently hosted a meeting with [redacted] in your building to educate the residents about trash being left in common areas. We've found that this educational session has helped other buildings and we are hopeful for a similar outcome at your building. We will continue to monitor the situation and appreciate your patience. I'm actually going to have [redacted] from our office reach out to you today to chat about any additional issues you may have that have not been addressed. You've spoken to her recently and she is familiar with your situation.

Thank you,  
[redacted]





# WELCOME

*Make Sure to Say Hello to Our New  
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FEATURED IN THE NEXT EDITION OF THE  
CT APARTMENT FOCUS.**





# WATER COOLER



## New Hires:

**Latasha Douglas** — New Assistant Property Manager at 1188 Lofts for Konover Residential

**Nicollette Brown** — New Leasing Consultant at ALTO Fairfield Metro Apartments for Konover Residential

**Sara Reyes Bickell** — New Business Manager at White Oaks at Wilton for Lincoln Property Company

**Paula McGuy** — New Assistant Manager at White Oaks at Wilton for Lincoln Property Company

**Oscar Rodriguez** — New Maintenance Technician at White Oaks at Wilton for Lincoln Property Company

**Eddie Padilla** — New Maintenance Technician at Cherry Street Lofts for WinnResidential

**Sarah Kerby** — New Assistant Property Manager at 777 Main for WinnResidential

**Hector Vazquez Mulero** — New Maintenance Technician at Huntington Woods for WinnResidential

**Alex Rivera** — New Maintenance Technician at Mill Pond Village for WinnResidential

**Mirian Guzman** — New Property Manager at The Tyler for WinnResidential

**Glenda Camacho** — New Occupancy Specialist at Schoolhouse Apartments for WinnResidential

**Carmen Nieves** — New Assistant Property Manager at Casa Familia & Casa Otonal for WinnResidential

## Promotions:

**Curtis Cherry** — Promoted from Maintenance Technician to Maintenance Supervisor at Windsor Crossing for Paredim Communities

## Special Designations:

**Gary Allen** — Received NALP designation

**Xiomara Saez** — Received CAM designation for Trio Properties, LLC

## Property News:

Lincoln Property Company recently acquired White Oaks at Wilton, formerly known as Avalon Wilton ■

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# CTAA Property Spotlight — The Borden





The brand-new Borden Apartments, located at 1178 Silas Deane Highway in Wethersfield, experienced a successful lease-up in 2020 even with the challenges of COVID-19. With the first residents moving in for June 1st, by the end of December 2020, the community was 96% occupied. The Borden features a total of 150 apartment homes.

Phase 1 consists of 39 apartment homes in a former bank building converted into studios and one-bedroom homes with commercial space on the first floor. The first residents moved in October 2019.

Phase 2 consists of 111 apartment homes built from the ground up in the former Fun Zone site. This building consists of studios, 1, 2 and select 3 bedroom apartment homes and retail tenants on the ground level. The luxury community

will soon be anchored by a bistro/restaurant that should be officially announced soon.

The Borden offers its residents a true lifestyle-driven, amenity-rich community located in a walkable location to many restaurants and shopping venues. A unique feature installed into each apartment home is an Aura One Air purification system that removes viruses and allergens while improving air quality through a smartphone app, providing peace of mind to residents. The Borden is always looking at new ways to enhance the well-being of anyone who chooses to reside in the community.

COVID-19 has increased the demand by renters for more outdoor amenity space, making The Borden ideal as it boasts a sky

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top terrace/lounge, which has become a popular gathering space for sunsets vistas. The rooftop features an area for outdoor grilling and eating and a gazebo for more intimate gatherings with a large screen TV, an outdoor fire pit and a sundeck. Additionally, the community features a second outdoor lounge on the first floor with a grilling station and outdoor fireplace.

The Borden also offers a large first-floor lounge/clubroom that boasts a complimentary unlimited Starbucks coffee bar, shuffleboard, Foosball and three televisions. Residents and guests continue to appreciate the use of the lounge throughout the day while they are working from home. As well, it continues to be enjoyed for COVID-friendly resident events. On the first floor, you will also find a state of the art fitness center with an interactive mirror, a paw spa/groom room and a TruGolf Sports simulator studio — all of which have vibrant murals painted by local artist Corey Pane. The amenities do not end there as The Borden offers a 24/7 Parcel Pending package service. This 5th-floor clubroom serves as a business center during the week and a private reservable gathering spot during non-business hours, a paw park, car charging stations, bicycle storage and public Wi-Fi.

The Borden is owned/managed by Lexington Partners/Lexington Property Management based in downtown Hartford. At present, the Company operates approximately

1200 units in CT and an additional 1,000+ units in North Carolina and Georgia. Lexington's goal is to develop and purchase a minimum of 1,500 apartments per year for the next five years so that its portfolio will consist of 10,000+ units by the end of 2026. Lexington prides itself on hiring the most talented individuals with the fundamental building blocks — a caring personality, infectious positivity and excellent communication. ■

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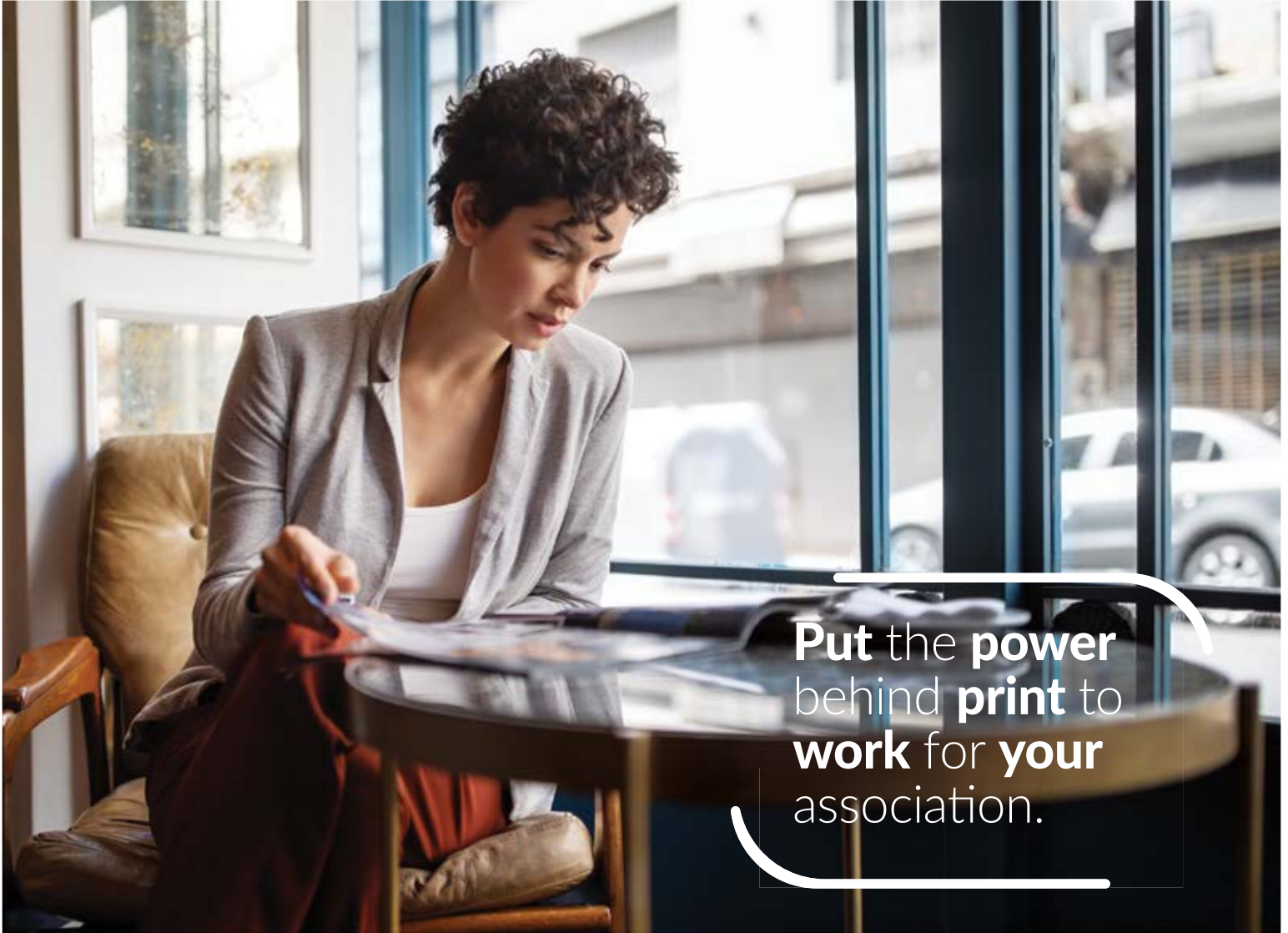
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