

Apartment

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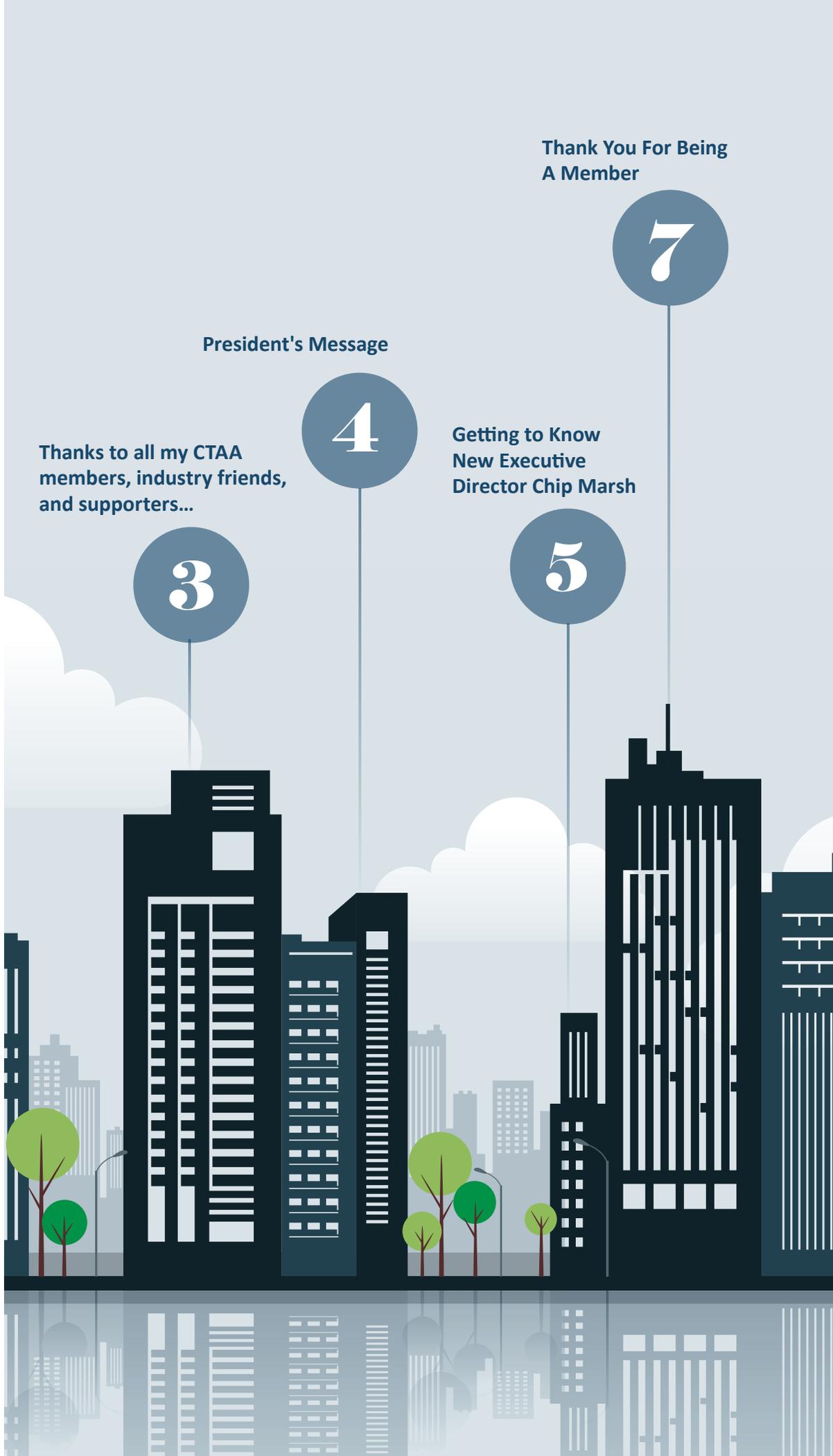
# FOCUS

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE CONNECTICUT APARTMENT ASSOCIATION

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Your Property's  
Green Initiative

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# 2021 CTAA Board of Directors

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Kelly DeMatteo  
Regional Property Manager  
Trio Properties, LLC  
2461 Main Street, 3rd Floor  
Glastonbury, CT 06033  
860.430.1966  
kdematteo@trioproperties.com

## Immediate Past President

Justin Gaboury  
Regional Property Manager  
Pinnacle Living 6065 Roswell Road,  
Suite 224  
Atlanta, GA 30328  
jgaboury@cushwake.com

## President Elect

Dragana Lacore  
Area Manager  
Pinnacle Living  
301 Commons Park South  
Stamford, CT 06902  
203.920.4270  
dlacore@cushwake.com

## Treasurer

Brenda Sandoval  
Property Manager  
AvalonBay Communities  
185 Canal Street  
Shelton, CT 06484  
203.924.5366  
Brenda\_Sandoval@avalonbay.com

## Secretary

Brian Lemire  
Paredim Communities  
Sr Dir of Regional Leasing  
and Operations  
430 Eastern Street  
New Haven, CT 06513  
203.469.6337 ext.203  
blemire@paredim.com

## VP of Associate Affairs

Jim Brooks  
New York Maintenance Group  
Business Development Manager  
203.707.3071 (cell)  
jbrooks@nymgroup.com

## Director of Associate Affairs

Steve Weir  
American Integrity Restoration  
60 Village Place  
Glastonbury, CT 06033  
860.657.2100  
sweir@1callair.com

## Director of Associate Affairs

Cindy Harrison  
CORT  
Northrup Road  
Wallingford, CT 06492  
Cindy.harrison@cort.com

## Director of Northern Connecticut

Carrie Rowley  
M.B.A. Balfour Beatty  
Quality Control Specialist NSB  
New London Homes  
100 Tern Road  
Groton, CT 06340  
860.446.5913  
crowley@bbcgrp.com

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Rachel Montoya  
Property Manager Spinnaker  
Real Estate Partners  
1 North Water Street, Suite 100  
Norwalk, CT 06854  
203.354.1550  
rachel@spinrep.com

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Jessica Doll  
WinnCompanies Property Manager  
Huntington Woods  
200 Blakeslee Street  
Bristol, CT 06010  
860.768.3500  
jdoll@wincco.com

## Lifetime Director

Robert Chesson  
Landlord Law Firm  
215 Broad Street  
Milford, CT 06460  
203.874.4747  
203.874.4701  
rchesson@landlordlawfirm.com

## Lifetime Director

Andy Lund  
Regional Vice President  
Winn Residential  
942 Main Street, Suite 301  
Hartford, CT 06105  
860.524.5198  
860.524.5647 (fax)  
alund@wincco.com

## Committee Chairs:

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Licia Ciotti  
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Lori Ricci  
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# Thanks to all my CTAA members, industry friends, and supporters...



“ Your CTAA Board and committee volunteers work so very hard! Thank you all for your time, efforts and energies. ”

**W**hat a long, strange trip it's been! In case you haven't heard, I have left CTAA to accept another position outside the industry. This is a great move for me professionally, and bittersweet personally. I have had the honor, privilege and pleasure of leading this amazing organization for 10 years. It's been hard, but gratifying, work and I THANK YOU for trusting me to be your voice.

Your CTAA Board and committee volunteers work so very hard! Thank you all for your time, efforts and energies. We have brought CTAA to tables that we previously have not been invited to, we have grown membership and brought value to our members.

CTAA's financial position is strong and advocacy efforts are top notch, keep it up! Education opportunities abound with

NAA certifications, VISTO, and Multi Family Insiders. Public Relations and Marketing is on fire with press releases, weekly communications, and a continued partnership with the American Red Cross. Events are coming back in a big way, so get ready for the 2021 Education Conference and Trade Show, featuring Maintenance Mania, September 9-10 at Foxwoods.

I look forward to seeing some of you at my new organization, and to everyone else, I hope our paths cross one day again. Until then, stay hydrated, pick an exit buddy and make good choices! 🍷

Jessica Olander  
Executive Director



# President's Message

Kelly DeMatteo

“

As we move into a new year, we owe a huge thank you to our 2020-2021 Board of Directors for their dedication, service and leadership over the past year, as well as to all our members for giving their time and talents to make the year a success.

”

I am honored to step into the role of President of the Connecticut Apartment Association, following in the footsteps of Justin Gaboury and the extraordinary men and women that have served this organization for the last 20 years.

As we move into a new year, we owe a huge thank you to our 2020-2021 Board of Directors for their dedication, service and leadership over the past year, as well as to all our members for giving their time and talents to make the year a success. The strong stability in our membership base, well-attended virtual events, the kickoff of an in-person event, and the around-the-clock work on the legislative issues that plague our industry is a testament to the resilience of this industry’s leaders. Despite the uncertainties and obstacles that arose last year, the association continued to support its members and focus on its mission.

As I look ahead to the upcoming year and the challenges that we will face, I would like to share one of my favorite adages: “Many hands make light work.” There is tremendous

power in the size of our membership and the many talents our members bring to this organization. Through our collective action, I am confident we can fulfill our mission, continue to grow and accomplish our goals.

I hope you will take the time to read and learn more about the Executive Board, the Board of Directors, and the Committee Chairs that comprise the 2021-2022 Connecticut Apartment Association Leadership. Information will be available on our website in this Apartment Focus and in editions to come. I am thrilled to be working with such an exceptional group of leaders in the months ahead.

Thank you for allowing me to serve alongside you this year. I truly appreciate your support and encourage you to share any feedback and ideas you may have as we work together in the upcoming year. 🙏

Sincerely,

Kelly DeMatteo  
CTAA President 2021-2023  
Regional Property Manager  
Trio Properties, LLC

# Getting to Know New Executive Director Chip Marsh



## **We understand you are the new executive director, replacing Jessica Olander. How did you become involved with CTAA?**

CTAA is a client association of TCORS Capitol Group, LLC, (TCG) a government relations and association management company with a dozen organization clients. Jessica managed CTAA and a couple of other organizations, and she took advantage of the opportunity to serve as the new executive director of a regional chamber of commerce. The timing of this opportunity to join the TCG team was perfect for me and allows me to bring my association management experience to CTAA.

## **Tell us a little about yourself.**

Born in the Cleveland, Ohio area, my family moved several times while I was a kid in the Midwest and Southeast. My dad was in manufacturing management which resulted in a few location transfers and job changes. These changes

“My primary goal is to help CTAA achieve its goals. I look to partner with the volunteer leaders to identify, plan, and execute the actions that will achieve their goals and objectives.”

provided the opportunity for me to learn how to adapt when we moved, and I attended seven different schools from first grade through high school graduation. Although moving as much as I did was sometimes challenging, I think that it probably helped mature me in some ways I might not have

*Continued on page 6*

*Continued from page 5*

otherwise. Presently, I live in Branford, Connecticut on the Shoreline of Long Island Sound near New Haven.

### **What are your interests?**

Of course, I enjoy association management and the opportunity to work with members who engage with and lead their organizations. Outside of work, I enjoy cycling and golf, and I love watching live theater. I am really looking forward to seeing live performances again. I also enjoy traveling, both in the United States – which I thoroughly appreciate – and abroad. I think I've been to ten or twelve countries, with my favorites being Italy and the United Kingdom.

I have a long history of personal volunteer involvement, which I believe helps me better engage and relate with association members. I currently serve on a couple of nonprofit boards and am an active Rotarian, all of which provide me many opportunities to contribute to my community.

### **What is your educational background?**

I earned my business degree from the Terry College of Business at The University of Georgia; to this day I remain a dedicated Bulldog. While in college, I was active on campus in a variety of student organizations and loved my time in Athens. It was a great environment for me and a significant influence on my life. Early in my career, I returned to Athens as the Membership Director for the local chamber and got to experience the town in a different and fun way.

I also graduated from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Institutes for Organization Management, a masters' level professional development program. I was honored to serve on the Institute faculty for three or four years, which I found to be enlightening and helped develop my presentation and facilitation skills.

### **Please tell us more about your work experience.**

Prior to joining TCG, my career path involved managing mostly member-based associations including six chambers of commerce in four states, an international professional technical society, alumni relations for a private high school, and on the management team of another association management company. My background includes leadership development, strategic planning, event planning, membership, communications, governance, and resource management. I enjoy facilitating group discussions and helping the participants come to consensus on the issues they are addressing.

Now, at TCG, I'm finding the work to be similar to what I've done throughout my career, and I feel great about joining the team here. It's only my third week, so I'm still learning my way around. I've been meeting the leaders of the two organizations that I have the opportunity to serve while also figuring out where to find computer and physical files and other internal needs.

### **What are the main issues facing the association right now?**

Right now, CTAA is taking the appropriate steps for post-pandemic activity, such as planning future educational and networking programs. The Tradeshow is coming up in September after being postponed twice due to COVID. We have several legislative issues the Government Relations Committee has been addressing as the General Assembly session comes to a close. Additionally, the eviction moratorium and other pandemic-related actions of impact need to be addressed to the benefit of the membership and industry.

I've been able to attend a few committee meetings so far and have been impressed by how well the volunteers work together to address critical issues they are facing. The opportunities the return to in-person activities, such as the Tradeshow, are on the way and will help reconnect current and prospective members with each other and the association. The effort to do strategic planning is underway so that the association addresses the needs of the membership while helping them better interact with their residents.

### **What are your goals for the association?**

My primary goal is to help CTAA achieve its goals. I look to partner with the volunteer leaders to identify, plan, and execute the actions that will achieve their goals and objectives. This involves producing beneficial programs that educate, engage, and advocate for the membership. CTAA members should be able to serve the needs of their residents while successfully managing their businesses. CTAA can provide the resources to help them do that. My job is to help the association look good and achieve its mission.

### **Is there anything else you would like association members to know about you or the association?**

I'm looking forward to getting to know and work with the CTAA membership. I am a believer in the value of associations and the opportunities they give people to advance themselves, their industry, and their profession. 

# CTAA

THE CONNECTICUT APARTMENT ASSOCIATION

## Thank You For Being a Member

CTAA MEMBERSHIP AUTOMATICALLY GIVES YOU NAA MEMBERSHIP - AT NO EXTRA COST!

### CTAA MISSION STATEMENT:

WE ACTIVELY LEAD THE APARTMENT INDUSTRY IN PROVIDING QUALITY HOUSING BY EDUCATING, ADVOCATING AND CONNECTING PROPERTY OWNERS, MANAGERS AND BUSINESS PARTNERS.

### CTAA BENEFITS INCLUDE:



#### QUALITY EDUCATION:

CTAA offers educational opportunities for apartment industry professionals through various channels including VISTO, Multifamily Insiders, CTAA member trainings, NAA designations and more!



#### CLICK & LEASE PROGRAM:

NAA Click & Lease puts the official Connecticut Lease Forms at your fingertips, through an easy to use secure web interface designed to save you time, save you money and increase ROI.



#### LEGISLATIVE MONITORING:

The CTAA Government Affairs Committee helps oversee coordination of issues through grassroots efforts and helps bring awareness to local leaders about the importance of apartments in Connecticut. CTAA also works closely with NAA to monitor issues on a federal level.



#### INDUSTRY INFORMATION:

CTAA keeps you informed on news & information that affects the apartment industry and your business. Members receive weekly communication, the CT Apartment Focus magazine distributed 6 times per year, and access to a member directory.



#### NETWORKING EVENTS:

CTAA offers several functions throughout the year for members to network with one another, including happy hours, new member orientations, and our annual trade show.



#### NAA MEMBERSHIP:

CTAA is the local/state affiliate of the National Apartment Association (NAA). As a federation of nearly 170 affiliates, NAA encompasses over 73,000 members representing more than 10 million apartment homes globally.

## More questions about your membership?

Contact Licia Ciotti, United Property Restoration Services, Membership Committee Chair at [LCiotti@unitedprs.com](mailto:LCiotti@unitedprs.com)

# Property Managers Share Five Lessons of Pandemic Leasing

Enhanced technology and increased communication are here for the long term.

By Bendix Anderson



**E**ven in the worst days of the coronavirus pandemic, property managers kept leasing apartments.

Along the way, they have learned lessons on how to use technologies like virtual tours, self-guided tours, and even simple video calls to lease apartments to customers they often never meet in person.

## 1. Embrace Touchless Leasing

Long after the pandemic is over, property managers plan to keep using technologies that allow them to lease apartments from a distance. There will always be potential renters who can't visit a property in person, either because of their schedule, their preference or their location.

“More than 65% of our renters have historically come from out of our metro area,” says Nick Benjamin, managing director of multifamily development for The Cordish Cos., working in the firm's offices in Kansas City, Missouri. “These technological tools will continue to support our ability to bring new residents to our markets.”

## 2. Work Extra Hard to Engage Customers Virtually

Many leasing agents have missed the engagement of sitting with a potential renter. “We shine when we have someone in front of us,” says Chris Furman, vice president of asset management for CGI+, based in

“

To engage customers, leasing agents should make sure they communicate proactively by their preferred methods, whether customers prefer email, phone calls or even video chat.

”



Woodland Hills, California. “Learning how to shine remotely was a challenge.”

Scott Ferguson, senior vice president of operations for Waterton, based in Chicago, agrees about the remote shift. “When leasing shifted to a virtual environment, we saw a dip in total tours and gross closing percentages, which we attributed to the loss of personal interaction and engagement,” he says.

To engage customers, leasing agents should make sure they communicate proactively by their preferred methods, whether customers prefer email, phone calls or even video chat.

Apartment companies also have made sure leasing agents understood their own value.

“We had to make sure that on-site associates knew that this was not replacing them,” says Michael Manfred, vice president of marketing at The NRP Group, working in the firm’s Cleveland offices.

### 3. Pay Attention

Leasing agents also have had to work hard to make up for insights they miss when they don’t meet prospective renters in person. “A leasing specialist can learn a lot from a customer’s nonverbal cues,” says Waterton’s Ferguson.

However, video calls with prospects can provide a different kind of insight. “We are able to see the environment our prospect is currently living in and in many cases, this has allowed us to paint a better picture of what they are looking for,” says CGI+’s Furman.

### 4. Be Flexible With Potential Renters

Property managers also have learned not to take it personally when customers missed virtual appointments.

“In a virtual world, it has become easier than ever to simply not show up for an appointment,” says Ferguson. Waterton reengaged these customers both with automated emails and personal outreach. “That improved the appointment attendance rate and provided the customer with flexibility to reschedule to meet their needs,” he says.

### 5. Create Strong Partnerships with Tech Providers

Owners and managers adapted to set up self-guided tours at tens of thousands of vacant apartments during the peak of the pandemic.

“It’s amazing how quickly and relatively seamlessly property managers could shift,” says John Helm, founder and current partner with RET Ventures, a venture capital firm based in Park City, Utah, focused on proptech.

Strong partnerships with technology companies made it possible.

“A strong partnership with a self-guided tour vendor is key,” says NRP’s Manfred. “Having a strong partnership in place allowed for a quick and painless transition and prevented our site team’s day-to-day activities from being changed drastically.” ↗



*Bensix Anderson, MFE  
multifamilyexecutive.com.*



# WATER COOLER

## New Hires

**Rena Marquis** — New Assistant Property Manager at Arbors at Brighton Park and Windsor Crossing for Paredim Communities

**Viviana Kirby** — New Assistant Property Manager at Brook Hollow and Fairway for Paredim Communities

**Aldolfo Gonzalez** — New Maintenance Technician at Brook Hollow and Fairway for Paredim Communities

**Thomas Briggs** — New Leasing Consultant at Soundview at Savin Rock for Paredim Communities

**Lynn Calabrese** — New Property Manager at Fairbank Apartments for WinnResidential

**Victoria Cancel** — New Community Coordinator at Fairbank Apartments for WinnResidential

**Gennie Muniz** — New Occupancy Specialist at Fairbank Apartments for WinnResidential

**Emonee Dortch** — New Leasing Professional at Lofts at the Mills for South Oxford Management

**Jacqueline Cohen** — New Leasing Professional at Forest Park for South Oxford Management

**Randy Casiano** — New Assistant Manager for Cedarwood, Chase Manor and Eastwind Village for Konover Residential

**Bethanie Giardina** — New Property Manager at Knoll Crest Apartments for Trio Properties

**Sarah Craig** — New Floating Leasing Consultant at 81 Arch, Front Street Lofts, and The Novella for Trio Properties

**Derrick Asberry** — New Property Manager at Broadleaf Boulevard for Trio Properties

**Christopher Gerundo** — New Maintenance Technician at Rivers Bend for Trio Properties

**Kelsie Clayton** — New Leasing Consultant at Harbor Heights for Trio Properties

**Timothy Mellow** — New Maintenance Supervisor at Harbor Heights for Trio Properties

**Nathan Gowash** — New Maintenance Technician at Broadleaf Boulevard for Trio Properties

**Abigail Blatte** — New Leasing Consultant at The Mill for Trio Properties

### Promotions

**Angelina Maldonado** — Promoted from Senior Property Manager to Regional Manager for WinnResidential

**Zaida Izquierdo** — Promoted from CTAA's 2020 Property Manager of the Year to the New Manager at The Arlo for South Oxford Management

**Kristen Yeranian** — Promoted from Assistant Community Manager at Lofts at the Mills in Manchester to the Community Manager at Parkview Apartments in Naugatuck for South Oxford Management

**Rachel Shaw** — Promoted from Leasing Professional at Forest Park Apartments in Rocky Hill to the Assistant Community Manager at Sagamore Hills in Middletown for South Oxford Management

**Lauren Wheeler** — Promoted from Property Manager at Knoll Crest to Property Manager at Trail Run Apartments

### Special Designations

**Nicholas Viscone at Artspace Hartford** — CALP Designation

### Property News

South Oxford Management acquired The Arlo, formerly Alvista Willow Brook, of Meriden this past May 

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# The Rental Assistance Maze

By Elaine Simpson

**O**n Sept. 1st, 2020, the CDC issued a temporary halt in residential evictions to prevent the further spread of COVID-19. The order imposed a temporary national moratorium on most evictions for non-payment of rent to help prevent the spread of the virus. The average person spends more than 30% of their income on housing and lives paycheck to paycheck with little to no savings. That is one of the reasons why the eviction moratorium was extended. The order applies to all standard rental housing, including mobile homes. It does not cover hotels, motels or other guest home rentals. A complete list of qualifications can be found at the National Low Income Housing Coalition website: [nlihc.org](http://nlihc.org).

The National Apartment Association recently published an article in Units Magazine called “Finding Rent Relief.” The article features a nonprofit organization founded in 2020 by a Los Angeles-based real estate firm created to assist

residents facing eviction for the first time. It is called the Resident Relief Foundation or RRF. Over 12 months, the foundation raised over \$90,000 that provided 41 grants. Their next goal is to raise \$200,000 to assist 100 more families and individuals across the nation. Aid can be up to a month or two of rent paid to the property. They provide a “prevention model” offering assistance to those people identified by participating property management companies as potential recipients, hopefully BEFORE the situation becomes unmanageable. Budgeting classes and credit counseling are also offered. The RRF hopes to build support from property management professionals across the country. Link to the RRF at [residentrelieffoundation.org](http://residentrelieffoundation.org).

Our state and local apartment associations have been hard at work promoting resources that are helpful to both property owners and renters. Many apartment associations are

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The U.S. Department of the Treasury’s Emergency Rental Assistance program revised its list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) in late February of 2021. It is a great resource to use as guidance for the ERA program requirements. It explains who is eligible for assistance, gives the definition of income, lists the methods to determine income and the documents to use.

”

beginning to partner with the Resident Relief Foundation and similar organizations. With the allocation of Federal funds, new Community Action Programs are being established to support renters and owners/managers. There are also crisis assistance programs and utility assistance programs.

Eligibility criteria vary from entity to entity, but the funds are always intended for those most in need. According to Federal guidelines, applicants for assistance through Federal funds are prioritized using the following criteria:

Households living at or below 50% of AMI (Area Median Income);

Households with a household member that has been unemployed for the past 90 days AND the household is at or below 80% of AMI.

The U.S. Department of the Treasury’s Emergency Rental Assistance program revised its list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) in late February of 2021. It is a great resource to use as guidance for the ERA program requirements. It explains who is eligible for assistance, gives the definition of income, lists the methods to determine income and the documents to use. For example, it refers to the published HUD database to look up what the Area Median Income figure is for our specific individual areas. Use this link: [huduser.gov/portal/datasets/il.html](https://huduser.gov/portal/datasets/il.html). To obtain the Fair Market Rent or Small Area Fair Market Rent, visit: [huduser.gov/portal/datasets/fmr.html](https://huduser.gov/portal/datasets/fmr.html). For a copy of the 8 page FAQs, visit the Occupancy Solutions website’s resource page.

We all need to be compassionate and patient during this time and help responsible residents who need to work through the rental assistance maze. Our current mantra should be “help keep responsible residents in their apartments!”<sup>1</sup>



*Elaine Simpson – President, Occupancy Solutions, LLC Operations, Leasing, Marketing Consultant and Training Specialist*

*Elaine Simpson has been involved in the housing industry since 1986. Starting on site as a leasing agent, she moved up, working as assistant manager, site manager, executive director and finally senior regional manager with communities in several states and portfolios containing more than 1400 units. Ms. Simpson has worked for local and national industry leading companies and throughout her career, has trained new managers across the country, assisted in creating “Best Practices” and procedure manuals, participated in numerous task forces during national mergers, acquisitions and dispositions and headed “turn around” teams assigned to troubled communities, successfully increasing income while decreasing expenses and allowing the property to recover economic viability.*

*With over 30 years of experience in the multi-family industry, Elaine Simpson founded Occupancy Solutions, LLC to provide on-site operations, human resources, housing program compliance, maintenance, marketing, leasing, training and consulting services for multifamily professionals of market rate, senior and affordable housing communities throughout the United States. Occupancy Solutions assists communities by providing proven, cost-effective techniques and strategies that achieve increased occupancy, improve resident retention, minimize expenses and increase net operating income.*

*Ms. Simpson is a licensed real estate broker in Michigan and Arizona, a Certified Senior Real Estate Specialist, a member of the National Speakers Associations, a National Apartment Association Education Institute Faculty Member, an Accredited Resident Manager, a Certified Assisted Housing Manager and John Maxwell Certified Coach, Trainer and Speaker; American Apartment Owner Association member; National Association of Realtors, National Association of Residential Property Managers, Arizona Multihousing Association.*

*Please visit [occupancysolutions.com](https://occupancysolutions.com) for testimonials and more about Elaine Simpson and Occupancy Solutions. Phone: 800-865-0948 Address: 21001 N. Tatum Blvd., Suite 1630-612, Phoenix, AZ 85050 Email: [esimpson@occupancysolutions.com](mailto:esimpson@occupancysolutions.com).*

# 5 Ways to Enhance Your Property's Green Initiative

By Brittany Benz, Rae Parker



**C**ommercial and residential buildings account for 39% of the carbon dioxide emissions in the United States. Is your property management company doing everything it can to be more sustainable? Now more than ever, it's essential to make sure you're investing in green initiatives, not just because it's better for the environment but because your business will depend on it.

## The Growing Demand for Sustainability

According to a survey by Forrester, 32% of consumers prioritize companies that are actively reducing their impact on the environment. Today's renters don't just like sustainable features — like high-efficiency appliances and smart thermostats — they expect them to be already built-in. As more millennial and gen z renters enter the market, this demand is only going to increase. And it's not just renters; investors will also be looking for buildings that are LEED-certified and eco-conscious, too. Nielsen reports that 81% of consumers worldwide believe it's very important for companies to have environmental improvement as an objective.

If you're not actively improving your sustainability efforts and outfitting your units with the latest energy-saving technologies, you'll be at risk of falling behind the competition. By making it a point to prioritize sustainability now, you can stay ahead of the curve, attract more renters, boost profitability and better the planet. Here are five ways you can improve your green initiative:

### 1. Install Energy Efficient Appliances

The majority of renters (81%) are interested in having Energy Star Certified appliances and 79% are interested in having a high-efficiency washer and dryer, according to the NMHC / Kingsley Associates Apartment Resident Preference Report. Based on an article by Globe St., 69% of residents were interested in living in an energy-efficient or green building and are willing to pay more to do so. If your building doesn't already have energy-efficient appliances, then this is a simple and affordable way to increase desirability and cut back on your energy consumption.

## 2. Implement a Community Recycling Program

Recycling is not a new trend, but you'd be surprised by how many buildings don't have a program in place for their residents. Based on the NMHC / Kingsley Associates Report, 79% of renters are interested in having a recycling program. By allocating a communal space for residents to recycle, it increases their satisfaction in knowing that they live in a building that aligns with their personal values.

In addition to a regular recycling area, you could also offer residents a place to recycle harder-to-dispose items, like light bulbs, batteries and electronics. Based on the report, 57% of renters are interested in this. Plus, it doesn't have to cost you a thing, as many nonprofit organizations come and pick up these materials free of charge.

If your building already offers a recycling program, be sure you're communicating this to your residents effectively by posting plenty of signs around the community and including information about it in your online resources.

## 3. Adopt a Utility Management Service

Without a utility management system in place, it can be difficult to detect spikes or leaks, which can cost your business and the environment. Using a property management software with built-in utility management can help you identify issues quickly, reduce usage, increase efficiency.

In addition, utility analytics can help you benchmark your building against other buildings in your area, so you can find opportunities to save. According to a study by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, on average, buildings that consistently benchmarked their energy performance saved 2.4% annually, with a total savings of 7%.

## 4. Embrace Smart Home Technology

Renters today prefer to do everything from their mobile phones, so it's only natural that they would also want to interact with their apartments the same way. In fact, about 45% of respondents to the National Apartment Association's survey stated that they are open to requesting energy-efficient improvements at the properties where they live.

And a whopping 77% of renters are interested in smart thermostats, based on results from the NHMC / Kingsley Associates survey. By incorporating more smart home

features — like smart thermostats and voice automated light switches — into your units, you'll be better able to meet your current and future residents' needs.

## 5. Invest in Renewable Energy

The NMHC / Kingsley Associates report revealed that 63% of renters are interested in buildings that invest in renewable energy. While renewable energy may seem like a big initial investment to make, it can pay off in the long run. For instance, installing solar panels can bring your common area utility costs down, increase your building's value, and make it more attractive to investors. In addition, many states offer tax incentives for residential buildings that implement renewable energy technology, which can further boost your bottom line. Other renewable energy technologies you can add to your building include electric vehicle charging stations and rooftop wind turbines.

By making the most of these green initiatives, you can reduce costs, increase the attractiveness of your building to future renters and investors, and have a positive impact on the planet for years to come. 



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