# Top 10 Real
# INSIGHTS
Western Canada Apartment Investment Conference 2021

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ISSUE 56

# TOP 10 | REAL INSIGHTS | 2021 Western Canada Apartment Investment Conference | ISSUE 56

**INSIGHTS FROM INDUSTRY LEADERS DURING THE CONTENT FORMATION OF WESTERN CANADA APARTMENT INVESTMENT CONFERENCE**

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## 1. ECONOMY BEGINS LONG ROAD BACK TO RECOVERY

**Economic recovery slowed during the second wave of the pandemic.**

**British Columbia**

Unemployment in the province grew in January 2021 to 8.0%, 80 basis points higher than in December 2020. This ended an eight-month run of employment gains.

In 2020 the provincial real GDP contracted by 6.1%, according to the Conference Board of Canada (CBOC). This is better than what was originally forecasted due to gains in retail sales and housing activity.

Retail sales have surpassed pre-pandemic levels, and residential sales are expected to bring in $500 M more in revenue than last projected.

The CBOC reports that manufacturing has fully recovered to its pre-pandemic level. Other sectors such as the transportation, accommodation and food services, information and culture are not expected to recover fully until pandemic restrictions are lifted.

Looking forward to 2021, TD Bank has calculated that the provincial Real GDP will grow by 5.1% in 2021, but expects unemployment to decline to 6.3%.

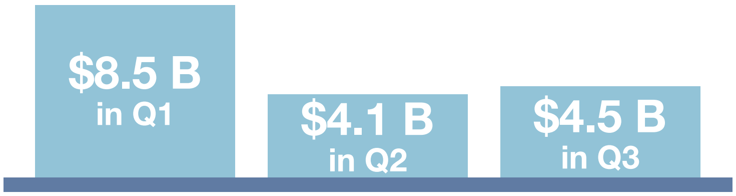
**Alberta**

The January 2021 unemployment rate declined to 10.7%. Although this rate is 40 bps better than in December 2020, it is 330 bps higher than it was 12 months ago.

The pace of recovery slowed with the second wave of the pandemic, and business investment remains weak. As a result, the Alberta government does not project a full recovery to 2019 levels of GDP until 2023. In 2020, the GDP is expected to have contracted by 8.1%, the largest annual contraction in Alberta's modern-day history.

An "L-shape" recovery so far in the energy sector is at the core of Alberta's lagging performance. "National data show that capital spending in the oil and gas extraction industry improved only slightly in Q3 2020, up to $4.5 B from $4.1 B in Q2, well below its Q1 level of $8.5 B. Oil production is gradually recovering but remained 10.4% below year-ago levels in September," TD reported in their December Provincial Economic Forecast.

**2020 Capital Spending in Oil and Gas Extraction Industry**




According to the CBOC, business investment is set to bounce back by 14.3% in 2021 as oil sands production increases and construction on larger projects outside the energy sector pick up again.

As such, real GDP is expected to see a partial recovery of 4.4% in 2021, and employment will continue to rise gradually. The Alberta Government predicts real GDP to grow at an average annual rate of about 3.7% over the next few years, while the unemployment rate gradually declines.

## 2. PANDEMIC EXACERBATES HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

**Housing affordability remains a concern across British Columbia as home prices keep rising.**

The BC Real Estate Association (BCREA) reports that 94,000 homes sold in 2020. This was a 21.5% increase over 2019. The average price for the year across all home types was over $782,000, up 11.7% year over year.

BCREA Chief Economist Brendon Ogmundson said the market gains appeared to have resisted the pandemic because of the way its economic impacts have been unevenly spread. Those most affected have been of lower income and, on average, of younger age groups.

Those who have higher-income employment have been in positions with more opportunity to work from home and have posted gains of about 6% since the start of the pandemic, Ogmundson said.

He states, "in spite of the COVID-19 induced recession, British Columbia home sales are approaching record levels, and prices are climbing, providing a needed boost to the province's economic recovery. However, elevated demand for homes is brushing up against limited supply, further straining already challenging affordability."

According to Altus Group, Vancouver multi-family transactions totalled nearly $1.1 billion in investment value in in 2020, marking a 30% increase compared to the previous year.

Home prices have not just increased in Vancouver, but across the province. Some of the most substantial gains were recorded in the interior markets. For example, average resale prices in Kamloops rose by 21.9%, and in the Kootenays by 19%.

Last year saw the expansion of the Rent Bank concept. Last June, the British Columbia Rent Bank was established with funding from the provincial government. So far, it has provided money to charities in the Lower Mainland, Fraser Valley and Prince George to maintain their existing rent bank programs or open new ones. In 2021, the program is expected to expand to the Central Okanagan and Nanaimo areas.

Through the initiative, people in crisis can be offered loans of up to $2,000 to help cover housing costs. They repay the loan, interest-free, over the course of six to 24 months.

"It's not the answer to our affordable housing issue," BC Rent Bank Project Lead Melissa Giles told the CBC. "But it will be a support for people … [in] these times where they just can't make that month's rent."

Fueled by ultra low interest rates, Central 1 expects that the British Columbia housing market will continue to surge, with average prices rising 5.6% in 2021 and a further 4% in 2022.

## 3. NEW TRENDS INSPIRED BY COVID-19 WILL OUTLAST THE PANDEMIC

**Many believe that anti-virus design will become more common in new homes even after the people are vaccinated.**

A Fall 2020 multifamily landlord survey conducted by CBRE uncovered new client requirement trends emerging out of the pandemic. Landlords indicated that they had begun to see preference shifts among their residences related to unit and building features.

There was an increased demand for the following building features: in-suite laundry, balconies, walk-up access, units with dens or space for a home office.

CBRE reported that the building features with the largest increases in demand since March included outdoor terraces, business centres or co-working spaces and private gyms.

This shift in tenant preferences was echoed in the most recent multifamily tenant survey conducted by Canadian Real Estate Forums. This survey, in which 24,000 Canadian tenants participated, showed that during COVID-19, similar features and amenities had grown in popularity.

COVID-19 will influence innovation in home design, according to Chris Marlin, President of Lennar International – one of the largest homebuilders in the US. Architects and developers are already incorporating design elements into their projects to reflect these changes.

Some of these changes include the use of antimicrobial metals, such as bronze, copper and brass in high touch areas.

In order to accommodate social distancing practices, developers are changing the layout of common areas and amenities. These spaces are being redesigned in order to facilitate a better flow of traffic.

Developer Qualex-Landmark will introduce pandemic-proofing designs at their Vancouver and Burnaby projects. Some of these measures include moving elevators to the building's exterior to reduce congestion and moving some of the amenities outside.

The concept of flexible amenities is also trending in multifamily design, according to Jonathan King, principal at the architectural firm BNKC.

"We are looking at how to re-program both our indoor and outdoor amenity spaces. We are looking to create more flexibility to allow for continuous use by individuals or smaller groups," he said. "Bookable spaces where students can study…conference rooms to support working from home…outdoor dining areas and unique play spaces – these features are going to become even more important in the future."

Working from home will likely continue to some degree once the virus has run its course. As such, renters will be looking for apartment units that can accommodate home offices or private workspaces.

Common areas will need to adapt to the work from home model, according to Brian Carberry, Managing Editor for the US Apartment Guide. "Implementing soundproof and tech-enabled meeting rooms that include reliable WiFi and social distancing mandates will be essential to residents who are juggling living and working demands in one location," he states.

Experts agree that mechanical systems will be a priority post-pandemic. Spaces will be designed to optimize ventilation, and better filtration will be used in order to create healthier spaces. These will be features that prospective tenants may look for when choosing a place to rent.


## 4. COMPETITION FOR TENANTS HEATS UP

**In this soft rental market, landlords have been getting creative in order to retain tenants.**

Last year, vacancy rates rose, and the number of incentives being offered to new tenants grew. As a result, apartment operators have had to get creative in order to keep their tenants.

As many are struggling financially during COVID-19, some operators have pulled out all the stops to support their tenants.

During the first wave of the pandemic, Greenrock Real Estate Advisors provided $1.5 M in resident support and community funding. As part of that funding, the property management company gave $300 in grocery gift cards to each unit in its 2,000-suite portfolio — $100 for each unit in April, May and June.

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This fall, during the second wave of the pandemic, Greenrock added $600,000 of resident support. All units in its portfolio received $100 grocery gift certificates in each of October, November, and December 2020.

As well as helping tenants who were having trouble paying their rent, US multifamily operator Mill Creek Residential focused on communicating with their tenants clearly and more frequently during the past year. Mill Creek's portfolio is comprised of 85 communities, totaling over 24,700 apartment homes as of June, 2020.

"It was really important to us to engage directly with our renters and to try and keep them in their homes if at all possible," Stephen Prochnow, Senior Vice President of Property Management for Mill Creek, stated. "So, we gave our residents options. One option was a rent deferral option, and another allowed them to extend their lease for no increase and defer some element of rent in the process."

Another consequence of the pandemic is that apartment operators have had to reassess the amenities that they were offering.

A solution to closed amenities is LulaFit Live, which was launched last year by LulaFit – an on-site amenities manager for office and multifamily developments. The LulaFit LIVE program features daily and weekly programming for tenants. In addition to fitness classes, the service offers nutrition live streams, game nights, candle-making classes, and other social events. Custom content can be created by property managers using the platform.

Developers of The Waverley, a new rental building at Spadina and College in Toronto, have partnered with Cleveland Clinic to offer access to online virtual health care.

Tenants of the Selby, a Tricon Residential development in Toronto, have been given access to the Mobile Doorman app. This app allows tenants to communicate directly with management to stay connected and book amenities.

The pandemic drove stakeholders to reimagine shared amenities and common areas. Moving forward, special consideration will be given to ensure these spaces limit virus transmission and cultivate positive social interactions by using outdoor spaces, biophilic design and antimicrobial finishes.

## 5. SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN APARTMENT VACANCY ACROSS MAJOR MARKETS

**Rise in vacancy has not led to a significant decrease in rental rates.**

**Vancouver**

Vacancy

Purpose-built rental apartment vacancy in Vancouver increased from 1.1% to 2.6% over the last year, according to CMHC.


Reduced demand for apartment units resulted from increasing unemployment and slow immigration due to international border closures. Demand was also affected by post-secondary education going online this year. On the University Endowment Lands, where the University of British Columbia is located, the purpose-built rental apartment vacancy rate increased from 0.4% in 2019 to 13.0% in 2020.

These situations will likely reverse post-pandemic, but barriers to home ownership will continue growing as home prices rise. This will result in continued demand for rental housing.

Rental Rates

While vacancy more than doubled over the last year, average rental rates continued to grow. However, the average rental rate went up by just 2.0% to $1,508, a significantly lower increase than the 4.7% in 2019.

CMHC reported that the average asking rent for vacant units was 21.4% higher than the average rent paid for occupied units.

Rentals.ca reported the average rental rate for a one-bedroom unit to be $1,941 in October 2020, whereas the CMHC average was $1,415.

Supply

The supply of rental housing units increased by 2,388 units in 2020. This was the highest increase on record since 1990 – due in large part to the completion of new developments. Supply was also impacted by the 7,137 condo units that were added to the long-term rental market. This was an increase of 10.2% from the previous year.

**Edmonton**

Vacancy

Apartment vacancy rose significantly in 2020 due to the growing supply of units and lower demand.

The purpose-built rental apartment vacancy rate in the Edmonton CMA increased to 7.2% in October 2020 from 4.9% in October 2019. Vacancy in the city is the highest since 1997.

Job losses due to the pandemic and the fall in oil prices have directly impacted rental housing demand. These losses predominantly affected younger demographics that are considered "prime rental cohorts," according to CMHC.

In the condominium apartment rental market, the vacancy rate decreased from 2.5% in 2019 to 2.0% in 2020. The increase in demand for condos reflects consumer preferences in the Edmonton market.

Rental Rates

The average rental rate grew by less than a percent to $1,153. Increasing competition from both new and existing units likely limited the ability of landlords to raise rents for existing tenants. In addition, asking rates for vacant units were not much higher than rents for occupied units.

The average rent for new units in structures completed in the past two years was $1,513, 31.2% higher than the average rent for purpose-built rental units of all ages. Still, average rental rates for condominiums were 11.3% higher than for purpose-built rental units.

Supply

Rental supply in the Edmonton CMA increased in 2020 as more rental structures were completed. The apartment rental stock expanded by 3.1% to 72,061 units. Rental completions in the Edmonton CMA more than doubled over the past year to 2,223 units.

**Calgary**

Vacancy

The apartment vacancy rate in Calgary rose from 3.9% in October 2019 to 6.6% in October 2020.

CHMC reported newer buildings to have a higher vacancy rate, with an average vacancy rate of 10.1% for buildings completed after 2005. While some newer units are still in the absorption phase, higher vacancy rates are likely due to the higher rent for newer units combined with prevailing economic conditions and weaker migration.

Rental Rates

Average rental rates in Calgary remained flat at $1,195.

There was only a slight difference between vacant and occupied units in the city, with average rents in vacant units 4.4% higher than rents in occupied units.

Rental condominium units had a higher average rental rate of $1,466.

Supply

In Calgary, rental apartment construction activity has been steady since 2017, resulting in a stable rental completion pace. As a result, the supply of new purpose-built apartment units grew by 3.2% in 2020, up from the 2.8% in 2019.

Over the last ten years, CMHC reports that there has been a rapid growth in rental condominium apartments. The number increased from 11,168 condo rental units in 2010 to 26,240 in 2020. This growth, however, slowed down this year with a smaller percentage of condominium apartments used as rentals. The number of condo rental units grew by only 1.3% in 2020 compared to 2019.

(CMHC)

## 6. PURPOSE-BUILT RENTAL DEVELOPMENT GOING STRONG

**Thousands of rental units are being planned in Western Canada's major urban centres.**

Real Estate market research firm Urban Analytics is tracking hundreds of purpose-built rental developments in Vancouver, Calgary and Edmonton. The projects, which are in various development stages, could potentially add over 55,000 new units if they are all built. As of Q3 2020, the company calculates that there were:

- 94 projects under construction or in pre-development in Calgary. A total of 22 projects were under construction, representing 5,282 units.
- 84 projects in Edmonton had submitted development applications. These projects would add 19,915 units to the city of Edmonton. 24 projects with a total of 4,312 total units were under construction.
- 288 development applications for purpose-built rental projects in Vancouver. The applications represented an approved total of 14,490 rental units. 24 developments with 2,590 units were slated for completion within the next year.

The following are some of the rental apartment complexes that are being planned:

Cidex Developments has submitted a development permit application for a three-building complex on a 3.3-acre site located just West of Stampede Park in Calgary. The residential towers will range in height from 44 to 55 storeys and will be built on top of a nine-level podium that will contain restaurant and retail space on the ground level, as well as 1,180 parking stalls.

The development will be located near the Victoria Park/Stampede LRT Station and once complete, will contain 1,252 units. If the plan is approved, the project will be one of the largest in Calgary in terms of the number of homes within a multi-residential project.

The Louvre is currently under construction within Procura's 32-acre Century Park in Edmonton. The six-storey apartment building will contain 358 rental units. Rents will be around $1,250 for a one-bedroom, and the building will include live-work units. The first phase of the building will be ready for occupancy this year. Amenities will include an art school, handicraft room, fitness facility and golf simulator as well as a seven-storey atrium. There is also 8,800 square feet of retail space in the Louvre, which will include restaurant space.

A two-tower apartment complex is under construction on the former Edmonton Motors site in Oliver, on the Southeast corner of Jasper Avenue and 115th Street. The developers behind the project are Pangman Development Corp. and John Day Developments who plan to build 825 units on the site.

Another two-tower project is in the pre-development phase in downtown Edmonton at 102nd Avenue and 106th Street. On the 37,340 square foot site, Edgar Development is planning to build 730 luxury rental units within two buildings of 36 and 40 storeys. The buildings will sit above a four storey podium.

Chard Development is proposing a mixed use development for 622 Southwest Marine Drive, just West of the Marine Drive SkyTrain Station in South Vancouver. The 66,474 square foot lot is currently occupied by three low-rise buildings and a Denny's.

The development includes two rental towers of 28 and 32 storeys above a six-storey podium. The towers will contain 573 rental units including 456 market rental homes and 117 below-market rental homes.

At least 28 below-market units will be YWCA social housing units for women and their children, with a mix of 22 two-bedroom units and six three-bedroom units.

Wesgroup Properties has submitted a rezoning application to build 222 rental units in two buildings. The buildings, 16 storeys and 8 storeys, will be connected by a podium. Almost a quarter of the units will be affordable rental homes with below market rates. Amenity space on the 17th level will include a children's play area, outdoor space and a dining area. The ground level will include 16,700 square feet of commercial space which will contain a grocery store.

A rezoning application has been filed for an 18-storey, 122-unit rental building at the corner of West 2nd and Ontario Street, next to Vancouver's Olympic Village. JTA Development Consultants and Point Grey Developments are developing the site which is currently occupied by an auto mechanic.

Vancouver-based Westland is proposing a condo and rental tower development in Burnaby, just South of SkyTrain's Metrotown Station. The plans include a 51 storey office and condominium tower on the North end of the site and a 22 storey rental tower on the South end.

The entire development will contain a total of 575 homes: 408 condominiums, 95 rental units and 72 affordable housing rental units. It will also include a 70,000 square foot retail and office component.

In the latest Emerging Trends in Real Estate report by PwC and the Urban Land Institute, multifamily residential was listed as one of its expected best bets for real estate in 2021.

"Although some pandemic impacts — notably, reduced immigration, the desire for more space, and unemployment — may put a damper on demand for very dense housing types, interviewees emphasized that shelter remains a core need and noted the stability that the multifamily category can offer right now," the report stated.

### 7. CLOSED BORDERS IMPACT RENTAL DEMAND

**Pandemic puts the brakes on key rental market demand drivers.**

At the time of writing, the Canadian border has been closed for almost one full year.

This has had a major impact on the key rental housing demand drivers including immigration, international students and travel.

In 2019, 341,000 new immigrants were admitted into Canada. The country continued at this high level in the first quarter of 2020. However in Q2 2020, only 34,271 immigrants arrived in Canada while in Q3 this number dropped to 2,767, according to Statistics Canada.

"The restrictions placed on international borders and the subsequent drop in international migration levels had the largest impact on population growth in 2019/2020," Statistics Canada said.

The interruption of immigration has had a major impact on rental demand as well, as new Canadians tend to form renter households, according to CMHC. The agency sees this as a temporary effect on demand with the recent increase in projected immigration.

Lately, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) announced a 2021-2023 "Immigration Levels Plan." The plan sets an immigration target of about 1% of the population for the next three years bringing the annual level of immigration to about 400,000 per year – the highest level ever.

However, it will be difficult to meet these targets until the pandemic is over and the borders reopen.

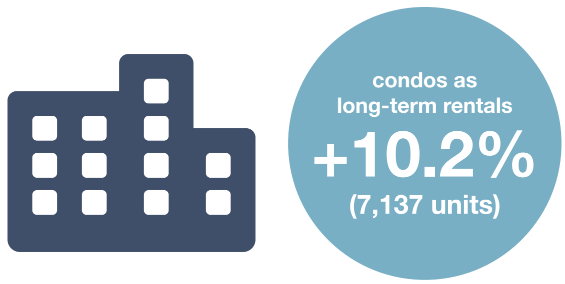
At the end of 2019, there were 144,675 study permit holders in British Columbia. This number has grown by 8% annually over the past decade.

The number of people who obtained a study permit to come to Canada was down 40% in Q2 2020 after COVID-19 hit, compared to Q2 2018. In British Columbia, the number of foreign students has dipped by 38%.

With post-secondary education moving online, many students, especially international students, have remained at home, choosing to delay coming to or return to Canada. CMHC has warned that this will have a significant effect on the demand for rental housing.

Many condominiums in Vancouver used for short-term vacation rentals saw demand dry up when the borders closed and travel restrictions halted the influx of tourists to the city.

Last year, the number of condominiums used as long-term rentals increased by 10.2% (7,137 units) as investors have pivoted their properties away from vacation rentals.




"With lower demand for short-term vacation rentals due to less tourism in the pandemic environment, it is likely that some of these conversions are the result of investors now choosing to rent their units to long-term tenants," the CMHC writes.

Once the borders reopen, demand for rental housing is expected to return. However, the long-term impact on short-term rentals remains to be seen.

## 8. DEVELOPERS MAXIMIZING THEIR ROI

**Property owners are employing innovative strategies to increase their bottom line.**

### Adaptive Reuse

Apartment developers are looking at properties that they can transform into apartments. Properties purchased at distressed prices offset high renovation costs associated with the conversion process.

"Renovation costs vary very substantially from building to building, but costs are typically high, and typically are only feasible in areas that are supply-constrained—think San Francisco—or have federal grant money available to help," says Tony Lenamon, National Practice Lead for Multi-housing for JLL Valuation Advisory.

According to Real Capital Analytics, 6% of hotel assets bought in Q2 2020 were acquired with the intent to redevelop or convert the properties to a new asset class. The company reports that this purchase rate for redevelopment was twice the average rate seen in a second quarter between 2014 and 2019.

In the US, vacant malls have become a target for apartment developers, especially as many have lost their anchor tenants. "Regional malls are perfect candidates for conversion," says Mike Muldowney, Executive Vice President at CBRE.

### Densification

Last December, Starlight Developments announced plans to densify the 7.4-acre Lougheed Village in Burnaby. The company is proposing an additional 1,200 new rental homes in three buildings to the 528 units in four concrete buildings that currently exist on the property.

The site and surrounding community will also be linked to the development of a multi-use path connecting to nearby Lougheed Mall and the Lougheed SkyTrain station.

Mark Goodman, Principal of Goodman Commercial, told the Globe & Mail that it's becoming increasingly popular for investors to buy rental properties with infill potential.

### Shift to rental

In Edmonton's ICE District, 168 units originally designated as condominium residences have been converted to rental residences. The Sky Residences within the condominium levels of the Stantec Tower are now the Sky Signature Suites.

A 490 square foot unit with one bedroom is renting for $1,585 per month, and a 1,221 square foot unit with two bedrooms, two bathrooms, and a den is listed for $2,660 per month. The shift in tenure comes as a result of changing consumer preferences in the city.

Regency Developments' 121 West in Edmonton was initially intended to be a condominium but was changed into a rental building and is currently on the market.

It's comprised of one nine-storey building and one 10-storey building, both constructed out of concrete. It has a total of 396 units containing 24 studios, 234 one-bedroom units and 138 two-bedroom units. The development on a 1.48-acre site sits parallel to the Brewery District.

## 9. ESCALATING INCENTIVES

**Growing number of landlords and property managers are embracing incentives to attract new tenants.**

With rising vacancy combined with the high number of new products coming to market, the use of incentives to attract new tenants is growing.

Incentives range from free storage to one or two months of free parking. This tactic is becoming more widely used because of softening demand for rental housing. Another reason for its growing popularity, according to Urban Analytics, is due to the cap on maximum allowable rental rate increases as set by the government. In British Columbia rents are only permitted to grow by 1.4%.

Landlords need to keep contract rents as high as possible in order to "capitalize on a larger allowable rent growth," the company explains.

According to Urban Analytics, these are some of the incentives that are being offered at different multifamily residences:

- Half-off rent for the first four months of tenancy
- $400 each month for the first four months of tenancy
- Waived security deposit
- One to two months free, non-amortized rent
- One year free internet, phone, and cable
- Free parking and storage for six to 12 months
- Moving expenses covered by the developer
- Six months grocery credit

A rentals.ca report states that Vancouver renters are finding most incentives exist for luxury units, downtown units, new units, and condos. Landlords with fewer units are offering incentives such as free parking or shorter lease terms.

QuadReal offers the first month free on a 12-month lease plus 6-months of free parking at their Metropolitan Towers complex on Seymour Street.


New luxury building Bergen by Brava Development Corp. in Calgary's Mission neighbourhood offers two months free rent on a 12-month lease in September.

Boardwalk REIT, which has just over 20,000 units in Alberta, has "selectively increased the use of incentives for new rentals during the pandemic to increase our occupancy," Sam Kolias, CEO, said.

There is a cautionary note attached to this trend, however. "Once the incentives start, they do become common, as rental providers have to compete more with each other, and eventually tenants start to expect them," said Shaun Hildebrand, President of Urbanation.

## 10. PROPERTY MANAGER ROLES BECOME MORE CRUCIAL

**Companies have embraced technology more extensively to improve communication with their tenants.**

The pandemic has required property managers to pivot quickly in order to meet the needs of existing and prospective tenants. Many management companies have expanded their digital platforms so they can communicate with residents via an app, by email and by text message.

Communication is viewed as a cornerstone of customer service, and most agree that virtual methods of communication will remain an integral method of connecting with people beyond the pandemic.

Right now, many tenants are working from home and may continue to do so in the future. People are spending a lot more time in their living space, and as a result, there has been a rise in customer service expectations. Debi Wherry is the Senior Vice President of Property Operations at Fogelman Properties which operates 88 multifamily properties totalling 28,000 rental units. She reports that it has become important to accelerate response times of maintenance requests as tenants are demanding almost real-time responses.

Companies have implemented resident portals to make sure residents could easily pay rent and make service requests online. The portals also provided an efficient way for community managers to connect with residents. Some firms ramped up their use of live and pre-recorded video tours for prospective tenants.

US property management company Pegasus Residential managed more than 35,000 units during the pandemic by unveiling a mobile app that provides its clients with 24-7 access to real-time information about their communities. The app allows the clients to communicate quickly with the company.

According to Wendy Simpson, Vice President of Marketing, installing Rentgrata across a portion of their portfolio was one of Edgewood and Vantage property management companies' most impactful changes. The messaging platform permitted prospects to contact current residents directly to ask questions about the community's lifestyle.

A pilot project that the company conducted early in the pandemic showed that the platform resulted in more than $528,000 in leases.

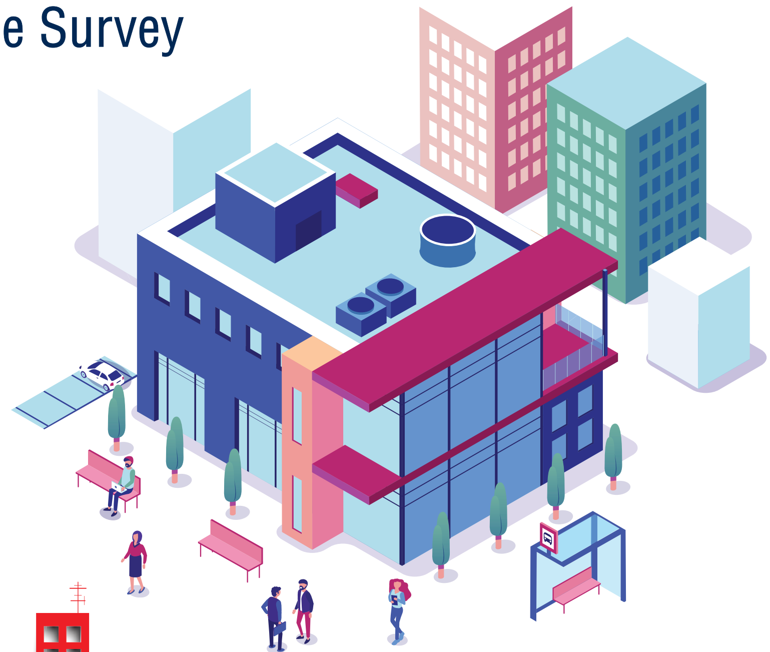
"In any circumstance, we feel it's incredibly beneficial for a prospect to get genuine feedback from a current resident. These conversations really help a prospective renter make a quicker and more informed leasing decision," Simpson says. "And over the past year, it's been a particularly important resource for prospects who haven't been able to physically tour our properties because of the pandemic."

Amenities at multifamily complexes have been closed for the past year in order to stop the spread of COVID-19. There have been reports of disgruntled tenants who have complained about not getting a rent credit or discount despite amenities being closed for months at a time.

Susan Goff, Director of Brand Management at Highmark Residential, advises property teams to focus on the services they can still provide, engaging tenants through virtual events and being in constant communication with them.

Experts advise that it is essential to keep residents involved in managing the pandemic response by providing opportunities to share feedback or ideas and to be as transparent as possible.

## Canadian Office, Retail and Industrial Tenant Preference Survey



## CANADIAN MULTI-RES TENANT RENTAL SURVEY

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