



Location
Atlanta Metro Area

Units managed
8,000

Portfolio
Owned and Managed

Product
ResidentPay

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Jamin Harkness, VP
Wesley Apartments

Introduction

Wesley Apartment Homes is an apartment management company serving the Atlanta Metro Area for more than 25 years. With more than 18 apartment communities, Wesley is continuously searching for innovative ways to improve the customer experience and streamline operations. Recognizing the inefficiencies of accepting rent checks from residents, Wesley turned to ResidentPay® by Property Solutions to enhance their payment processes.

The Challenge

Accepting Checks - Ineffective and Inefficient

Accepting a rent check at Wesley Apartment Homes once was complicated and often riddled with duplication. On-site leasing professionals and property managers were wasting valuable time completing unnecessary paperwork and manual verifications, all to simply accept a check.

Though this cumbersome process was reason enough to make a change, it was the risk of theft with checks and money orders required from new residents for application fees and deposits that set Wesley over the edge.

“We were getting all these money orders in the office. They would go missing, they would be mis-posted, or they would be stolen,” says Jamin Harkness, Vice President of Property Operations for Wesley. “We used to rely on drop boxes for check payments, but people would put fly tape in them, steal the checks out of the drop box and just go cash them.”

“The exercise showed our team how many times we touched this piece of paper. They saw just how ridiculous all of this process was, versus a resident simply paying from the convenience of home or even on their mobile device.”

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The Solution

Gaining Efficiencies through Technology

Property Solutions’ ResidentPay offered check scanning and delivered the complete payment solution for credit card, electronic check (ACH) and cash/money order that check scanning lacked.

In order to streamline the transition to ResidentPay, Harkness and his team embarked on a six-month rollout process that involved regular webinars and classroom training. We scheduled emails through the Property Solutions Message Center, scheduled phone calls that we prerecorded, created signs that we posted on the doors—we had a whole calendar of events to promote the rollout.”

As part of the rollout process Wesley even created an exaggerated role-play to help solidify the rationale behind implementing an automated, comprehensive payment solution. Each staff member was given a fake check to write out their rent payment and present it to Harkness, who acted as the leasing professional. He painstakingly completed each step in the payment process, then handed the check over to an assistant to fulfill the Assistant Manager role.

“The exercise showed our team how many times we touched this piece of paper,” Harkness explains. “They saw just how ridiculous all of this process was, versus a resident simply paying from the convenience of home or even on their mobile device.”

That’s when Wesley made it official – they would no longer accept paper checks from residents except in extreme circumstances. If a resident showed up in the leasing office with a check, the leasing staff helped them make their rent payment online via a community kiosk or computer, further emphasizing how easy it was.

Finally, Wesley integrated online payments into specials and other promotional programs to further increase resident adoption. For example, some specials required new residents to sign up to pay their rent exclusively online in order to receive the first \$100 of their rent special.

The Results

High Penetration Delivers

Wesley set the bar high with a goal of 90 percent penetration in the first four months and leveraged a leasing agent contest to help drive digital payments. From the start, ResidentPay reduced theft, provided residents with a fast and easy means to pay rent online and decreased the time required for staff to post rent checks. This effectively increased net operating income at the community. After using ResidentPay for just a few months, Wesley’s communities saw monthly online payment rates achieve 82-98 percent with a portfolio average of 91 percent, surpassing the firm’s aggressive goal.

“What’s important to realize is that once you hit your goal, you have to continue to nurture the program and then just set an expectation of only digital payments,” Harkness says. “By doing so, we now average 99 percent each month.”

In addition, delinquency is down and small balances are history because 100 percent Digital Payment Adoption only allows payment in full.

“ResidentPay simplified our accounts receivable process and enhanced the composition of the leasing office,” Harkness says. “It made us realize excess capacity and repurpose the staff to provide better customer service to our residents. With ResidentPay we aren’t accountants anymore. The software runs itself in the background.

Online Payments

