

Millennials will determine your future success. Here's what you can do...

The Millennial generation, those under 30 years old who have been raised during the turn of the millennium, are gaining influence over the multi-unit residential housing sector. It's not that they are taking leadership positions in executive suites and governmental bodies, though that is happening to a degree; rather, they are flocking to apartment and condo living.

Millennials are looking for a residential setup that matches their lifestyle, which in both urban and suburban areas tends to include a lot of mobility, a high degree of social interaction and a hefty demand for digital access. If your complex is older, it may simply not have the infrastructure to support the biggest crop of potential residents out there. That means you either upgrade or fade.

In New York, the new housing stock isn't keeping up with demand, and other urban and suburban centers are in a similar situation. Social media can help you get on the map with this demographic sector, but it can also tank leasing if you get a reputation for inadequacy. Here are some of the things millennials are looking for:

1. **Getting to know neighbors.** Common areas that don't interfere with privacy, but that afford the opportunity to meet up with others in the course of the daily routine, are popular. Think glassed-in laundry rooms that have work stations, social pods or even a snack area to replace the traditional dim basement spaces. Code-accessible gyms are another plus.
2. **Easy access to services.** Consider your ability to lease first-floor space to manicurists, dry cleaners, convenience stores and even a pub.
3. **Parking.** While many apartment dwellers commute by public transportation, the majority want off-street parking, preferably covered, for their residence.
4. **Bedrooms and outlets.** Though Millennials tend to shun the roommate scene more than the generations before them, they do need to plug in. One-bedroom units with lots of electrical outlets score high on the interest list.
5. **That neighborhood feel.** When Millennials rent an apartment or condo, they are renting more than your building. They look for neighborhood amenities, like access to public transportation, grocers, shopping, parks and night life.

Upgrades like these open the door to new possibilities for your multi-unit residential complex, but they can also usher in a new set of risk exposures. If you agree that it's time for an overhaul of your buildings so you can keep pace with the new renters market, bring your insurance agent into the discussions at the outset. From valuations on property to reviewing contractors' insurance policies to make sure you are adequately protected during the course of construction, your insurance agent can serve as a specialized advisor for your financial care.

Betterments that you make may substantially improve the value of your property, as well as the income potential from your leases. Both your property and income insurance protection may need to be adjusted to reflect the value added. Expanding to allow businesses to locate in your complex may also necessitate a change in your commercial property, general liability and business interruption coverage.

Great things await residential buildings that move forward in response to the newest generation of residents. It's possible not only to keep up, but also to lead the way. Your insurance agent is part of your strategic team, so don't put him or her in a box that says "sales" and forget him until your annual review. Maximize your risk management and business protection by using your insurance agency team to its fullest.