Exploring “Community” in Multi-Family Communities

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Overview
Considerations
• 33% of Americans live in multi-family (apartment) housing.
• Property management consultants advocate for greater community in these multi-family properties.
• Specifically, consultants argue greater community will reduce turnover expense.

Research Questions
• Do residents value a strong sense of community?
• How might a property manager create a sense of community at their properties?
• How do they measure strength of community?
• Does a strong sense of community equate to a reduction in turnover?

Methods
To explore community in multi-family rental housing, this Capstone relied on a two-step analysis:
• A literary review of existing research related to the concepts of community in housing and the problem of turnover.
• A qualitative analysis of 15 articles recommending community in multi-family housing.

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Five Factors Affecting a Sense of Community

Influence
• Group influences Members
• Members influence Group
• Shared Values
• Conformity

Conscious Ident.
• Identification with Neighborhood
• Awareness of Membership in Group

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Conclusions
Do multi-family renters desire community?
Yes
Can property managers create a sense of community in the properties they manage?
Yes
Can we measure the sense of community among residents at a property?
Yes
Does greater community lead to reduced turnover?
Unsupported

What does it all mean?
Industry insiders advocate for greater community. While research does not support linking greater community with reduced turnover expenses, managers can establish and improve a sense of community within their properties. Most managers already view community building as fundamental to their role. Strengthening community-building efforts will help property managers better perform their roles and meet customer needs.

To create community, managers should:
• Define what “community” means for their property.
• In what ways do staff and residents desire community from both an emotional and a physical perspective?
• Expand community-building efforts beyond hosting events. Community building should address the four factors of the sense of community.
• Managers should incorporate online spaces (social media and web) to build community.
• Avoid the trap of community as a consumable. Community building is not an end goal but rather an improvement to existing customer service processes.

Literature Cited

Further Information
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