



Future-Proofing Your Property: 3 Must-Haves for Modern Living

By Steve Van Till



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When we welcomed 2020 months ago, we had no notion of just how different this decade would be the COVID-19 pandemic has defined it, seemingly overnight.

Professional property managers must navigate a new landscape. Residents will have concerns and demands that didn't exist a year ago. As we look to the future, we know that properties must be three things: sanitized, secure and smart.

The standards for each of those have shifted. Here is what each of those hallmarks means in post-pandemic terms:

Sanitized

We'll probably never touch a doorknob without thinking twice. The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we interact with our homes and offices.

Already, early research shows that Canadians are feeling unprecedented levels of anxiety because of coronavirus. According to a recent survey by Morneau Shepell, a human resources and tech company, 81 percent of respondents say the pandemic is negatively impacting their mental health.

Property managers must acknowledge these lingering effects. They must show how they are proactively defending against contagious diseases because that is now a real fear.

In the post-pandemic world, technology such as touchless entry, package lockers, and smart intercoms will be the new standard. These solutions not only curb the spread of germs, but they also reduce unnecessary physical interaction.

Secure

Safety is perhaps the most basic human need, and naturally, it has been

a top priority for property managers. Before the pandemic, security meant locks and cameras. Moving forward, it will need to be more sophisticated.

This is largely because we're going to see a spike in crime after the COVID-19 pandemic. Experts are predicting a major economic downturn, which typically drives up crime rates. Just recently, for example, University of Calgary researchers concluded that an economic downturn spurred a local 50 percent spike in property crimes, which includes vehicle thefts, home break-ins and robberies from 2015 to 2018.

In the post-pandemic world, the impacts could be even greater. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has called the country's unemployment an "unprecedented situation," with some experts saying more than 2 million jobs are at stake.

If the experts are correct, it's logical to assume there will be an uptick in crime. It is wise, then, to invest now in

security that will protect your property and residents.

Technology has enabled solutions that go far beyond the brass keys of yesteryear. This includes features such as mobile credentials, cloud-based access control and wireless locks.

It's also worth noting that modern security is not only about controlling access. It is also about having the ability to control how the property behaves. For example, if you can lock down a property with the push of a button or use a camera that will keep a secure image of all people who have entered a property, with the option to use thermal cameras to record their temperature. Again, these advancements will help define modern security.

Smart

The pandemic has embedded technology into our lives more than ever. Quarantines have driven virtually all of us to rely on technology in new ways, and those habits are likely to stick.

Many Canadians expect that working from home will be the new norm in the post-pandemic world. A recent survey by Research Co. and Glacier Media found that almost three in four Canadians (73%) expect more employees to work from home in the wake of this pandemic.

Collectively, this means tech-enabled homes will matter even more. If people are spending more time at home, features such as programmed lighting and smart thermostats will be

more important. And they're willing to pay more for them, too. Commercial real estate company Avison Young conducted a tenant survey in 2018 to gauge what Canadian renters want most. It found that, on average, they're willing to spend an extra \$17 per month for a smart thermostat.

Beyond a competitive advantage in the marketplace, these upgrades also improve efficiency. Most of these features save energy and can be controlled remotely by property managers, ensuring the best level of service possible.

Indeed, the pandemic will have ripple effects on property management, like most things in life. It's important to remember that during times of great turmoil, we see great shifts in thinking. As we emerge from this crisis, people will crave more innovative ways to protect themselves and their properties. Embracing that new reality now will help you emerge as an industry leader well into the future and remain ahead of the curve. ■

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owners. In New York, all the elevator and escalator code violations are posted online so that anyone can easily see the status of an elevator in real-time. Similarly, in Ontario, the Technical Standards and Safety Authority (TSSA) is building a portal for building owners to determine the status of the elevators and escalators and access all outstanding violations.

Consultants are also developing their own systems and solutions that allow building owners to determine the number of callbacks placed daily; the status of the elevator/escalator (running or shutdown); the number of maintenance hours being spent on-site every month; the status of the government reports, the status of the consultant report; if a trend is forming with the callbacks; and much more. These services are available online and in real-time. IoT is here to stay, and we will see an acceleration in its advancement as fresh new technologies emerge. ■

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