

Ironing Out the Wrinkles of Common Area Laundry Rooms

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Any way you spin it, every resident has to do laundry. By working with a professional laundry route operator and following these tips, owners and property managers will be well on their way to providing their residents with an attractive, desirable and valuable amenity that makes the constant undertaking of laundry a much more enjoyable experience.

1. Provide a Convenient Location: First and foremost, a laundry facility must be conveniently accessible for residents. Who wants to climb flights of stairs or walk to a different building with a heavy basket full of laundry? Common-area laundry rooms should be located near main traffic areas such as community rooms, elevators and other amenities such as the fitness room. A good rule of thumb is to ensure that the maximum distance from any unit to the laundry room does not exceed 250 feet and is preferably on the same floor. This may call for several smaller rooms rather than one large, centralized one. Bottom line: It's all about location, location, location!

2. Keep It Clean: No one wants to clean his or her clothes in a dirty, musty or cobweb-infested laundry room. So to ensure cleanliness in your laundry facility, arrange for regularly scheduled cleaning. Be sure to also provide plenty of lined trash cans so residents can help keep the facility clean too. Also, when making upgrades to the laundry room, choose easy-to-clean surfaces such as tile or laminate for the floors and washable paint for the walls.

3. Ensure It Is In Working Order: What is the point of providing a common-area laundry room if the equipment doesn't work? A laundry route operator will check the laundry equipment regularly to ensure it is working properly and will schedule periodic maintenance. This will not only ensure that residents have access to the laundry equipment when they need it, but it will also extend the life of the machines and make certain a property isn't losing profits. Addi-



Good design and proper upkeep can make common-area laundry rooms a more valuable amenity to residents.



tionally, encourage residents to immediately communicate when the equipment is not working by posting directions on how to report a maintenance problem.

4. Make It Feel Secure: A key component to resident satisfaction is the feeling of safety and security in the laundry room. A few measures can be taken that will go a long way in doing just that. Make sure the common-area laundry room is well lit and adequately visible; install windows, if appropriate. Consider putting locks on doors and making the room accessible only to residents.

5. Create a Social Environment: Common-area laundry rooms are just that—common areas. So why not evoke a sense of community and encourage the communal, social aspect of the common-area laundry room by adding a few extra amenities? Provide plenty of quality, comfortable seating and tables, positioning them in a way that urges residents to mingle. After all, the laundry facility is an extension of the residents' homes, and this room will see more resident use than the leasing office or lounge area. Vending and coffee machines should also be included. Finally, post information about upcoming events in the community to further encourage your residents to socialize.

6. Make Laundry Affordable: Laundry is a necessity, and the last thing residents want to do is fork out an outrageous fee in order to get their clothes clean. By charging a reasonable fee for washer and dryer usage, owners will see a boost in resident retention, and residents will stay on the property to do their laundry.

For owners interested in making a little ancillary income, include vending machines and laundry detergent machines.

7. Provide the Right Number of Machines: Reduce wait time and increase resident satisfaction by providing a common-area laundry room equipped with the proper amount of washers and dryers. The demographic make-up of a property will help determine how many machines are needed; a laundry route operator can offer consulting on this issue. If a property is comprised mostly of families, for example, more machines will be necessary than a property whose residents are seniors. A rough estimate is:

- Families:* One washer/dryer pair per eight to 12 units
- Young Working Adults:* One W/D pair per 10 to 15 units
- Older Working Adults:* One W/D pair per 15 to 20 units
- Students:* One W/D pair per 25 to 40 students
- Seniors:* One W/D pair per 25 to 40 units

8. Add Extra Amenities: What better way to make laundry fun than providing a source of entertainment? Include TVs, DVD players, VCRs and/or stereos to make a laundry room an enjoyable place to be and stay while clothes are getting clean. In addition to entertainment amenities,

make doing laundry a breeze for residents by providing practical laundry room accessories such as folding tables, rolling carts and hanging racks.

9. Enhance With Technology: New technology can be found everywhere these days, even in the laundry room. These new innovations can

provide residents with added convenience and ease. Card systems, rather than coin-operated machines, are becoming common in multifamily laundry rooms, and these cashless systems will continue to grow in popularity. These laundry cards can also be used to gain access to a laundry facility for added security. In addition to hassle-free payment methods, the industry is also seeing systems that can alert residents, via their cell phones or the Web, when machines are available.

10. Give It a Face-Lift: A laundry route operator can help make common-area laundry rooms a very attractive amenity to residents. Investing in a few cosmetic enhancements can easily and inexpensively upgrade this amenity. One way to give a laundry facility an instant face-lift is by applying new paint, which will brighten the room. When selecting a color, be sure to be mindful of the established design and colors that are prevalent around the property. And simply by updating the lighting, a sense of security can be increased, while also enhancing the cosmetic appearance of the facility. Sufficient lighting through the use of fluorescent lights will make the room more inviting while providing two-and-a-half times the lumens obtained from incandescent lighting. But recessed lighting, ceiling fan/light combos or other softer lighting options can also be used to enhance the room, as long as the room is still well lit, especially around entrances. ■

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