MAIL AND PACKAGE DELIVERY POLICY

Despite technology dramatically shifting how Americans communicate, apartment companies and their residents continue to rely on the United States Postal Service (USPS) for the bulk of their mail and package delivery. Yet changing consumer preferences and the ever-growing e-commerce boom has apartment companies facing a new landscape that includes managing deliveries from a variety of carriers including USPS, UPS, FedEx and some smaller rivals.

NMHC/NAA Viewpoint
As legislative and regulatory actions are considered or enacted to encourage or mandate changes to USPS mail delivery policy, the impact on apartment communities must be evaluated. Reforms should not be overly burdensome to existing and future apartment communities who must account for a host of design, legal, and resident demands.

The significant increase in package deliveries has forced apartment communities to change how they operate, shift resources, divert staff time and expand storage space (if possible). The private sector is implementing innovative solutions to help alleviate such challenges including package lockers, concierge services and off-site delivery points. Some apartment firms have moved to limit the size of packages they receive while other firms no longer accept packages and instead put the onus on the delivery companies to hand-off the package directly to their residents.

Package delivery has recently dominated the conversation, but traditional mail delivery remains an issue for apartment communities. Falling mail volume and accompanying revenue has increased pressure on Congress to restructure the USPS' business model to avoid insolvency, calling into question services enjoyed by apartment communities. Of particular concern to apartment firms is a proposed cost-cutting measure that would mandate a move to centralized delivery locations for new and existing addresses to reduce the number of USPS delivery points. While USPS policy already favors centralized mail delivery for new addresses, requiring existing communities to convert to centralized delivery could be extremely problematic.

Total mail volume handled by the USPS has fallen from 213.1 billion pieces in 2006 to 154.2 billion in 2015.

Policy changes such as centralized delivery raise issues for apartment communities such as: safety and security; construction/design costs; available space and building design; accessibility and convenience; historic designations and aesthetic style; and weather and geographical landscape. Additionally, existing USPS regulations prevent other delivery carriers from accessing USPS mailboxes. This means that apartment communities may have provide two separate delivery spaces: one for USPS and one for other delivery companies, causing a duplicative expense and design challenge. If a move to centralized delivery is required to help the USPS weather its financial crisis, policymakers should also consider repealing the USPS's monopoly on mailbox access and allow for technology solutions that provide for access by multiple carriers to allow for truly centralized delivery options for property owners.

Because of the potential impact of conversions to centralized delivery locations, NMHC/NAA are working to ensure that policymakers and the USPS consider the challenges that apartment owners face on mail and package delivery in general and the impact centralized delivery mandates would have on apartment communities operations.

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NMHC/NAA Joint Legislative Program
1775 Eye St., N.W., Suite 1100 | Washington, D.C. 20006 | 202 974 2300 | WeAreApartments.org