



# Beyond Four Walls: Exploring the Influence of Maintenance on Resident Experience

Discover the undeniable link between proactive maintenance and satisfied residents.



No one is likely to deny the importance of a well-maintained property. Regular maintenance can help prevent costly repairs, improve energy efficiency, and extend the property's lifespan. But property maintenance includes more than just the tasks performed to keep a property looking its best; it also encompasses the culture and responsiveness of the maintenance team. In other words, it's not just "what" you do but "how" you do it.

Maintenance responsibilities are the largest piece of a property's operational budget and the area most closely linked to resident satisfaction. Therefore, property owners and managers need to recognize this critical connection and understand the essential role of maintenance as it relates to safety, satisfaction, livability, and value — all of which ultimately lead to lower turnover rates and higher rents — to assess the effectiveness of maintenance operations.

# What Is Maintenance?

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Simply stated, maintenance is the upkeep and repair of a property to keep it in good condition (e.g., fixing broken appliances, repairing leaky pipes, and painting walls). But in the context of multifamily properties, it goes beyond these simple repairs and fixes to encompass a comprehensive approach to property care aimed at maintaining both the physical infrastructure and the overall well-being of the residents.

Maintenance is vital for multifamily properties because it helps ensure residents' safety and comfort. But it also helps protect the property's value by preventing costly repairs down the road.

However, maintenance extends beyond the physical aspects of a property and involves creating a welcoming and comfortable living environment for residents. By paying attention to these details and implementing effective maintenance strategies, property managers can enhance residents' overall quality of life, fostering a sense of community and pride in the multifamily property and establishing a reputation for excellence within the industry.



# Why Is Maintenance Essential for Multifamily Properties?

Maintenance is essential to multifamily properties for many reasons, but it requires a focused approach to drive resident satisfaction.

## The top 4 ways maintenance positively impacts resident satisfaction:

- 1. Safety:** Maintenance helps ensure residents' safety by keeping a property in good repair. Examples include repairing broken appliances, fixing leaky pipes, replacing worn-out carpets, attending to faulty or burned-out lighting, and more.
- 2. Comfort:** A well-ordered maintenance plan helps keep residents comfortable by keeping the property clean and well-maintained. A few examples include changing air filters, repairing light fixtures, and painting walls.
- 3. Value:** Preventative maintenance helps protect your property's value and is the most effective way to avoid costly repairs and unplanned downtime. A proactive approach helps avert expensive — and often untimed — repairs. Regular maintenance allows you to catch minor problems before they become major ones.
- 4. Compliance:** Maintenance helps ensure your property complies with all applicable laws and regulations. Compliance gaps and failures can be incredibly costly, so your maintenance approach must address code requirements and safety standards. These things should never be considered optional.

By taking the time to maintain your property correctly, you can reap many benefits for both your residents and your bottom line.

### Additional benefits of a well-maintained property:

- Increased property value
- Extended building lifespan
- Reduced risk of lawsuits
- Increased tenant retention
- Reduced energy costs
- Fewer tenant complaints
- Improved tenant morale



# How Does Maintenance Impact the Resident Experience?

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The level of maintenance in a multifamily property directly impacts the resident experience. Meaning it's not enough simply to understand "why" maintenance is essential for multifamily; you must also understand "how" it drives satisfaction.

While people choose to rent for various reasons, the desire for maintenance-free living is a key driver for many (50% to be exact, according to the 2022 NMHC/Grace Hill Renter Preferences Survey Report). In the report, this factor emerged as the top-rated benefit of renting, so it stands to reason that residents are increasingly sensitive to the quality of maintenance and the ease (and timeliness) with which requests are handled.

**50%** of renters say the biggest benefit of renting is maintenance-free living.

Residents that don't have to deal with maintenance problems, such as broken appliances or leaky pipes, are more likely to be satisfied with their living situation, attributing feelings of safety and comfort to their living situation. As a result, they are more likely to renew their leases.

On the other hand, residents who live at poorly maintained properties, where maintenance issues frequently disrupt their lives, experience greater dissatisfaction with their living situation. This cycle often leads to increased turnover rates, which can be costly for property owners.

By regularly inspecting and maintaining assets, you can identify and correct potential problems before they fail. Doing so can save you money in the long run, improve the safety and reliability of your property, and significantly increase resident satisfaction.





## Creating a Proactive Maintenance Culture

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A proactive maintenance culture is one in which equipment is maintained regularly to prevent failures. This type of culture is essential for businesses that want to improve their uptime, reduce maintenance costs, and extend the lifespan of their assets.

### Here are 5 tips for creating a proactive maintenance culture:

- 1. Get buy-in from top management.** Proactive maintenance requires a commitment from top management. If management is not on board, it will be challenging to implement a successful program.
- 2. Define your maintenance goals.** What do you want to achieve with your maintenance program? Do you want to improve uptime, reduce costs, or extend asset lifespan? Once you know your goals, you can develop a plan to achieve them.
- 3. Create a maintenance schedule.** A maintenance schedule will help you keep track of when equipment needs to be maintained. The schedule should be based on the equipment's age, condition, and use.
- 4. Train your employees.** Your employees need training on how to perform maintenance tasks, which should include the proper use of tools and procedures.
- 5. Use technology to streamline maintenance.** There are several software programs that can help you streamline your maintenance program. These programs can help you track equipment, schedule maintenance tasks, and generate reports.

# Developing a Maintenance Plan That Meets the Needs of Your Residents

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Your multifamily property must be maintained to ensure a standard of livability and safety for residents. Specifically, this includes all of the following:

- **Exterior**, including the roof, siding, windows, and doors.
- **Interior**, including the flooring, walls, appliances, and fixtures.
- **Common areas**, such as the hallways, laundry rooms, and pool.
- **Parking lot and grounds**.

Regular maintenance of these areas helps prevent accidents, injuries, and health hazards and creates a comfortable and inviting living environment for residents.

However, before creating a maintenance plan for your multifamily property, consider the following factors: 1) age and condition of the property, 2) number of residents, 3) type of property, and 4) budget for maintenance.

Once you have a comprehensive view, you can begin developing a maintenance plan that not only meets the needs of your residents but also includes a schedule of regular inspections and repairs and a process for handling emergency repairs.





## Key Components of a Successful Maintenance Program

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A comprehensive maintenance program is essential for ensuring the long-term health and safety of a property. As you evaluate and develop your program, be sure it includes the following elements:

- **Risk assessment:** Identifies the assets most critical to the property's operations and those most likely to fail.
- **Maintenance strategy:** Determines the best way to maintain assets based on risk level.
- **Preventive maintenance schedule:** Specifies the frequency and scope of preventive maintenance activities.
- **Work order system:** Tracks maintenance requests and ensures timely completion.
- **Maintenance budget:** Ensures sufficient funds are available to maintain the property.



# How Do You Effectively Manage Maintenance Requests?

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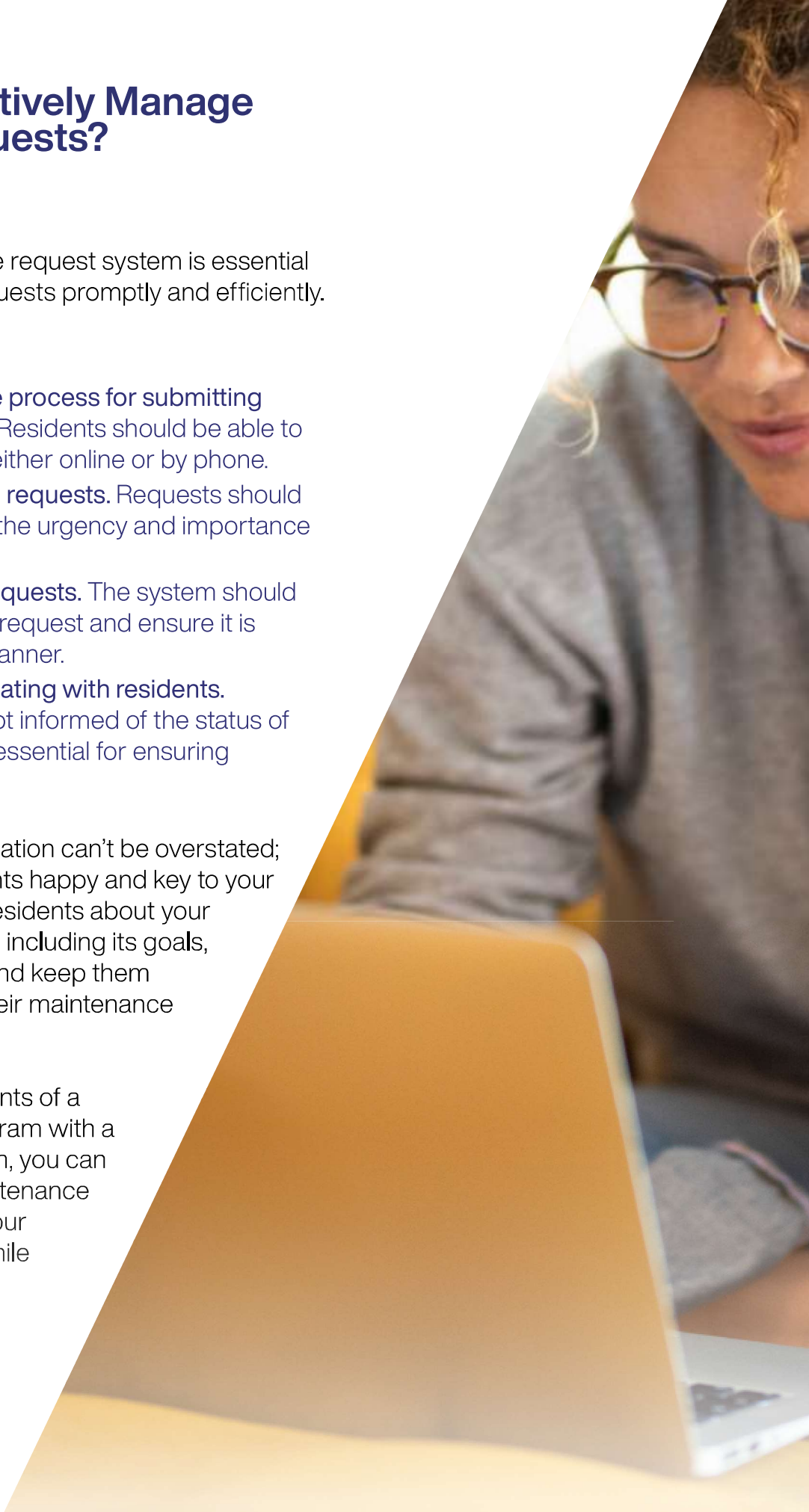
A well-managed maintenance request system is essential for handling maintenance requests promptly and efficiently.

## The system should include:

- **A clear and easy-to-use process for submitting maintenance requests.** Residents should be able to submit requests easily, either online or by phone.
- **A system for prioritizing requests.** Requests should be prioritized based on the urgency and importance of their situation.
- **A system for tracking requests.** The system should track the status of each request and ensure it is completed in a timely manner.
- **A system for communicating with residents.** Residents should be kept informed of the status of their requests, which is essential for ensuring resident satisfaction.

The importance of communication can't be overstated; it is critical for keeping residents happy and key to your operational success. Inform residents about your overall maintenance program, including its goals, objectives, and procedures, and keep them up-to-date on the status of their maintenance requests.

By coupling the key components of a successful maintenance program with a well-managed request system, you can create a comprehensive maintenance program that will help keep your property in good condition while also ensuring your residents' satisfaction.



## Ready to Refocus?

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Maintenance is an essential part of owning and managing a multifamily property. With proper maintenance, property managers can help maximize their property's safety, comfort, and value. And in doing so, it improves the overall resident experience, boosts satisfaction, and decreases turnover.

Step back and make an honest assessment of your approach to property maintenance. Do you have effective control of your system and responses, or is it an area of programmatic weakness?

With so much riding on the effectiveness of your maintenance program, it may be time for a change.

**Do you need policies and training to support your maintenance program?  
Reach out to the experts at Grace Hill today to get started!**

