Leveling Up Water Management in Multifamily Properties

Five best practices to reduce waste, minimize risk, and boost revenues.

The multifamily sector is facing turbulence: new constructions are down almost 80%, and most major markets are seeing higher vacancy rates than before the pandemic. Nationally, multifamily rents could start to tick upwards in 2026 and 2027, but many key markets are expected to see flat or even declining revenues for the foreseeable future.

Alongside uncertainty over inflation, tariffs, and labor costs, this means property managers and owners must carefully consider where to invest their limited resources. Renovations and improvements can help attract and retain residents, but in these challenging times, new CapEx investments must come with a rapid and reliable path to ROI.

Water management to the rescue

Given these requirements, multifamily leaders have an important and underused tool at their disposal: a new focus on water management. At present, most multifamily properties still use a single central meter, but research shows that more effective water management can reduce total consumption by 20% or more, while also helping to eliminate costly leaks and boost operational efficiency. For both residents and owners, that can add up to real savings.

So how can multifamily leaders capture the bottom-line benefits offered by today's advanced water solutions? Drawing on Metron's experience managing over 850,000 smart meters nationwide, this report offers 5 key best practices that multifamily managers and portfolio owners can use to turn water management into a driver of profitability and lasting growth—even in today's challenging economic landscape.

The power of smart water

Intelligent water management uses a combination of water solutions, including cellular smart meters, retrofitted monitors, and other technologies, to deliver reliable, around-the-clock water data covering the entirety of a multifamily property.

The best solutions combine minute-by-minute flow data and advanced analytics to track precisely how and where water is being used, and also to offer automated reporting to quickly notify managers, maintenance teams, or residents when leaks or unusual usage patterns are detected.

Together, these technologies deliver a number of key benefits:

- Rapid leak detection. Modern sensors can pinpoint leaks faster than ever before—even slow drips of as little as 1/30th of a gallon per hour. Eliminating undetected leaks can reduce unbilled water by as much as 40%, sharply reducing overall costs. Machine learning tools can also rapidly determine the root cause of excess flow—from a cracked pipe to a stuck toilet flapper—enabling repairs to be made before minor issues turn into major headaches.
- Less risk and lower premiums. Water damage accounts for over 70% of multifamily insurance claims, so fixing issues quickly means big savings. For that reason, insurers recognize the value of intelligent water management: premiums for both residents and owners typically fall by 5% or more when properties add smart metering and rapid-alert systems.
- Transparency and timely billing. With cellular sub-metering, it's often possible for multifamily operators to move away from old-school RUBS billing, and issue accurate and timely bills based on each resident's individual water use. That's inherently fairer to residents—and because it incentivizes conservation, it often leads to lower costs for everyone.

- Improved resident relations. Even when unit-level sub-metering isn't possible, smart water solutions offer important insights into where water is being used. Managers can spot excessive irrigation or other issues quickly, keeping residents' bills low—or issue friendly warnings about excessive water use or potential leaks before a bill arrives, significantly improving relationships with residents.
- Increased occupancy and lower churn. With better resident relationships, lower water bills and operating costs, and other value-adds, smart water helps reduce churn and increase overall occupancy rates. Over time, that boosts revenues and adds significant value to a property portfolio.

5 Best Practices for Water Management

To unlock the benefits of intelligent water solutions, property managers and owners need an effective management strategy powered by best-in-class technology. Here are Metron's five best practices for effectively integrating intelligent water management into multifamily properties and portfolios:

1. Monitor as much of the property as possible

Metron sees a hierarchy of metering opportunities in multi-family properties. Some levels may or may not be achievable, depending on the age or construction of the buildings and other factors. However, the more of these levels that can be metered, the more complete and powerful is the data that's collected.

- Monitor the master meter(s). Depending on the property's size, there may be one or more utility-owned meters for the property. Getting reads from these meters into Metron's WaterScope® software is very valuable for water management, as it provides high-resolution usage data for the entire property. You will get to see your water consumption every day, rather than waiting for the monthly bill from the utility. Metron has several products which can monitor existing utility meters once installed. Installing monitors usually requires permission from the utility.

See our monitoring solutions

https://metron-us.com/retrofit-solutions/

- Meter each building. The next hierarchy level is to install a meter for each building, a practice called zone metering. This allows owners or managers to easily identify if there's a leak inside a building, as its water use will be anomalously high compared to other buildings.
- Meter each apartment. The best data richness arises when every apartment is submetered. This leads to accurate billing, in-unit leak detection and more. However, this isn't always possible: garden-style apartment campuses built before the early 1990s, for instance, often have in-wall plumbing that makes it impossible to install meters in individual units.

See our small water meters

https://metron-us.com/residential-spectrum-jet-meters/

- Capture common areas. It's also possible to separate out different functions: a swimming pool or irrigation system, for instance, might account for a substantial part of a property's total water use. Using dedicated submeters, managers can subtract irrigation or other major draws from their flow data to expose useful insights from other areas of their property.

Cellular monitors and submeters provide leak detection for water that passes through them. They operate separately from spot leak sensors, which are WiFi-dependent and only report leaks in specific, defined spaces (such as around water boilers or under sinks).

2. Use the hierarchy for insights into infrastructure leaks

If a property has a monitored master meter, zone meters AND per-building submetering, it's possible to identify losses in the infrastructure that distributes water to the buildings. WaterScope automatically calculates the difference between the water coming through the utility's meter and the total water consumed by the submetered buildings. This differ-

ence represents water that's lost en route, i.e. leaks in the infrastructure. Addressing these leaks can have a major impact on water bills and recapture rates.

3. Watch your minimum flow rate

Since multifamily properties often have dozens or even hundreds of individual residents, it can be hard to figure out exactly how and where water is being used. One useful strategy is to zoom in on the minimum flow rate for a specific property, typically by monitoring consumption at a time of day—such as 3am—when most residents are sleeping. By looking at the overnight water use history across several days, it's possible to screen out the occasional late-night toilet-flush or dishwasher cycle and derive a clear minimum flow rate for your property.

AI's impression of a crew repairing a lateral...

Once a baseline is established, it can be used to both detect problems and validate repairs or maintenance work. If your minimum rate suddenly jumps 20%, your property might have a substantial leak—and if it drops 20% after repairs are carried out, your maintenance crews can feel confident they just fixed a significant leak. Such data can ensure leaks are remediated before they cause serious damage—and that maintenance resources are deployed efficiently across your properties.

Metron goes even further, using machine learning algorithms to monitor a property's water use over a period of a week or two, and learns what's typical at any time of day. That lets our software provide rapid alerts when water flow deviates from the norm, further minimizing damage and disruption from leaks.

4. Break out consumption by use case

To monitor water use effectively, you need to know where and how water is being used. The "where" is fairly straightforward, as long as you're monitoring flow close to the point-of-use. But advanced water technologies are now making it possible to gain important insights into the "how," too.

Every time water flows, it creates a specific data signature that reveals how it's being used. A resident who's filling a bathtub leaves a different flow-data fingerprint than someone who's using the sink or taking a shower. Every toilet flush, dripping tap, laundry load, or sprinkler system leaves a different trace in the flow data—and using machine learning, Metron can interpret that data in real time to reveal exactly how water is being consumed.

That's important, because it empowers managers to rapidly determine whether excess flow is due to legitimate water use or problems that need addressing. It also ensures that maintenance teams can go straight to the source of the problem—whether it's a broken pipe, a stuck toilet, or a badly calibrated irrigation system—and put things right. That means less disruption and lower bills for residents, reduced operational costs, and more time for work crews to add value elsewhere on your property.

5. Make water data work for you

Water data can be leveraged in many different ways, so it's important to tailor solutions to the needs of different stakeholders. Maintenance crews, for instance, might benefit from automated alerts or mobile tools that proactively provide the insights they need to locate and fix leaks. Managers might find value in using WaterScope's machine learning to unlock operational efficiencies—or appreciate the ability to create consumer-facing alerts that help residents make smarter consumption decisions.

Investors and owners, meanwhile, can use water data to assess performance across their portfolio—zooming out to compare KPIs or benchmark properties by region or property type, or zooming in to identify problems, amplify new learnings, and capture effective management strategies from high-performing properties.

For all these applications, the key is to partner with a vendor who understands the benefits that water data brings for all multifamily stakeholders—from maintenance crews to property managers, and from residents to real-estate investors. Pair that with real-world experience, technical knowhow spanning both hardware and software, best-in-class customer support, and high-quality data and analytics, and you've got a recipe for success.

See how much your multifamily property could save by switching to modern water management: check out Metron's online Savings Calculator.

https://metron-us.com/multi-family-roi-calculator/

Take control of your water

Multifamily properties are operationally complex, and it's easy for utility costs to become a major drag on profitability and property values. Advanced water management can help property managers to reduce waste, lower costs, and boost occupancy—and give property owners powerful insights that elevate ROI across the entire portfolio.

At Metron, we work with property managers and investors to deliver best-in-class metering and analytics in high-rise properties, garden-style campuses, and other multifamily settings. With over 850,000 meters and monitors under management, we're delivering best-in-class flow detection and machine-learning insights to support managers and owners as they unlock savings, optimize workflows, and maximize revenues.

We've seen first-hand just how transformative intelligent water management can be. If you're looking to keep costs low, revenues high, and residents happy, get in touch with Metron and start harnessing the power of advanced water solutions across your multifamily portfolio.

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