



Whitepaper:

Multi-residential access management and security

– The move to digital

A whitepaper from IFSEC Insider and ASSA ABLOY Opening Solutions EMEIA



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Introduction

At the core of any property is that it needs to feel safe. Whatever the capacity of the tenant, they want to feel secure and know that their privacy and assets are protected – and this fundamental need is what property developers, owners and landlords must deliver.

As the point of entry and exit, access control is consequently a vital piece of the security jigsaw puzzle. The choice of system is particularly crucial in the multifamily (or multi-residential) sector, where requirements differ significantly from single-family residences.

This market segment remains strong. According to a report from Savills in late 2021, multifamily represents Europe's second biggest real estate sector.¹ The vast majority of these developments are in cities, and despite indications early in the COVID pandemic that city dwellers were on the move to find more space in rural areas, this 'exodus' was short-lived.

While working from home practices have continued, people moved to and returned to suburban areas or inner city living, where multi-residential is fundamental to providing the living spaces required from high density populations.²

Though demand for space hasn't changed, expectations of the dwellings themselves have. Resident

requirements have evolved, impacting many of the provisions in which property managers, owners and landlords need to supply and invest.

There are several reasons behind these changes. Let's not forget that a global pandemic fundamentally altered our way of living and working – but broadly speaking, there is widespread demand for more modern and technologically advanced spaces.

This is true in all areas of life, of course. In the past decade, mobile payment systems have transitioned from a gimmick to normality, cloud-based services have become ubiquitous, and artificial intelligence is no longer something only seen in the movies.

But from a multi-residential perspective, and for the purpose of this whitepaper, we'll focus on one specific aspect – access control.

As we'll cover in the pages that follow, in a market that was previously dominated by mechanical locks, there's a growing shift towards digital and connected access management systems. Having spoken to several experts and analysts, this trend is markedly clear.

Those who own and manage properties are required to provide prospective residents with both convenient and enhanced security measures, while themselves looking

¹ Property Forum, Multifamily is now Europe's second biggest real estate sector, <https://www.property-forum.eu/news/multifamily-is-now-europes-second-biggest-real-estate-sector/10050>
² Sky News, COVID-19: The return of city life after coronavirus rules – new data reveals who is moving and where in England, <https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-are-people-returning-to-city-living-now-the-pandemic-is-over-12600751>



for centralised management systems that are accessible from anywhere.

While mechanical devices still have their place, electronic and digital access control offers many of these requirements in abundance. Security, convenience and efficiency benefits are there to be grasped, as the evolution of the 'smart' home is no longer only applicable to single-family abodes.

What do we mean by 'multi-residential'?

Before we delve into trends in the market and how these are impacting access control requirements, it may be best to define what we mean by 'multi-residential' – otherwise referred to as 'multifamily' in the US market. We use both terms throughout this whitepaper interchangeably.

Multi-residential essentially refers to a complex or building where multiple separate housing units exist – usually defined as two or more.

Throughout this whitepaper, we are generally referring to several units in one, purpose-built building, where dwellings are accessible via a communal hallway or stairwell. Apartments, condominiums, and blocks of flats are our main areas of focus – think those with five or more private residences within a building, for instance.

Access control systems are therefore required for a communal entrance used by residents, visitors, maintenance staff and couriers alike, as well as communal amenities such as gyms or laundry rooms, and for the individual residences.

Security underpins whatever solution is chosen, but as we will discover, so too are convenience and efficiency increasingly important for both users and managers of the building.

About ASSA ABLOY Opening Solutions

ASSA ABLOY Opening Solutions leads the development within door openings and products for access solutions in homes, businesses and institutions. Its offering includes doors, door and window hardware, locks, access control and service.



Multi-residential – Market overview

It doesn't take much more than a basic online search to spot that demand in the multi-residential market remains high.

According to data from Rightmove, UK apartment sales across the country are currently 10% above 2019 levels – London is 23% up alone – while an article on Forbes in early 2023 stated that the US “multifamily space has been performing incredibly well for the past two-plus years with record demands”.³

Demand in Europe has continued, too. Global real estate company JLL found that investment in European multifamily rose 16% quarter-on-quarter in Q2, with the German market particularly strong.⁴

Despite the well documented challenges of inflation and subsequent mortgage increases to have hit the property sector, rental demand remains strong in multifamily. According to a report from UK-based Knight Frank, growth has been “driven by high rental demand and limited supply; trends that are currently more pronounced in city centres”.⁵

Supply looks set to grow, with over €27 billion invested in multifamily across Europe in the first half of 2022, research from Savills showed.⁶ Investment in construction of new developments in the UK, France, Spain and Germany was strong, while there is awareness that much of the older residential stock will require upgrades and investment – particularly when it comes to meeting energy performance requirements.⁷

Conversion of office to residential space

We have already touched upon how the pandemic set the wheels in motion for more remote working outside of the office.

Headlines will tell you that companies are calling for a return from employees to expensive and now chronically underutilised HQs. While attendance is rising – take UK banking giants Citi Group, HSBC and Lloyds’ demands in September 2023, for instance – hybrid policies remain for many. Some have shut their offices or significantly reduced their capacity, for good.⁹

³ Benoit Properties, Why Apartment Sales are Boosting UK Property Market Growth, <https://www.benoitproperties.com/news/why-flat-sales-are-boosting-uk-property-market-growth/>; Forbes, Multifamily Real Estate Predictions For 2023, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesbusinesscouncil/2023/02/27/multifamily-real-estate-predictions-for-2023/?sh=1e8d85207d26>

⁴ JLL, European Multifamily Market Dynamics, <https://www.jll.co.uk/en/trends-and-insights/research/european-multifamily-market-dynamics>

⁵ Knight Frank, 2022/23 Multihousing Report, <https://content.knightfrank.com/research/707/documents/en/multihousing-202223-9550.pdf>

⁶ Savills, UK & European Multifamily 2022: The inflation hedge? https://www.savills.co.uk/research_articles/229130/332848-0

⁷ Savills, UK & European Multifamily 2022: The inflation hedge? https://www.savills.co.uk/research_articles/229130/332848-0

⁸ Financial Times, Employers and staff seek truce on office working, <https://www.ft.com/content/e5969903-3b7b-4dcb-8219-15be3acad01f>

⁹ BBC, The companies doubling down on remote work, <https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20220722-the-companies-doubling-down-on-remote-work>



There are regional variations to these trends. Early in 2023, the Wall Street Journal reported that return to office rates were much higher in Europe and Asia than in the US, which sat around the 50% mark. Even so, Paris and Tokyo were said to have seen return rates at just over 75%, still leaving plenty of room for spare capacity.¹⁰

Simultaneously, many countries are experiencing a shortage of housing stock, making residential property more expensive than ever before.¹¹ Housing Europe's *State of Housing 2023 Report* remarks that the "increasingly unsustainable costs for construction and renovation" are causing new build projects to be postponed, and will be "likely to exacerbate shortages in available social and affordable housing" down the line.¹²

One solution to the problem has been to convert office space into residential space – and predominantly multi-family units.

Savills has calculated the amount of office floorspace that has been converted to residential use since 2015 is an estimated 1.3 million square metres in London, with a further 3.5 million square metres of offices converted to residential across the rest of England.¹³

Canary Wharf – a hub for office space in London – is one area where several conversions have already taken place. It is likely this trend may continue, with news in August 2023 that major banking institution HSBC is relocating its 45-storey skyscraper to the City of London,

where it will take space roughly half the size.¹⁴

It's not just happening in the UK, either. JLL research estimates that 23 million square metres of vacant office space in the top 35 European cities could provide up to 500,000 new homes.¹⁵

In a study carried out by the firm, it found that the conversion of former commercial space was already accounting for a high proportion of housing completions in the 'Big-7' cities in Germany, which are all suffering from major housing shortages. Frankfurt is a leader in this, with the volume of office-to-residential conversion having doubled in the past 15 years.

Cities in Spain, too, are beginning to explore this trend. There is an estimated 1.8 million square metres of existing office space with the potential for conversion in Madrid alone.¹⁶



¹⁰ Wall Street Journal, As Americans work from home, Europeans and Asians head back to the office, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/as-americans-work-from-home-europeans-and-asians-head-back-to-the-office-db6981e1>

¹¹ Data from LSE shows that average house prices in the UK have risen by over 160% in real terms since 1996 – LSE, Why building 300,000 houses per year won't solve the housing crisis – and what will, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/tackling-the-uk-housing-crisis/>

¹² Housing Europe, The State of Housing in Europe 2023, <https://www.stateofhousing.eu/#p=1>

¹³ Savills, UK office supply falls 35% in just over a decade, <https://www.savills.co.uk/insight-and-opinion/savills-news/313456-0/uk-office-supply-falls-35--in-just-over-a-decade>

¹⁴ Bloomberg, What to do with a 45-storey skyscraper and no tenants, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2023-08-29/hsbc-8-canary-wharf-tower-will-it-become-flats-how-can-qataris-upcycle-it>

¹⁵ JLL, Office to residential conversion – the solution to address the housing shortage? https://www.jll.co.uk/content/dam/jll-com/documents/pdf/research/emea/germany/en/JLL_Insight_Office_to_Residential_Conversion.pdf

¹⁶ Hollis Global, Office conversion sweeps across Europe, <https://www.hollisglobal.com/our-perspective/insights/office-conversion-wave-sweeps-across-europe/>



From a sustainability perspective, this all makes sense. Housing and construction developers are not immune to the drive from governments in hitting Net Zero and other sustainability targets, so conversion is much preferred to demolishing and rebuilding.

These projects do not come without their own challenges. New layouts and floor plans may require a complete revamp to the building's infrastructure, compliance with regulations will change, while from a security perspective, the needs of tenants and residents are very different to those of employees.

So what? How does this all impact on access control?

To summarise, multi-residential development and usage is here to stay. Investment is strong, but as we'll cover in the next two chapters, user and property manager requirements are changing.

New-build residences are expected to feature modern infrastructure that works seamlessly with user experience. Meanwhile, as older housing stock is upgraded and offices are converted to residential space, digital solutions will come to the fore.

Why not start the digital experience at the point where you get into and out of the building, then? It's often the first interaction a prospective tenant or buyer has with the property, and access control is widely regarded as the key to unlocking a smarter, more efficient space – be that office or home.

Multi-residential development and usage is here to stay, as it sees significant demand. Investment is strong, but user and property manager requirements are changing.





What do tenants and residents expect from access control?

Access control in the multi-residential market is changing. Those at the sharp end of either the property sector or access control indicate a clear shift away from mechanical keys and locking systems, to electronic access methods.

Certainly in any new build developments, or refurbishment projects to existing buildings, traditional keys have been swapped for electronic cards or fobs. Credentials are held within them and residents simply scan electronic locks to access the building's entrance, their own residence and any other amenities the building may hold.

From a resident perspective, they no longer need several keys to access different areas. Though Master Key Systems are an option for mechanical locking, where one key can open all access points, the process of dealing with lost mechanical keys remains a challenge compared to an electronic solution.

Meanwhile, communal amenities such as gyms, laundry rooms or pools that may have previously had no lock at all, or relied on a guarding service to prevent unauthorised access, can quickly improve security without impacting on user experience. An electronic

reader or lock can be installed, and residents' can use their existing credentials to gain entry.

Bryan Montany, Senior Research Analyst, Physical Security at Omdia explains: *"The proliferation of residential smart locks compatible with apartments has dramatically shifted the market. 10 years ago, multifamily residential was predominantly dominated by mechanical locks – but there's been a huge shift in the past decade to electronic, and now mobile, access control."*

Mobile access set to transform the market?

The overall electronic access control market is undergoing a transformation with the evolution of mobile credentials, it would seem. IFSEC Insider's 2023 Wireless Access Control Report found that 20% of organisations are now using mobile credentials, while another 40% expect to implement mobile credentials in the next two years.¹⁷

The benefits so often cited for mobile access systems such as enhanced security, improved user convenience and remote access capabilities remain as true for multi-

¹⁷ IFSEC Insider, The Wireless Access Control Report 2023, <https://www.ifsecglobal.com/downloads-resources/wireless-access-control-report-2023/>



residential residents as they do for employees. Let's break this down, a little, shall we?

Enhanced security: Compared to a set of keys, users are less likely to misplace or lose their mobile phone. In addition, to use a mobile credential to gain access to a building or dwelling, an additional layer of authentication is required – unlocking the phone via a PIN or biometrics.

Improved user convenience: Similar to an electronic physical card or fob, credentials in a mobile device can be used to access multiple areas of the building, removing the need for several keys.

Remote management: Mobile credentials that utilise apps can allow for remote access capabilities. If the main tenant is out, but a visitor arrives early, a couple of swipes on a phone can unlock the building and dwelling entrance for the visitor, without them needing to wait.

The evolution of the smart home

While the single-family residential space has been embracing the idea of 'smart homes' for some time now, it would appear multifamily is catching up. A research study from Parks Associates found that 27% of multi-dwelling unit residents now have a smart device provided by their property owner or landlord.

Tenants are enthusiastic about the benefits of the smart home, too. The same research also found that 64%

value the notifications they receive around safety issues, and 62% find the ability to monitor activity outside their door valuable.¹⁸

As more smart devices are installed into multi-residential units, the value for integrating access control into the smart home ecosystem only grows. Electronic and mobile access systems can be linked to lighting and heating controls, for instance, while app-based automation systems can be set up to switch lights on when a resident arrives home, or turn the heating off when they leave.

Despite being seen as little more than gimmicks in early iterations, smart ecosystems – when properly set up and integrated – can provide genuine energy efficiency benefits. Some reports even suggest a smart home can reduce energy usage by around 30%.¹⁹

As the transition from mechanical to electronic and digital solutions continues, access control can play a key role in this trend – acting as the catalyst for the smart ecosystem to kick in. The fundamentals of a smart locking system can also improve security for users, enabling remote communication to the door to provide temporary access or in case they misplace or lose their physical credential.

Enhancing resident security

Mechanical systems still have their place and work for a vast array of units, and for those with long-term tenants,

¹⁸ Parks Associates, Smart Solutions – Boosting Revenue in Multifamily Properties, <https://www.parksassociates.com/products/whitepapers/multifamily-apr2022>

¹⁹ Ee the eco experts, Smart Home Statistics, <https://www.theecoexperts.co.uk/smart-homes/statistics>



they may ask why upgrading is necessary. With any 'digital switchover', the introduction of new technology is always a learning curve for some. Residents less 'tech-savvy' may worry about glitches or system failures, and act as a significant barrier to implementing mobile-based credentials.

Yet, the switch from mechanical locks to electronic access systems is now seemingly underway in the multi-residential space.

Apartment blocks can feel more secure. Credentials on a card that can be kept in a wallet or purse are less likely to be misplaced, while additional authentication is even required if using mobile technology.

Any complexes with amenities can easily add electronic locks and readers on the outside, meaning residents feel secure in the knowledge that only they have exclusive access rights to those areas.

Meanwhile, the challenges of package deliveries that are on the rise with the continued growth of ecommerce enable residents to unlock specific delivery areas for couriers. The number of claims for missing parcels in the UK have jumped by 59% in 2023 as parcel thefts have risen in the wake of the cost of living crisis, so being able to provide remote access to couriers will likely be a major driver for electronic solutions in the years to come.²⁰

Underpinning the switch to electronic access control then, is that such solutions now add genuine value for tenants. Perhaps previously seen as a modern, 'nice to have', tenant experience and security can be enhanced and growing use-cases may continue to drive the trend further still.

Residents: Security drivers for adopting digital access control

1	Multi-factor authentication
2	No more lost keys
3	Mitigate risks of package thefts
4	Remote access capabilities for visitors

²⁰ The Guardian, Parcel thefts from UK doorsteps soaring, new figures reveal, <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2023/jul/08/parcel-thefts-from-uk-doorsteps-soaring-new-figures-reveal>



Digitalisation enabling security and convenience for property managers and landlords

While for residents it's all about user experience, the security, convenience and efficiency opportunities realised by digital access control are by no means less advantageous to those who own and manage the properties, either.

Before we explore the benefits, it's worth noting that a transition away from legacy systems isn't necessarily easy for property owners to implement. Not everyone will welcome the move away from mechanical keys. Residents may question why there is the need to upgrade if, from their perspective, they just want to get in and out of their building and home without fuss.

The challenges of communicating and planning an upgrade with potentially hundreds of residents likely remains central to the reluctance of many property owners to 'go digital' with their access system.

For new builds, developers will need to work closely with property managers to understand the likely demographic of tenants. Training or education might need to be carried out with those less confident with technology, or assurances made when technical glitch or failure concerns are raised.

Credential management – Security fundamentals

Despite this, the market is witnessing a digital transformation. Let's start where we ended the last chapter – security. The fundamental role of multi-residential property owners or managers is to keep tenants safe.

For as long as access control has existed in the form of a lock, the traditional transaction between a property manager or landlord and new tenants was the exchange of a mechanical set of keys.²¹

The set of keys very much passes out of the owner's control from that point onwards – as many will have experienced themselves, they are liable to be lost, copied or even changed in extreme circumstances by unruly tenants. If keys are lost, mechanical locks need to be changed – a frustrating but necessary expense for the sake of security.

While security companies and manufacturers alike have evolved key design to make them more difficult to cut

²¹ For those interested, it is believed the first 'key' was invented way back in the 6th century BC by Theodorus of Samos, according to Roman chronicler, Pliny the Elder.



and copy, the fact remains – if they are lost or stolen, a person with malicious intent can easily use them to break into a multi-residential building and individual unit. There is no two-factor authentication, or remote application that can stop them from doing so.

From this perspective, there is a strong driver for a shift towards electronic keys, fobs or cards. An electronic solution enables property owners and landlords to remotely manage credentials if and when required, whether it be via an on-premise access management system, or remotely in the cloud. Electronic keys may also support the transition process, with tenants more comfortable using a physical device that they understand, rather than a card or fob.

Meanwhile, mobile access control provides an additional layer of security, with users required to unlock the device before unlocking the door. In multi-residential complexes where there are tens, if not hundreds of people requiring credentials to get in and out of the building, amenity and entertainment areas, and their own dwellings, this can provide additional peace of mind for owners.

In a fast-moving rental market, where tenants change regularly, centralised credential management applications enable landlords to quickly revoke access permissions in real time.

Convenience and efficiency

Like we witnessed in the 2023 Wireless Access Control Report, end-user professionals (such as landlords, security or facilities managers) no longer view access control as solely a security domain. The most popular reason for adopting mobile access credentials, is convenience, for instance.²²

Real-time credential management that digital or electronic access control systems offer those managing multifamily properties the benefit of convenience. Seamless access can be granted or revoked to tenants – not just in and out of the main building and their own apartment, but also to amenity areas, lifts, gyms and car parks.

In multi-residential units, cleaners and maintenance professionals are regularly in and out of the building too, as well as the continual stream of deliveries that occur. Remote issuance of credentials for entry removes the need for landlords to be physically present, providing greater flexibility for maintenance jobs.

In addition, having a continual audit trail of credential issuance provides property managers with oversight for any potential problem, as well as enabling integration with resident portals to keep tenants up to date with any scheduled maintenance access requirements. In the last chapter, we touched on the smart home segment, and how integrated electronic access control can support tenants in reducing their bills. This is often just as important for property managers, too.

²²IFSEC Insider, The Wireless Access Control Report 2023, <https://www.ifsecglobal.com/downloads-resources/wireless-access-control-report-2023/>



For those managing purely rental multifamily units, it is not unheard of for property managers to charge fixed rates for bills per month, meaning energy usage per unit will directly impact on expenditure. Regardless of this, building owners and developers have to consider – and in some cases comply with – the overall building energy efficiency output.

For instance, in the UK the Domestic Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES) Regulations set minimum levels that domestic private rented properties must meet.²³ In the US, the Department of Energy’s Better Buildings Initiative is pushing for the multifamily housing sector to increase affordability for residents by investing in energy efficiency solutions.²⁴

Modern access control – A new selling point?

Mechanical keys are unlikely to disappear anytime soon. They remain widely accepted across demographics, don’t require technical know-how, and the vast majority of legacy multifamily buildings already have them in place.

Yet, there are clear drivers behind the growing uptake of electronic and digital access control from developers, property managers and landlords. The fundamentals of providing tenants with a safe and secure place to live can continue to be met, and in many ways improved. Such solutions also allow for more efficient credential management for property owners, landlords and managers, as well as contributing towards their sustainability goals.

More modern, technology-led solutions are likely to impact on property value, as well. Prospective tenants at the high-end of the market may now expect digitally-enhanced, smarter technology – with the point of access being the first marker for this.

The ‘PropTech’ market is growing rapidly. Poised to surpass \$32.2 Billion by 2030, it’s all about the use of technology in real estate to facilitate, improve and automate building processes.²⁵ While the multifamily sector is just one part of this, access control has a fundamental role to play in the ‘smart’ ecosystem.

Those tenants with flexible budgets may be willing to pay more for flats or apartments that come with mobile or biometric credentials, or with app-based access control systems, for instance.

Property owners & landlords: Drivers for adopting digital access control

1	Enhanced tenant and property security
2	Convenient credential management
3	Contribute towards smart buildings and more sustainable credentials
4	Increase property values

²³ Gov.uk, Domestic private rented property: minimum energy efficiency standard – landlord guidance, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-private-rented-property-minimum-energy-efficiency-standard-landlord-guidance>

²⁴ Better Buildings Solution Centre, Department of Energy, Multifamily, <https://betterbuildingsolutioncenter.energy.gov/sectors/multifamily>

²⁵ Zion Market Research (GlobeNewsWire), PropTech market size poised to surpass \$32.2 billion by 2030, <https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2023/09/03/2736434/0/en/PropTech-Market-Size-Poised-to-Surpass-32-2-Billion-by-2030-Transforming-Real-Estate.html>



Multi-residential access control 'in action'

We've talked a lot about the transition to electronic access control solutions, so let's take a look at a couple of case studies to see how the technology is supporting existing multi-residential spaces.

WOBAK relies on eCLIQ electronic keys to secure residential buildings

As an urban housing association based in Constance, Germany WOBAK aims to provide residents with different requirements with suitable living space. As part of this, it is involved in both the construction of new buildings and refurbishment of existing ones.

Securing its residential buildings and connecting them to its own administrative offices is a top priority for WOBAK.

The housing association regularly experiences problems with lost keys, and needs to provide access to tradespeople and cleaning staff regularly. A locking system which combined a high level of security with flexibility was therefore required.

Solution: Wireless electronic access control

The WOBAK service centre and workshop, as well as three new buildings were equipped with eCLIQ wireless electronic access control.

This programmable key system from ASSA ABLOY can be managed via an easily scalable and flexible cloud-based platform: the CLIQ Web Manager (CWM).

This user-friendly software enables the locking system management application to be launched from anywhere via the internet. Responsible employees can manage access at any time and from any location.

Lost or stolen keys are quickly deactivated and tradespeople may be granted access authorisations without great effort. CWM is therefore ideal for managing locking systems which are distributed over several locations – as is the case for WOBAK.

Becorp reimagines build-to-rent housing with smartphone keys

Offering contemporary apartments with on-site resident services such as concierges, swimming pools, gyms and co-working spaces, Becorp is a disruptive force in Spain's domestic rental market.

Having used mechanical lock-and-key security in past projects, Becorp was aware of its drawbacks in both cost and management time. The company therefore sought a modern electronic access solution for a landmark new build-to-rent development.



Solution: Wireless mobile access control

With over 1,000 individual homes at its new build-to-rent development, Becorp knew mechanical security would create a huge workload. Each apartment requires five keys per cylinder – making many thousands to manage in total. Rental turnover is also high, which requires regular cylinder and key changes.

Mobile key technology was therefore a more efficient and attractive solution. Residents use secure mobile keys in a smartphone app instead of a physical credential. Openow app-based credential management keeps managers in control, as virtual keys can be created and sent from anywhere.

With SMARTair Wireless Online system management, security staff can see the live status of any door, and have the ability to open doors remotely or lockdown in case of an emergency.

The app also enables easy locking by deadbolt projection. After presenting their phone, a resident simply moves the handle upwards to lock a door securely.

Energy efficiency is another key ethos of Becorp's new development. Because SMARTair locks are wireless and battery powered, they consume less energy than wired locking – supporting efforts to promote more sustainable living.



Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs) are available for many SMARTair devices. These detailed life-cycle audits help customers like Becorp to make informed choices about their environmental footprint during construction and specification.

At Becorp's new Barcelona development, cost and energy efficiencies have been made by specifying a mobile credential-based access solution.



David Moser, SVP and Head of Digital Access Solutions at ASSA ABLOY Opening Solutions EMEIA

Connectivity and compatibility: The future of multi-residential access control?

David Moser, SVP and Head of Digital Access Solutions at ASSA ABLOY Opening Solutions EMEIA, provides a viewpoint on the future of security for multi-residential properties.

At ASSA ABLOY, we've been securing access to homes and businesses for decades. Indeed, our roots stretch back even farther, to Linus Yale Jr. – inventor of the pin tumbler cylinder design and founder of Yale Manufacturing, an ASSA ABLOY Group company. Yet another ASSA ABLOY company patented the Euro profile cylinder design in 1928.

It's fair to say our experience and expertise in residential security and locking is unmatched.

And this knowledge has been invaluable in bringing a new generation of digital access to the modern property and its residents. Digitalisation has penetrated almost every aspect of life. It makes sense that we ask it to keep people and property safe, too: "the market is witnessing a digital transformation," as this report notes on page 11.

Shift towards digitalisation empowers tenants and property managers alike

When tenants or homeowners choose a multi-residential property, they place their faith in property managers to deliver security and access without hassle or worry. Building managers must counter this trust with responsibility.

Everything from day-to-day site safety to intermittent maintenance work applies time and cost pressure. And the workload is destined to keep growing. As this report notes, quoting data from Savills, "multifamily" is now Europe's second-largest real estate sector, behind only office developments.²⁶ In London alone, £2.7 billion was invested in the build-to-rent sector in 2022 – a record.²⁷

Solutions must be deployed which can help to shoulder some of the facilities management burden. Greater efficiency will help multi-residence housing providers improve their service and boost resident satisfaction.

Migrating to digital access may be the answer. Many residents have come to expect the convenience of digitalisation, in everything from food delivery to banking and travel. When deployed effectively, a

²⁶ Savills, Multifamily is now Europe's second biggest real estate sector, www.property-forum.eu/news/multifamily-is-now-europes-second-biggest-real-estate-sector/10050

²⁷ JLL, London BTR, www.jll.co.uk/content/dam/jll-com/documents/pdf/research/emea/uk/jll-london-build-to-rent-report-2023.pdf



digital access solution should be a win/win: a seamless experience for the resident and a reputation enhancer for the housing provider.

Tenants get a connected experience, moving around the building and site hassle-free; instead of a bunch of keys, they carry one flexible, shareable 'key'. Meanwhile, their door lock can connect with a smart home automation system, and can let visitors in remotely or share temporary keys which expire automatically. Plus, they never have to worry about their kids losing a mechanical key again!

Property managers get a more efficient way to manage building security for tenants, their visitors, and service providers. They don't spend hours on physical key management; nor do they need to change locks when keys go missing – which with mechanical security is, unfortunately, too often.

The added flexibility in their workflow saves time; even more so if they can manage access from anywhere with a remote or cloud-based system.

Flexibility – no 'one size fits all' approach

Of course, not every property is the same, which is why ASSA ABLOY offers a choice of solutions. These can be deployed within a single ecosystem to secure almost any access point in the premises – not just doors. Best of all, they are already proven 'in the field' at properties across Europe and the Middle East.

Our CLIQ® solution uses smart key technology: In effect, every keyholder carries their own programmable key which is loaded with access permission for every door and point where they have authorisation. No more, no less. For a resident, that might be the main entrance, a gym, the refuse area and their own front door, for example.

A property manager carries, effectively, a digital master key; they can also issue contractors with their own CLIQ keys which open certain areas at certain times – for example, cleaners between 6 and 9am or electricians for three days to complete a temporary on-site job. Whenever someone loses their key, the property manager just cancels it in the software. It no longer poses a security threat and they simply reissue another.

This was the system chosen by WOBAK (Städtische Wohnungsbaugesellschaft GmbH Konstanz), discussed on page 14. WOBAK has been active in the local residential building sector for over 90 years and has a large property portfolio. It regularly experienced problems with lost keys. However, for three new buildings – two apartment blocks and one for refugee accommodation – WOBAK chose an eCLIQ electronic access system with 350 wireless cylinders. It has issued around 840 programmable keys to authorized staff, contractors and residents.

An alternative is the SMARTair® electronic access control system with robust battery-powered locks. Installed



without wires and managed by intuitive web-based software, SMARTair devices can secure almost any opening, from high-traffic entrances and mailboxes to front doors for homes. Building users gain access via cards, fobs, badges or their mobile via the SMARTair Openow® smartphone app. Facilities managers use the same app to keep control of their property on the go.

As noted on page 14 this was the connected solution deployed in Barcelona by Becorp, at a site with around 3,000 doors.²⁸ Residents gain access with mobile keys stored on their phone. This approach has helped them manage a large site more efficiently.

“Physical key management for any large development puts severe pressure on operational costs,” explained Becorp’s Xavier Casals. “Choosing SMARTair wireless locks and mobile management via Openow helps us to minimize them.”

And whichever system customers deploy, ASSA ABLOY offers a full range of complementary products like Door Closers, for fire protection, thermal efficiency and barrier-free access; effeff Electric Strikes, which remotely unlock doors at the push of a button; smart door intercom systems which let you see and talk to visitors, and even let them in from a smartphone; and more.

Connectivity and compatibility: These will be the drivers of building solutions for the multi-residential property market going forward.

“Connectivity and compatibility: These will be the drivers of building solutions for the multi-residential property market going forward.”

A digital solution offers the flexibility to meet almost any individual user or building management need. A connected solution can put property managers in remote control of their premises. Choosing digital also saves time and money: Our solutions are easy to retrofit, with no need for cables.

Access shouldn't be a hassle. It should be seamless and convenient for both tenants and property managers. They should not be stressed... they should relax!



²⁸ For further insight, read the full case study at IFSEC Insider, Mobile keys and wireless access control utilised in Barcelona housing complex, www.ifsecglobal.com/access-control/mobile-keys-and-wireless-access-control-utilised-in-barcelona-housing-complex