



Sequoia Living sets future-looking tech strategy at Viamonte at Walnut Creek

The tech-enabled model unit led to faster sales than anticipated, with 98% lease-up less than two years after the community opened.

Sequoia Living has been a leading provider of engaging, invigorating senior housing communities for older adults in the San Francisco Bay Area for more than 60 years. Part of thriving for more than half a century – in any industry, but especially senior living – is learning to change with the times and constantly innovate to meet the needs and wants of consumers both today and in the future.

Sequoia's management had those changing needs in mind when they developed Viamonte at Walnut Creek, a new independent living campus in the East Bay area. When the development first entered the planning stages, company leaders knew that, at a minimum, senior living residents would demand the same tech they had been enjoying at home. But the community they were beginning to plan in 2015 would not open until 2020. They would need to forecast the tech needed not just five years into the future, but well beyond to assure that Viamonte would meet consumer expectations and operational requirements for years to come. In short, Sequoia leaders had to "futureproof" their new community.

Sequoia chief business development officer Dave Latina recognized the need for an adaptable, comprehensive technology plan. He also realized that Sequoia didn't have the right bench to develop that plan internally. "We wanted Viamonte to appeal to a whole new generation of consumers," Latina said, "so this was a big leap for us...we knew we'd have to address technology early on in the project."

That's why, once Sequoia closed on the land and began development work in 2015, leadership decided to work with Tazergy – a technology partner with the senior living experience needed to help achieve the goal of producing a tech-forward, future-proof community.

Working with Sequoia's in-house IT team, Tazergy offered up-to-date insights, expertise, and experience on weaving together complex, interactive technology systems, which have become a hallmark at Viamonte. Tazergy helped to translate the data that Sequoia collected from focus groups into action, supporting the types of technology that potential residents demanded.

"We deal with vendors who support all kinds of businesses," says Steven Hieger, Chief Information Systems Officer. "But Tazergy really understands our business."

Managing the layers of infrastructure that go into a community that can stand the test of time is where Tazergy made all the difference. Working with the multiple vendors whose products and services would serve as the building blocks for a fully integrated technology system, Tazergy developed and executed the plan needed to ensure that each component was installed in the correct order, at the right time, and in the right place.



Key to the successful tech strategy was to take individual systems, each designed to work independently, and integrate them so that they functioned together seamlessly. An example was connecting an exterior security post that features a card reader for residents and staff to enter the building with a camera and intercom system to vet non-resident visitors, and a fire department access point for use during emergencies. These systems must work together to ensure the right people can enter at the right times – and the wrong people can't. Multiply the operational complexity of that single security post many times over, and you've got the task that Tazergy managed on behalf of the Viamonte team.

"Tazergy's expertise in senior living technology had a huge impact on our operational success," observed Latina. "They were able to coordinate and bridge the communication gaps between construction and all of the technology going into the project, saving us time and money—and the strategic integrations have led to less management, less oversight, and, critically, less staff time spent grappling with technology. Stuff just works."

Tazergy's assistance has paid significant dividends for Sequoia, residents, and staff alike. For Sequoia, the extra upfront investment in low voltage project management helped them come in on budget, and a tech-enabled model unit – complete with voice-controlled lighting and blinds – led to faster sales than anticipated, with 98% lease-up less than two years after the community opened at the end of 2020.

After the initial wow factor of the model unit, residents continue to enjoy the benefits of their new tech-enabled homes – including special programs that help them stay connected to family members and each other, a platform for managing day-to-day tasks from meals to mail, and an app to keep up with medical appointments.

And tech has had a dramatic effect on ongoing operations in the form of less management, less oversight, and, critically, less staff time. Staff members enjoy the benefits of innovations like tech-enhanced medication management tools, a non-invasive motion-detection system making daily resident checks more efficient—even dining and cleaning robots, so that staff can spend more meaningful time with residents.



Initially, Sequoia planned to use Tazergy for just the design, construction administration, and project management during the construction process and operational transition. But management opted to keep the Tazergy team on to help with ongoing support of the community 24/7.

"They're like an extension of us," observes Dan Chase, Network Manager. "They never say, 'that's not our problem.' They work to understand the issue and stay on it through resolution."

Consequently, Tazergy continues to supplement Sequoia Living's internal IT staff, working with 3rd party vendors and covering after-hour support needs.

"They're very responsive. With a tech-forward community, people get anxious if things don't work. Resident satisfaction is a big factor here, but also, the staff knows they have support outside of normal business hours from Tazergy," Hieger says. "Senior living is a unique business with a unique set of challenges. Tazergy demonstrates an unusual level of customer service and a strong commitment to our success."



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