

Opting for better condo security.

Urban Property Management relies on Axis/2N video intercoms to provide condo owners with safer visitor screening.



Organization:

Urban Property Management

Location:

Boston, Massachusetts, USA

Industry segment:

Commercial

Application:

Access control, safety and security

Axis partner:

Advanced Network Connections

Mission

After fielding multiple complaints that the intercom systems in four of its older properties were failing, Urban Property Management and the condo association boards decided it was time to replace the antiquated systems with new, more advanced technology. The challenge was to find a solution that could be aesthetically retrofitted to the multi-unit brownstones and easily used by tenants who might not be very technically savvy.

Solution

Advanced Network Connections (ANC), an Easton, MA-based technology integrator and Axis Communications/2N partner, recommended that Urban Property install extremely durable 2N® IP Verso audiovisual intercoms from Axis Communications – citing that the devices' HD camera, crystal-clear two-way audio, modular features, and intuitive operation would be ideal for these locations.

All four properties elected to install a main video intercom unit and provide tenants with the 2N® Mobile Video application for their smartphones. One of the buildings also added AXIS Companion cameras to their security solution.

Result

The consensus among residents is that the new technology makes them feel safer and in better control over who enters the building. The 2N® IP Verso's HD-quality audio makes it easier to hear visitors even with the typical background noise of a busy city and the wide-angle, HD camera allows them to visually assess the visitor and the surrounding area before unlocking the door. With the digital touchpad and RFID reader residents now have the option of keyless entry with fobs and pin codes that Urban Property can also program for trusted delivery and service people to use.



Equipping old buildings with new future-forward security

Urban Property Management maintains a portfolio of more than one hundred upscale condominium properties in Boston and outlying suburbs. While many of the high-end high rises feature the latest in building security technology, antiquated legacy intercom systems at several historic brownstones were beginning to fail.

"Condo owners were complaining that buttons weren't functioning, that it was becoming difficult to control the volume which was making communication difficult. And there was growing concern that there was no way to see who was at the door," explains Bill Kasper, President and Owner of Urban Property Management of Boston, MA.

Kasper met with the condo association boards of two of those downtown Boston properties who had decided that it was time to make a new intercom system a priority. Once given the green light, Kasper contacted Advanced Network Connections, an Easton, MA-based technology integrator and Axis Communications/2N partner, to draw up intercom plans for the four multi-story brownstones which together comprised more than 60 condo units.

A tale of two 2N video intercom solutions

Because each condo association operates independently, ANC presented a range of 2N® IP Verso intercom options that could meet the needs and budgets of the individual properties.

"In real estate, aesthetics is very important. That's why we included masonry work as part of the proposal," says Scott Newall of Advanced Network Connections. "We wanted to assure them that we would skillfully integrate the sleek-looking 2N intercom technology into the existing brick work and make it watertight."

After reviewing all the literature, the condo boards for both the Broadway in Bay Village property (a block of three buildings each with a separate entrance) and the single-entrance Appleton property voted to install 2N® IP Verso units at their front doors.

The versatility of the IP Verso also provided them the opportunity to expand the system by adding a touch display module in certain areas and both a touch display module and RFID card reader module in other areas. This produced an aesthetically pleasing intercom with multiple functions.

Customized to depict the Urban Property logo, the Verso with touch display module also features a directory for calling tenants, a digital keypad, two-way audio and a wide-angle, HD camera equipped with night vision.

2N® Access Commander software included with the intercom system makes it easy for Urban Property to configure the system and centrally manage tenant credentials for each building.

With the 2N® IP Verso touch display module, visitors can scroll through the condo directory to contact a specific resident and request entrance. Residents see a pre-video stream before answering the call so that they can decide to answer or not. Another option for residents, is to set up the intercom to send them an email with a still photo of the visitor.

Residents using the 2N® IP Verso keypad with RFID reader module, can enter a pin code or swipe a pre-programmed fob across the RFID reader, then push the unlock symbol on the keypad to open the door. The intercom system tracks dates and times of all entrances and exits and stores the information in case of incidents.





“With the 2N® IP Verso intercom our condo residents can see as well as talk to whoever’s at the front door which gives them a much better feeling of security. Plus, the technology is smart-looking, easy to operate and easy to maintain, which makes it a great solution for these properties.”

Bill Kasper, President and Owner of Urban Property Management of Boston, MA.

Residents can also provide trusted visitors, vendors and service people with their own unique pin codes or fobs to gain entrance without needing to call the condo owner.

“Owners especially love knowing who’s coming into the property even when they’re not home,” says Newall. “The 2N system has a feature that automatically notifies them that someone like the maid or maintenance person has let themselves into the condo using the given fob or pin code.”

As part of its management services, Urban Property Management programs the pin codes and fobs for the condo owners. If someone loses a fob, a tenant moves away or a service person is no longer under contract, Urban Property Management can disable a pin code or fob with a few keystrokes.

Avoiding costly reconstruction with mobile app

From Kasper’s perspective, 2N® Mobile Video application was a major selling point because it allows residents to use their own smartphones to see and converse with visitors and unlock the front door remotely. “If we had to install video monitors in each unit the cost would have been prohibitive, not to mention disruptive to the residents,” says Kasper. “The ease of use and ability to use a smartphone anywhere/ anytime to unlock the door is an incredible feature to offer residents.”

Another advantage he cited is that residents can use the mobile app even when they’re away from home to communicate with someone requesting entrance to the condo. This can be especially useful in deterring individuals who have no legitimate business on the property. Because the intuitive interface resembles a lot of the applications they were already using on their smartphones, Kasper reports that even building residents who aren’t very technical found it easy to learn how to operate the intercom system remotely. “We just sent the condo owners the 2N literature to read,” says Kasper. “It was a pretty quick learning curve.”

“We’ve gotten a lot of positive feedback on the new intercom systems,” continues Kasper. “Residents appreciate that they can finally see who’s at the door – even when it’s totally dark outside – before deciding whether it’s safe to let someone in.”

Adding discreet surveillance cameras to provide a protective eye inside the building

The condo board for the Appleton property was also looking for technology to increase security inside the building – particularly the lobby, mail room and stairwells.

“Their biggest sticking point was that the cameras had to be almost invisible, yet deliver great video detail,” says Newall.

He recommended the AXIS Companion Series which included a network video recorder and five mini dome HD cameras. “We chose very small dome cameras that could fit up in the corners and remain virtually out of sight,” explains Newall. “The accompanying Axis network video recorder easily fit in the condo building’s telecom closet. Furthermore, the surveillance system was totally compatible with the 2N system.”

Urban Property Management maintains the surveillance system, providing access to the video as needed. Condo owners can opt to download viewing software for a nominal monthly fee.

Providing a platform for future security options

“One of the reasons we like to recommend 2N video intercom solutions to our customers is their ability to add features as the scope of a project evolves,” says Newall. “If and when our customers are ready, we can add other features to their system like a fingerprint reader or Bluetooth. We can integrate their 2N® IP Verso intercom with Axis surveillance cameras, network video recorders and even add video/audio analytics to create a more comprehensive security solution.”

As Bill Kasper looks over his company’s portfolio of managed properties, he sees several older condos that could benefit from an upgrade to a 2N IP intercom solution. “We have a number of buildings with 30-year-old dumb pushbutton systems,” says Kasper. “When they reach end of life, you’re looking at replacing dozens of suite phones inside dozens of individual condo units. Maintaining that kind of intercom system becomes very expensive.”

He goes on to point out that “With a 2N system, there’s just the unit at the front door and the condo owner’s own smartphone. So, it’s really easy and economical to maintain. Plus, it provides a host of outstanding features to better protect the residents. And that’s the kind of value proposition condo boards look for.”

Kasper also noted that upgrading the intercom system at these older properties adds to their curb appeal, especially for the growing number of millennials flocking into the city. He states, “Whatever we can do to make these properties more marketable to prospective buyers is a definite plus.”



About Axis Communications

Axis enables a smarter and safer world by creating network solutions that provide insights for improving security and new ways of doing business. As the industry leader in network video, Axis offers products and services for video surveillance and analytics, access control, and audio systems. Axis has more than 3,500 dedicated employees in over 50 countries and collaborates with partners worldwide to deliver customer solutions. Axis was founded in 1984 and has its headquarters in Lund, Sweden.

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