



Question: Are the mixed-use (MXU) and the multi-dwelling unit (MDU) markets really all they are hyped up to be and why?

Answer: The answer is an unwavering yes. These types of installations definitely live up to the expectations and that has made them a common and extremely hot topic of late.

As for the why, well that part is relatively simple. As the population soars, the available space within metropolitan areas that offer reasonable commutes are decreasing daily. The demands for convenience in our fast-paced lifestyles, in addition to the movement to be more eco-friendly, are some underlying drivers that we must mention. While these might be obvious, there are many other factors supporting why these sectors will prosper.

To help better understand the hype and why these particular spaces will see continued growth, let's start with the most common question: what's the difference between a mixed-use and multi-dwelling unit?

Mixed-use simply implies that the building structure supports multiple tenants with varying types of needs and uses for their specific part of the structure. The variety of tenants that may be found within these types of structures are truly limitless. A typical representation would likely consist of retail spaces, small- to medium-sized office environments, medical, light manufacturing and finally, living spaces in varying size and variety. Again, there is no real limit on what could be deployed in the mixed-use building structure.

In many cases, older or abandoned buildings in older communities are revitalized to support the MXU development, but certainly these developments occur in new Greenfield constructions as well. Typically these communities offer lots of retail shopping within walking distance.

A Multi-dwelling unit is self explanatory. This is simply more than one dwelling or residence within a building structure. MDU structures could range from a single level to a high-rise structure. Now that we know the basic definition of both environments, we can conclude they are indeed different in nature, yet the same type of building structure could be utilized to support either environment.

Let's discuss the statement we made earlier: how will lifestyles and trends impact and drive the expansion of these segments. Convenience is becoming more important to us. In most families both husband and wife work. Arranging schedules and trying to balance it all requires we make the most of every minute of our time. Being in close proximity to our work, retail businesses, restaurants, entertainment and other activities is a major convenience. The MXU buildings and/or communities satisfy this increasing demand for convenient living in many instances.



People from all demographics are making the decision to sacrifice a house and yard in the suburbs for a condominium or apartment closer to work or activities in the city. The trade-offs are pretty clear; no longer are they faced with long commutes to and from work, traffic woes and added excursions to take care of daily needs. The MXU communities are commonly self-contained and have the most needed services and provisions within walking distance. Other demands for convenience occur within the tenant/living spaces. Being very busy and time sensitive, people have driven service providers and developers to offer more services at our fingertips. Online banking, shopping, remote operation of living spaces and equipment – the possibilities are endless. But before these buildings can achieve this amazing technology, it requires the bandwidth and capable infrastructure to support it.

In addition to the convenience factor, there is a major movement in our society to conserve our resources and to be smarter in how we live and how we care for the environment. People are making sacrifices and adjusting their lifestyles accordingly. These MXU/MDU types of structures are gaining popularity because of that environmental awareness. Many developers choose to refurbish existing building properties and communities rather than disturb undeveloped land. Regional and local governments in many cases are pushing legislation that encourages these types of restoration projects versus past methods to consume and develop large parcels and spread farther out. In the end, we are coming to the realization that as a society we have a responsibility to change the way we use our resources and make sacrifices for the betterment of the world around us.

It appears that our demand for convenience, the continued population growth and the push to be less invasive toward the environment will sustain and even expand the presence of the mixed-use and multi-dwelling unit installations into the future. This effort will continue to push the commercial and the residential spaces closer and closer, resulting in people in our industry being forced to become experts in other areas they may or may not be accustomed to specifying, designing, or installing.

In summary, these types of structures will be increasingly present in either new constructions or renovation projects for many years to come. Customer demands, trends and supply drive all business, and this is also true in the network cabling space. Having the proper knowledge to understand and service the needs that will present themselves as these commercial and residential spaces collide will be the key to business success for everyone from the property developer to the installer. Not having the proper network infrastructure in place to support the future bandwidth needs and conveniences that will be demanded by these prospective tenants or buyers in the coming years could be disastrous. Future proofing these spaces now will be the difference between a desirable property or community and one that is not.

