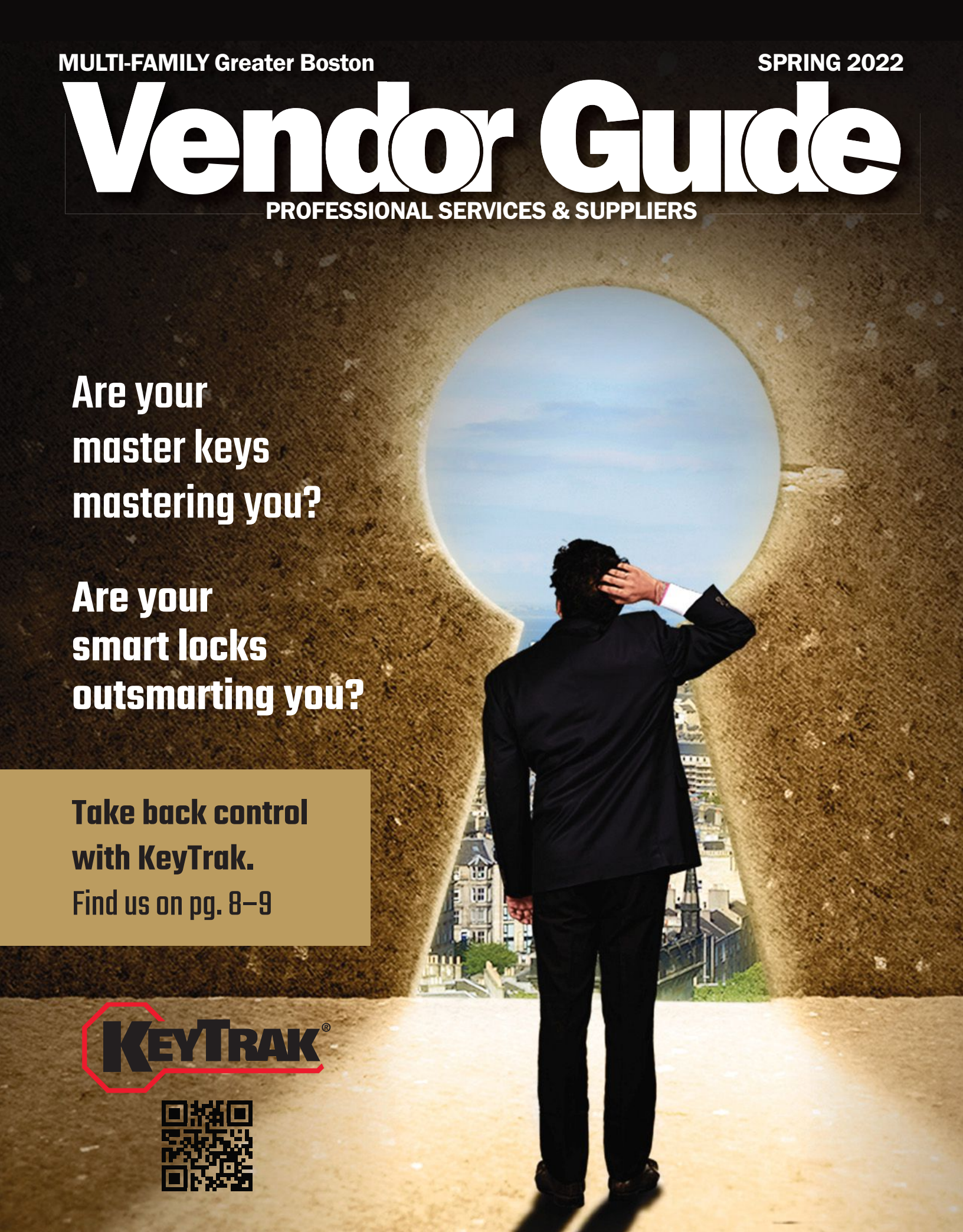
MULTI-FAMILY Greater Boston

SPRING 2022

Vendor Guide

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES & SUPPLIERS



The Key to Balancing Security & Convenience

By Carl Hanly, CAS, KeyTrak

As you go about your routine, think about how many decisions you make based on convenience. Maybe you order groceries online and pick them up curbside, have restaurant meals delivered to your doorstep, or stream your favorite movies and TV shows on demand. These services were once considered luxuries, but now they're a normal way of life for many of us.

In fact, according to YouGov America research, U.S. consumers value convenience so much that nearly a third prioritize functionality over security when selecting a mobile app. That same mindset is evident in the way many multifamily communities prioritize convenience over security when managing door access. There are two major culprits: master keys and smart locks.

Are your master keys mastering you?

For as long as most of us have been alive, multifamily communities have used master keys. It's not hard to see why. With master lock systems, employees don't have to juggle as many keys, which saves them time.

But efficiency isn't the be-all and end-all. Let's say someone forgets to update the key log. How do you know exactly who has removed a key, when, and why? If that key disappears, how much time (and money) will you waste looking for it and rekeying locks? The most important question is: What — or *who* — is at risk?

Are your smart locks outsmarting you?

Smart locks can be convenient for both residents and on-site staff. With just a code, fob, or smartphone, residents can easily unlock their doors. Property managers like that they don't have to track which employees have accessed each apartment and when. In addition, some would rather reprogram door access than cut new keys.

However, although electronic locks can be convenient, there are risks too. Programming key fobs or access cards seems easier than cutting new keys, but it's still time-consuming. As a result, some apartment communities program fobs or cards to access multiple apartments. This practice is no different from using master keys. Just as you shouldn't leave metal keys in an easily accessible location, you don't want to leave preprogrammed fobs or cards unsecured.

Another issue is that power outages, software glitches, or security breaches can temporarily disable the locks. Some electronic lock systems offer the option to use traditional metal keys as backups in these situations. However, if the property doesn't secure and track these physical keys, that's a liability risk.

Finding a Balance

While master keys and smart locks are complete opposites in terms of technology (one is old school, the other is the way of the future), they have one thing in common: they're convenient for users, but security suffers. With inadequate security, apartment investors, property owners, and management companies assume more risk. On the other hand, if keys are locked down like Fort Knox, it makes on-site staff's jobs harder.

The key is balancing security and convenience. Electronic key control systems provide that happy medium. All master keys, backup keys, and fobs or access cards can be secured inside a metal drawer only authorized users can access. When a key is removed, the system automatically creates an audit trail, eliminating the hassle of filling out a manual access log and reducing human error.

Like any technology, key control systems can be as simple or complicated as you make them. There are three things you can do to maximize security without hurting user friendliness:

- Ensure the system is installed correctly.
- Set up features and reports appropriate for your community.
- Train your employees how to use the system.

The right technology partner will walk you through all these steps.

Don't sacrifice security for convenience. To improve your key security, visit **keytrak.com/boston**.

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