

# Choose the Right Access Control Solution for Your New Property

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**W**ith new multifamily construction booming in San Antonio, property management professionals across the city are working on competitive strategies for marketing, leasing, and hiring. These are all critical elements of setting up a new apartment community for success, but before you hand over a key to that first resident, make sure you've thought through a key and access control strategy.

Key control is an important part of providing a safe, streamlined resident experience and protecting your reputation. The three most common key and access control methods are a manual process using a pegboard and logbook, electronic key control systems, and smart locks. Which one is right for your property? Use the criteria below to help you decide.

## 1. Your Target Demographic

Are you building a smart community geared toward younger generations? Do you expect retirees to flock to your property? The best access control solution for your property depends on who will be living there. For example, millennials and Gen Z are more likely to find smart locks appealing. Older generations, however, may prefer traditional metal keys.

If your property uses metal keys, you'll need to manage them with either a pegboard and logbook or an electronic key control system. The pegboard system will cost you less out of pocket upfront, but an electronic system is more reliable since it can securely store keys and capture a digital record of who's accessed those keys.

Even if you use a smart lock system, however, you may still need a method of key control for smart tokens that function like keys (fobs, cards, etc.) or for areas not outfitted with smart locks (storage sheds, offices, mailboxes, etc.).

## 2. Your Brand

Imagine being served wine in paper cups at a 5-star restaurant. Would that experience affect your opinion of the brand? Now imagine taking a prospect on a tour of a high-end property and whipping out a key attached to a paper label. How do you think that would affect the prospect's perception of your apartment community? Details matter.

Paper-based key tags and logbooks don't just give your prospects and employees reason to think your community is outdated, they're also present the risk of human manipulation and inaccuracy. Securely attaching keys to an electronic key control system's unlabeled tag or controlling access to apartments with a keypad or security token shows that you've thought through how you'll protect residents from unwanted access to their homes.

## 3. Scalability

Think about how you manage key and access control at existing properties. Is there a certain method or system that works well? Do you need to overhaul the key control situation at multiple properties? Do you anticipate needing a solution for new properties in the future?

Consider using the same key and access control method across multiple properties. This will make your life easier in a few ways:

- You can standardize employee training.
- You can use the same format for your key control reports.
- Purchasing and vendor management are simplified.
- Rolling out the solution at future properties is streamlined.

As I mentioned before, however, you should remember your target market and brand. For example, if you don't think smart locks are a good fit for a new property, don't implement them simply because you already use them at another apartment community.

## 4. Versatility

If your on-site personnel are stretched thin for time, having a key and access control method that includes time-saving features or applications will help your team do more with less. Manual key control methods such as pegboards are the least versatile since they can't do more than store keys.

Electronic key control systems, on the other hand, may offer options to manage resident packages, track employee time clocks, manage work orders, or even collect prospect data by scanning driver's licenses. With smart lock systems, you may have the option to offer self-guided tours if that's something you're interested in.

To decide what capabilities would give you the most value from your technology investment, consider your staff's daily tasks and their interactions, as well as any existing software.

## 5. Training and Support

As employees leave and your processes change over time, having an efficient training process is essential. Working with a technology partner that provides customized training services can help alleviate the training burden. They'll focus on showing employees how the tools work, while you can focus on educating your team on what your policies are and why they should follow them.

Getting a new apartment community up and running can feel like a race to the finish line, especially in a competitive market. It's easy for hiring, leasing, marketing, and other processes to bump key and access control down your priority list, but set aside the time to find a solution that works for you. Your property's residents and your reputation are worth it.