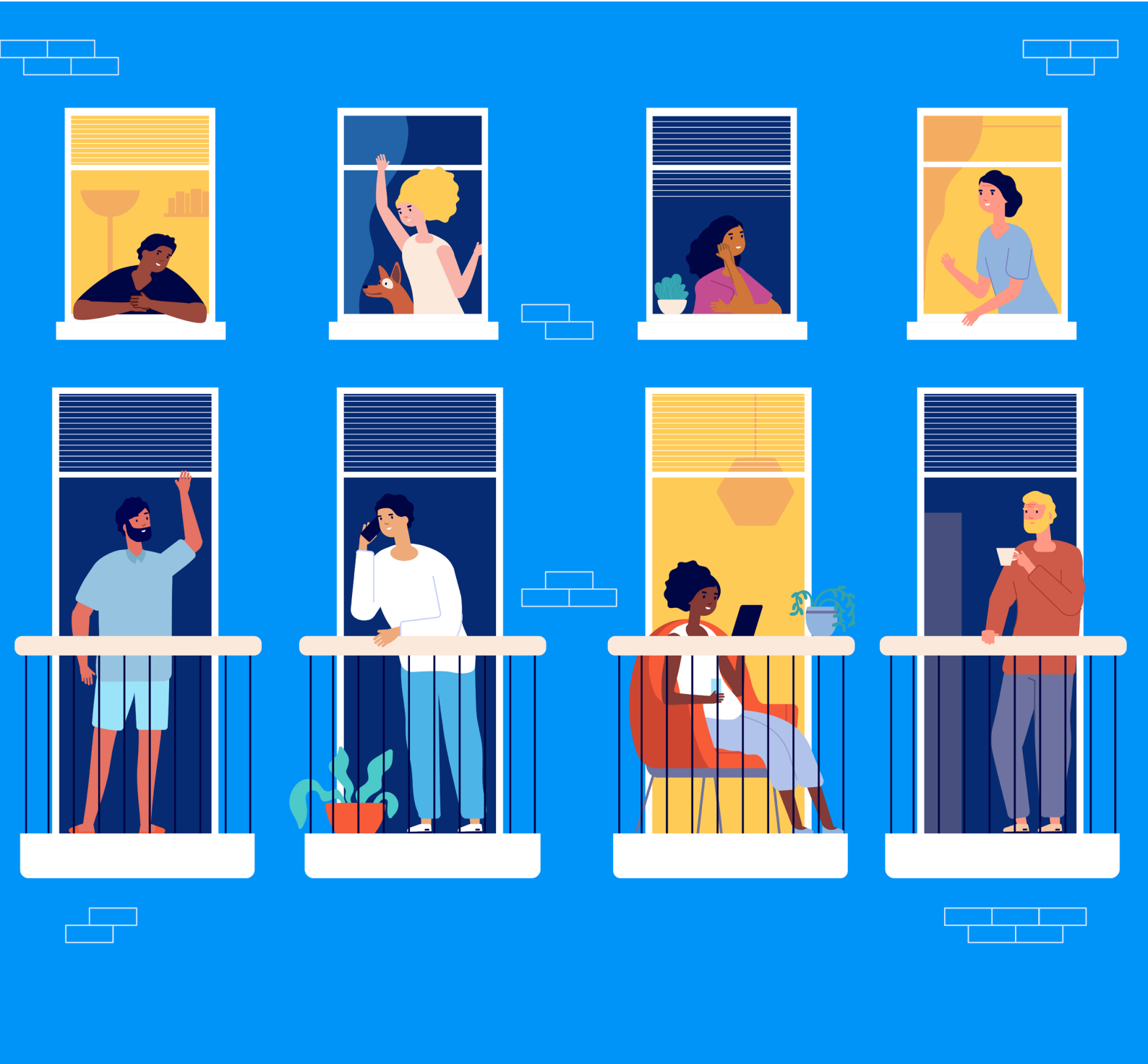


A GUIDE TO

# Marketing Apartments

TO THE NEXT GENERATION OF RENTERS



# Contents

- 1** Forward & Industry Challenges
- 2** Apartment Marketing Comes of Age (Digitally)
- 3** Implications for Apartment Marketers
- 5** Location, Location, Location!
- 6** Google Business Profiles: An Apartment Marketers' Competitive Advantage
- 8** Summary and Getting Started
- 12** Search + Display Advertising Cost Comparison
- 13** Summary and Getting Started

# FORWARD & INDUSTRY CHALLENGES

Benjamin Franklin was right when he said that change is the only constant in life. The disruptive effects of the pandemic, increased digitization of the multifamily industry, and a new generation of renters navigating a more connected society present challenges for those responsible for apartment marketing. The ability to adapt to these challenges can determine success or failure.

[\(Source: Multihousing News\)](#)

A recent nationwide survey conducted by the National Apartment Association (NAA) revealed that multifamily operators, regardless of their size or location, are facing a common set of issues:

- 1. Recruitment and retention of staff.**
- 2. Finding operational efficiencies**  
(Specifically: freeing up team members from labor intensive processes.)
- 3. Reducing costs.**

[\(Source: Multihousing News\)](#)

For multifamily marketing leaders, these issues, combined with shifting demographics and a flood of new technology choices, are forcing a reassessment of strategy, resourcing and marketing spend.

This guide will examine how changing demographics and emerging digital trends are impacting renter behavior and shaping marketing in this new environment.

**“Change is the only constant in life. Ones ability to adapt to those changes will determine your success in life.”**

**-Benjamin Franklin**



# APARTMENT MARKETING COMES OF AGE (DIGITALLY)



## The Renter Journey 2.0

The real estate industry has traditionally been one of the most change resistant verticals. However this is shifting quickly as upcoming generations, predominantly Millennial and Generation Z (or Zoomers, born mid-to-late 90s), are demanding immediate answers to their questions, and frictionless on-demand digital experiences.

**This group has never had to wait for information and they simply don't know a world without the Internet.**

With a very short attention span (8-12 seconds), this upcoming renter demographic values speed, convenience, and brand transparency. They are already having a potent influence on multifamily, and marketing leaders are being forced to rethink their brand and engagement strategies to better address these new behaviors and requirements.

The renter journey is also far less linear than in the past. Renters shift back and forth between one or more sources on the path to your property. This means that **engaging prospective renters effectively while they're searching** on their preferred channel(s), and displaying a high level of customer service and authenticity is key to winning the hearts and minds of this next generation renter.

## Important Generation Z Attributes:

They start their apartment search on Google. (Source: REACH survey, RentCafe)

75% use a smartphone over computers or other devices.

(Source: Institute of Business Management)

More than 80% use a search engine or marketplace environment. And when searching for an apartment size, price, and location matter most.

(Source: Yardi.com)

Establishing trust with Zoomers is vital when engaging with them as future customers.

Regular advertising doesn't work. 82% of Gen Z skip ads and more than half use ad blockers.

(Source: Kantar-Millward Brown Study)

# IMPLICATIONS FOR APARTMENT MARKETERS

## Know Your Audience.

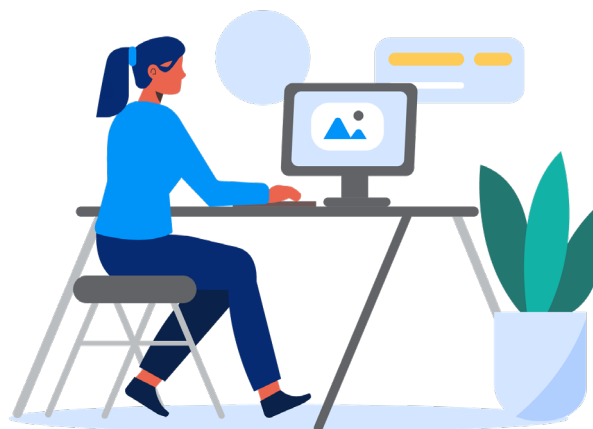
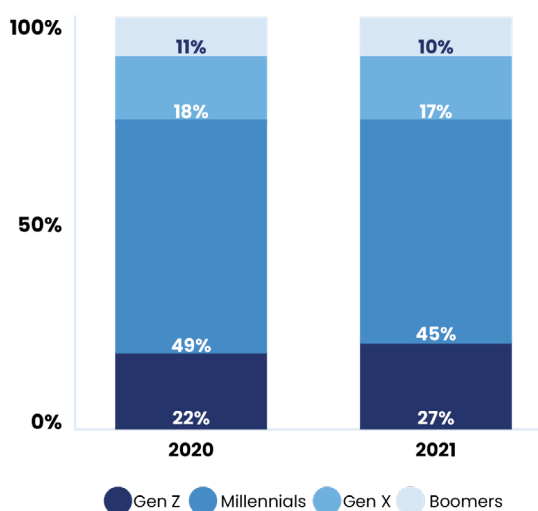
*“Consumer beliefs and behaviors are changing fast. To keep up with—and perhaps even influence—those changes, companies must leverage deep consumer insights.”*

(Source: McKinsey)

While the next generation renter may only represent one of several audience profiles or segments your organization targets, at 65 million strong this cohort has incredible buying power.

According to a study by [RentGrow](#), **Gen Z and Millennial renters make up 72% of the share of rental applications.**

**Share of Rental Applications by Generation**



## Keeping Up is Hard To Do

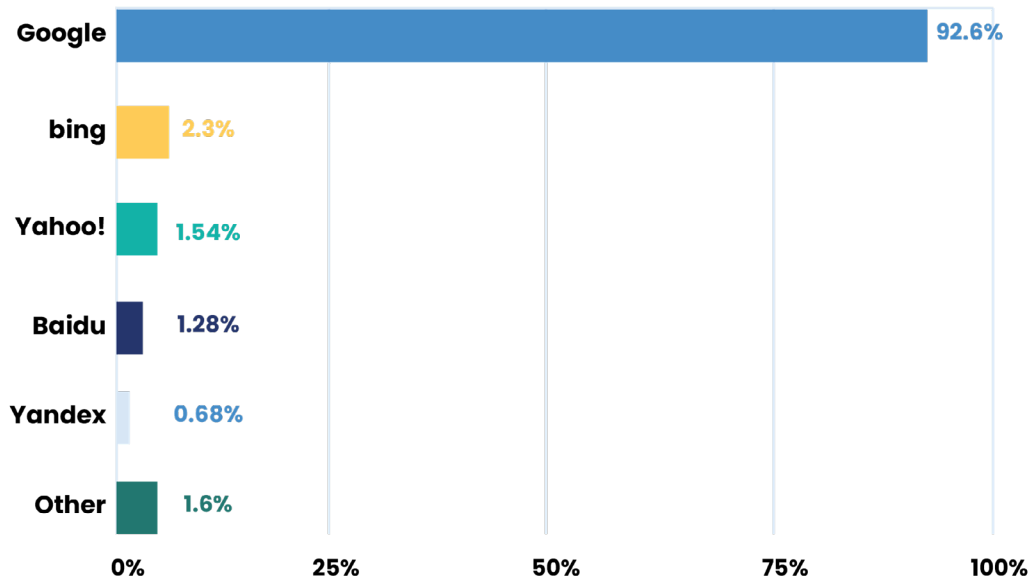
For marketers, navigating demographic changes in a rapidly evolving digital marketing environment presents new challenges.

Advances in technology have led to a proliferation of new digital channels, property tech and platforms that are providing considerably more avenues through which renters can discover properties of interest. This includes website and ILS listings, classifieds, social media platforms, Google Business, search marketing and display ads, review sites, chatbots, and more!

Choosing the right set of media and tools is imperative from a time, budget, skillset and performance perspective. **Every application or digital channel requires an investment in time and effort, a minimum level of knowledge, ongoing management, and performance monitoring.**

As the NAA survey highlights, resources are simply too few or too stretched to take care of all channels and associated tasks effectively. Additionally, the rising costs of paid advertising and ILS subscriptions is adding pressure on marketers to compete more cost-effectively. The automation and digitalization of manual marketing tasks is helping to streamline workflows

# Search Engine Market Share in 2021



and provides marketing leaders greater visibility into the performance of their programs and campaigns.

## A Perfect Match: Next Generation Renter + Local Search

The platformization of solutions is also creating new opportunities to engage prospective next generation renters where they're at, and while they're actively searching for their next place to live.

And this last point, "searching", is where marketers will find a tremendous amount of untapped potential to **find, reach and engage new residents more effectively, more immediately, and at a much lower cost than traditional paid advertising or ILS services.**

## THE SEARCH REVOLUTION

Search engines came about in the early 90s and over time have transformed the way we perform research, shop for products and services, and connect with others. Behind

most online destinations – whether it's a website, social network, or app - is a search engine.

**Search engines have become the connecting force and directional guide to everyday life, especially for the next generation of renters.**

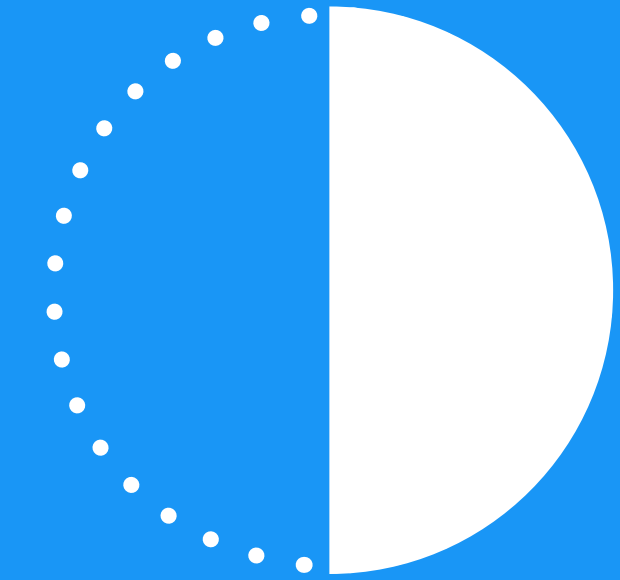
Search engine optimization (SEO) in simple terms is the process of improving your organization's website to increase its visibility when people are looking for products or services related to your business using search engines like Google, Bing, etc. The better visibility your website pages have in search results, the more likely you are to attract prospective and existing customers to your business.

Google handles over 90 percent of all search queries worldwide and is undoubtedly dominating the global search engine market share.

**"Search engine optimization (SEO) very much revolves around Google today."**

**(Loren Baker, Search Engine Journal)**

# Half of all Google Searches are Local.



## LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION!

Location-based marketing is a rapidly growing and increasingly effective marketing strategy for the multifamily industry. It allows organizations to target consumers based on their physical location and facilitates a more personalized and engaging consumer experience.

### Local Search + Google Business Profiles Evolve

In 2004, Google began improving results for queries that had a geographic intent (e.g. a restaurant, plumber, or other type of business or service provider in your city or town). In 2005 Google released “Local Business Center” and merged it with maps, thus creating a one-stop shop for local business information including location, driving directions, hours and contact information. This was a game changer for two reasons: it clearly distinguished organic SEO from local search and increased the

importance of keeping business location information up to date.

Unlike organic SEO which is more national and global in scope and focused on optimizing a business’s website to make it search engine friendly, **local SEO revolves around building reliability and gaining relevant signals around specific locations.** Local search encompasses terms such as:

**“apartments near me”**

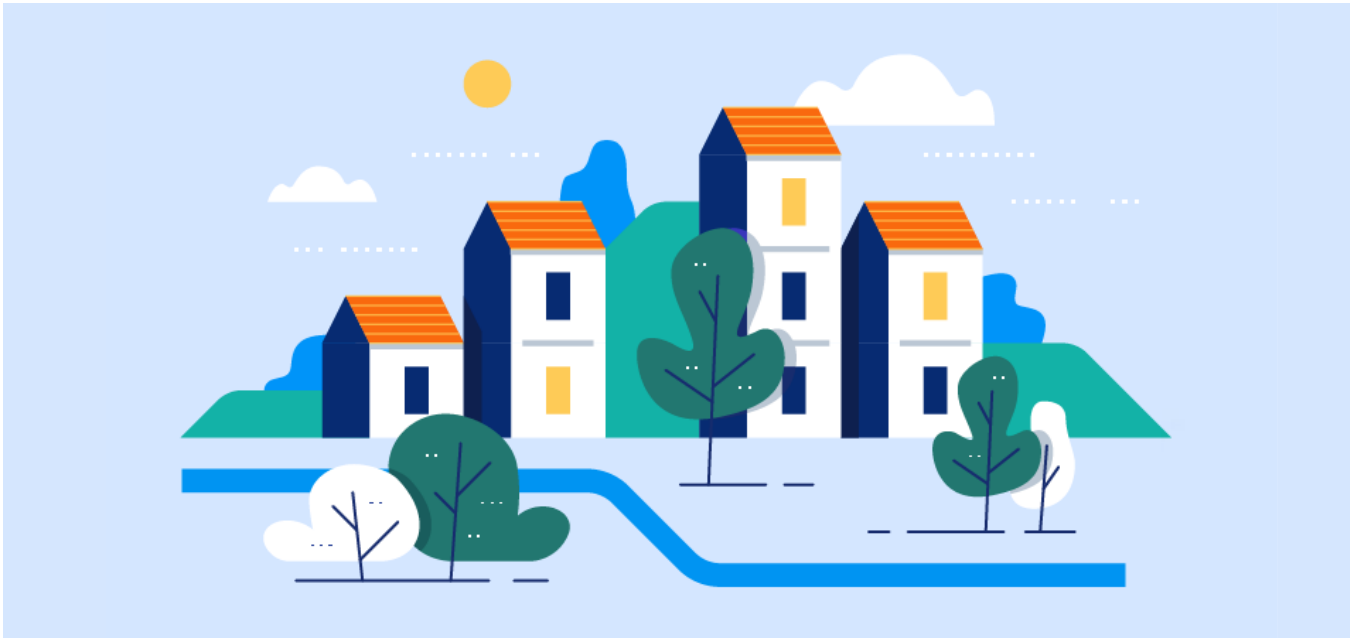
**“one bedroom apartment near landmark”**

**“apartments in city name or city, state”**

**“three bedroom apartments in neighborhood name”**

For these reasons, and combined with renter search behavior, **Google Business Profiles (formerly Google My Business) are fast becoming an apartment marketing imperative.**

Google business profiles are free to create and use, and are built into the number one traffic driver for websites globally - Google. Most importantly, a well-managed listing will drive traffic, increase retention, and nurture leads all at the same time and at a fraction of the cost of paid advertising.



## GOOGLE BUSINESS PROFILES: AN APARTMENT MARKETERS' COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

### The Benefits

A Google Business Profile has distinct advantages over paid search marketing (SEM) and traditional organic results (SEO). Profiles empower your organization to manage how your communities are discovered organically across Google products like Maps and Search.

### Your Community Google Business Profile is Free to Claim and Verify.

Verifying your profiles is key. When left unverified, profiles are not considered eligible by Google and will not show up in search results.

Additionally, ensuring your profile is complete and accurate is crucial to attracting quality traffic to your community website.

### A Real Example

The Bryant Apartments is a claimed, verified, and optimized community listing. For a prospect conducting a local search for “apartments near Charlotte, NC” the community shows up organically in both the “3-pack” (Google’s top 3 local organic search results) and in the map search results, as illustrated on the next page.






# GOOGLE SEARCH RESULTS EXAMPLE

## Google Local Search Results

Apartment s



Rating Hours

**The Bryant Apartments**  
4.3 ★★★★★ (71) · Apartment building  
2020 Morton St · +1 980-276-2324  
Open · Closes 6 p.m.  
Online appointments

[Website](#) [Directions](#)

**The Village at Commonwealth**  
4.3 ★★★★★ (242) · Apartment building  
1308 Lorna St · +1 704-270-3582  
Open · Closes 6 p.m.

[Website](#) [Directions](#)


**The Crown of Queen City**  
4.6 ★★★★★ (99) · Apartment building  
101 W Morehead St · +1 980-580-6693  
Open · Closes 6 p.m.

[Website](#) [Directions](#)


[→ View all](#)

## Google Local Map Search Results


**Apartments @ Eleven240**  
3.9 ★★★★★ (85)  
Apartment building · 11240 Woolwich St  
Open until 6:00 p.m.




**Citra Luxury Apartments**  
3.4 ★★★★★ (203)  
Apartment building · 1825 Carrington Oaks Dr  
Open until 6:00 p.m.




**The Bryant Apartments**  
4.3 ★★★★★ (71)  
Apartment building · 2020 Morton St  
Open until 6:00 p.m.  
Online appointments




**Live at NoDa Apartments**  
4.6 ★★★★★ (138)  
Apartment building · 2120 N Brevard St  
Open until 6:00 p.m.

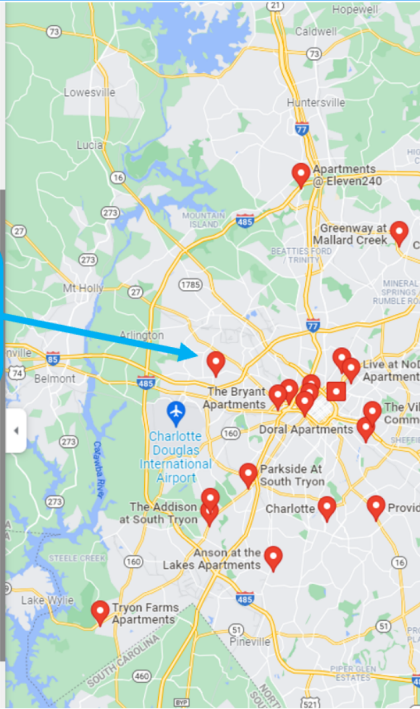


**Charlotte**  
No reviews  
Apartment building · 6205 Morrison Blvd



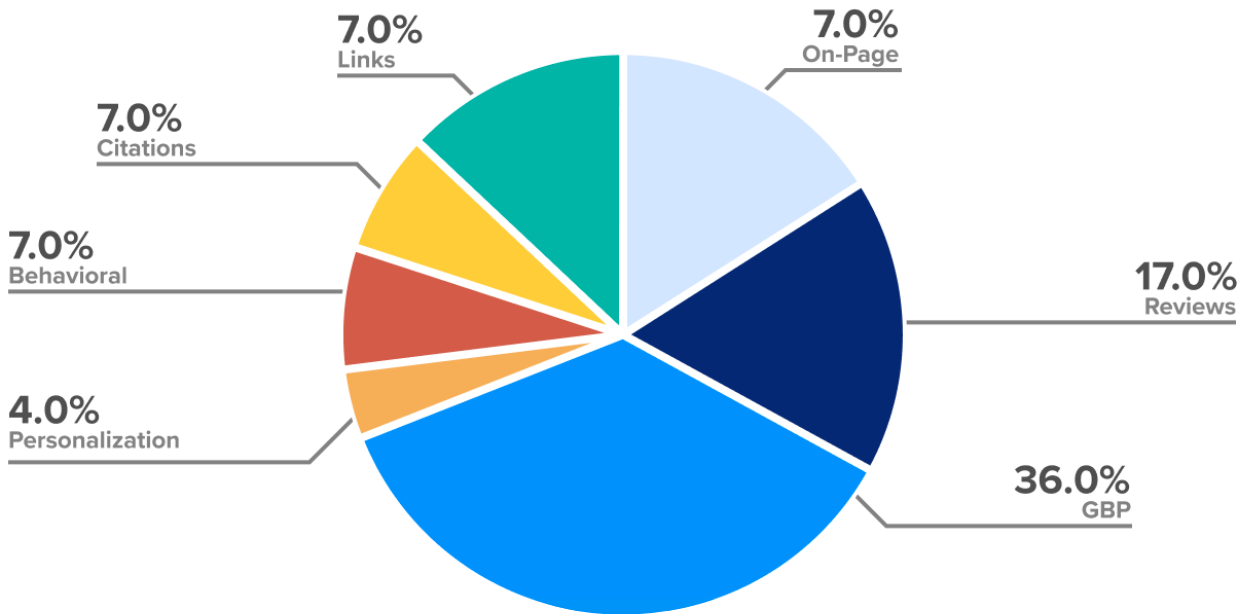
**Anson at the Lakes Apartments**  
4.2 ★★★★★ (792)  
Apartment building · 8000 Waterford Lakes Dr





A blue arrow points from the 'The Bryant Apartments' listing to its location on the map.

## Google Local Pack/Finder Ranking Factors



Source [WhiteSpark.com](https://www.whitespark.com) Ranking Factors Annual Report

## 7 SECRETS TO LOCAL SEARCH RANKING SUCCESS

Beginning in 2008, the factors that matter most for local search results have been determined by a group of global local search experts. Their findings are compiled annually and consistently rank Google Business Profiles (formerly GMB) as a top factor.

### Local Search: The 7 Ranking Signals Explained

#### #1. Google Business Profile

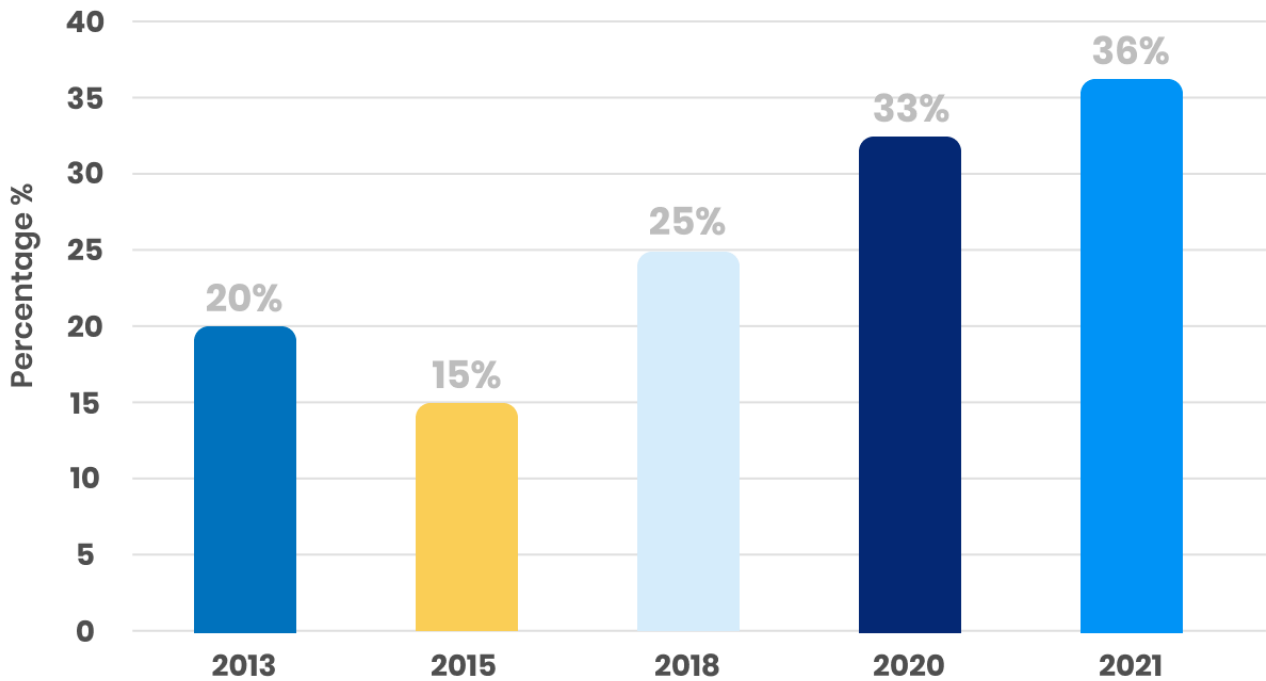
The most important local SEO ranking factor is Google Business Profiles (see signal ranking chart below). Properly setting up your Google Business Profile (GBP) listing is an integral part of getting your business noticed by both Google and potential residents. Given that GBP

is one of the first things that apartment seekers come across when searching for an apartment, it is absolutely essential to have your listing claimed, verified, optimized, and managed.

Google's search algorithm uses GMB signals such as proximity, contact information, categories, reviews, and updated content to analyze and determine where and when your community is shown to people. This means that apartment marketers need to not only claim, verify, and optimize their GBP community listings but ensure there is an ongoing effort to manage profiles to enhance search results visibility.

A lack of activity, such as posting fresh content, responding to questions asked, or addressing good and bad reviews is a recipe for failure. It limits signals to Google, and can affect the "trustworthiness" of your profile, all of which impacts local search results.

## Rise Of GBP Factors Change Over Time



To maximize how often prospects find your community in local search results, ensure that your Google Business Profiles are accurate, complete, and engaging. Here are just a few best practices specific to the apartment industry:

1. **Claim or create Google Business Profile listings for your communities (it's free!)**
2. **Verify your listings to establish legitimacy**
3. **Ensure your community branding is visible**
4. **Enter community information (address, local phone, etc.)**
5. **Verify your community location(s)**
6. **Select the correct business categories**
7. **Keep your hours accurate**
8. **Manage and respond to reviews**
9. **Monitor your profile Q&A**
10. **Post relevant content like offers, events, and updates to the post section**

**11. Upload high-resolution photos**

**12. Share links to book a virtual or in-person tour**

### The Anatomy of a Profile

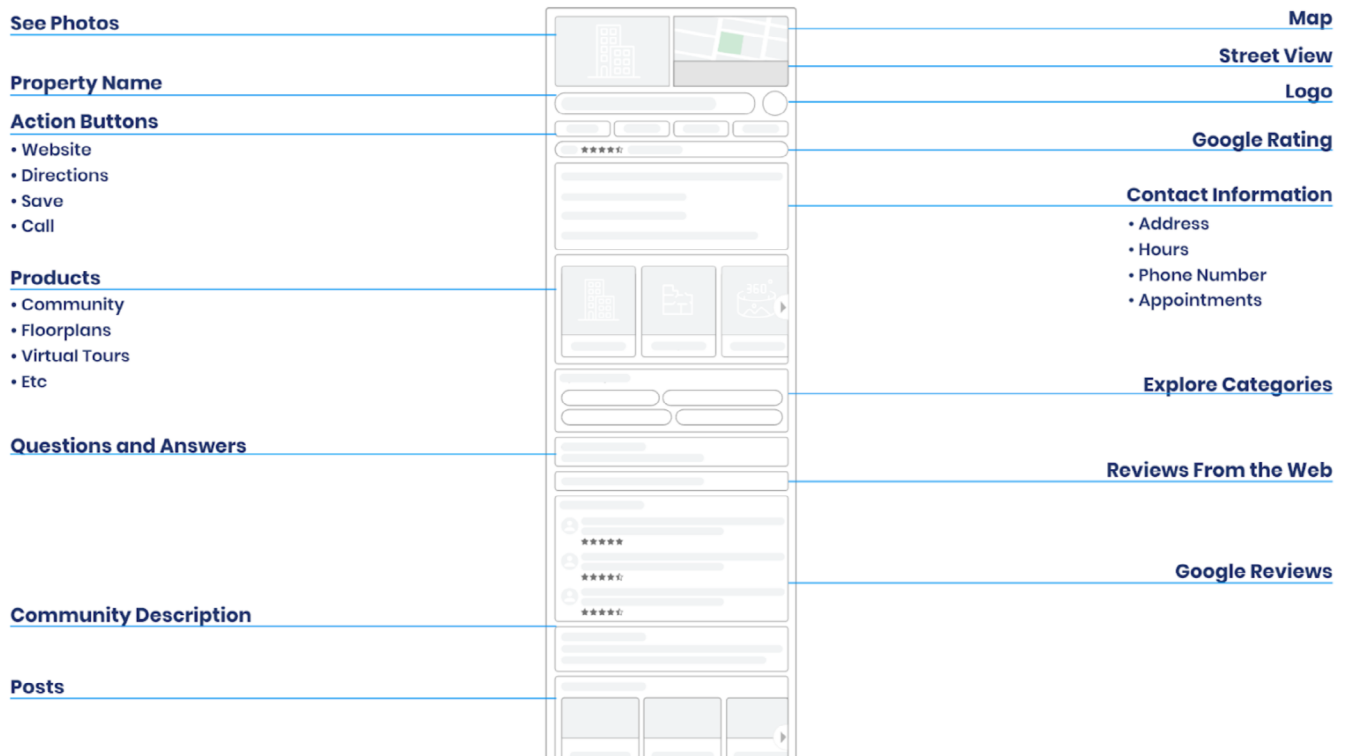
**"Google is the new homepage"**

**- Mike Blumenthal, Co-Founder, GatherUp.**

The opportunity to generate interest directly from your Google Business Profile should not be underestimated. If you don't have a Google Business Listing, you are missing out on an enormous opportunity to generate more traffic and subsequently, more business.

Take a quick look at the anatomy of a profile (page 10) and it's easy to understand how a complete and current profile is now upstaging your community website. Aside from offering a one-stop resource of information about your community on Google, it has the unique advantage of building brand credibility and transparency through reviews and ratings, questions, and other user generated content such as photos.

# The Anatomy of a Google Business Profile



## #2. Reviews

They are essential for all consumers, but especially Gen Z. They're very resourceful when it comes to finding the information they want and verifying it. This has profound implications for multifamily in terms of brand authenticity. Reviews can help your brand be upfront and transparent.

There are a few things to keep in mind regarding your reviews: score, content, volume, velocity, spread, and responses. You don't want a perfect review score, the sweet spot is between 4.2 and 4.5. Scoring in this range will attract prospects because you have a good overall score that doesn't seem fake.

Google also looks at the content and volume of reviews. Keywords used by reviewers and the number of reviews you

get will improve your chances of ranking well in local search results. Review velocity refers to the rate at which your reviews come in. If you get a few reviews here and there, that's a natural pattern. If you get a massive number of reviews on a single day and then none for several weeks, Google will identify this as an unnatural pattern and it may negatively affect your ranking. Review spread is also a factor.

Google reviews are definitely the most important but it benefits you to get reviews across other platforms such as Facebook, Yelp, ApartmentRatings and ModernMessage.

Finally, it's important to respond to every review – yes, even the positive reviews should get a reply!

### **#3. On-Page**

The on-page content is what makes a web page worthy of a search result position. It's what the user came to see and is extremely important to the search engines. This is why on-page signals make up 16% of local ranking factors. Elements like title tag optimization, structured data markups and URLs, image optimization, XML sitemaps, and so on. Each of these technical elements can affect a page's organic search results. If you haven't analyzed your site lately, Google Search Console is a great place to start.

### **#4. Links**

Google's local algorithm looks at links differently, valuing local links regardless of domain authority. In Local SEO, the important factor is that the link comes from a local business or website.

**Multifamily communities that get involved in the neighboring area can build local links relatively easily through relationships they already have.**

Establish a neighborhood page on your community website and offer to link to businesses that link back to you. Local sponsorships, events and press releases are also great opportunities to build backlinks. To get started, use a tool to analyze your competitors' links to inform your efforts moving forward.

### **#5. Behavioral**

These signals are user engagement that Google can track, like mobile clicks to call, clicks for directions, to read reviews, view photos, and so on. It's easy to manipulate

links and reviews, but it's difficult to fake real-world engagement. The more people that interact with your Google Business Profile, the better your behavioral signals will be. SEO experts say it's likely that these behavioral signals will continue to gain importance as Google finds better ways to track actual user engagement.

### **#6. Citations**

Citations are mentions of your community's NAP across the web. NAP stands for Name, Address, and Phone number. They make up about 7% of the ranking factors and there are two kinds: structured and unstructured. The most common for multifamily communities are structured citations and they usually come in the form of directory listings, where the NAP is presented in a strict line-by-line format. Unstructured citations occur when your NAP is listed but in an unstructured format, such as in long-form content on a blog post or news article.

### **#7. Personalization**

Google used to personalize search results based on the search history of the device conducting the search, using past searches you've made to influence the search results you're seeing. Personalization is much less of a factor today and the importance of this signal will likely continue to decrease.

### Average Advertising Costs\*

	Search (PPC)	Traditional SEO	Display Advertising	Google Business Profile
Average Cost Per Click	\$1.43	-	\$4.66	no cost
Average Cost Per Call	\$40	-	\$117	no cost
Average Monthly Spend	\$1500	\$500	\$1000	no cost

# ADVERTISING COSTS COMPARISON

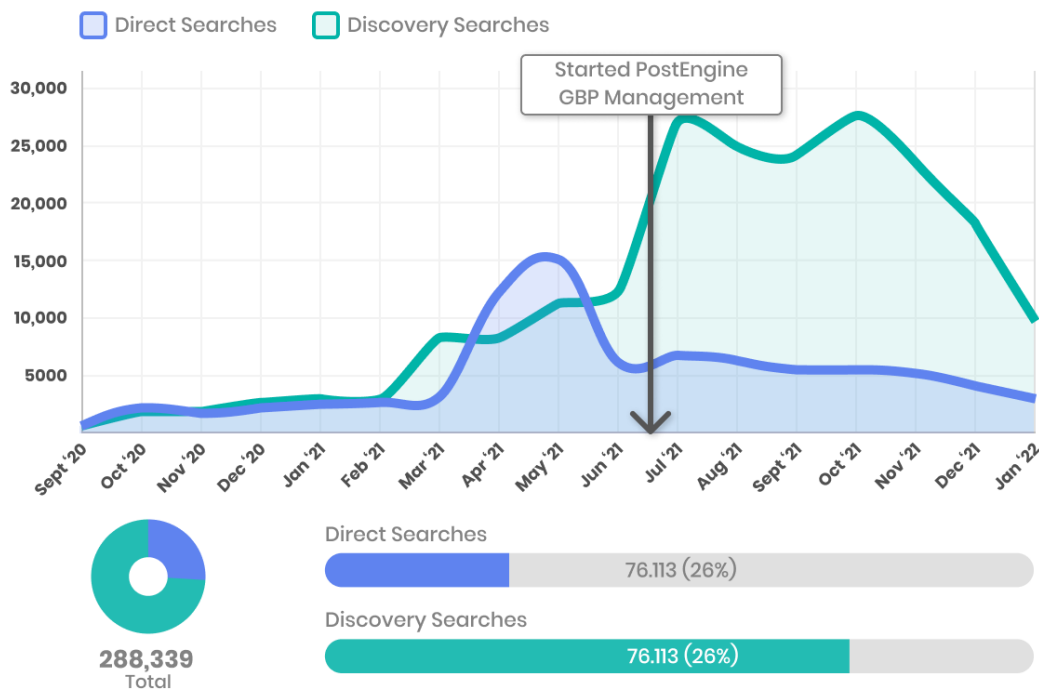
Unlike paid search or display advertising, a Google Business Profile offers a form of high-quality and free advertising on Google. It provides you with targeted exposure on the world's most trusted search engine and it costs nothing, other than time. See the ad cost comparison table above.

## Results

In addition to advertising cost-savings, the benefits of a well-managed profile are illustrated in the chart below.

Optimizing a profile, consistently posting quality content, and responding to reviews and questions can boost results, as shown in the reporting of an actual community's profile. Note the dramatic increase in Discovery Searches (those coming from generic search terms, such as 'apartment near me').

### Search Analytics Before and After Optimization and Management\*



\*(Sources: [WordStream](#) + [LOCALiQ](#), [Search Engine Journal](#))

# SUMMARY AND GETTING STARTED

Companies that develop an understanding of the changed behaviors, key moments, and habits of their target customers —and that respond by adjusting their marketing accordingly—will be best positioned to thrive.

Meeting prospects, especially the next generation renter, is about engaging them where they are. That means ensuring they can find you while they're searching for an apartment on Google.

For these reasons, Google Business Profiles are fast becoming an ideal way for apartment marketers to update their marketing strategies, gain a competitive advantage and generate qualified leads more cost-effectively than with paid ads or ILS services.

## Where to start.

Getting started is easy. Plus, we've included some helpful resources below.

### Resources

Speak with a GBP Apartment Marketing Expert:

**Email:** [sales@postengine.com](mailto:sales@postengine.com)

**Phone:** (206) 735-3239

Learn more:

[www.google.com/business](http://www.google.com/business)

[www.postengine.com/google](http://www.postengine.com/google)

