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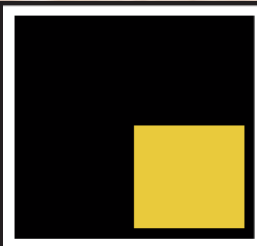
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## What's in your toolbox?

## Welcome to the Facility Manager's Handbook

It's said that there's never a slow day in property management.

There's a need to keep detailed records, conduct inspections, show rental properties, create and execute a marketing plan, screen tenants, maintain the physical plant and provide accurate accounting, among many other tasks.

Property management is challenging, but there are ways to operate efficiently and successfully. In this ongoing series of e-books, we'll be examining the challenges specific to landlords and facility and property managers.

To begin with, we examine the recently signed law, SB-126, that revises the circumstances under which a tenant can stop eviction, updates rights to rental assistance and rewrites portions of the Fair Housing Law. Perhaps most importantly, it allows tenants to pay rent in arrears up until the day of the eviction hearing. The bill's sponsors, who worked with property managers, say it provides an opportunity to collect back rent without slowing the process in any way.

As workers return to offices after an extended time away, John Reuter, CEO of NewVo Interiors, sheds some light on what the new normal will look like. The new, hybrid office is as much a cultural space — a place to cultivate and foster relationships — as it is a place to be productive. Reuter reveals what those designs will look like and how you can incorporate them into your commercial spaces.

How about first impressions? When someone approaches your property or your campus, the first thing they will see are your grounds, such as the grass, trees and shrubs. The condition of your landscaping — like it or not — says a lot about who you are as an institution. NH Business Review columnist Mark Aquilino discusses when, and why, you should show extra attention to your property.

Just as the property management industry evolves, so, too, do the tools managers use to increase efficiency. We take a look at five top software and applications that are becoming an invaluable part of doing business.

Welcome to the first issue of the Facility Manager's Handbook.

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# Property Management Law

**NEW BILL UPDATES TENANT/LANDLORD RIGHTS:**

## How it affects you as a property manager

BY BILL BURKE

**A** new bill introduced in the spring to the New Hampshire Senate and just signed into law by Gov. Chris Sununu rewrites the state's Fair Housing Law, revises the circumstances under which a tenant can stop eviction and updates a tenant's rights to rental assistance.

The bill, SB-126, was sponsored in March by Sen. Rebecca Perkins Kwoka (D-Portsmouth) and passed both the House and Senate before being sent to Sununu.

"This bill was intended to bridge a gap during an unusual time," Perkins Kwoka says. "And it ended up as being a good housing compromise."

The bill does three things:

- It forbids landlords from evicting tenants for non-payment if the tenant pays the overdue rent. (Payment after notice.)
- It allows tenants to seek rental assistance prior to being served an eviction notice. (Eviction notice not required.)
- It revises New Hampshire's Fair Housing Law. (Discriminatory actions.)

Perkins Kwoka worked with property managers and landlords, New Hampshire Legal Services and the Apartment Association of New Hampshire to craft the bill.

"Originally, we wanted to extend the non-payment of rent period from seven days to 30 days," she says. "When I put it in the bill, I heard from a landlords association and legal aid, and we worked together to come up with a different compromise that accomplishes the same thing — giving renters even more time to pay rent in arrears."

### Payment after notice

According to the bill, action based solely on non-payment of rent shall be dismissed if "the tenant, at any time prior to the hearing, pays to the landlord ... all rent due," and "the landlord also submits prior to the hearing date a receipt of such payment to court and states in writing that a copy of same receipt has also been forwarded to the tenant prior to the time and date of the hearing on the merits. If the landlord fails to file such receipt the hearing on the merits shall proceed, and if the tenant proves that payment has been made ... the case shall be dismissed."

However, it goes on to state that a tenant may not avoid eviction for nonpayment of rent by citing the law more than three times in one year.

"For a long, long time, the very short period of time

**“ The landlord has the same rights as before the law. They can trial an eviction notice after seven days of non-payment. But now the tenant has up until the date of eviction hearing to make the payment on rent. ”**

— SEN. REBECCA PERKINS KWOKA  
(D-PORTSMOUTH)

a tenant has had to cure non-payment by paying what they owe was a real problem for people who needed assistance trying to catch up on their rent,” says Elliot Berry, managing attorney and housing project director at New Hampshire Legal Services. “Basically, it was a seven-day period. It was a problem from the get-go.”

### Eviction notice not required

The bill states that the governing body and overseers of public welfare “shall not require the issuance of an eviction notice before providing rental assistance.” Typically, tenants who are behind in their rent will go to social service agencies or organizations seeking help with the payment. Those groups would often ask for copies of the eviction forms. With the passage of the bill, that was no longer mandatory.

“The landlord can still serve the eviction notice, but it will have to go through the court process,” Perkins Kwoka says.

An eviction notice may be required to assist the applicant in documenting emergency needs for emergency assistance, timely application and decision-making, and referrals to other agencies with eviction notice requirements for consideration of additional rent arrearage assistance.

And while relief funds became available due to the pandemic, it was arriving slowly.

“Significant resources were on the table to enable people to get help paying their rental arrear issues,” Berry says. “But the process of obtaining that help took a lot longer than the seven-day period which was set forth in the existing law. So, it was a very good time to do the sensible thing for all involved, which would be to give the tenant the right to pay-and-stay right up to the time of the hearing.”

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## Discriminatory actions

SB-126 also updates New Hampshire's Fair Housing Law, which was previously revised in 2018 to prohibit discrimination based on gender identity. The law also prohibits discrimination based on age, sex, sexual orientation, race, religion, marital status, familial status, disability or national origin. The bill now prohibits various activities that support blockbusting: scaring homeowners into selling at a lower price based on claims that an undesirable minority group is moving into the neighborhood. It also includes exemptions to the Fair Housing Law. For example, it does not apply to someone renting out a room in a primary residence. There are also exemptions to allow housing for older residents, among others.

The first two sections — payment after notice and eviction notice not required — took effect upon passage. The third section, regarding discriminatory actions, will take effect Jan. 1, 2022.

"I know the pandemic hit our renters particularly hard," Perkins Kwoka says. "Over 50% of renters experienced COVID-related job loss. The pandemic pushed people already living on tight margins close to homelessness. As a policy, it's better to keep a tenant who can pay rent in their home. That way, they can focus on finding a new job or taking care of their family instead of just looking for housing."

## How SB-126 could affect property managers

Because the bill included input from stakeholders on all sides, the solutions benefited both property managers and landlords and tenants.

"The landlord has the same rights as before the law," Perkins Kwoka says. "They can trial an eviction notice after seven days of non-payment. But now the tenant has up until the date of eviction hearing to make the payment on rent."

That process typically takes between 60-120 days. The bill was also written to protect property manager and landlords' rights.

"In order to make it fair for the landlords, the tenant also has to include service or process fees incurred during the process," she says.

The bill also allows property managers and landlords to collect rent owed, without drawing out the timeline.

"The way the bill was written — and this was important — is that it was designed so it doesn't hold up the process in any way," Berry says. "If the tenant can raise money by the hearing, the eviction goes away. Or, if they can't, the eviction proceeds as quickly as it would have. Nothing changes except for the tenant's right to cure that non-payment over a longer period of time." ■

# Designing the Hybrid Office

BY JOHN REUTER  
CEO, NEWVO INTERIORS

**A**fter more than a year since the start of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the business world is adapting and redesigning what work looks like.

Creating environments — cultural spaces — that are collaborative, flexible and foster relationships is key to creating this new workplace.

We've all heard terms like, "the new normal" and "hybrid work environments" as descriptors for the future of the business landscape, and how offices will no longer be dependent on all their employees being physically present in the office to effectively get things done.

But what does the hybrid office of the future really look like?

The hybrid office, and the term hybrid in itself, is the idea that organizations will have an office environment in which both physical workers (those in the office) and remote workers collaborate in real time. Hybridity promises organizations the benefits of remote working capabilities, like increased flexibility across teams, increased employee satisfaction and a reduced carbon footprint, coupled with the strengths of traditional in-person work, like face-to-face collaboration, smoother communication, informal networking, and the fostering of beneficial employee relationships through team-bonding.

However, for organizations to effectively implement hybridity within their walls, they'll need to redesign their traditional, cramped, cubicle-laden offices into a hybrid-optimized landscape by intentionally designing workspaces with unique furniture and design solutions; that's where we come in.

- Hybrid office designs of the future will be seen as a cultural space. Rather than a rigid layout of conference rooms and cubicles, these layouts will have flexible and adaptive furnishings, like those offered by innovative

manufacturers like Swiftspace, which allow employees to easily reconfigure their workspace to fit a variety of needs.

- The utilization of various alcoves where people can conduct impromptu meetings to share ideas and polish presentations are key for collaboration and maximizing creativity within the company.
- Mobile seating around high tables with acoustical dividers helps to separate conversations, ensuring multiple meetings can happen as employees come and go, while keeping conversations private and keeping residual noises or echoes at a minimum.
- An effective alcove or meeting area will be designed from the ground up and will be outfitted with furniture and acoustical solutions to strike a balance between openness and privacy. This balance will focus on collaboration to increase creativity.

Additionally, by exploring ways to incorporate technology and digital aids into the environment, we can help create a catalyst for higher-level conversations that propel the organization forward. This means that hybrid offices will need to have quickly adaptable and flexible layouts and designs like easily movable conference tables, mobile room dividers and flexible storage solutions to effectively use their space and recapture wasted real estate.

Effectively designing an optimal hybrid office is different for everyone and relies on each organization to know its own strengths, weaknesses, and requirements they'll need to balance employee needs with organizational goals. If you're ready to optimize your workspace for the future, come talk to us, we have the knowledge and resources to lead you into the future! ■

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# Cultivating your commercial property's first impression

Landscaping is about managing your property's appearance to maximize its value

BY MARK AQUILINO

**We all know you only get one chance to make a first impression, and while that line has become cliché, it is cliché for a reason.**

When you arrive for that job interview either in person or via Zoom, and your tie is askew or your suit is ruffled — well, I wish I could tell you no one was going to notice. I would be lying, though. They are definitely going to notice.

In a job interview or a business meeting, you are presenting yourself and you want your personal presentation to be professional, neat and tidy. It is not about dazzling them with your stylish wardrobe, but one way or the other, you will be sending a powerful message with your attire — so make it a good one.

Business owners and commercial property managers should think about their grounds in the same way. When someone approaches your property or your campus, the first thing they will see are your grounds: your grass and your trees and your shrubs. The condition of your landscaping — like it or not — says a lot about who you are as an institution.

If shrubs and trees are overgrown or your lawn is patchy, people take note, if not entirely consciously. In the same vein, if your landscaping is meticulously and thoughtfully maintained, people notice that as well. And isn't that the impression you want to make — that your institution is neat, tidy and detail-oriented? That says professional, impressive, powerful. It also says valuable.

Landscaping is not just about having some pretty flowers in the springtime; it is about managing your commercial property's





appearance to maximize its value, both for your current tenants and employees and future ones.

Even with businesses beginning to welcome back employees, there are fewer and fewer people in the office now. According to a survey by Prudential released this spring, 87% of respondents wanted to be able to continue working remotely post-pandemic. That is forcing businesses to adapt.

It is easy to assume larger facilities, campuses and office parks will go by the wayside now that companies are downsizing but when one company downsizes, it opens up an opportunity for another business. A building that once held one big company now can hold several smaller entities. Property managers may ultimately have more tenants, and that only reinforces the importance and impact of your grounds — and making that strong first impression.

Now is the time to invest in your property's appearance. A commercial landscaping provider should be playing a crucial role in managing your building asset. That is why it is critical your landscaping partner is a partner in the truest sense. The right company will help identify and follow through on short- and long-term objectives — and they should be helping you find areas to save money. The right company will rely on best practices to ensure your building asset maintains esthetic value and curb appeal reflective of your brand.

Proper grounds management adds value in terms of actual dollars. Any real estate agent will tell you a well-maintained property is likely to sell faster and for more money.

Take a look outside. Is there room for improvement? Probably. Are your shrubs overgrown? Can you see out the windows of the first floor? Kidding, probably. Does the lawn look fresh and green? Do your grounds offer people anything visually? Flowers? Trees? Stonework? Is your property offering a landscape or a blank, boring canvas?

We are constantly talking to our clients about how we can make improvements and enhancements to their grounds. Yes, it is possible your landscape has become so outdated or overgrown that a complete overhaul is necessary. More likely, your landscaping provider or your own in-house grounds team can just make a few strategic tweaks and adjustments to better preserve your building and property assets to maximize value.

You can add a few flowering trees and perennial flowers for some springtime beautification. Clean up the flower beds and the edges of the lawn. Trim and prune hedges and trees. Wash your walkways for a cleaner look. Pay close attention to your entryways — remember, first impressions. A few simple but strategically placed plantings might go a long way.

Clothes do not define the person and grounds do not define an institution. But clothes and grounds can similarly play an important role in making sure others view people and property through the appropriate lens. ■



**MARK AQUILINO IS PRESIDENT OF OUTDOOR PRIDE LANDSCAPE AND SNOW MANAGEMENT, MANCHESTER.**



# What's in your toolbox?

BY BILL BURKE

**T**he property management industry is evolving rapidly. Tracking tools that can increase efficiency and foster communication can change just as quickly.

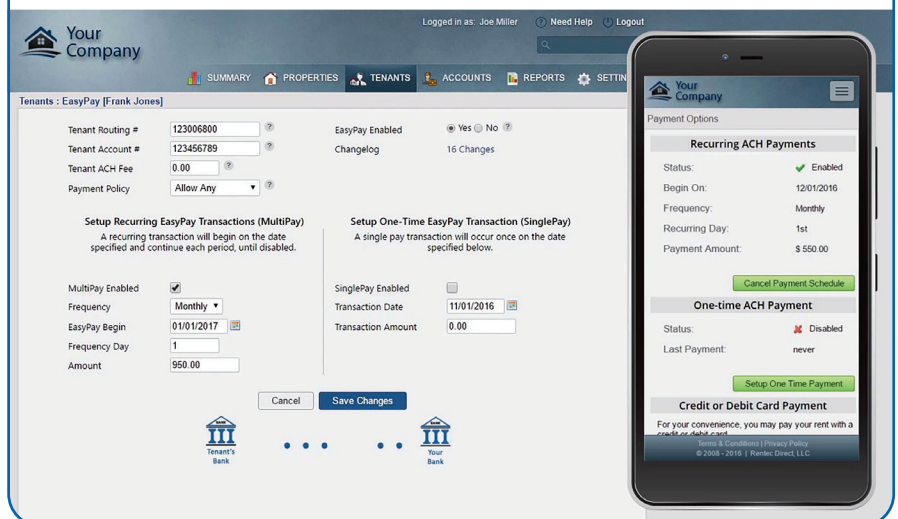
Software and apps allow landlords and property managers a chance to monitor and even complete tasks ranging from collecting payments and monitoring tenant requests to scheduling repairs and executing marketing campaigns.

Property managers are turning to software that combines digital platforms and amenity-laden mobile apps with software systems to offer a diverse and complete set of tools for managers and tenants alike. Cloud-based solutions provide an environment for easy and transparent communication with tenants.

Many of these solutions allow managers to monitor a tenant portal, receive online payments, manage vacancies and manage the organizations website.

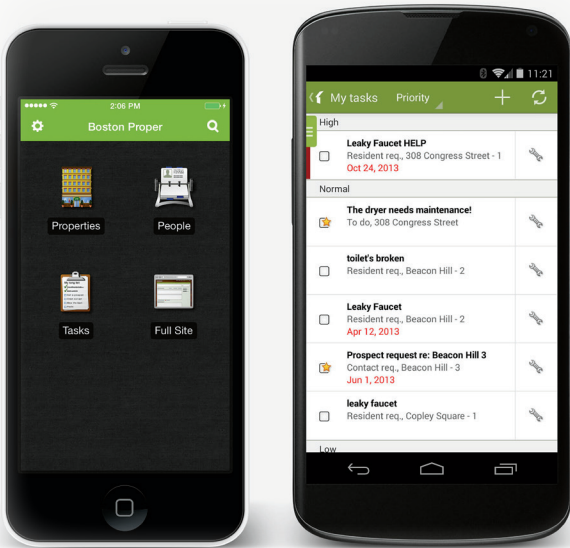
Here are five top property management apps that offer the ability to take on all of these tasks:

- **Rentec Direct** — This web-based software is for property managers and landlords, offering the ability to maintain bank, property and tenant records. It allows users to publish property vacancies, photos, details and prices to popular rental property websites. It includes a tenant-screening feature and uses two-factor authentication to ensure data remains secure. [rentecdirect.com](http://rentecdirect.com)

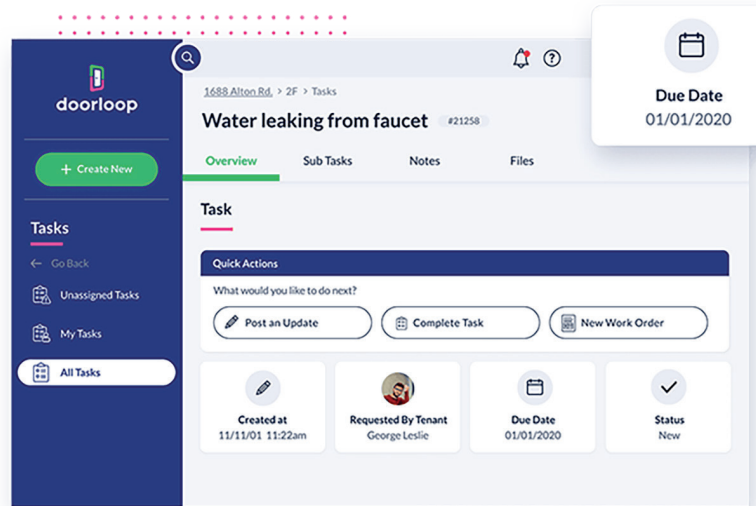
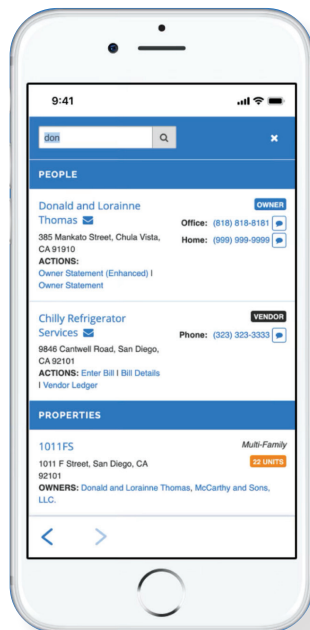


The screenshot displays the Rentec Direct web interface for a tenant named Frank Jones. The main content area is titled 'Tenants : EasyPay [Frank Jones]' and contains several sections for configuring payment options. On the left, there are input fields for 'Tenant Routing #', 'Tenant Account #', 'Tenant ACH Fee', and 'Payment Policy'. Below these are sections for 'Setup Recurring EasyPay Transactions (MultiPay)' and 'Setup One-Time EasyPay Transaction (SinglePay)'. The MultiPay section includes a 'MultiPay Enabled' checkbox, a 'Frequency' dropdown set to 'Monthly', an 'EasyPay Begin' date field, a 'Frequency Day' dropdown, and an 'Amount' field. The SinglePay section includes a 'SinglePay Enabled' checkbox, a 'Transaction Date' field, and a 'Transaction Amount' field. At the bottom of the main content area are 'Cancel' and 'Save Changes' buttons. On the right side of the interface, a smartphone is shown displaying the 'Payment Options' screen. This screen has a 'Recurring ACH Payments' section with 'Status: Enabled', 'Begin On: 12/01/2016', 'Frequency: Monthly', 'Recurring Day: 1st', and 'Payment Amount: \$ 550.00'. Below this is a 'One-time ACH Payment' section with 'Status: Disabled', 'Last Payment: never', and a 'Setup One Time Payment' button. At the bottom of the smartphone screen, there is a 'Credit or Debit Card Payment' section with a note: 'For your convenience, you may pay your rent with a credit or debit card.' The Rentec Direct logo and navigation menu are visible at the top of the web interface.

- **Buidium** — A cloud-based solution that provides accounting, lease management, tenant screening, contract renewal, lease management and tenant communication applications. Residents can request maintenance, make online payments and read messages from landlords in the tenant portal. [buidium.com](http://buidium.com)

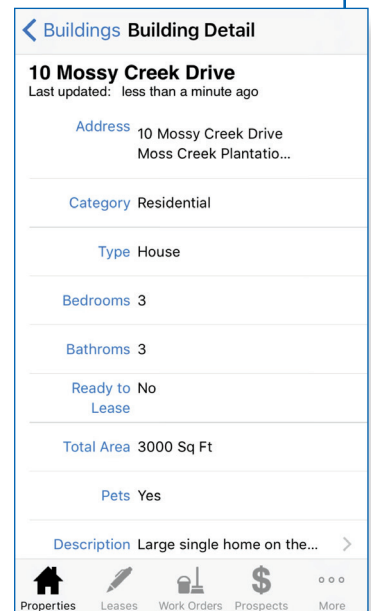


- **AppFolio** — Cloud-based, this app allows property managers to monitor vacancies, screen tenants, take rent payments, schedule maintenance, run marketing campaigns and analyze rent prices in the area using its RentMatch comparison tool. It also features tenant screening and creates work orders for properties in need of attention. [appfolio.com](http://appfolio.com)



- **DoorLoop** — A free app, DoorLoop helps manage tenant screening, maintenance, work orders, marketing and accounting. A tenant portal allows you to monitor prospects, lease renewals and active tenants. The accounting suite can generate financial statements and can allow rent payment through an automated clearing house (ACH). [doorloop.com](http://doorloop.com)

- **Propertyware** — Manage and market properties with this cloud-based solution, tailored for small and mid-sized businesses. It offers the ability to organize and share owner and tenant contact information, create renewals, lease management, write standard letters, sync schedules with Outlook and Google Calendar, and allow communication via a tenant and owner portal. [propertyware.com](http://propertyware.com)



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