

# “I SEE YOU”: The Growing Demand to Install Video Doorbells in Multifamily Buildings

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Security concerns are always at or near the top of the list of priorities in shared ownership communities. With personal home technology evolving at a dizzying pace, many homeowners are considering the installation of video doorbells such as those offered by Ring or Nest. However, for owners living in private residential communities, particularly in multifamily buildings, those owners may be subject to advance association approval requirements under the terms of their governing documents when it comes to installing the devices on their doors.

More and more owners wish to install these devices but some boards are reluctant to grant approval (assuming their advance approval is required) for fear of encountering complaints from other residents when the doorbell cameras may record the comings and goings of neighbors, their guests, and other visitors and invitees, like package deliveries, etc.

Video doorbells tend to have a fixed viewing range so it would be difficult to effectively argue that they unreasonably invade the privacy of a neighbor. Their usefulness is limited to seeing who is arriving at your door. If any portion of your neighbor's unit happens to be within range of your front door, an issue can arise inasmuch as the neighbor does not want your video recording his or her visitors as well. The desire for privacy is understandable but an owner has no reasonable expectation of privacy outside his or her unit. Certainly there is no expectation of privacy on the common elements.

Given the benefits of this technology and the growing popularity of same, it may make sense for a board of directors to pass a rule which allows the installation of these devices without making owners go through an individual approval process. However, I would limit that approval to the doorbell video only and

make the installation of any additional cameras dependent upon advance board approval as you don't want owners installing additional cameras in locations that could be deemed intrusive by others.

I would urge boards who just don't want to allow the devices for any particular reason to reconsider their position. Preventing your owners from taking advantage of the security benefits these devices offer could also subject the association and, possibly, the board to potential liability. Simply put, when owners wish to take advantage of technology for proper purposes, like security, it is better to encourage rather than prohibit such behaviors.