



From crisis to comeback: How The Metropolitan reclaimed its future

Introduction

The Metropolitan, a 14-story high-rise with 210 units in the heart of downtown Kansas City, was at a crossroads. Years of deferred maintenance, stalled capital projects, and mounting resident frustration had left the building in urgent need of transformation. From persistent plumbing issues, a mismanaged garage reconstruction, and even a fire in the penthouse commercial space, the board knew it was time for bold action. That's when board members Spencer Kaullen and Emma Soby led a competitive RFP process to find a new management partner. Enter FirstService Residential: a team whose

expertise, responsiveness, and hands-on support immediately set them apart. Their arrival marked a pivotal shift – revitalizing infrastructure, streamlining operations, and restoring resident confidence. What happened next is a story of renewal, resilience, and results.

A high-rise on the brink

For years, The Metropolitan had been stuck in a cycle of stagnation. With the same management company in place since its inception, progress was slow – and the consequences were costly. “They’d spent over \$4 million in special assessments with nothing to show for it,” recalled Dalton Malcolm, VP of Community Management at FirstService Residential. “The challenges were significant. We had to start over.”

Determined to break the cycle, Spencer and Emma took action. “Spencer and I were the driving force behind the search for a new property management company,” Emma explained. “We built the RFP from the ground up and led the charge to bring in FirstService. We were invested in making this change happen.”



The turning point

At The Metropolitan, plumbing problems weren't new – they were decades in the making. As Spencer put it, the building had been dealing with water issues for years, and by 2018, the pipes were so calcified that hot water could barely pass through. Yet it took the previous management company four more years to take action, and by then, the system was barely functional.

Then came the garage project, which was supposed to be a \$400,000 repair. Without permits, competitive bids, or engineering oversight, it spiraled into a \$3 million catastrophe. The garage was ultimately deemed unsafe and has been closed for two years, forcing residents to pay out of pocket for street parking that's often blocks away and hard to find.

These compounding frustrations made it clear: the building needed a new direction.



Rebuilding from the inside out

When FirstService Residential was selected, the team dove straight into action, tackling both long-standing issues and overlooked details. “We brought in engineers and architects, secured a \$5.7 million loan through FirstService Financial after a previous bank backed out, and began scoping the garage reconstruction and plumbing stack replacement,” said Dalton. “Our project management division took the reins so I could focus on other pressing issues.”

Emma echoed the impact: “FirstService Residential has an incredible network of professionals and

partners. It makes serving on the board easier. We don't have to hunt for trustworthy contractors or vendors – they already have relationships in place to deliver top-tier quality. That kind of reliability is priceless.”

Quick highlights: Impact at a glance

- \$40K–\$50K utility tax refund and ongoing savings
- \$12K saved yearly on waste management
- Staff available 7 a.m. – 11 p.m., weekends included
- Quick response time from on-site manager and team
- Proactive and fast action on repairs and projects
- New laundry, landscaping, and free convenience store
- Reliable hot water and unit shutoffs

A new era of living well

Plumbing system overhaul

Residents were fed up with unreliable hot water, calcified pipes, and building-wide shutoffs for even the smallest repairs. FirstService Residential responded with urgency and precision. Their solution? A water softener system and individual unit shutoffs – eliminating the need to cut water to the entire building for routine maintenance. It was a game-changer for comfort and convenience.

Garage reconstruction

Dalton's team brought in competitive bids, proper engineering, and a clear timeline. Emma shared, “I never even went inside the garage until this last week because it's been closed down the whole time I've owned here. I'm excited to see the building whole again.”

Spencer added, “We're not just fixing the garage's structural integrity. FirstService is elevating

everything – new lighting, a refreshed entryway. These upgrades help property values, and as board members, that's part of our responsibility.”

Fire incident and response

A fire in the penthouse commercial space had been mishandled by previous management, leaving a trail of confusion and missteps. “The insurance claim was botched,” Dalton explained. “We had to clean up the process, bring in remediation vendors, and educate the board on proper procedures. The claim exceeded \$2 million and is still ongoing.”

Spencer credited FirstService Residential for their steady guidance: “They were instrumental in helping us navigate a really tough time. They got us back on track.”



Operational improvements

FirstService Residential's impact goes far beyond capital projects. They've also transformed day-to-day operations:

- **Staffing & service hours:** Expanded staff coverage from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m., including weekends for improved resident experience.
- **Vendor partnerships:** New landscaping vendors, laundry room renovation, and a free convenience store amenity for residents.
- **Communication:** “Alejandro, our property manager, is incredibly committed,” Emma said. “Not a day goes by without an update. If I send an email, he replies within 30 minutes – every time. Residents love him. It's night and day from what we were used to.”



Financial wins

- **Waste Management Savings:** Switching to FirstService's negotiated rates saved \$12,000 annually on waste management contracts.
- **Tax exemption:** The management team filed for Missouri state utility tax exemption resulting in a refund of \$40,000–\$50,000 and ongoing savings.

From reactive to strategic

Spencer reflected on the transformation: “FirstService Residential has allowed the board to shift our focus from putting out fires to thinking strategically. With Alejandro and a strong corporate support team, everything has improved.”

Emma added, “I sleep better at night knowing FirstService is steering the ship.”



Looking ahead

With a revitalized board, improved amenities, and major projects underway, The Metropolitan is entering a new chapter. “I can’t say enough good things about how FirstService stepped in during such a chaotic, broken time,” Emma concluded. “I truly believe they’ll make lasting, positive changes for our building. They’re all in – and so are we.”

This case study was developed from interviews and meeting transcripts with Dalton, Emma, Spencer, and the board at The Metropolitan, Kansas City. For more information, visit [FirstService Residential](https://www.firstservice-residential.com).

About FirstService Residential

FirstService Residential is simplifying property management. Its hospitality-minded teams serve residential communities across the United States and Canada. The organization partners with boards, owners, and developers to enhance the value of every property and the life of every resident. Boards and developers select FirstService Residential to realize their vision and drive positive change for residents in the communities in their trusted care. FirstService Residential is a subsidiary of FirstService Corporation (NASDAQ and TSX: FSV), a North American leader in providing essential property services to a wide range of residential and commercial clients. www.fsresidential.com.



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