

Walsworth Properties offer their tenants the historic charm of yesterday;

AT&T Business Fiber gives them

# the network of tomorrow

- **Business needs** - Frustrated by its slow and unreliable network, Walsworth Property Management sought a powerful, dependable solution that would better serve its business tenants.
- **Networking solution** - AT&T Business Fiber delivers high-speed connectivity services to support tenants' data, applications, and cloud services.
- **Business value** - Tenants can conduct business virtually without interruption thanks to highly reliable throughput and consistent performance; managers can focus on their core responsibilities rather than troubleshooting network problems.
- **Industry focus** - Commercial property development
- **Size** - Privately held

## About Walsworth Property Management, Inc.

Walsworth Property Management is one of several real estate ventures owned by Michael Walsworth in West Monroe, Louisiana, an appealing southern enclave that once supported a thriving cotton industry. The crown jewel of the Walsworth properties is the Cotton Port Plaza Executive Suites, a group of offices housed in a historic church annex.

## Situation

Century-old structures like the Cotton Port Plaza are long on charm but sometimes short on modern conveniences. The property owner was generous in the amenities he provided for tenants, but the building's internet service provider was unable to supply the bandwidth to meet tenants' needs. Reliability was another issue that frustrated tenants and the building's manager. Cotton Port Plaza needed a robust, highly reliable network to support the important work of its tenants.



## Solution

AT&T replaced Cotton Port Plaza’s legacy internet service with AT&T Business Fiber, a highly reliable, high-speed solution that transports data at speeds up to 1 Gbps. The highly secure, customizable solution gives tenants all the bandwidth they need to do business at the speed that commerce today requires.

## Clean, green, and thriving

The historic town of West Monroe sits on the banks of the picturesque Ouachita River in northeast Louisiana. While the town’s earliest economy was based on cotton, it has since diversified and modernized. Today its major industries are retail, healthcare, social services, lodging, and dining. West Monroe’s commitment to protecting its beautiful parks and woodlands is evident in its new motto: “Clean and green.”

The small town has produced some big names in sports, show business, and other areas – even though it only has about 13,000 residents. It’s the hometown of basketball great Bill Russell, country star Andy Griggs, and the colorful Robertson family of TV’s “Duck Dynasty.”

Many of the buildings in West Monroe’s lively downtown are more than a century old. Walsworth Property Management owns more than a city block in this historic district, including the Cotton Port Plaza Executive Suites. The building, which once served as the classroom annex for West Monroe’s First Methodist Church, today houses 11 businesses, including attorneys, money managers, a hair salon, therapist, and other assorted operations. The offices are former classrooms, some with adjoining doors for businesses that need additional space.

The building is owned by Michael Walsworth, a real estate developer who’s also a state senator representing constituents in Louisiana’s Ouachita, Claiborne, Morehouse, Union, and West Carroll parishes. The senator’s governmental duties often require his presence in Baton Rouge, so the day-to-day operations of Cotton Port Plaza Executive Suites are managed by Teresa Hicks.

## Preserving a historic past

West Monroe has created a healthy business community by building on its past. Cotton Port Plaza is part of the city’s Antiques Alley, a collection of specialty shops, restaurants, antique malls, boutiques, and meeting spaces, including Miss Kay’s Sweets & Eats, a shop owned by Kay Robertson, the matriarch of Duck Dynasty’s Robertson clan.

Cotton Port Plaza, the First Methodist Church, the old parsonage, and many other neighborhood buildings are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Federal government's official list of properties worthy of preservation.

Michael Walsworth has been renovating his properties, including the church and its associated buildings, which will be 100 years old next year. "Any renovation takes time, and that's especially true for buildings like this that fall under historic preservation," Hicks said.

He's passionate about the project, she said. "You don't get to be part of preserving a 100-year-old building very often. I feel blessed that I get to be part of that. I want to help preserve this building and help Mike take care of his tenants and customers."

## The need for speed

Customer service is a key element of Walsworth's way of doing business. "Mike's philosophy has always been, 'Take care of the customer, and the rest will follow,'" Hicks said.

Part of this involves charging customers a flat fee for their rent, which includes amenities unheard of in most commercial real estate contracts these days, including internet service, phone and fax lines, utilities, and even cable service. "They also get access to our training and conference rooms and they can even use the entire building for fundraisers or other events, at no charge."

Most tenants are appreciative, Hicks said, but they don't hesitate to let her know if there's a problem. While most services work well, the Cotton Port Plaza had experienced ongoing difficulties with its internet

service. Problems like outages occurred almost daily. Even when it was running, the network didn't provide enough bandwidth to handle most tenants' business transactions.

"It got to the point that tenants didn't even want to bother me to complain, because there was nothing that we could do," she said. "The wiring in the building was so old; we even hired a telecommunications company to come in and look at the wires, and they could not figure out the routing. The problem wasn't just the provider; it was years of putting band-aids on the network." They needed a new communications infrastructure that kept pace with its customers' demands.



## Tenants deserve better technology

After several months of visiting Cotton Port Plaza and leaving his business card, a persistent AT&T account representative landed a meeting with Walsworth and Hicks. They immediately saw the value of AT&T Business Fiber, which offers technology that increases network speed and capabilities. The building's tenants now have

ultra-fast internet upload and download speeds, and enough bandwidth to support their devices.

Another vendor had suggested a solution that would have required Walsworth Property Management to pay what Hicks called “exorbitant fees” to rewire the historic building. “But we didn’t have to pay anything for AT&T to run the fiber to our building,” Hicks said. “That’s what sold us. Mike wanted to be able to offer this to his tenants without having to raise the rent.”

Walsworth said he wants to make it easy for his tenants to do business. “There’s a lot of office space in this world, so you want to give tenants technology that’s easy to use,” he said. “And you have to continue upgrading your technology or you’ll find yourself with an empty office building.”

## Speed, high reliability, and satisfied customers

AT&T was able to supply the top things his customers requested, Walsworth said. “Our tenants were looking for bandwidth capacity, so they could move things faster.” AT&T Fiber makes it possible for the building’s tenants to access innovative solutions like highly-secure networking, cloud computing, video conferencing, and collaboration tools.

“The tenants are very happy,” Hicks said. “Their internet has not gone down, so they don’t get behind at work. And I’m floored at having a real person that answers my phone call when I have a question or problem. It’s just been a blessing.”

Walsworth added that the change has virtually eliminated calls from frustrated tenants. “The good

thing is it’s cut down on complaints and I do appreciate it,” he said.

“All buildings are trying to push technology as fast and as hard as they can to keep customers satisfied,” Walsworth said. “If they’re satisfied, they’ll stay; if they’re not, they’ll go somewhere else. Competition makes you stronger.”

**“AT&T has blown the competition out of the water, and it all starts with their people. They take care of us because they truly believe in customer service.”**

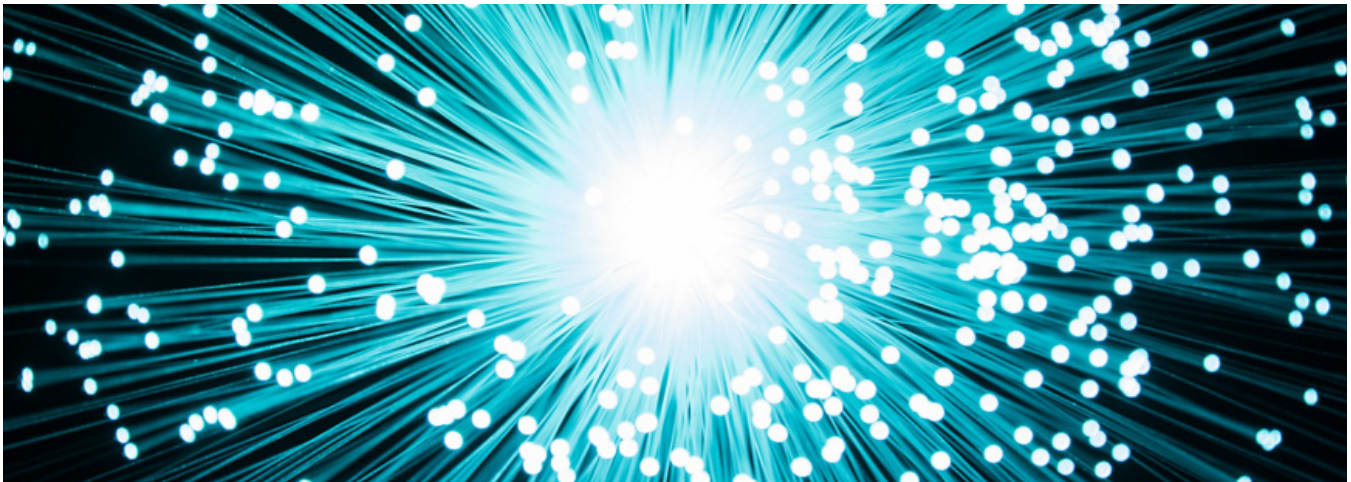
**Teresa Hicks**

Property Manager, Walsworth Property Management, Inc.

## Customer service that eclipses the competition

Hicks and Walsworth are enthusiastic about their relationship with AT&T. When the Cotton Port Plaza Executive Suites almost burned down from a bad outlet, Hicks said, “AT&T heard about the fire and called us because they were concerned. And it wasn’t even an AT&T issue. AT&T has a long history, and we’re very fortunate to have a personal relationship with them.”

Hicks appreciates that her account representative and digital technician go above and beyond her expectations to ensure that Walsworth Property Management has what it needs to succeed. “I feel that my AT&T team is a lifeline that I can always use to get



an answer,” she said. “And I appreciate that they’re willing to communicate via text message. I just send them a screenshot of a problem and they take care of it.”

“AT&T has blown the competition out of the water, and it all starts with their people,” she said. “And it’s not that we get special treatment because Mike Walsworth is a senator – they take care of us because they truly believe in customer service. AT&T has made my life easier.”

Walsworth said AT&T has also helped him protect his bottom line. While many tenants move into the Cotton Port Plaza Executive Suites because of its historic character, they expect state of the art conveniences. “Charm only carries you so far. At the end of the day you still have to provide fast, highly reliable internet service,” he said.

The move to AT&T has meant that Walsworth’s tenants don’t have to forego efficiency to work in a beautiful historic building. “Thanks to AT&T our tenants are not sacrificing their bottom line by operating in a building with a lot of charm,” Walsworth said. “AT&T knows its business.”

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**Michael Walsworth**

President, Walsworth Property Management, Inc.