How Woodward Management Partners Slashed Eviction Filings by 84% Using ApproveShield

CASE STUDY

$6.5M
total rent loss prevented

500+
fewer eviction filings each year

1%
eviction rate on approved applicants

"ApproveShield has helped us **prevent over $6.5M in total rent loss** by declining high-risk applicants."

Kelli Stiehl
CEO, Woodward Management Partners

Based in Atlanta, one of the nation's most competitive and challenging rental markets, Woodward Management Partners oversees more than 50 properties across five states. Their portfolio includes both high-end rentals and more affordable, value-driven communities.

CHALLENGES

- Post-COVID, delinquencies were at unprecedented levels
- Existing screening tools missed fraud and high-risk renters
- Onsite teams were overwhelmed chasing applicant pay stubs and landlord verifications

SOLUTION

- AI plus human investigators to catch fraud and hidden eviction risks
- Centralized screening takes the burden off onsite teams
- Configurable screening criteria for different property types
- Proactive support to fine-tune screening and reduce risk

RESULTS

- $6.5M in rent loss prevented through smarter applicant screening
- Eviction filings down from 600+ to just 100 annually
- Delinquency dropped from from $140K/month to $1700 at one property
- Better resident profiles leading to stronger, more stable communities

Challenge

Ensuring screening catches fraud and high-risk renters

Woodward Management Partners is no stranger to running high-performing properties. Under the leadership of CEO Kelli Stiehl, the company has consistently taken on tough properties and turned them around.

But post-COVID, they found themselves facing a new kind of challenge: delinquency was skyrocketing across the board, and no amount of process tightening seemed to fix it.

> "I've been doing this since 1987, and I had never seen anything like it," says Kelli. "We had a 250 unit property that had $120,000 in delinquency each month."

The problem wasn't just late payments — it was that the screening process wasn't effectively weeding out high-risk applicants.

> "We were really having trouble getting resident histories at all, and then it was very hit-or-miss depending on individual managers was as to whether we were getting bank statements and pay stubs," Kelli explains.

Kelli and her team tried several screening solutions, including RentGrow and Snappt, but fraud and bad actors kept slipping through.

> “We tried Snappt for a little while, but if there are no changed pixels, it doesn’t catch anything. People were buying fake documents online or creating their own, and it couldn’t detect them.”

As a result, Woodward ended up filing over 600 evictions each year, tying up their teams and draining resources.

So when Chris Riley, the owner of Blaze Partners and Kelli’s former boss, shared how ApproveShield had transformed one of his properties, Kelli was intrigued.

> “Within a year of switching to ApproveShield, everything had changed for them,” Kelli recalls. “They had less crime, fewer noise complaints, and fewer pet issues. Suddenly, they had a community full of really responsible renters.”

The results were impressive, but ApproveShield came at a higher cost than other platforms Kelli’s team had used. Until then, application fees had been a small profit center for them, and giving that up felt like a leap of faith.

Solution

AI-powered screening backed by human investigators

With pressure mounting to get reliable renters in place, Kelli and her team made a strategic decision to raise application fees — not to drive revenue, but to invest in ApproveShield's more thorough screening process that would strengthen long-term property performance.

> "It's not just about delinquencies and evictions," says Kelli. "It's about the legitimacy of the people that are living at your property."

Unlike many AI-driven screening tools, ApproveShield combines automation with real investigators who manually review each application, digging deeper when something doesn't look right.

For example, if someone tries to hide an eviction by claiming identity theft, the team at ApproveShield will pull court records and look for matching details like phone numbers or email addresses.

> "ApproveShield is really hands-off for our onsite teams. They're not chasing applicant bank statements and pay stubs or tracking down landlord verifications."

The added scrutiny quickly revealed just how many unqualified applicants had been slipping through with RentGrow and Snappt.

> “At first, ApproveShield was declining 47-48 percent of applications,” Kelli admits. “I thought, ‘How much risk can we take on?’ It felt like it was too stringent. That first year, I almost pulled the plug.”

Instead, she trusted the process — and the team behind it.

> “[ApproveShield co-founders] Damon and Tom have been fantastic,” explains Kelli. “We’d get on a call and look through portfolios and tweak the screening parameters to get a few more across the goal line without taking on unnecessary risk.”

Kelli’s decision to stick with ApproveShield paid off. Within six or seven months, they began seeing delinquencies go down dramatically.

> “We have a C-class asset that used to close out with $80,000 in delinquency each month. Now we’re closing at $20.”

A key reason ApproveShield works so well is the ability to fine-tune screening criteria for different properties without compromising the integrity of the process.

> “I use ApproveShield on A, B, and C properties,” says Kelli. “We’re able to tweak the criteria for C properties so it's a little less stringent because a lot of residents are living paycheck to paycheck.”

ApproveShield also gives Kelli and her team access to detailed reporting that helps them make smarter decisions. For example, the platform breaks down approved, conditionally approved, and declined applicants by income, credit, rental history, traffic source, and more.

And because ApproveShield pulls eviction data from the courts every night, Kelli can even see which applicants are in the middle of being evicted from another property — not just those with a prior eviction record. No other screening platform offers that level of insight.

> “With RentGrow, I was paying $16 a screening for a basic credit check and criminal background. With ApproveShield, you get what you pay for.”

Results

500+ fewer eviction filings every year

Since adopting ApproveShield, Woodward has prevented over $6.5 million in rent loss by declining high-risk applicants.

What's more, with screening criteria tailored to Woodward's preferences and risk tolerance, only 1% of ApproveShield-screened applicants are ever evicted. Annual eviction filings have dropped from over 600 per year with the previous screener to just 100.

"When you evict someone, you never recover the rent, the damages, the legal fees, the late fees. To see those eviction numbers come down this much is huge."

With fewer delinquencies and evictions, onsite teams can finally focus on leasing.

"ApproveShield saves our team time because they're not chasing down late payments or going to court," says Kelli.

It takes some time to get out the repeat offenders that were approved by the previous screening platform. But at properties that stick with the program, ApproveShield has paid for itself many times over.

“We have one property that's in a tough part of town and was previously mismanaged. They used to have $140,000 in delinquency each month,” says Kelli.

“That client wanted to drop the program, but I kept telling them to stick with it. Last month, they closed out with just $1,700 in delinquency.”

A recent portfolio analysis by competitor Two Dots confirmed what Kelli already knew: ApproveShield's screening process is keeping bad actors out and helping build stronger, more stable communities.

“When Two Dots offered to review ten of our properties, they could only find a handful of ‘questionable’ applicants that had been let in by ApproveShield. We’re talking about hundreds of leases, so that made me feel really good.”

Those results are why other screeners don’t even bother to compete with ApproveShield.

“At RentCon, there were 8 or 10 other background screening companies promoting their products,” says Kelli. “The minute they found out I was using ApproveShield, they didn't even try to sell me.”

After decades in the industry, Kelli says no other screening tool has delivered results like this.

“ApproveShield is the gold standard. I've been doing this since 1987, and I've used a lot of different screening programs. This is the best and most thorough one out there.”