Multifamily Housing Strategy Guide

Green Property Management

Sustainability improvements can create value in existing multifamily properties by reducing energy and water costs and increasing attractiveness to current and future tenants. While lack of resources often limits the extent of environmental improvements, it is important that property managers have a framework in place to identify and implement those measures that are feasible. Implementing best practices such as developing planned maintenance programs and specifying Energy Star performance for replacement equipment will significantly improve environmental sustainability.

A key to delivering environmental improvement in existing buildings is to pursue every opportunity that is relatively easy and has minimal or low associated costs. Ideally, sustainability improvements should be integrated into everyday operations. This involves ensuring that front line and operational staffs are fully aware of, and committed to, the organization's environmental objectives; they should be able to identify potential sustainability improvements every time they have contact with a property.

Operations and maintenance activities are essential for ensuring a building's energy and water efficiency through frequent cleaning and upkeep of buildings, grounds, and equipment. Regular testing and maintenance of energy and water-using systems will reduce the probability of breakdowns, air quality problems, and inefficiencies. Several strategies can be utilized with O&M staff to encourage environmental sustainability including: education and training on installation and maintenance of energy and water saving technologies, feedback on building performance, and integrating sustainability upgrades with regular maintenance, repairs and unit turnover.

In addition to general best practices for improving O&M staff's attention to and prioritization of sustainability, there are several focus areas where regular maintenance can result in significant cost and natural resource savings with minimal additional effort.

Building Envelope

Maintaining the building envelope seal is as important as maintaining mechanical systems and will increase those systems' effectiveness. Even the best HVAC equipment will have to work overtime if it is compensating for cracks and gaps in the building envelope. To keep building envelopes well sealed, caulk any openings or cracks, repair holes, and replace cracked or broken windows. Also replace or repair weather-stripping around windows and doors when the seal is no longer tight. Remove window air conditioning units in winter and use operational shades and awnings in warmer months to further reduce unwanted heat transfer, saving energy and increasing occupant comfort.

Property Management Resources

Build It Green

Energy Star Quantity Quotes

Enterprise Community Partners

Flex Your Power

Global Green- Green Affordable Housing Initiative

HUD's Mark-to-Market Green Initiative

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design

Local Initiatives Support Coalition

National Housing Trust

Heating and Cooling

Heating and cooling systems require additional attention as outdoor temperature and sun angles shift, and should therefore be adjusted seasonally. Be sure to turn off pilot lights in summer and to adjust thermostats in common areas to avoid unnecessary energy use. Check for duct leakage, lubricate equipment, balance steam distribution, and make certain vents and registers remain clean and unobstructed to ensure efficient operation. Keeping components (such as burners, filters, heat exchangers, boilers, coils, and blowers) clean and free of build-up is also essential to the effectiveness of HVAC systems. Regular attention will both reduce energy consumption and prolong equipment life. The maintenance of HVAC systems should be carried out in conjunction with repairs to the building envelope for maximum energy savings.

Domestic Hot Water

Domestic hot water systems require occasional cleaning and sealing to maintain efficiency. Regular maintenance should include repair of any leaks and insulation of exposed pipes. Also be sure to periodically flush tanks, clean and adjust burners, and remove any buildup within the system. Lower water temperature to about 120 degrees and reduce water pressure to further decrease energy and water use.

Lighting

Maintain lighting efficiency by keeping fixtures clean and storing energy efficient bulbs on site for easy replacement. Additionally, keep walls clean and well painted to brighten rooms and help maintain lighting efficiency. Removal of unnecessary lamps and installation off-timers will also keep energy use to a minimum.

Other Measures

- Check temperature settings and door seals on refrigerators
- Reduce ventilation and exhausted air rates
- Calibrate meters to ensure accuracy

About the California Sustainability Alliance

The California Sustainability Alliance (Alliance) is an innovative market transformation program co-managed by Navigant Consulting, Inc. and The Public Sustainability Partnership and administered by Southern California Gas Company on behalf of utility customers under the auspices of the California Public Utilities Commission. The mission of the Alliance is to increase and accelerate the adoption of energy efficiency in combination with complementary sustainability measures such as renewable energy, water efficiency, greenhouse gas reduction, waste reduction, smart planning and growth, and transit-oriented development.

If you are a multifamily housing property owner or manager and would like to consult with the Alliance on greening your properties, please visit our website at www.sustainca.org or contact us at info@sustainca.org.