



Multifamily Housing Strategy Guide

Developing a Sustainability Plan

A green housing strategy recognizes the importance of planning in advance to establish policies, identify opportunities, implement a test pilot, and apply best practices throughout the organization. Incorporating sustainability at the planning level involves consideration of the following key actions:

1. Benchmark organization's practices, policies and procedures
2. Set goals, develop strategies and actions
3. Assess sustainability of properties and areas for improvement

Benchmark Organization

Benchmarking is a process of continual improvement. Through measurement, analysis, and action, benchmarking provides a systematic approach to improving the energy efficiency of properties. To benchmark your organization's state of sustainability, ask the following questions:

- Is my organization interested in becoming more sustainable?
- Has my organization taken any steps to reduce energy and water consumption?
- Are there programs through my utility or local government that incentivize sustainability?
- Are there local building code requirements for energy efficiency in retrofits and rehabs?

Set Goals

Green rehab offers an opportunity to strategically combine improvements and upgrades that achieve utility cost savings, reduce resource consumption, and improve resident comfort and health. To develop green rehab goals for your properties, first identify opportunities for improvement within your existing portfolio and then progress to establishing green rehabilitation goals. Evaluate funding cycles, upcoming financial milestones, and the current uses of operating and capital funds to identify areas for improvement and assess feasibility of goals. Outside resources which may be beneficial to developing sustainability goals include:

- No or low cost weatherization and energy efficiency programs for low-income residents (where eligible)
- Utility rebate programs for improving performance of lighting and appliances for all property types (not just low-income)
- Green building programs for existing buildings such as GreenPoint Rated or Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)
- Local government incentive programs for green buildings (such as tax credits, expedited permitting, etc)
- Green product labeling systems such as Energy Star, Water Sense, or Green Seal

Sustainability Planning Resources

Utility Programs [SCE](#)

[PG&E](#)

[SDG&E](#)

[LADWP](#)

[SMUD](#)

Rating Programs [GreenPoint Rated](#)

[LEED](#)

[Green Seal](#)

[Home Energy
Rating System](#)

[Energy Star](#)

[Water Sense](#)

Other Green Resources [Quantity Quotes](#)

[Partnership for
Advancing
Technology in
Housing](#)

[Green Affordable
Housing Coalition](#)

[Stop Waste](#)

[Low-Income Home
Energy Assistance
Program](#)



Assess Property Sustainability

Assessing the current performance of existing properties is an essential step in the development of a green housing strategy. An assessment can provide baseline values of performance that can be used to monitor progress, demonstrate what has already been achieved, and make the case for additional investment in improved energy efficiency. To maximize energy efficiency in a rehab project, it is best to use an integrated design approach that considers the interaction between various building elements such as lighting, windows, and mechanical systems. The following tools can be used to evaluate the green retrofit potential of specific properties within your portfolio:

Green Physical Needs Assessments

A physical needs assessment is a tool to identify the most pressing needs for your property, as well as other items that will be in need of upgrade in both short and long-term. To achieve a true high performing building from your green rehabilitation efforts, do not consider individual measures in isolation. Using an integrated design approach to your rehabilitation project will maximize sustainability, to capture the interaction between various building elements, such as lighting, windows, and mechanical systems. Green physical needs assessments differ from energy audits as they are focused not just on the energy performance of a building but on all aspects of sustainability, such as water, waste, and occupant health.

Energy Audit

Prior to rehab, have a performance-based energy analysis performed on the building. This allows for more cost-effective and project-specific upgrade recommendations based on current energy usage and potential return on investment. Energy audits also enable inspectors to establish benchmarks from which future improvements can be measured. Basic energy audits are often available for free or at low cost from your electric or gas utility. More in-depth energy audits, such as Home Energy Rating System (HERS) inspections, are often required to validate qualification of particular projects for utility incentive and rebate programs.

Sustainable rehabilitation offers an opportunity to strategically combine various improvements in a way that can achieve utility cost savings, reduce consumption and improve resident comfort and health. Begin your transition to greener properties by participating in energy and water efficiency programs and by utilizing green building and operations guides.

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.