Multifamily Owners Interviews Summary

Multifamily owners need:
- Fast payback time for efficiency upgrades - a focus on the bottom line
- Single point of contact for upgrade work
- Guidance to interpret incentive options
- Technical assistance to complete upgrades
- More durable and longer lasting appliances
- Good customer service for tenants
- Resident education

How do we preserve affordable housing and provide energy, water, and health upgrades?

Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing

Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing (NOAH) stock is considered to be affordable based on the rents charged and the average median income of its residents which tend to be at or below 80% of the area median income. Over 40,000 units of NOAH stock exist in Dane County, which comprises a notable amount of affordable housing options. It typically consists of small size buildings (often less than 30 units) and is privately owned and managed by small companies.

Who did we interview?

We interviewed over 24 property owners and programs working with them in the Dane County area to understand their experience with energy efficiency, water, and health upgrades. Seven NOAH properties have been selected for a pilot program to conduct assessments and understand challenges and opportunities for upgrade implementation.

When things aren’t broken, owners often do not want to replace them. More efficient equipment can be a harder sell, but if the equipment we’re offering is durable and high quality with cost-saving measures, they may be more interested.

What do the owners know about rebate/incentive programs?

Owners understand that incentives exist to help reduce the cost burden of the potential upgrades, however, some say that the incentive levels are not high enough to meet their financial needs, especially the smaller owners who do not have as much cash flow. Some owners have suggested that seeing the payback math dome for them would be helpful, with clear graphics and figures to explain the financial benefits (ROI) they would receive from these upgrades. Many owners also lamented the overwhelming paperwork, which can be confusing to understand, saving a navigator-type role present to explain the choices may be beneficial. For example, some owners are interested in saving energy costs through heat, so smart thermostats may be a target incentive option to suggest.

What impact could this have on NOAH stock?

Reducing energy and water use in Dane County’s NOAH housing stock is a key climate planning strategy, and providing owners and managers with the means to reduce operating costs is critical to maintain affordability. Enhancing resident health and comfort, reducing utility bills, and providing resiliency for these homes is a key strategy to provide a more equitable and sustainable housing market.