



## Green Rental Home Energy Efficiency Network

*An alliance of nonprofit organizations  
dedicated to the sustainability of California's affordable rental homes*

# SAHA Creates A Model for Achieving Verified Energy Savings



MERRITT CROSSING: The 70-unit sustainable development in Oakland's Chinatown District provides affordable apartments for low-income seniors, at least half of whom were formerly homeless. Additional units are set aside for seniors living with HIV/AIDS or challenged by mental illness.

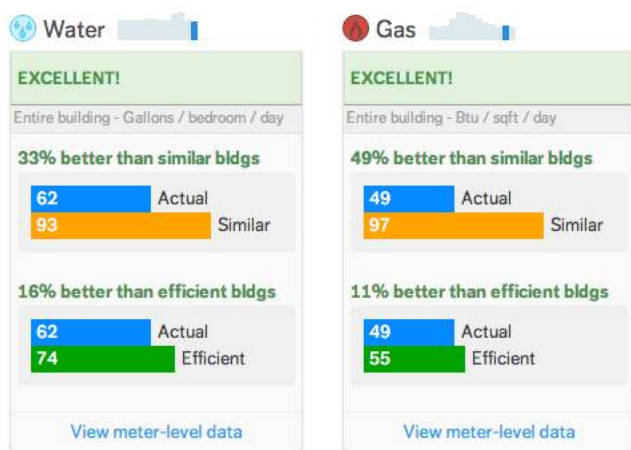
Berkeley-based nonprofit affordable housing owner [Satellite Affordable Housing Associates](#) (SAHA) is using sophisticated tools to track energy and water performance at Merritt Crossing Senior Apartments, leading to clearly quantifiable energy savings. These results can lead to improvements not only in the operations of the property but also in how future energy efficiency work is financed and implemented at multifamily affordable rental housing developments.

### **Merritt Crossing Senior Housing a Model of Energy Efficiency**

The strength of the design and energy performance at Merritt Crossing has been acknowledged by the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and its Committee On The Environment, which recently named Merritt Crossing one of the nation's Top Ten Green Projects of 2013. In addition, Merritt Crossing was California's first multifamily residential high-rise to achieve ENERGY STAR certification and earned a LEED Platinum Certification from the U.S. Green Building Council for incorporating an array of sustainable design features and strategies.

## Verified Energy Savings = Financeable Energy Savings

SAHA's ability to monitor energy usage at Merritt Crossing has been critical to ensuring the property achieves its energy performance goals. It's also important to the whole field because having this data will ultimately encourage financial institutions to lend against energy savings repaid through the utility bill without requiring collateral or even recourse. SAHA uses WegoWise<sup>1</sup> (water electric gas oil - wise) software to track utility bills and energy and water performance across its portfolio. As a result, SAHA has been able to verify that in the first year of savings Merritt Crossing consumed 25% less water and 7% less gas than other similar buildings in California. This is quite impressive for new construction, which already has to meet stringent Title 24 energy code requirements.



*This WegoWise snapshot shows Merritt Crossing's performance statistics from July 2013: **49% less gas** and **33% less water** than similar buildings in California.*

SAHA is now monitoring the performance of its entire portfolio, from newer properties like Merritt Crossing to their oldest property, Satellite Central, which just underwent a major rehab featuring energy efficiency upgrades. Benchmarking the energy performance of an entire portfolio is a huge undertaking, but one that has had substantial rewards for SAHA. Director of Property Management Zachary Lopez said, "Utility tracking tools have been extremely beneficial to helping us monitor the performance of our portfolio. WegoWise enables us to identify if systems are performing properly or if there's a problem in the building, such as a water leak or a solar panel malfunction. The ability to quickly identify problems means we can find solutions

quickly, resulting in significant costs savings for individual properties."

CHPC Sustainable Housing Program Manager, Tara Siegel, adds, "In addition to reducing operating expenses, our ability to point to energy savings data of the quality that SAHA is now collecting throughout its portfolio will be critical when persuading lenders to finance stand-alone energy retrofits in the future. Each owner of affordable rental housing who commits to tracking energy consumption in this way gets us closer to the day when we no longer have to twist lenders' arms and provide subsidies to encourage them to make stand-alone energy efficiency loans without requiring burdensome collateral and permissions."

*CHPC's GREEN Data Collection and Monitoring working group evaluates the costs and benefits of various energy tracking software platforms and encourages owners to share best practices around energy and water monitoring and financing. For more information about joining this group contact Amanda Isbell, Sustainable Housing Program Associate, at [aisbell@chpc.net](mailto:aisbell@chpc.net).*

<sup>1</sup> Other commonly used energy data tracking software include EnergyScoreCard and Portfolio Manager. CHPC's GREEN Data working group is currently collecting data on the experiences owners in California are having using these various tools. Please contact Amanda Isbell [aisbell@chpc.net](mailto:aisbell@chpc.net) if you have information you would like to offer or would like to participate in this working group.

### Merritt Crossing Green-Specific Financing

To help finance Merritt Crossing's green features, SAHA obtained \$110,453 in energy credits for solar Photovoltaic (PV) system installed, which is equivalent to approximately \$91,000 in Low Income Housing Tax Credit equity.

SAHA also took advantage of an array of energy efficiency technical assistance and grants, including:

- California Solar Incentive (CSI) Thermal Program – \$56,000
- Alameda County Stopwaste – \$20,000
- Bay-Friendly Landscaping – \$15,000
- ENERGY STAR funds – \$11,000
- New Home Solar Program rebate contracted through the solar provider
- The California Multi-Family New Homes Program

SAHA's strong commitment to green building practices has earned them a LEED Platinum rating in yet another affordable development, Valley Oak Homes. The 43-unit property is celebrating its grand opening September 25, from 3-5:00 PM in Sonoma. ([Map](#))



*The GREEN program is generously supported by:*

## THE SAN FRANCISCO FOUNDATION

*The Community Foundation of the Bay Area*



### HOW DO I GET INVOLVED?

The GREEN Network is a collaborative effort by stakeholders to make energy retrofit funding available to federally assisted low-income rental apartments that serve our state's lowest-income residents. To learn more, please contact Tara Siegel at [tsiegel@chpc.net](mailto:tsiegel@chpc.net), 415-433-6804 x310 or Amanda Isbell at [aisbell@chpc.net](mailto:aisbell@chpc.net), 415-433-6804 x313.