



ARGENTUM
EXPANDING SENIOR LIVING

Efficiency Through ENERGY STAR®

A Toolkit for Quality
in Senior Living Utilities

In partnership with:



ABOUT ARGENTUM

Argentum is the leading national association exclusively dedicated to supporting companies operating professionally managed, resident-centered senior living communities and the older adults and families they serve. Since 1990, Argentum has advocated for choice, independence, dignity, and quality of life for all older adults.

Argentum member companies operate senior living communities offering assisted living, independent living, continuing care, and memory care services. Along with its state partners, Argentum's membership represents approximately 75 percent of the senior living industry—an industry with a national economic impact of nearly a quarter of a trillion dollars and responsible for providing over 1.6 million jobs. These numbers will continue to grow as the U.S. population ages.

Argentum's programs and initiatives are driven by its membership. For more information about joining Argentum, please visit [argentum.org/membership](https://www.argentum.org/membership). Learn more at [argentum.org](https://www.argentum.org).

ABOUT ENERGY STAR

ENERGY STAR® is the government-backed symbol for energy efficiency, providing simple, credible, and unbiased information that consumers and businesses rely on to make well-informed decisions. Thousands of industrial, commercial, utility, state, and local organizations—including about 40% of the Fortune 500®—partner with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to deliver cost-saving energy efficiency solutions that improve air quality and protect the climate. Since 1992, ENERGY STAR and its partners helped American families and businesses save more than 4 trillion kilowatt-hours of electricity and achieve over 3.5 billion metric tons of greenhouse gas reductions, equivalent to the annual emissions of more than 750 million cars. In 2018 alone, ENERGY STAR and its partners helped Americans avoid \$35 billion in energy costs.

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EFFICIENCY THROUGH ENERGY STAR®

A Toolkit for Quality in Senior Living Utilities

INTRODUCTION

Optimizing energy and better utility management saves money and can provide a healthier environment—top concerns for senior living leaders.

But it can be a tough job to coordinate different elements and sort through all the guidance.

Argentum and ENERGY STAR put our knowledge together to make it easier for senior living leaders.

This Toolkit provides tools, resources, and industry best practices for utility management specifically designed to help senior living communities optimize energy usage and costs.

When you follow the steps in this Toolkit, you can improve quality in your community in many ways:

- **Reduce energy-related costs and generate savings.** Utilities are typically the third highest operating expense for senior living communities. Reducing energy consumption can lead to significant savings, which can provide much needed funds for other programs, be reinvested to make more efficiency improvements, or used to improve Net Operating Income (NOI).
- **Enhance the value of your senior living community.** Communities can reduce energy consumption through no- and low-cost measures—and often through capital investments, with a very good payback. Efficiency measures can also provide a higher comfort level for staff and residents. For example, upgrades such as LED lighting can be used to refresh outdated spaces and attract current and future residents, while creating a brighter atmosphere that reduces eye strain and improves visibility for residents and staff alike.
- **Increase resident attraction and retention rates.** Many residents and their families, as well as staff, appreciate efforts to reduce energy usage and are happy to be associated with a company that incorporates environmental programs into their operations.
- **Prepare for upcoming energy reporting laws and regulations in your locality.** Many cities and states across the United States are implementing mandatory energy benchmarking and reporting ordinances to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and meet local sustainability goals.

“MEASUREMENT IS THE FIRST STEP THAT LEADS TO CONTROL AND EVENTUALLY TO IMPROVEMENT. IF YOU CAN’T MEASURE SOMETHING, YOU CAN’T UNDERSTAND IT. IF YOU CAN’T UNDERSTAND IT, YOU CAN’T CONTROL IT. IF YOU CAN’T CONTROL IT, YOU CAN’T IMPROVE IT.”

- H. JAMES HARRINGTON



FIRST STEP: FIND YOUR BENCHMARK

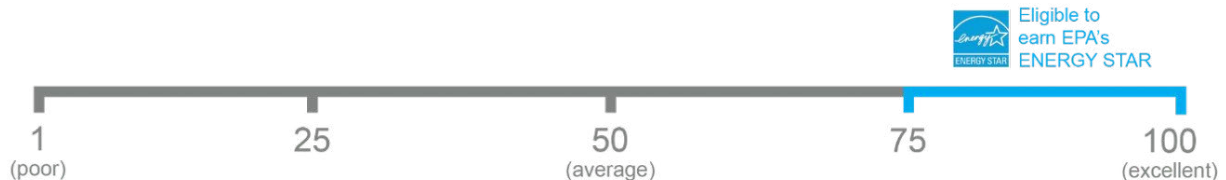
GETTING STARTED IN ENERGY STAR® PORTFOLIO MANAGER®

The adage that *you can't manage what you don't measure* holds true with energy usage. Many senior living communities track energy only through their expense budget. Their managers may think that if costs meet budget, all is well.

However, a budget is not an indicator of efficiency. The community may be a poor performer with significant savings opportunities or be a good performer eligible for third-party recognition—or fall somewhere in between.

To find out where you stand, get your **ENERGY STAR score**.

[ENERGY STAR® Portfolio Manager®](#) is a no-cost tool developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that turns energy and space use data into an easy-to-understand score on a scale of 1 to 100. The ENERGY STAR score provides the ability to quickly understand how a community is performing compared with similar communities nationwide. A score of 50 represents median energy performance, while a score of 75 or better indicates your building is a top performer—and may be eligible for ENERGY STAR certification.



Once certified, a community can proudly display the ENERGY STAR certification, a clear and reputable sign of a community committed to excellence as well as fiscal and environmental responsibility. More than 2,600 senior living communities are currently using ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager to track and benchmark energy performance with nearly **200 ENERGY STAR Certified communities**.



WHAT IS YOUR ENERGY STAR SCORE?

Senior living community owners and operators can use ENERGY STAR's cost-free tools and resources to learn their score and help optimize operations and efficiency, decrease utility costs, and improve indoor quality and comfort for residents and staff.

To get set up in Portfolio Manager, you will need at least 12 months of energy bills/consumption totals, as well as some basic information about your community.

Follow these simple steps to get started with ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager and start saving!

STEP 1 The first step: [Create a Portfolio Manager account](#)

STEP 2 **A.** Gather at least 12 months of energy utility bills. If your company uses a third-party bill payment vendor, you will need access to at least 12 months of usage totals and associated costs.

B. Portfolio Manager also tracks water and waste, so you may want to also gather at least 12 months of water and waste data for benchmarking.

STEP 3 **A.** Portfolio Manager is used across many real estate sectors. If you do not have an independent living component, enter your entire community square footage as “senior care.”

B. If you have an independent living component, enter your community as “multifamily.” See the [Space Classification Guide for Senior Living](#) for a guide on how to classify your square footage in Portfolio Manager.

STEP 4 Use the [Data Collection Worksheet](#) to help identify the data fields required to benchmark your community in Portfolio Manager. Select “senior care” or “multifamily” as your property type based on what you learned in Step 3.

STEP 5 You are ready to enter your space use details into Portfolio Manager to get your ENERGY STAR score!

Important Note

ENERGY STAR tools use two classifications for senior living. “**Senior Care**” applies to assisted living, skilled nursing or memory care communities. Independent living or 55+ communities are classified as **multifamily**. That’s because energy usage in the different types of communities can be very different. To learn more, see the guide on [page 10](#).



Belmont Village West University

IF YOUR SCORE IS 75 OR HIGHER

ENERGY STAR CERTIFICATION FOR HIGH-PERFORMING COMMUNITIES

Communities scoring 75 or above may be eligible for [ENERGY STAR certification](#). Certified properties use 35 percent less energy than typical ones on average and provides an opportunity to demonstrate to your residents, their families, and your staff that your community is a high performer. It also aligns your community with one of the most recognized brands in the United States for efficiency, providing a potential marketing advantage and differentiation against competitors.

Senior living communities may be able to get their ENERGY STAR certification through a cost-free “pro bono” verification process. Find Licensed Professionals who offer cost-free ENERGY STAR verifications near you using ENERGY STAR’s [Licensed Professional Finder](#) tool. Just enter your community’s zip code and select the “Cost-free verification offered” column.

BELMONT VILLAGE WEST UNIVERSITY

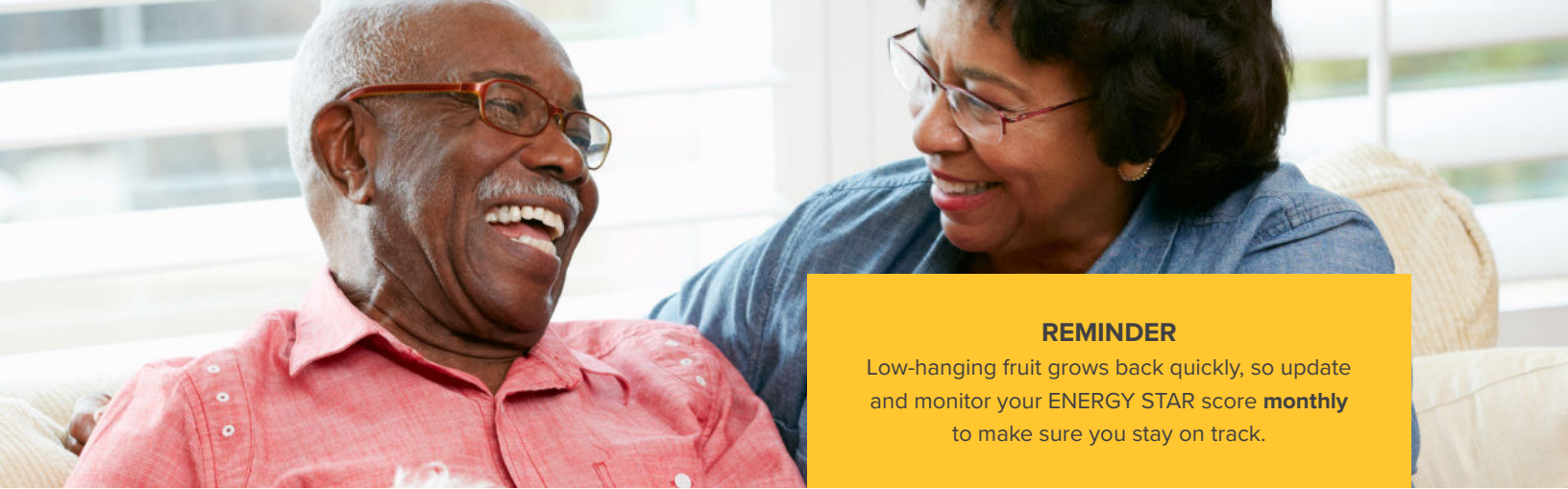
Built in 1998, West University is the first Belmont Village Senior Living community in a portfolio that today comprises 31 locations across the US and Mexico City. West University is approximately 101,000 square feet and has undergone significant renovation to maintain a modern look and to ensure it continues to operate efficiently. For example, the building is equipped with PTACS and all fluorescent lighting has been changed to LED. Through these efforts and others, **West University has achieved ENERGY STAR certification for the past five years.**

Belmont Village is focused on ways to conserve energy and moderate water usage. In the 9 years that I have been using ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager, I have found it an easy program to implement and use to help us be responsible. Using Portfolio Manager, I can track electric, gas, and water usage in all our buildings. It is a helpful tool that tells me how a community is performing at any given time and date, the history of the building’s utilization, and captures trends including what time of year energy and water consumption might peak.

In a time when environmental consciousness, energy utilization, and emissions are important issues, more and more cities and counties are passing legislations to track energy efficiency of businesses within their jurisdictions. ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager enables Belmont Village to comply easily with the reporting requirements by submitting the history of usage reports directly with the various reporting agencies.

In 2019, nine Belmont Village locations achieved ENERGY STAR certification. Using Portfolio Manager, we have learned that, on average, **our buildings are using 35% less energy than similar buildings.** Belmont Village is proud to be designated with the ENERGY STAR certification and to show our commitment to mitigating our impact on the environment.

– Catherine Alderman, Belmont Village Senior Living



REMINDER

Low-hanging fruit grows back quickly, so update and monitor your ENERGY STAR score **monthly** to make sure you stay on track.

IF YOUR SCORE IS BELOW 75

LOW AND NO-COST ENERGY EFFICIENCY MEASURES FOR LOW-SCORING PROPERTIES

Low-scoring communities have opportunities for savings, which can often be realized through low- and no-cost measures. The ideas below are based on industry [best practices](#) from leading ENERGY STAR partners who know how to trim their energy waste with nothing more invested than time and a little elbow grease.

□ Operations and maintenance

- Perform ongoing preventative maintenance of building equipment and systems to ensure efficiency and extend equipment life.
- Take night walks to see what is running unnecessarily during off hours.
- Plan regular visual inspections to keep an eye out for energy and water wasters.

□ Lighting

- One of the biggest energy wasters in a senior living community can be lights burning unnecessarily in unoccupied areas.
- Train staff to turn off lights behind them when leaving unoccupied areas, such as vacant residences. It is very common for lights to be left on 24/7 in vacant residences for no reason. **Considering resident safety first**, look for other areas where lights are on day and night.
- Install low-cost occupancy sensors in back areas such as offices, break rooms, storage closets, and mechanical rooms. These can automatically turn lights on when a person enters the room, and off after a designated time period once the space is vacant. This may not be an appropriate option for resident areas, so focus on staff and storage areas.
- If you have older lighting technology in your community, an LED retrofit may provide savings and excellent return on investment (ROI) while reducing maintenance time and costs, improving community aesthetics and lighting quality, and providing health and wellness benefits for your residents.

□ Natural light

- Open or close blinds where applicable to make the best use of natural daylight and take advantage of skylights or other natural light sources to reduce lighting use during daytime hours. This can reduce lighting expenses 10 percent to 40 percent.
- Use shades and blinds to control direct sunlight through windows. This can help prevent or encourage heat gain, leading to additional heating and cooling savings.

□ Heating and cooling

- Set common-area thermostats back in the evenings once most residents have turned in for the night. Even 2 degrees can make a difference in energy usage without negatively impacting comfort of the night staff.
- Regularly change or clean HVAC filters every month during peak cooling or heating season. Dirty filters cost more to use, overwork the equipment, and result in lower indoor air quality. This also applies to PTAC and PTHP units used in residents' rooms.

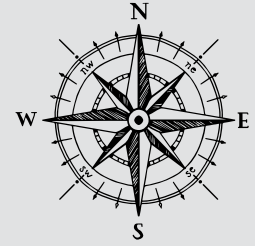
□ Appliances

- Enable the power management function on office computers, which automatically puts monitors to sleep when not in use.
- Purchase [ENERGY STAR appliances](#) for residences when feasible.



ENERGY TREASURE HUNT

A HOW TO GUIDE FOR FINDING ENERGY SAVINGS IN YOUR BUILDING



ENERGY TREASURE HUNTS: FIND YOUR SAVINGS, FAST

Do you need help to identify easy, low-cost improvements in your community? Would you like to reduce energy use without significant expenditures or capital improvements? Then consider an ENERGY STAR Treasure Hunt.

ENERGY STAR Treasure Hunts focus on quickly executed low- and no-cost fixes with a short payback period.

Start by recruiting one or two groups of people of all experience levels, from staff and residents (if desired) to maintenance experts and vendors. Each team then gets a Treasure Map that guides them on what to look for as they look throughout the community for energy-saving opportunities.

Many ENERGY STAR partners have used Energy Treasure Hunts to reduce energy use by 7 percent to as much as 15 percent.

Treasure Hunts are designed to strike a positive, optimistic tone, focusing on outcomes and improving day-to-day operations. And community staff who help “discover” treasure are more likely to take ownership of projects, ensuring their completion.

[Click here](#) for general information on ENERGY STAR Treasure Hunts

New senior living customized tools are currently being developed. If you are interested in pilot testing these tools, reach out to Clark Reed, EPA, at Reed.Clark@epa.gov or Marla Thalheimer at mthalheimer@retechadvisors.com





GETTING THE WORD OUT

GUIDELINES FOR MARKETING AN ENERGY-EFFICIENT COMMUNITY

ENERGY STAR certified communities provide multiple benefits to your stakeholders - cleaner air, greater comfort, increased affordability, and social responsibility. Marketing these benefits will help you increase your competitive advantage by attracting new residents and increasing employee retention rates.

- **Know your ENERGY STAR® score and use it to demonstrate transparency, trust, and dedication to sustainable management.** Track energy consumption using [ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager®](#) to understand your current energy consumption patterns, where and how improvements could be made, and how a collaborative energy management plan with residents can reduce their overall utility costs. Providing your residents with ENERGY STAR scores indicates a clear, open commitment to sustainability as a key aspect of your management ethos.
- **Enhance resident engagement by sharing ongoing best practices and standard energy efficiency operational procedures on a regular basis.** Implement and maintain standard procedures and best practices and share them regularly with residents to familiarize them with ongoing sustainability initiatives and how they can get involved. Ensuring that efficient performance standards can be consistently delivered and communicated to residents demonstrates your commitment to energy efficiency and high-quality approach to overall community management, which can increase resident attraction and retention rates.
- **Update your marketing materials to promote your building's energy-efficient features.** Update your website and create brochures, flyers, or other materials to hand out to prospective (and current) residents outlining your community's sustainable features and how they can positively impact residents.

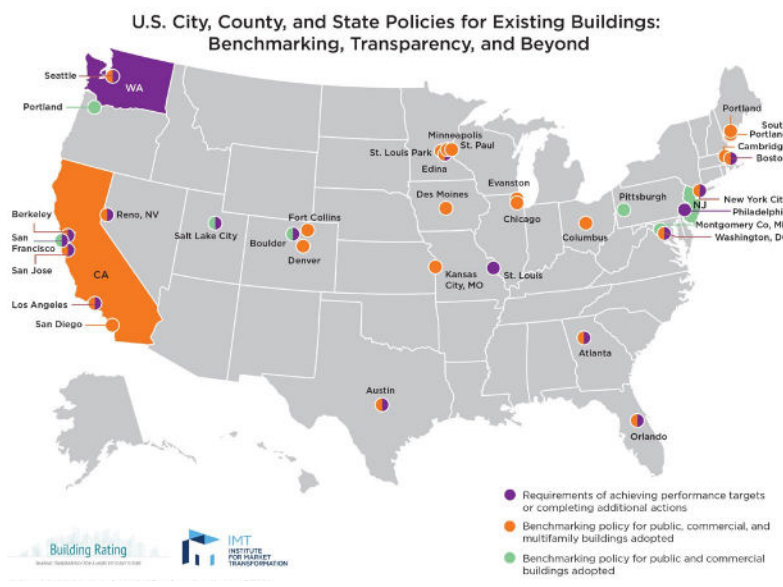


REMEMBER
 ENERGY STAR certified buildings use 35 percent less energy on average compared to typical buildings.

WHAT'S AHEAD IN ENERGY—AND WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

ENERGY REPORTING LAWS AND REGULATIONS ARE CHANGING FAST

Many cities and states across the United States are implementing mandatory energy benchmarking and reporting ordinances to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and meet local sustainability goals. To learn more about the latest policies in your area, check out [this link](#).



Benchmarking Map as of May 2020

While details vary slightly across the spectrum, the basic requirement is this: Owners, managers, and operators of buildings, including senior living communities, must benchmark utility usage to understand the level of efficiency, and report that information to the city, state, or county.

In many cases, this information is being made available to the public, too. The intent is to create awareness and increase public demand for greater efficiency. Some cities, including New York and Chicago, have additional requirements, such as energy audits and lighting upgrades over time.

Whether it's required or not, benchmarking utility usage now can put you ahead of the game and benefit your community.

Plus, it gives you insights into how you can save and how your community improves over time.

According to the EPA, buildings that were benchmarked consistently for three years reduced energy use by an average of 7 percent. For a community with an annual energy spend of \$100,000, benchmarking could lead to a \$7,000 savings over three years; coupled with a strong energy management plan, energy savings could increase to \$30,000 per year for a typical community.

Embracing this process can provide powerful information to help manage your utility usage to operate a more financially and environmentally responsible senior living community.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Portfolio Manager Quick Start Guide](#): Two-page guide to help you get started using Portfolio Manager to benchmark your properties, assess performance, and chart results.
- [How to Get Utility Data Into Portfolio Manager](#): Guide to options for getting data into Portfolio Manager, whether it's uploading information on buildings for the first time or updating existing information on buildings. It summarizes the three ways to enter energy and water data for your community or portfolio.
- [Generating Standard Reports and Performance Documents](#): This document describes the capabilities of standard reporting features in Portfolio Manager and includes step-by-step instructions.
- [Portfolio Manager 101](#): PowerPoint slides that demonstrate the core functionality of Portfolio Manager and all of the essential “how to” information you need to get up and running with Portfolio Manager, including how to set up properties and meters, enter utility data, and generate reports.
- [Portfolio Manager 201](#): PowerPoint slides to help you learn how to edit community data, correct or update community use details, use the Data Quality Checker, and share community data in Portfolio Manager.
- [Portfolio Manager 301](#): PowerPoint slides to help you learn how to update data using the spreadsheet upload feature, set baseline, goals, and targets to plan energy improvements, create custom reporting templates, and use the Sustainable Buildings Checklist.

ENERGY STAR TECHNICAL SUPPORT

For more information about benchmarking and Portfolio Manager help, visit the [ENERGY STAR Help Center](#) to view more resources and guidance material.



ARGENTUM
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1650 King Street

Suite 602

Alexandria, VA 22314

argentum.org