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Owners and managers can attract and retain better tenants with sustainable properties

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As a property owner or manager, it's important to recognize that every demographic appreciates the concept of sustainability. Providing tenants with sustainable corporate offices and living spaces is easier than one might think. Areas like energy and water efficiency, waste reduction, and recycling play a key role in an effective sustainability plan. By drafting a roadmap and implementing some of the realistic initiatives suggested below, managers and property owners can easily measure and share progress. Furthermore, this will add value for your company, employees, and tenants--a positive impact on the triple bottom line for years to come.

Don't Try to Boil the Ocean

Property owners and managers can start small, by implementing one or more of the steps below in corporate offices:

- * Install energy-conserving products such as tinted windows, smart power strips, motion-sensor sinks, and low-flow toilets
- * Print less. Use electronic versions of presentations and training materials. Refer prospects to the company website to avoid printing (and mailing) costs
- * Work with like-minded, environmentally responsible vendors. For instance, make sure to give old computer equipment to a non-landfill recycling center
- * Avoid paper and plastic kitchen utensils in the company kitchen. Instead, provide reusable coffee mugs, dishes, and silverware
- * Recycle batteries, printer cartridges, cell phones, compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulbs, and all paper

There are also numerous things that can be done across one's portfolio to improve sustainability, while simultaneously saving energy and improving net operating income.

Going paperless

- * Encourage tenants to complete routine transactions like payments and maintenance requests electronically. A secure, online portal is convenient and reduces paper transactions
- * Create an online database for all resident files
- * Encourage prospective tenants to conduct credit checks and reserve units online, further reducing paper consumption
- * Use a service like DocuSign for electronic signatures on applications and leases
- * Provide scanners at all properties to eliminate faxing between property managers
- * Equip model units and common areas with programmable thermostats, motion detectors, light switch timers, CFL bulbs, and smart power strips

- * Program onsite office equipment and common living area lighting to go into sleep mode
- * Offer a robust, easy-to-access recycling program. If a community doesn't offer single stream recycling, management can offer recyclables removal, or post information about the local recycling center
- * Promote public transportation by posting local bus and train schedules in common areas
- * Make sustainability a two-way street. Suggestions boxes, posters, and contests will foster dialogue and uncover new energy- and cost-saving measures

Promoting sustainability efforts

A company's commitment to conducting business responsibly at the corporate office and across its portfolio should be more than just a "feel good" endeavor. By spreading awareness about the benefits of conserving resources and reducing a building's carbon footprint, property owners and managers will attract and retain better employees and tenants for years to come.

Wendy Formichelli is the director of marketing at WegoWise, Inc., Boston.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540