

Martin Luther Tower

Location	1101 Franklin Street San Francisco, CA
Size	76,000 sf, 120 units
Building Height	13 stories
Date constructed	1967 Retrofit - 2005-2007
Uses	Senior affordable housing
Owner	St. Mark's Lutheran Church
Prop Manager	The John Stewart Co.
Tax Credit Inv	Aegon



Background

St. Mark's Lutheran Church has deep San Francisco roots, tracing back to the California Gold Rush days when the first wave of German immigrants began to arrive in San Francisco. In 1895 the present church building was dedicated - this building survived the 1906 earthquake and hosts worship services today.

As the neighborhood around St. Mark's declined in the 1950's, the congregation elected to stay in the current San Francisco location. This decision, and an effort to further St. Mark's mission to serve the community, led the congregation to take part in redevelopment of the declining neighborhood, which ultimately led to financing and constructing the MLT senior affordable housing project on St. Mark's Square in 1967.

Situation Overview

- MLT does not charge residents for water and SFPUC had announced 20% water rate increases
- No visibility in water consumption and limited awareness among residents
- 1967 era sinks, faucets and toilets in many cases
- Historical focus on maintaining tax credit status and commitment to affordable housing
- The John Stewart Co. was new to managing the building and eager to also evaluate operations and reduce operating costs



Initial Process

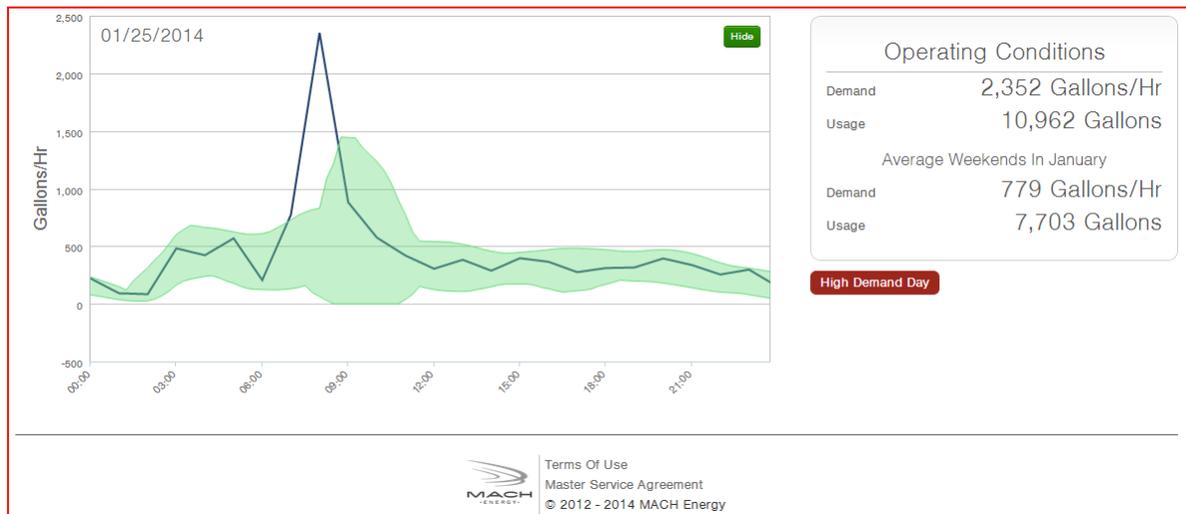
- JSCo contacted SFPUC for initial meeting
- Scheduled building walk-throughs with SFPUC
- SFPUC benchmarked building and determined water use was 30% above the norm.
- Approved free fixture upgrades from SFPUC – 240 sinks and 120 showers upgraded with water restrictors and low-flow shower heads.
- Communication plan – met with residents to describe plan and encourage water conservation; follow-up letters reinforced the message – some initial resistance but most residents supported a better use of resources
- All faucet and shower upgrades were completed in 4 days.

Phase II – Low Flow Toilets

- Initial test went smoothly enough that SFPUC implemented their low-flow toilet upgrade program
- This program upgraded toilets at NO COST to the building – New 1.6 gallon per flush (GPF) toilets were installed to replace the old 4.5 GPF per flush models - helps SFPUC reduce long-term water consumption
- Larger upgrade project required significant communication, which enabled further resident participation, interaction and messaging
- Process complicated by need to shut off water to entire building. Installation spread over 3 months – 4 floors per month - to minimize disruption to Residents.
- Critical to have maintenance staff dedicated to clean up after plumbers and discard all empty boxes, packaging and excess material to increase Resident post-install satisfaction.
- Important to inspect all building units after water turned back on - to identify leaks and prevent floods.

Ongoing Operations

- Evaluated operations, landscape watering schedules etc
- Used monitoring software to verify savings and ID anomalies
- Evaluating areas for advanced leak detection hardware (which may reduce liability insurance premiums)



Results

- 1.3 million gallons of water saved in 12 month period (31% reduction in water use)
- 31% savings in sewer treatment bills and 26% reduction in water bills

Community Benefits

- Savings enabled MLT Board and JSCo to reinvest in new lobby, programs, lighting upgrades and security enhancements
- Residents continue to be very supportive of the initiative and MLT currently has 100% occupancy
- "Upgrading to low-flow toilets entailed turning off the water to the entire building for six to eight hours approximately every two weeks for about a month and a half. This was quite inconvenient for the residents as they had to store water for personal use and to use the restrooms next door at the Urban Life Center on those days. Because the residents of MLT function as a close knit community, we were able to pull together to coordinate the access to the ULC and to help those who needed assistance with their walkers and wheelchairs.

Some residents had concerns about the new low flow toilets but the toilets soon proved not only satisfactory but, in fact, an improvement over the old toilets. In light of the seriousness of the current drought, everyone now seems to be gratified that we got ahead of the curve in water conservation. The residents are also grateful that the money saved by MLT on water has been reinvested by the MLT Board of Trustees in new equipment for the computer room, new carpet for the first floor, and new paint for the lobby and lounge.

Despite the concerns and inconvenience, residents on the whole consider that the program was a good thing and worthwhile for the long run."

Rose Priven, President, MLT Residents Association

More Info: www.mlt-sf.org