



# The Hard Task of Softening Water in Multifamily Housing

Sustain Dane – Dane County WI



## About Sustain Dane

Our mission is to inspire, connect, and support people to accelerate sustainable actions for community wellbeing.



# Holistic Sustainability



# Efficiency Navigator Program

The Efficiency Navigator helps small to medium-size multi-family housing become more efficient and resilient while reducing operating costs to remain affordable.



# Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District

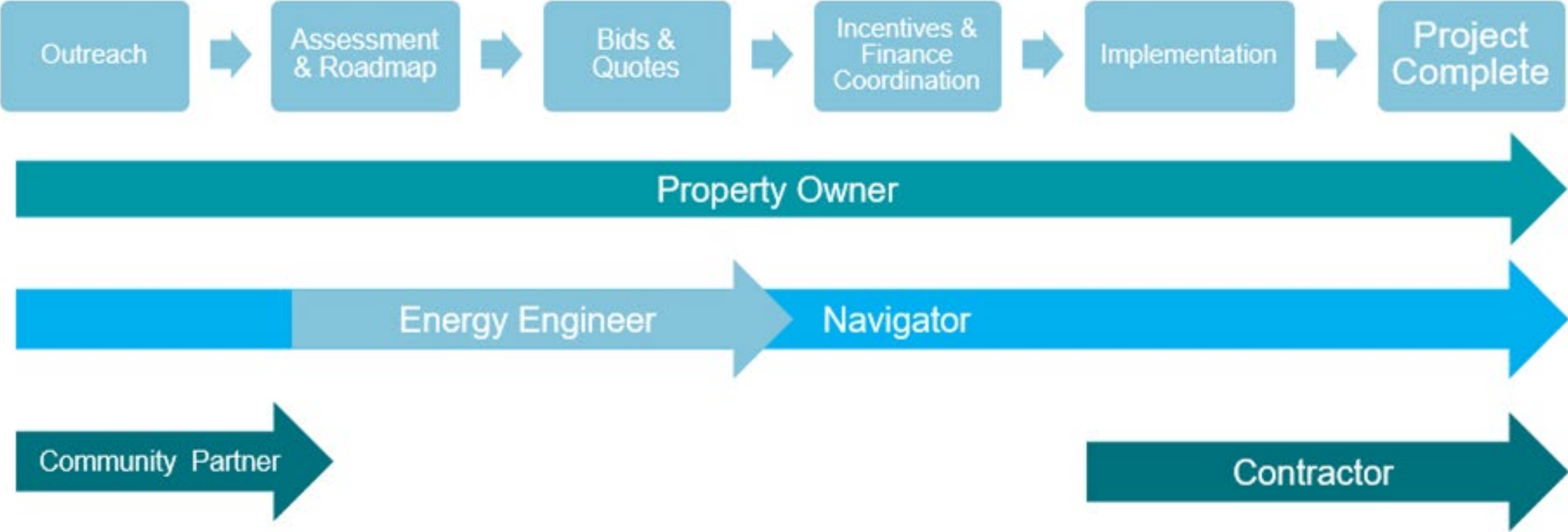


**ELEVATE**  
Equity through  
climate action



**SUSTAIN  
DANE**

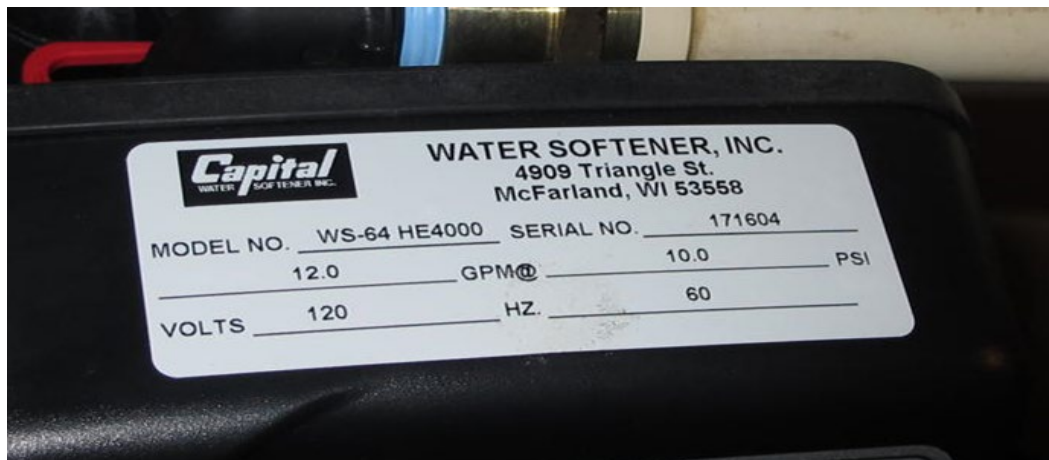
# Navigator Process



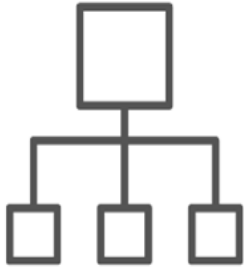
- High quality service through a single point of contact (Navigator)
- Robust data to support energy savings

# Addition of Water Softener Work

- Prior difficulty to access multifamily housing
- Holistic viewpoint
- Funding to reduce chloride
- Programmatically how it works
  - Assessment → Contact Contractor → Site Visit → Optimization or Replacement (owner dependent)



# How the Efficiency Navigator Model Addresses Barriers



Single point of contact to support owners step-by-step through the process.



Onsite building assessment and report with recommended measures with cost and savings analysis.

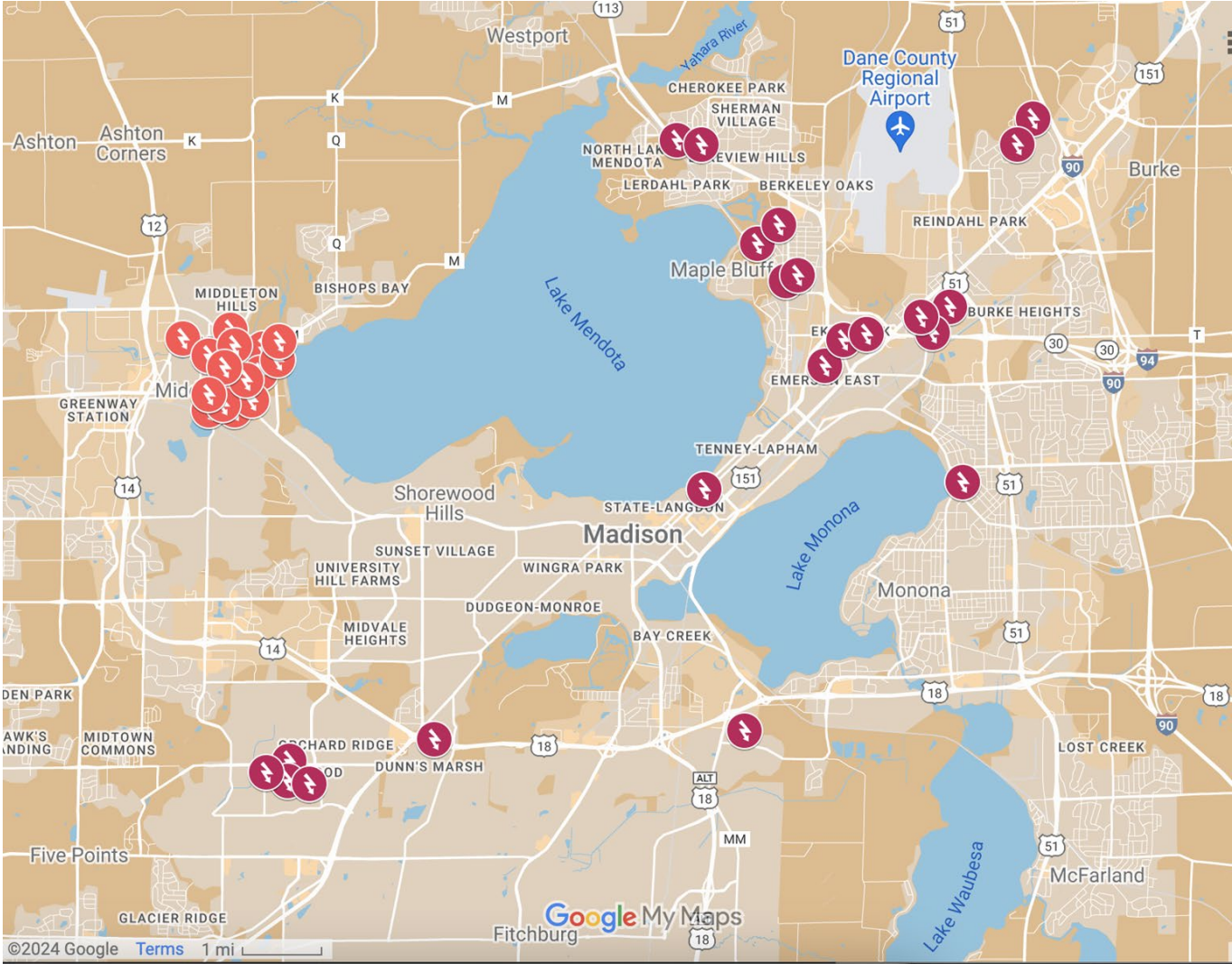


Provides access to grants capital, financing products, and incentive programs to pay for improvements.



Excellent customer service and program options to engage residents.

# Efficiency Navigator Locations



## Program Total

- 63 buildings
- 206 units

## Water Softeners

- 25+ buildings
- ~40% of buildings



# Work Completed in 25+ buildings

**5** clunkers replaced

**11** optimizations

**3** hot-line conversions

**4,500+** lbs of salt/year  
reduced

**8** softeners identified as  
optimal

**3** disconnected softeners

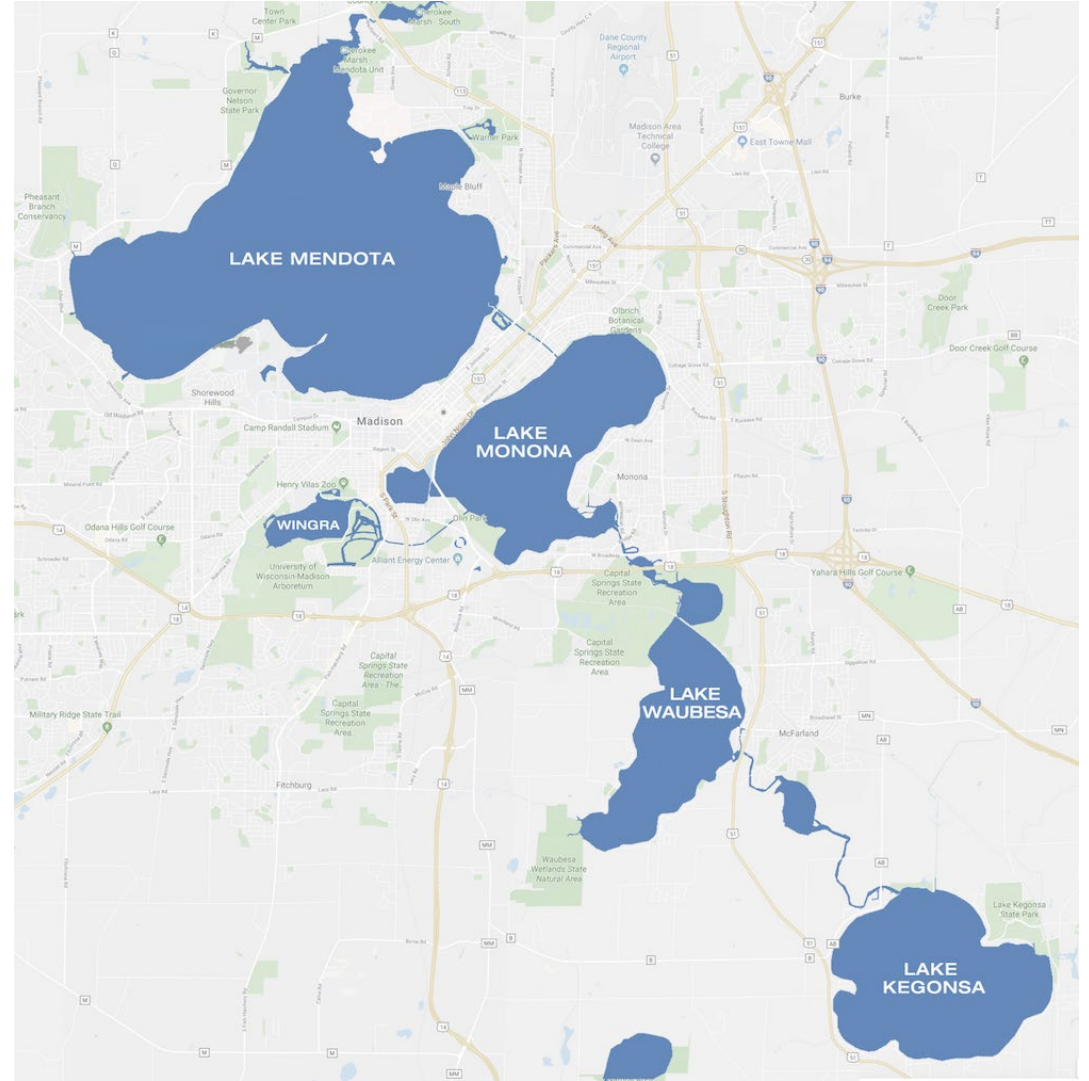
# Contractor Comments



- Brand new. The system still softened the hot side to 0 grains hard. Changed the capacity from 500 gallons to 900 gallons.
- Newer system. Optimized as the settings were wildly out of parameters.
  - Hardness setting changed from 3 to 25 grains hardness. Shut off the 14 day auto regen, and changed salt dosage to 6 lbs instead of 12 lbs.
- Streamlined contractor visits

# Owner Education

- Chloride runoff and reduction
  - “I didn’t think [the salt and water] came in contact with waterways. It just goes down the drain, but now that you mention it, I guess that drain does lead to somewhere,”
  - Thought watershed quality was only impacted by road salt
- Education on optimal use and settings or who to call



# Owner Decision Factors

- Cost
  - Owners want to keep housing affordable
  - Cost was the “biggest barrier”
  - “Filling up old softeners with more salt cost less than a new efficient softener”
- Priority
  - Other implementations take priority
- Incentive
  - Optimizations at no charge— only “cost” was time to meet contractor
  - Coordination of the contractor provided
  - Four at \$500 and one at \$250



# Takeaways



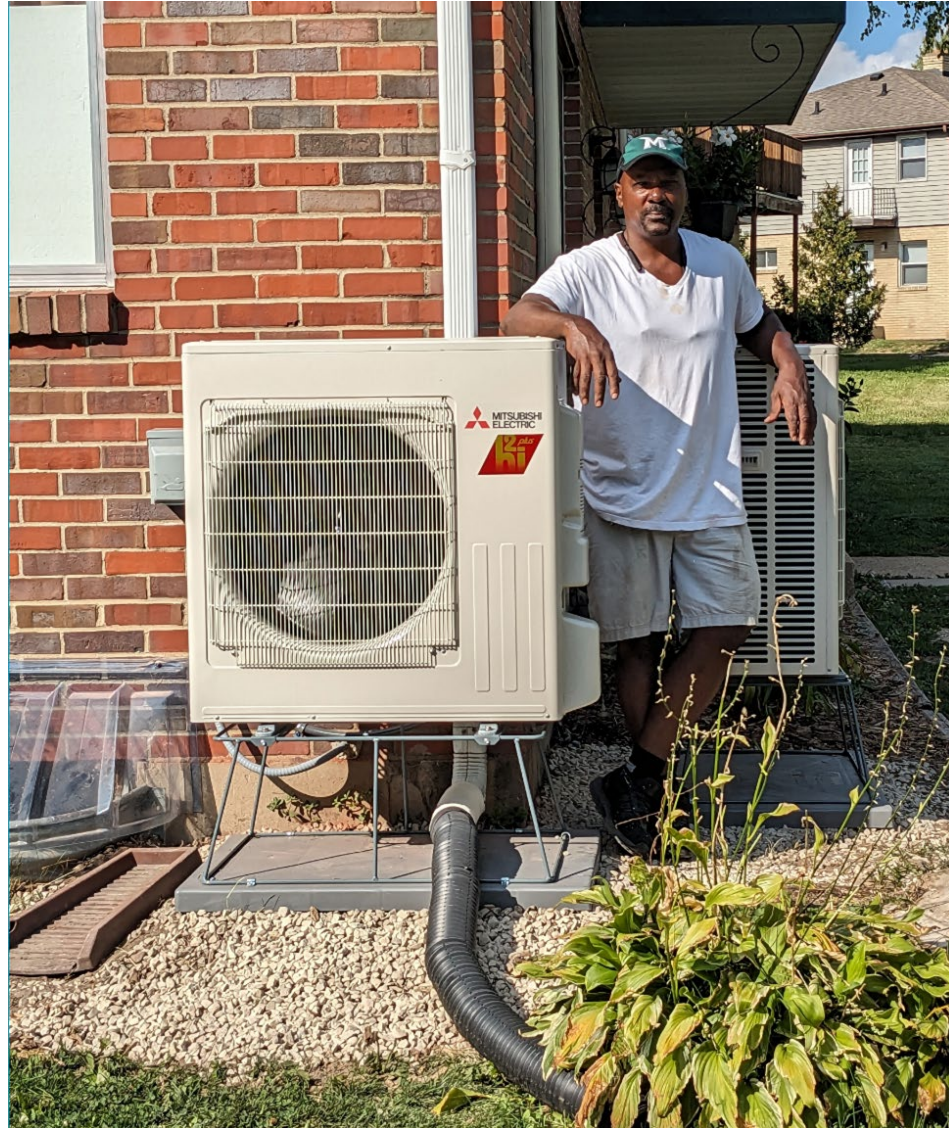
Opportunities in small, multi-family housing to reduce salt use



Strong customer service and dedicated engagement for high levels of interaction



Funding for staff time and owner incentives



“[The program] helps these families living paycheck to paycheck not only live a more comfortable life but save energy and money.

And, with each dollar spent helping people... the more hope we have for a sustainable future.”

– Melvin Boone, owner of apartment building

**Thank you!**  
**Questions?**



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