

# Who's the Customer Here? Effective Marketing for Rental Properties

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# So, who is the target customer?

Both rental property owners and residents, but effective marketing starts with owners.

## Presentation Agenda

*Today we will...*

- Describe today's rental market and the challenges renters and owners face.
- Provide guidance on designing program structures to match rental market needs and expectations.
- List key best practices to follow in marketing to rental owners.
- Suggest additional resources to support your work.



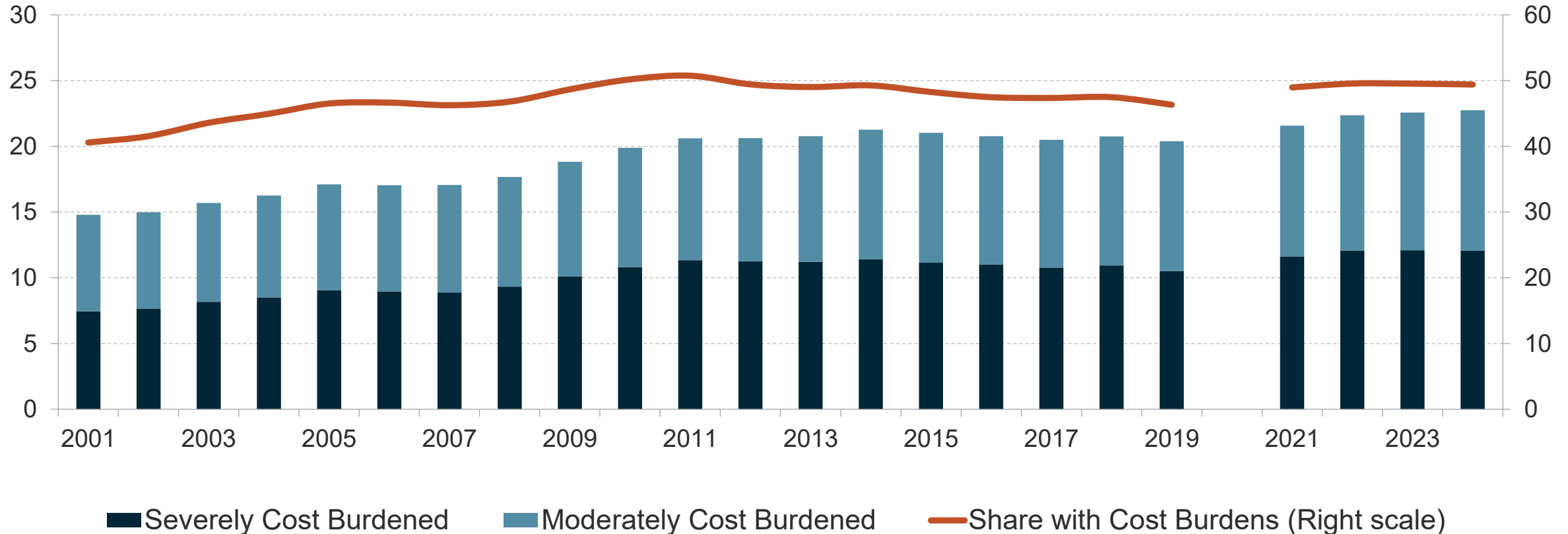
# Today's Rental Market: Increasing Financial Strain for Residents and Owners

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# The Number of Cost-Burdened Renters Has Hit Another All-Time High: 22.7 Million (49% of renters)

Renter Households (Millions)

Share with Cost Burdens (Percent)

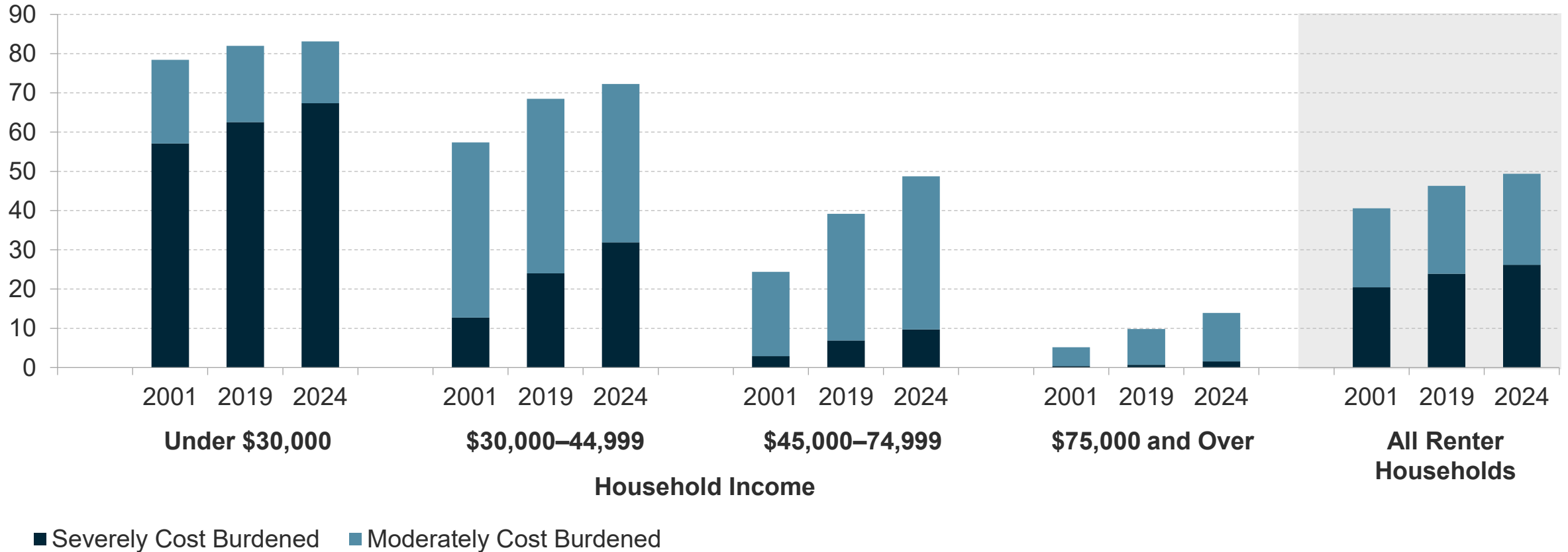


Notes: Moderately (severely) cost-burdened households spend more than 30% (more than 50%) of income on rent and utilities. Households with zero or negative income are assumed to have burdens, and households that are not required to pay rent are assumed to be unburdened. Estimates for 2020 are omitted because of data collection issues experienced during the pandemic.

Source: JCHS tabulations of US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

# Rent + Energy Cost Burdens Have Risen Across All Income Groups

Share of Renter Households (Percent)

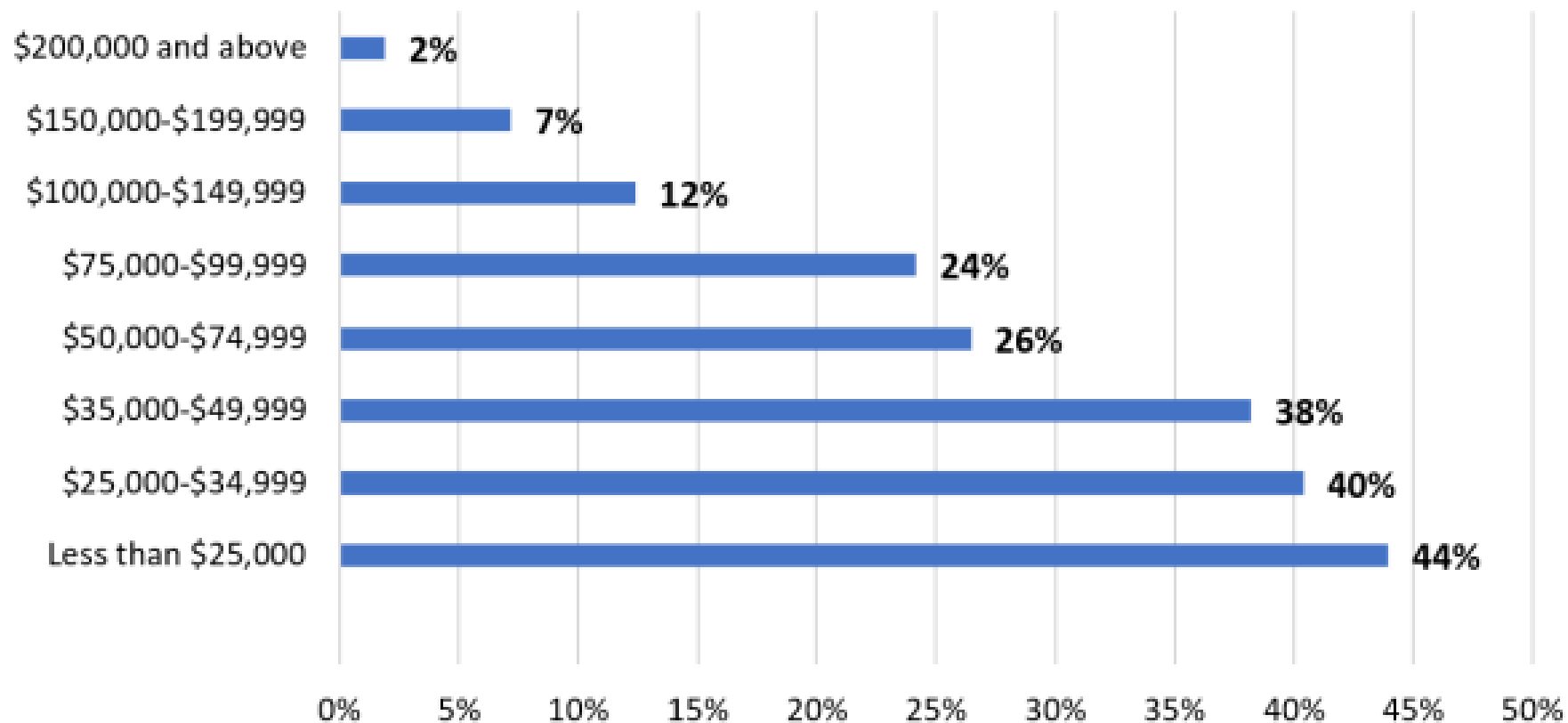


Notes: Household incomes are adjusted for inflation using the CPI-U for All Items. Moderately (severely) cost-burdened households spend more than 30% (more than 50%) of income on rent and utilities. Households with zero or negative income are assumed to have severe burdens, while households that are not required to pay rent are assumed to be unburdened.

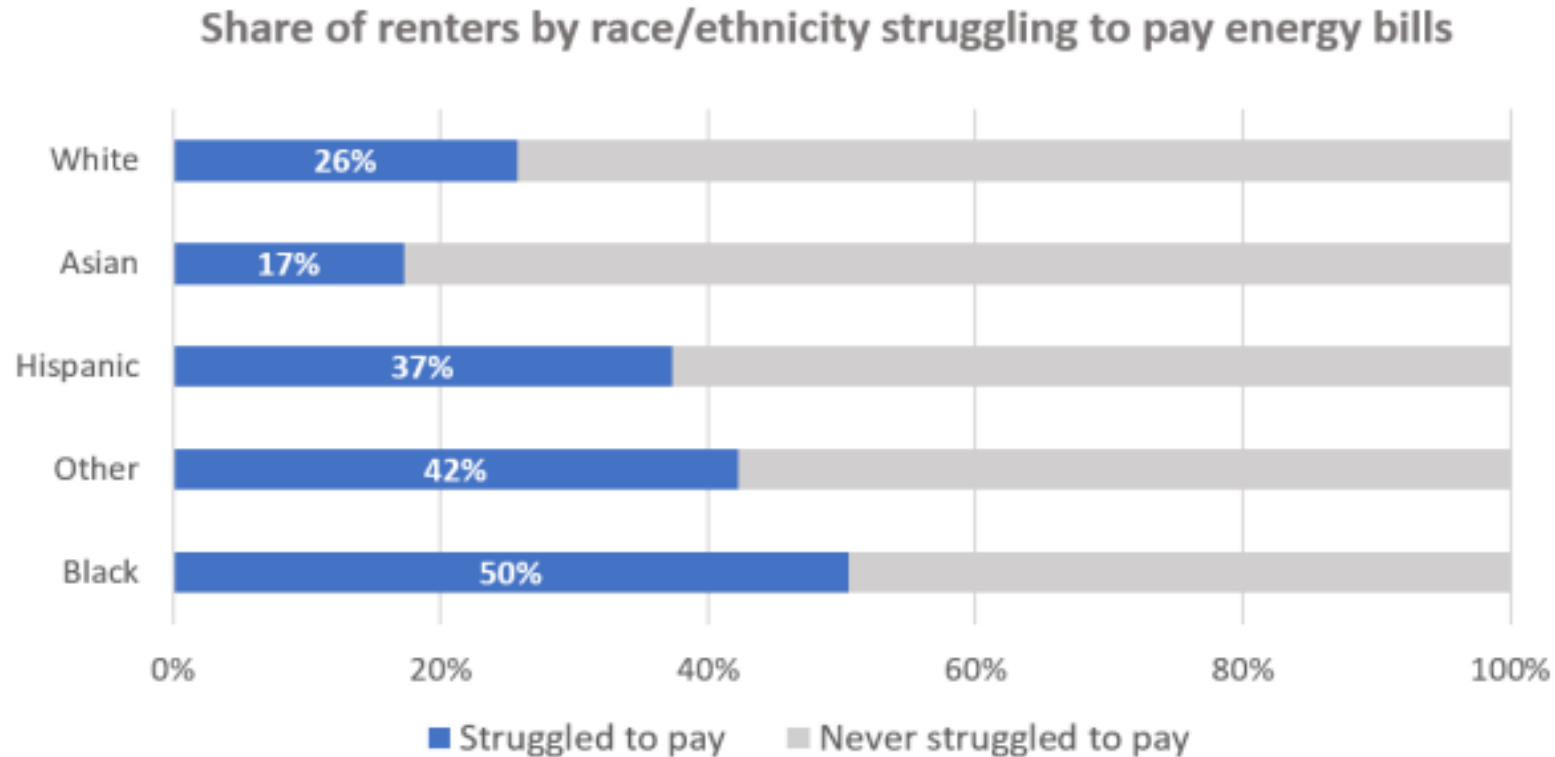
Source: JCHS tabulations of US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

# One-Third of Renters are Behind on Energy Bills

Share of renter households by income reporting struggling to pay energy bills over the previous year



# One-Third of Renters are Behind on Energy Bills



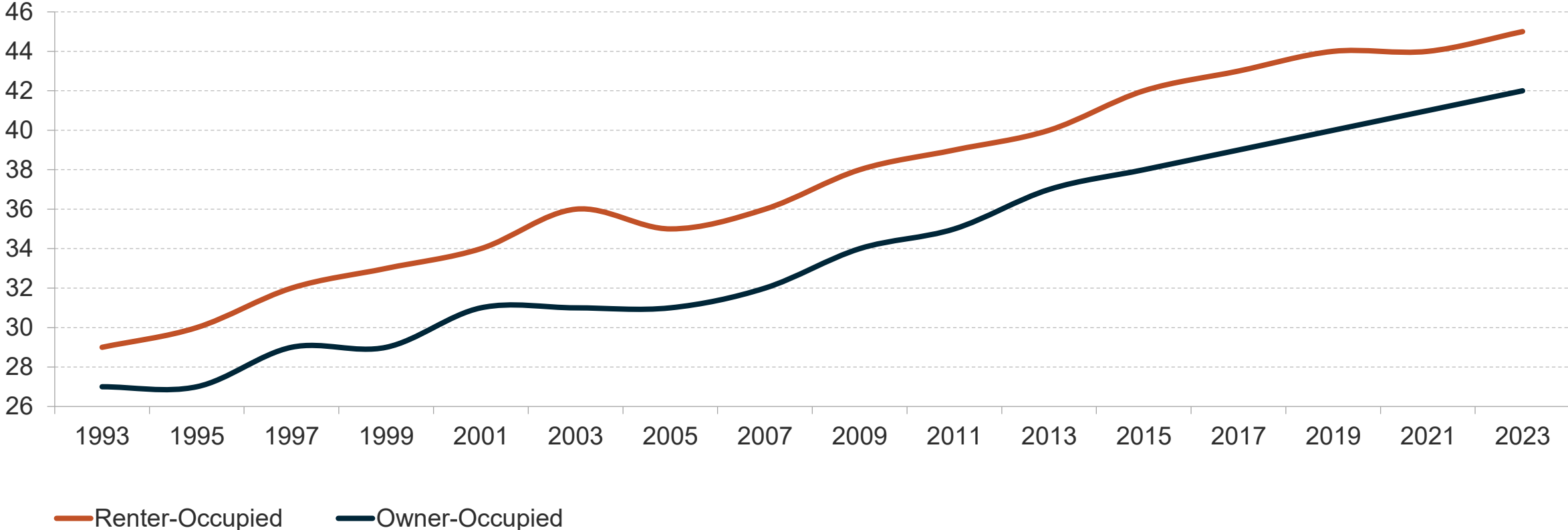
Note: All Hispanic respondents were included in the Hispanic category regardless of race. Because of this, we did not include these respondents in the other categories.

## Of those behind on their energy bills....

- 80% skipped paying other bills and necessities to pay for energy bills
- 44% reported keeping their home at an unsafe or unhealthy temperature at least once

# The Rental Stock Is the Oldest on Record

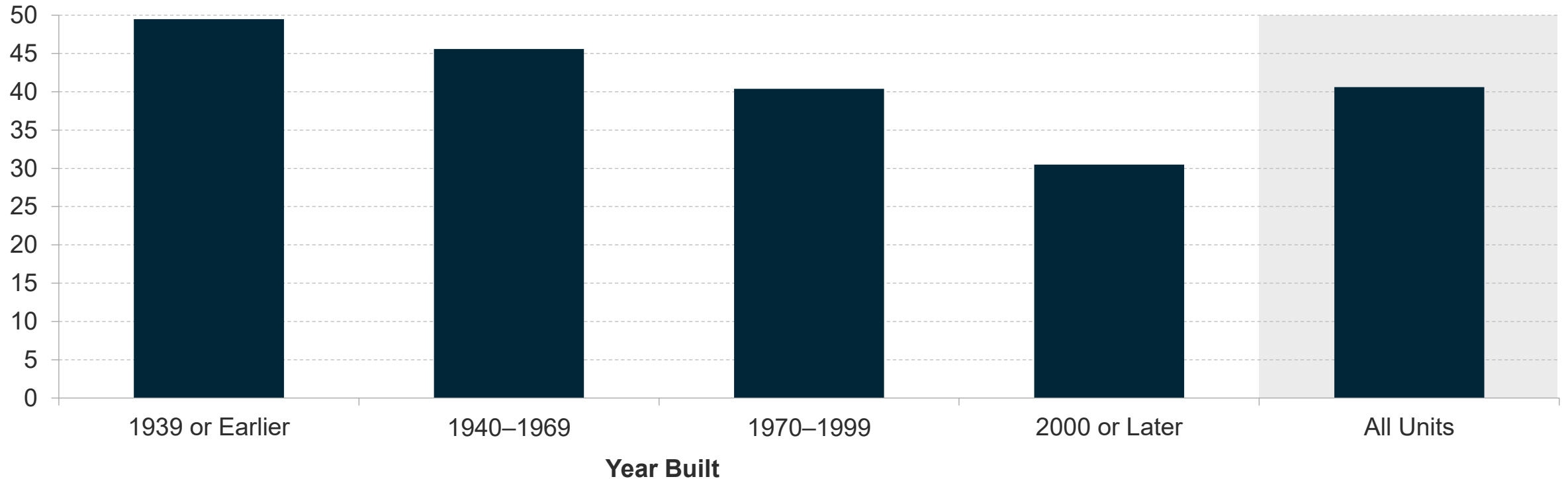
Median Age of Housing Stock



Source: JCHS tabulations of HUD, American Housing Surveys.

# Older Rental Units Are Likely to Require Investment

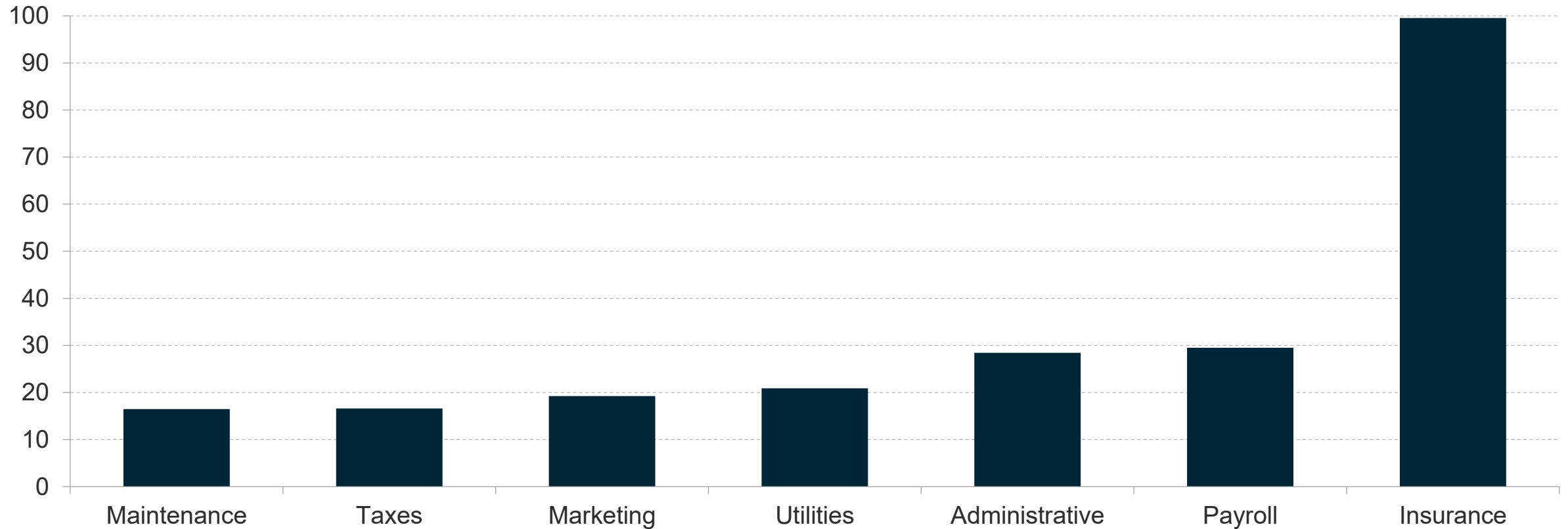
Share of Renter-Occupied Units with Repair Needs (Percent)



Source: Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, *Home Repair Costs 2025: Updated Estimates and New Measures of Cooling Needs*.

# Multifamily Operating Expenses Have Soared, Led by Insurance Increases

Change in Costs, 2019–2024 (Percent)



Source: TreppCRE & TreppInsights.

# Aligning Program Structures with Rental Market Needs & Expectations

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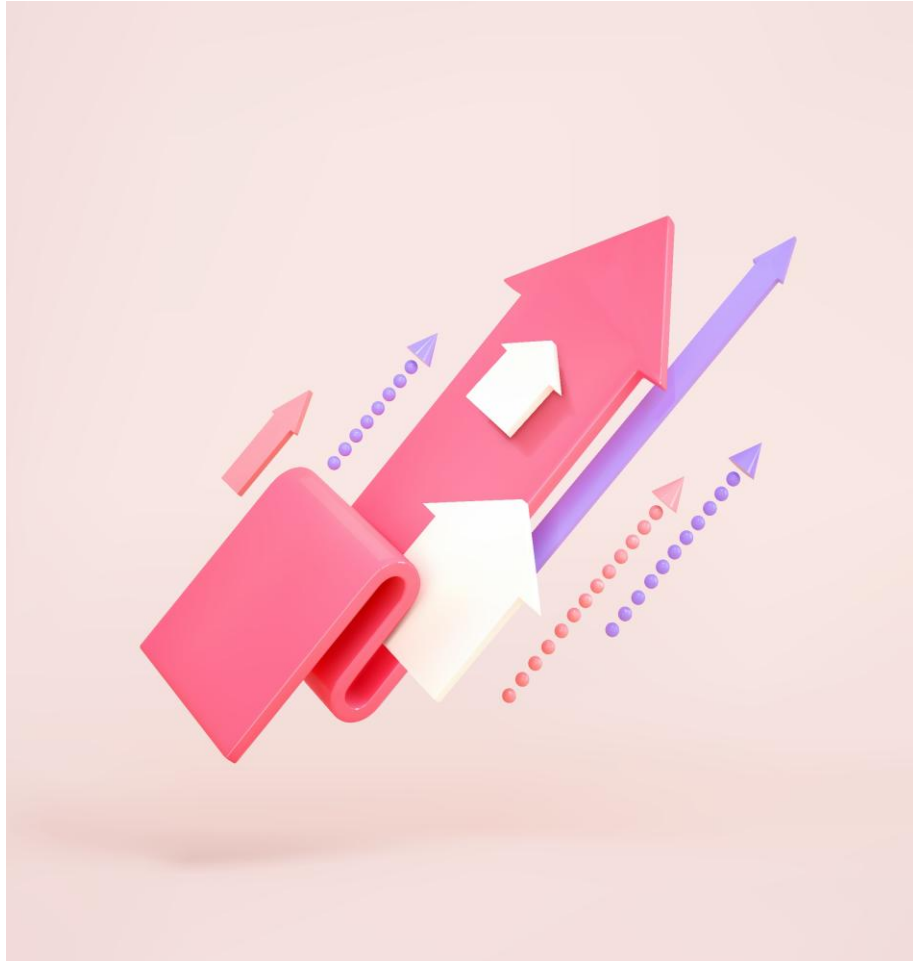


# Split Incentives Dominate the Rental Market

- Rental property owners control most decisions regarding building energy upgrades but struggle to recover their investments.
- Renters can lower their energy bills from efficiency upgrades but often lack the authority to make them.
- Misaligned incentives can lead to limited retrofit activity or rent increases.



# Connect Owners with Sufficient Funding to Overcome the Split Incentive Challenge



- Combine and layer incentives from multiple programs to complete deeper energy-saving projects.
- Effective incentive structures include escalating rebates, pay-for-performance offers, and bundled common-area and in-unit incentives.

# Keep in Mind Owner Habitability Requirements

## Warranty of Habitability Responsibilities



Complying with all state and local health and building codes



Maintaining structural components and a reasonably weather-protected unit



Providing the necessary heat, electric, and hot and cold water facilities



Making any requested repairs promptly



Ensuring that living conditions are peaceful and quiet, as well as hazard free



Maintaining a pest-free environment

# Keep in Mind a Renter's Covenant of Quiet Enjoyment



- A renter's right to occupy their home without unreasonable interference from their landlords or those working on their behalf.
- Legal principle applicable in all states.
- Some jurisdictions also have specific laws against landlord retaliation against renters.

# What these legal principles mean for your programs

- **Retrofit responsibility sits with property owners.** Programs should focus marketing deeper energy-saving projects to these individuals.
- **Renters can make only limited upgrades.** These typically need to be reversible or removable measures.
- **Disruption and displacement are major risks.** Program should work with owners to plan projects that do not disrupt renters' living conditions or displace them.



# Avoiding Resident Disruption & Displacement

- **Timing:** Appeal to owners to align projects with vacancies, renovations, refinancing.
- **Engagement:** Require that owners discuss projects with renters during the planning process.
- **Partnerships:** Connect renters to local nonprofit and government housing support services.



Image Source: Santa Barbara News Channel 3-12

# What Housing Partners Can Often Provide to Renters



Image Source: Direct Relief

- Financial assistance (rent, utilities, moving)
- Legal and tenant protections
- Housing stability (placement, eviction prevention)
- Case management and support navigation

# Managing Retrofit Impacts on Rent

- State and local laws governing post-retrofit rent protections are limited and varied
- Programs can require rent caps – but must ensure compliance to be effective!
- Compliance strategies:
  - Ensure residents understand owner requirements
  - Align requirements with affordable housing subsidies that other entities already enforce



# ACEEE Research on Best Practices for Rental Owner Marketing

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# Consistently Work to Engage Rental Stakeholders

- Build long-term relationships with property owners and managers, non-profits, and housing trade associations
- Especially important to form strong relationships with property managers and landlord associations
- Builds market trust in your program, ensures that program offerings match customer needs, and realizes high participation rates

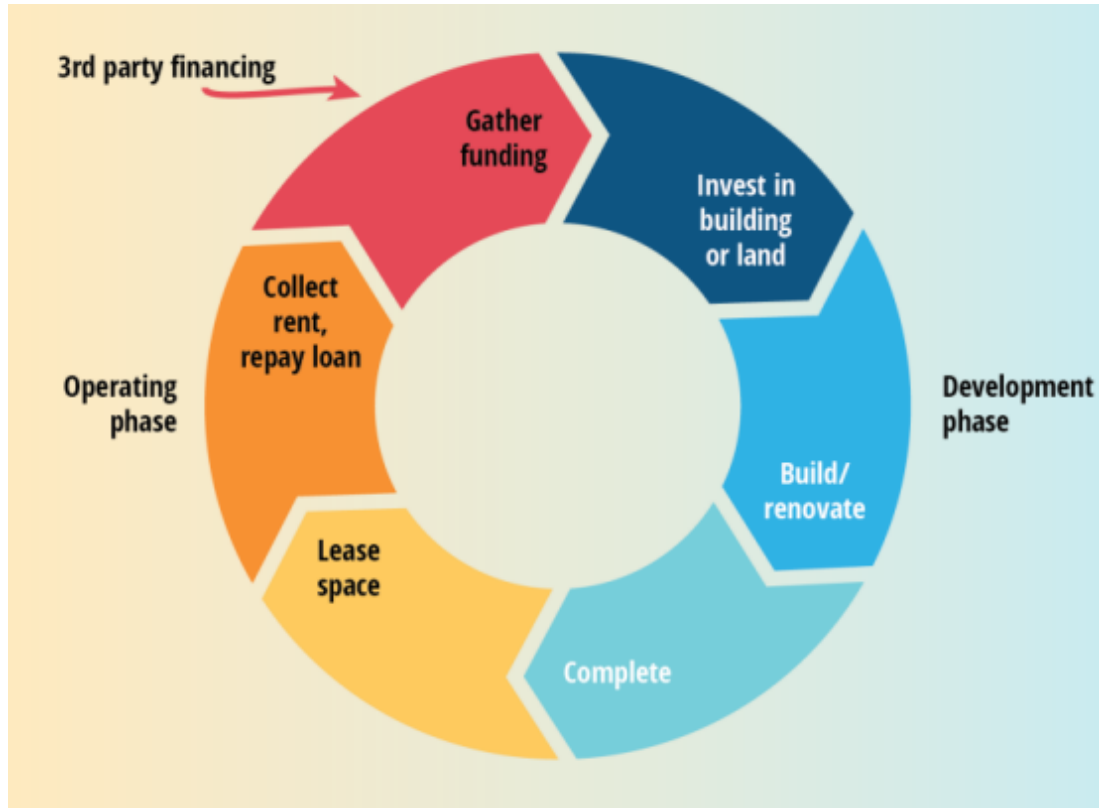


# Design Program Offerings for a Diverse Rental Market



- Tailor program offerings and outreach to reach different multifamily market segments – especially the affordable sector!
- Test different messages and forms of communication (paper outreach, social media, websites and community outreach)

# Carefully Consider Timing in Approaching Owners



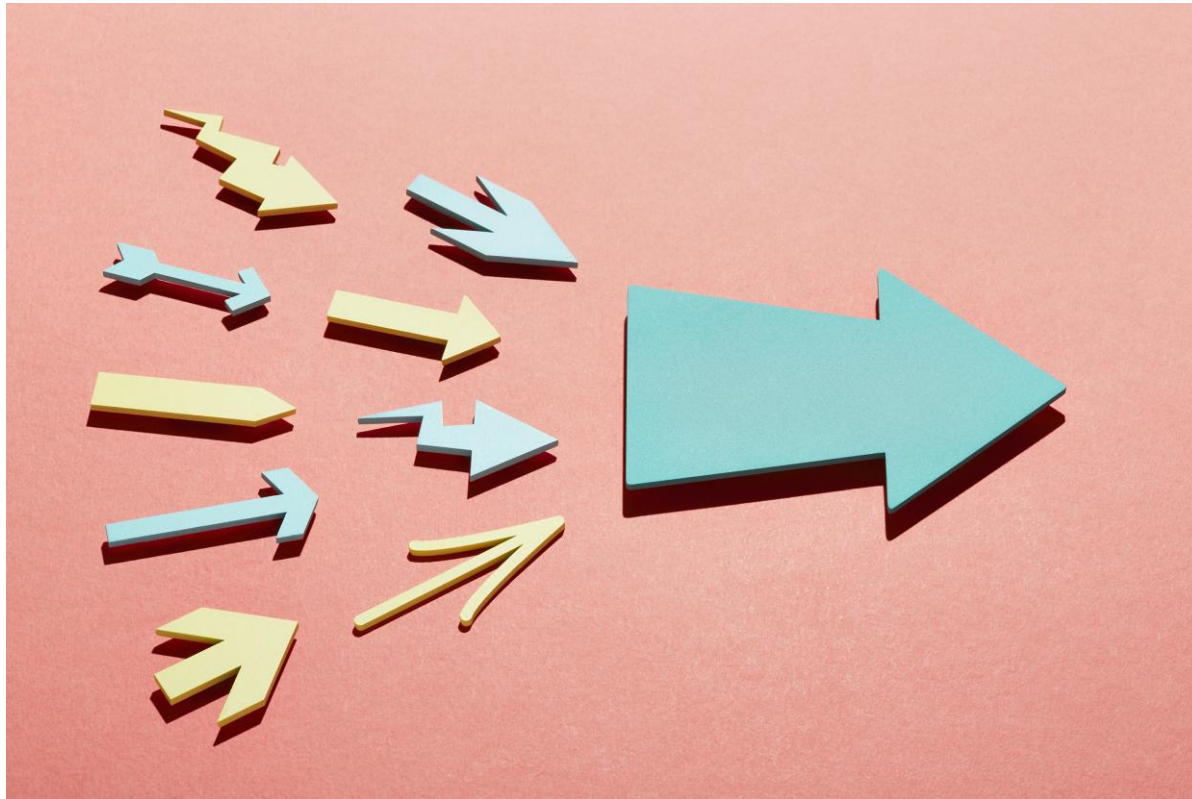
- Approach properties in advance of a planned renovation or refinancing.
- Build long-term relationships with managers and owners. Smaller-scale upgrades may be possible at other times.
- Offering options such as phased audits or staggered upgrades can help owners' cash flow remain stable and keep residents in their homes.

# Connect Rental Owners with Financing

- Incorporate financing options - on-bill repayment, pay-for-performance, forgivable loans, etc. - to support projects.
- If it is not possible to directly offer financing, programs can still inform owners and managers of financing opportunities.



# Create a One-Stop Shop: Streamline Participant Access to Incentives and Services



- Provide holistic, “single point of contact” solutions that simplify participation across funding, technical assistance, and implementation
- Coordinate programs across local electric, gas, and water utilities whenever possible

# Additional Resources



# Key Resources by Focus Area

- Core Guide for Multifamily Programs: [Apartment Hunters: Programs Searching for Energy Savings in Multifamily Buildings](#) (ACEEE)
- Core Guide for Rental Programs: [Energy Equity for Renters Toolkit](#) (ACEEE)
- Multifamily Program Marketing: [Reaching more Residents: Opportunities for Increasing Participation in Multifamily Energy Efficiency for Cost-Effectiveness Screening](#) (ACEEE)
- Small-Scale Rental Owner Engagement: [Landlord Engagement Toolkit](#) (NLC)
- Financing Case Studies: [Leading By Example: How Multifamily Real Estate Companies Approaches Energy Management and Savings](#) (ACEEE)
- One-Stop Shop Program Design: [One-Stop Shops for the Multifamily Sector Fact Sheet](#) (NRDC)

# ACEEE Publications Focused on Specific Types of Multifamily Programs



Affordable Multifamily: [Closing the Gap in Energy Efficiency Programs for Affordable Multifamily Housing](#) (also this related [topic brief](#))



Solar: [Our Powers Combined: Energy Efficiency and Solar in Affordable Multifamily Buildings](#)



Electrification: [Building Decarbonization Solutions for the Affordable Housing Sector](#)



Electric Vehicle Infrastructure: [Expanding EV Charging in Multifamily Affordable Housing: Insights and Strategies](#)

# ACEEE Utility Low-Income & Multifamily Working Groups

- ACEEE facilitates virtual peer-to-peer calls every 6-8 weeks. We also host occasional in-person workshops.
- Groups function to connect program managers with one another and recent relevant research.
- ACEEE provides members with opportunities for targeted no-cost technical assistance.
- Discussions with members guide and inform our research.

[For More Info:](#)

[aceee.org/multifamily-project](https://aceee.org/multifamily-project)

[aceee.org/low-income-energy-efficiency-programs](https://aceee.org/low-income-energy-efficiency-programs)

**Please reach out if you are  
interested in joining one or  
both working groups!**

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