



## The SSAFE Model

This document outlines the principal goals and functions of SSAFE (Senior Stewards Acting for the Environment). It informs residents in senior living communities about ways to reduce carbon emissions and seeks to inspire them to work toward a world no longer powered by fossil fuels.



Senior Stewards  
Acting For the Environment

SSAFE is a 501(c)(3) Non-Profit Kendal-inspired Network of Elder Communities  
Acting to Reach Carbon Neutrality by 2050.  
Contact: [info@ssafe.org](mailto:info@ssafe.org)





## The SSAFE Model

### Who We Are

As elders privileged to live in full-service retirement communities, we recognize the profound importance of addressing the climate crisis. Ours is the most freighted moment in human history; the choices of people alive today will determine the future of hundreds of generations to come.

SSAFE is a steadily growing group of residents who currently reside in many communities across the country, some of which are affiliated with the Kendal Corporation. Kendal’s Quaker-based [values](#)—especially “sustaining and improving the environment” and “building meaningful partnerships”—are SSAFE values. SSAFE brings to the growing worldwide movement to halt global warming the unique resources of retirees: the time, life experience, financial stability, and organizational skill needed to help stabilize the climate and create conditions so that everyone’s children, grandchildren, and all other forms of life on our planet can flourish. While we are an independent organization, we work closely with staff and administrators at each campus and with the Kendal Corporation itself to pursue our goals.

### How We Got Started

In early 2020, disturbed by more intense, frequent, and destructive weather events caused by a warming world, a half-dozen residents at Kendal at Hanover reached out to leaders in the other Kendal communities and formed a cross-community organization. That group agreed on two goals: to advocate for national carbon neutrality by 2050, with enforceable reductions of 50% by 2030; and to facilitate the reduction of carbon emissions on our campuses. Three teams were formed:

- *Education* informs residents about the urgency to act on our goals, and supports their journey to activism.
- *Greening* develops innovative approaches to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and promotes environmental improvements on our campuses; and
- *Advocacy* promotes government policies aligned with our goals.

Because SSAFE communities function as a voluntary federation, it was important that we remain independent of the Kendal Corporation. So SSAFE was incorporated as a 501(c)(3) charitable organization in 2021. By 2022, our fundraising success enabled us to bring on board a full-time program coordinator to support our three project teams.

### The Braided Rope

SSAFE’s Education, Greening, and Advocacy Teams are the three strands that, woven together, contribute to our overall institutional strength. In the crowded field of nonprofits, this braiding makes SSAFE unique among elder groups. Unlike AARP, LeadingAge, or Elders Action Network, SSAFE develops programs, documents their success on our open-source website, and fleshes out an





organizational model other Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRCs) can replicate. The three project teams meet monthly online to share best practices at their home communities, ask questions, and gear up to support SSAFE initiatives. Below are a few examples of activities from each team.

- **Advocacy:** The team develops [action alerts, letters and petitions](#) to members of Congress and federal agencies. SSAFE has petitioned the EPA to reduce methane emissions from municipal landfills, and the Department of Energy to stop approving liquified natural gas export terminals. Our affiliates also pursue similar initiatives with legislative and executive bodies in their own states.
- **Education:** In 2021 we launched an [online newsletter](#) to inform SSAFE members about developments in ongoing environmental and energy conservation initiatives. The newsletter is issued quarterly and is both easy to read and widely distributed. The team also provides support for Earth Day planning, as well as book and film recommendations.
- **Greening Our Campus:** The Greening Team developed an [energy audit template](#) for use in soliciting bids from contractors to perform a campus-wide analysis of energy usage; and, for enhanced energy conservation, a [Unit Turnover Guide](#) for use when living units are renovated. Both templates are available for downloading on the [SSAFE website](#). A template to measure the carbon footprint of any CCRC campus will soon be available as well. The team also collects case studies of successful campus programs addressing environmental and climate issues.

The Greening Team is also planning the *Pathway to Net Zero*, a step-by-step guide to creating a more energy-efficient and resilient CCRC campus. The guide will cover the basics: understanding current energy usage; planning for an energy audit; and phasing in clean energy. Case studies from SSAFE member campuses will illustrate the steps contained in this comprehensive guide.

Progress reports on the work of the three teams are one feature of the General Committee monthly meetings open to SSAFE members. Other regular features of these meetings are presentations by leading experts in the field of climate and environmental sustainability, plus brief updates on initiatives underway at individual campuses. Our interwoven initiatives promise the fullest, most effective set of ways for a voluntary organization to address the crisis.

## The Challenges Ahead

In 2023, SSAFE entered a new phase that further distinguishes it from other nonprofits: outreach to retirement communities beyond the Kendal affiliates. As we enlist other CCRCs, our website will continue to provide a wealth of helpful materials on addressing climate change through teamwork, on collaboration with facility administrators, and on utilizing resources you already may have in place (communications, governance, onsite expertise, knowledge of local opportunities, and shared values).

If, as a member of a CCRC community, you would like to learn more about SSAFE or the SSAFE model, please feel free to contact SSAFE Executive Director, Michelle Goodwin, at [info@ssafe.org](mailto:info@ssafe.org).





**Resources linked above:**

Kendal Values: <https://www.kendal.org/about-kendal/kendal-values/>

SSAFE: [www.SSAFE.org](http://www.SSAFE.org)

Online newsletter: [www.SSAFE.org/newsletter](http://www.SSAFE.org/newsletter)

Action Alerts: [www.SSAFE.org/action](http://www.SSAFE.org/action)

Energy Audit template: [www.SSAFE.org/rfp](http://www.SSAFE.org/rfp)

Unit Turnover Guide: [www.SSAFE.org/turnover](http://www.SSAFE.org/turnover)

