

# The Better Buildings Neighborhood View

How energy efficiency is improving lives, neighborhoods, and the economy

From the U.S. Department of Energy Better Buildings Neighborhood Program



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"Making our buildings more energy-efficient is one of the fastest, easiest, and cheapest ways to save money, combat pollution, and create jobs right here in the United States of America. And that's what we're going to do."

-President Barack Obama

## Get the Story on Energy Efficiency

In neighborhoods across the country, stories are continuously emerging about how consumers and businesses are benefiting from energy efficiency. The Better Buildings Neighborhood Program website now offers a variety of [stories](#) and [videos](#) that showcase these successes. [Read](#) about the family who feels more comfortable in their home after receiving energy upgrades, or [watch](#) a program partner video that follows a homeowner as he assesses his home's energy efficiency and performs a complete energy efficiency upgrade—you are sure to get the inspiration you need to start a success story of your own. Check out the [Better Buildings website](#) for more!

## Consumer Energy Tip

Are you letting heat right out the door? To quickly detect air leaks, shut a door or window on a piece of paper. If you can pull the paper out without tearing it, you're losing energy.

## Innovation Nation

[Garfield County, Colorado](#), is turning homeowners into "[Energy Heroes](#)" via an ad campaign that encourages residents and business owners to take the Clean

## Better Buildings in Action

### Residents Learn to Open Their Doors to Energy Efficiency in Michigan

[BetterBuildings for Michigan](#) conducts neighborhood "sweeps" that have already marketed the program's offerings to more than 11,000 homeowners in 27 targeted communities. The program hoped that behind every door was a family who felt that reducing energy use was the number one priority for their household, but BetterBuildings for Michigan discovered that energy efficiency wasn't yet on some homeowners' radars.

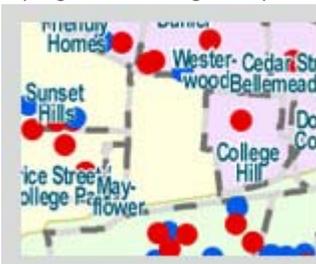
**Neighborhood sweeps** are intensive, house-by-house mini-campaigns designed to convince homeowners to complete a home energy upgrade.

"I was surprised at how little people know about the benefits of energy efficiency," said Mary Templeton, program manager of BetterBuildings for Michigan. "We go into these targeted neighborhoods, and part of the work is to educate homeowners that efficiency is something they should be doing on a regular basis. You have to build their awareness first."

## Energy Challenge.



**Better Buildings for Greensboro** is putting its residents on the map—a GIS-enabled map of the city, that is—by plotting where the program is making an impact.



## Related Events

**PRO EXPO 2012**  
Various locations in early 2012. The Better Buildings Neighborhood Program is a proud sponsor. Contact us to attend.

**Financing Middle Income Energy Improvements Webinar**  
March 6  
3:00–4:30 PM EST

**ACI National Home Performance Conference 2012**  
March 26–30, 2012  
Baltimore, MD  
Attendees are invited to participate in the Forum on Delivering Energy Efficiency to Middle Income Households, immediately prior to the conference.

**ACEEE National Symposium on Market Transformation**  
April 1–3, 2012

And build awareness is what BetterBuildings for Michigan aims to do. By partnering with established, trusted organizations in the communities where sweeps are conducted, BetterBuildings for Michigan is able to learn about the neighborhoods in advance of the sweeps, allowing the program to target its messages. Additionally, having a trusted local organization on its side has helped in connecting with homeowners who might otherwise not take the time to hear from a new program.

With more than 2,000 homeowners signed up to receive energy upgrades, BetterBuildings for Michigan continues to spread the word of energy efficiency with each knock on the door. Based on customer testimonials, what the program is doing is working. "This program is worth it!" says Edith Reed, an Oakdale resident who took advantage of the BetterBuildings for Michigan upgrades. "I was able to afford the improvements that needed to be done to save money, and my utility bills have gone down, my house is less drafty, and we're more comfortable." That's what energy efficiency is all about.

## Plugging Into Utilities

### Utilities Push Green Button; Help Homeowners Manage Energy Use

Access to data on household energy use is crucial to helping consumers save energy and money. Last month, the [Obama Administration announced](#) the launch of new online tools that will allow consumers to download their household energy use data. These tools, packaged as a website feature called "Green Button," are designed to help households save energy and money. Two of California's largest utilities—Pacific Gas & Electric Company (PG&E) and San Diego Gas & Electric Company—have taken the lead in launching the Green Button as a new feature on their websites, allowing nearly 6 million households to download their own detailed energy use data. Additional utilities that collectively serve another 11.3 million households plan to make the feature available later this year. See the [Green Button page](#) on the PG&E website to learn more.

### Study Confirms Diversity Among Utility Evaluations of Energy Efficiency Programs

Utility regulation is the responsibility of individual states, resulting in a wide variety of approaches to the evaluation of ratepayer-funded energy efficiency programs. This diversity makes it difficult for researchers and policymakers to make comparisons across states and has prompted discussion about development of a proposed national evaluation standard. The American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE) conducted [A National Survey of State Policies and Practices for the Evaluation of Ratepayer-Funded Energy Efficiency Programs](#) to assess utility-sector energy efficiency program evaluation practices. The study confirmed that from administrative responsibilities to defining and assessing cost-effectiveness, evaluation approaches are incredibly diverse. Fortunately, the report also found that despite these differences, energy efficiency has been shown to be robustly cost-effective. [Read the full report](#) for details on ratepayer-funded energy efficiency program evaluation procedures and ACEEE's recommendations for moving forward with program evaluation.

Washington, DC

## Impacting Multifamily and Municipal Buildings

### Apartment Owners, Utilities, and Residents Can Coexist Under the Same, Efficient Roof

A recent report from ACEEE and CNT Energy, [Engaging as Partners in Energy Efficiency: Multifamily Housing and Utilities](#), revealed that multifamily buildings hold an untapped wealth of opportunity for energy efficiency upgrades. Building owners and utilities working together could save up to \$3.4 billion in energy costs annually by expanding efficiency programs in the multifamily sector, the report found. The report also outlined state-specific opportunities for cost and energy savings and strategies that utilities and building owners can use to create more effective partnerships. Read the [full report](#).

### Think Locally; Impact Globally

Local governments may spend a lot of time considering ways for their constituents to reduce energy use, but saving energy can be as easy as looking at their own buildings and daily operations. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) recently released [Energy Efficiency in Local Government Operations: A Guide to Developing and Implementing Greenhouse Gas Reduction Programs](#) is available to help local governments reduce greenhouse gas emissions by improving the energy efficiency of new, existing, or renovated facilities and day-to-day operations. Local governments can use this guide to:

- Improve the energy efficiency of municipal facilities and operations.
- Motivate the private sector and other stakeholders to follow suit.
- Understand expected investment and funding opportunities.

This document is part of EPA's [Local Government Climate and Energy Strategy Series](#), which is designed to help policymakers and program staff plan, implement, and evaluate cost-effective climate and energy projects that generate economic, environmental, social, and human health benefits.

## Beyond Energy Efficiency

### Funding Opportunity: Matching Sustainability Directors With Local Foundations to Promote Sustainable Places

Sustainability directors are natural allies for nonprofit leaders and community-based foundations. By combining forces, they can become powerful partners in promoting more sustainable, prosperous, and equitable places. For that reason, the Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities and the Urban Sustainability Directors Network are looking to catalyze partnerships between sustainability directors and local foundations through a Local Sustainability Matching Fund. The fund will provide matching investments from national foundations on a competitive basis to support sustainability projects conceptualized through these partnerships. Investments will range from \$25,000 to \$75,000, with a 1:1 match required by one or more local place-based foundations. Read the [request for proposal](#) for more information about

applying for this unique opportunity before the upcoming March 5 deadline.

### **New Tools Can Help Programs Find a Financing Approach That Works**

One of the barriers to implementing any new clean energy program or building upgrade is figuring out how to pay for it. EPA's State and Local Climate and Clean Energy Program has recently developed two new tools that are designed to help state and local governments better grasp what financing options are available.

The [Financing Program Decision Tool](#) is for state and local governments just getting off the ground with their clean energy financing programs. The tool provides basic ideas for what types of financing are out there, and which would best serve different types of programs.

The [Financing Program Decision Guide](#) includes basic information on options for financing programs, as well as key considerations and factors for states and communities to weigh as they begin or expand their clean energy financing programs.

Check out these great tools and learn more about [EPA's Clean Energy Financing Programs](#).

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