

Clean Energy Salon #2 Triple Bottom Line

Cohosted by TAAR and SEEDS, September 17, 2019

How will we serve our neighbors, our waters, and our local economy by our investments in energy?

Baseline info offered:

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Zw4q_4iGLG9ldDwTOFU8RQzp0cdCkEMpx1BFMDf4330/edit?pli=1#slide=id.g5adc24aca6_0_26

In the Room

1. Kim Pontius, TAAR
2. Sarna Salzman, SEEDS
3. Leah Bagdon McCallum– Blue Orange Consulting
4. Mark VanderKlipp, Connect-CX
5. Wendy Irvin, Habitat for Humanity
6. Laura Galbraith, Venture North
7. Mike Nagy, State Savings Bank
8. Will Nichols, PhD Biomimicist
9. Rachel Johnson, Cherryland Electric
10. Peter Read, Broker
11. Doug DeYoung, Consumers Energy
12. Mary VanValin, Advocate
13. John Taylor, TCLP
14. Charlie Stallman, Green Builder
15. Tony Anderson, Cherryland Electric
16. Dave Mengebier, GTRCF
17. Steve Wade, GTRCF

Bright Spots:

- Sustainability has become a major talking point for NAR. TAAR is a national leader in this (Kim going to sustainability conference next week and will take ideas gathered here to that).
- The biggest energy resource in the world is efficient use. $\frac{2}{3}$ of the action is on the demand side - 30x more available energy via conservation & efficiency.
- Consumers Energy coal plant reduction plan is completely based on the reduction in customer use.
- Investing in property is a viable way to invest (compared to wall street).
- Habitat for Humanity GT is a conservation first org. Builds 50% better than code for new buildings.
- Cherryland + Habitat partnership focused on improving homes for the lowest economic strata.
- Cherryland investing in large scale wind and solar (outside MI) to continue to shift to RE in portfolio.
- Behavior change can save a sizeable amount of money. If you can divert money via passive decision making, this amounts to real, immediate savings.
- TAAR trainings.
- GTRCF building a score card with KPIs and goals for water, air, land, energy, economy
- TCLP pending commitment to follow Cherryland's lead on housing stock improvements and trial consistent messaging. Watch for this in October-Nov

Barriers

- Housing crisis is also an energy crisis, a landuse crisis, a transportation crisis.
Very complex
- Each home is responsible for an average of 9 transportation events/day – the first trips denied are extra-curricular activities for kids.
- Can't just address new builds; existing building stock huge contributor.
- Many of the problems hit those least able to pay the hardest.
- Current model of low-income utility **subsidies** coming from the State are payment assistance, which creates a stagnant repeating cycle.
- State **advocacy** is needed: e.g. affordable housing incentives do little to address rural communities.
- Fossil fuels are water intensive. Household use is most intensive related to power generation.
- Big delta between what is technologically feasible and what the market will take up.
- Many falsely think "they've already done everything" efficiency-wise.
- Large energy users have to find ways to conserve; we need to take the ideas from scale and reduce them to an individual level.
- Difficult to effectively get the word out about existing **incentives** and impactful **behavior** modifications and generally increase consumer demand. Contractors and **installers** need greater awareness.
- Mortgage **lenders** need to factor utilities & transportation costs as well as BAU.
- Split incentives for **landlords**.
- **Realtors** didn't go for the "Green MLS" because they didn't want to stigmatize non-green neighbor parcels. Also **customers** are not demanding this info.
- **Retirees** will push back on tax increases (don't increase value of my house)
- The **affluent** have a big role (likely an outsized role) to play in reducing energy use. Need to own the upstream effects of their downstream uses. Need to be sold on engagement in terms other than financial savings.
- Lack of effective story telling memes. **Messaging** is one of biggest challenges because the issue is complex and ever changing.

Ideas:

- Establish “Energy Zones” that offer tax breaks/deferrals for buildings that are improved for energy conservation & efficiency. *Because if a homeowner fixes things up, they will likely be assessed at a higher taxable value.*
- Get consumers to demand energy efficiency information in real estate listings.
- State advocacy is needed to reorganize subsidies to
 - Include rural residential opportunities.
 - Support improvements for homes using delivered fuels
 - Shift subsidy model so dollars go into making the building envelope more efficient, rather than subsidizing energy use.
- Build a coalition including energy and water advocates to influence state policy.
- Focus on one struggling neighborhood and do a deep dive to map all the complexities, obstacles, and buy-in. E.g. Traverse Heights; Grawn area (Ironwood)
- Start young, educate in schools. Kids are critical stakeholders
- Simple, understandable messages, aimed at different target markets, echoed by utilities, government, business, & nonprofit.
- Taking a Human Centered Design approach. Has to be seamless
- Better information processing. Going from Data to Info to Knowledge to Wisdom. And then being able to spread memes contagiously. A person needs to hear an idea 6 times before it starts to stick.
- Use incremental financial calculators. Tell stories about what saved money can be used for instead.
- Cherryland e.g.: field employees assess each structure and assign an efficiency number. Able to identify (using GIS) the addresses that need support. Any entity that is spending time with “eyes on houses” could be part of that assessment.
- Landlord trainings happen 1/mo at Elks Club
- Transit-oriented development allows for reliance on reduced number of cars.
- Step up local incentives e.g. requirements for ADUs, creation of EE incentives
- Charge “impact fees” against new development to provide for capital facilities’ costs made necessary by such growth (see Florida). Examples of capital facilities include additional water and sewer systems, schools, libraries, parks & rec, etc.