

Action

Contract with an organization to reduce the cost for low-income residents to receive professional home energy audits and recommendations for energy use reduction and monitoring. Develop a program to identify and implement measures that increase their homes' durability, safety, and efficiency. Goal: 500 households annually, each achieving 15% energy reductions. (BE 1-3)

Introduction

Reducing the cost of home energy audits is an important Buildings & Energy action for GHG reduction. It supports the Climate Action Plan's strategy to reduce building energy consumption by 15%.

Goal

500 households annually achieve 15% annual energy reductions each year.

Cost

[Homeadvisor.com](https://www.homeadvisor.com) estimates the cost of a typical home energy audit to be between \$200 and \$700. That means meeting the goal of auditing 500 homes a year could cost between \$100,000 and \$350,000 annually.

Work Sequence

- A. Review the Mayor's Home Energy Challenge for lessons that could apply here.
- ~~B. Look for partner organizations to conduct an energy audit program. Green Homeowners United~~
- ~~C. Identify funding sources for the program. Energy Innovation Grant Program~~
- D. Conduct outreach to attract 500 households to the program. Forward Together canvassed the low-income target neighborhoods.
- E. Prepare materials to show how incentives can be combined to reduce the cost of improvements.
- F. Help homeowners get assistance with completing forms to qualify for incentives.

Status

The City has secured funding to conduct 350-500 energy audits and will hopefully be self-sustaining thereafter.

Considerations

There are likely not enough energy auditors in the area to meet that annual goal so the city will need partners. Also, this program could use multiple funding sources to bring homes up to code.

Lead

Planning Dept.

Climate Action Implementation Plan - Reduce Home Energy Audit Costs (Revision 10/16/2024)

Support

Community Risk Management Dept., US DOE, WI OEI, WHEDA, Xcel Energy, Focus on Energy, CouleeCAP, Habitat for Humanity, and WTC.

Complementary Actions

- I. Revive/expand the Mayor's Home Energy Challenge to increase weatherization projects. Fund an income-based payment system for low- and fixed-income residents to participate in energy efficiency and weatherization program(s) at little to no cost. Finance energy efficiency retrofits and renewable energy projects for all residential buildings. Establish a tiered incentive based on percent improvement to energy efficiency and income qualifications for applicants. (BE 1-5)
 - a. With new IRA HOMES & HEAR programs launching, now would be the time to do this. What's the mayor's interest level?
- II. Communicate available energy efficiency incentives to residents, focusing on low-income and minority residents. (BE 1-7)
 - a. IRA Home Energy Rebates launched in August: <https://focusonenergy.com/home-energy-rebates>
 - b. IRA Energy Hero program: <https://focusonenergy.com/about/rfp/IRA-HERO>
 - c. Couleecap will be added as a Trade Ally
- III. Implement the [Energy Action Plan](#)'s Energy Efficiency Strategies: 1) increase awareness of energy efficiency rebates and behavior changes, 2) host an energy challenge, 3) connect residents with free and low-cost energy assistance programs, and 11) update existing loans and grants to include energy efficiency improvements as eligible costs. (BE 4-1)
 - a. [Housing Rehabilitation](#), [Lead Safe Homes Program](#), and [Replacement Housing](#)
 - b. Natalie met with Kevin Conroy.
 - i. Concerns: even if we give away a bunch of energy audits, we don't have enough trade allies locally to accomplish the work. Many contractors aren't interested in rehab projects or smaller, older homes.
 - ii. We will reconnect now that the IRA program has launched & discuss ways to share information through city programs.
- IV. Create an online "one-stop shop" for building and developing energy efficiency and renewable energy information and resources as an expansion to the City's existing "Energy Resources" website content. Resources should include the City's anticipated [Net Zero Energy Guide and checklist](#), [Solar Ready Guide](#) as well as content connecting residents and businesses with resources for energy-efficient products, costs, rebates, incentives, contractors, etc. (BE 1-13)
 - a. Net Zero Energy Guide doesn't account for embodied carbon, adaptive reuse or consider material reuse as a potential energy reduction strategy. Consider <https://worldgbc.org/advancing-net-zero/embodied-carbon/>, <https://carbonleadershipforum.org/embodied-carbon-101-v2/>, <https://rmi.org/embodied-carbon-101/>

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- b. The greatest impact would come from working with larger developers (Three Sixty Real Estate, e.g.). Connect with La Crosse Area Builders Association? Assess barriers to adding solar. What steps would make it easier? What are they currently doing?
- c. Find a good example of a large building that successfully added solar - talk to Marvin Wanders (?) to showcase the study & how it penciled out
- d. How can local governments motivate change? Potential strategies for implementing solar readiness & net zero construction methods:
 - i. Expedited permitting/zoning process
 - ii. Make it easier to retrofit existing buildings ["The majority of the buildings that will exist in 2030, and even in 2050, have already been built."](#)
 - iii. Education
 - iv. Set minimum standards for new buildings' energy efficiency and renewable energy content. Mandate tracking and disclosure of energy use.
- e. Next steps:
 - i. Contact key leaders - Marvin (Steph), Jason (Natalie), etc.
 - ii. Ask LABA who is working on solar/net zero (Natalie)
 - 1. Olson Solar / Ethos
 - iii. Ask CAPSC who else we should talk to
 - iv. Share guides with all for their feedback