

HOLD A NEIGHBORHOOD ENERGY CHALLENGE

City of St. Louis Sustainable Neighborhood Initiative



350.org created temporary billboards to educate about energy and climate at Washington University - Photo by Caitlin Lee

DESCRIPTION

A neighborhood energy challenge is a block or neighborhood-wide competition between individual households, groups of households, or different blocks to collectively reduce energy use. A well-organized competition spreads knowledge, resources, and motivation to help communities save energy and money. The competition will track energy use over time, educate residents about energy conserving strategies, creatively help residents implement some of those strategies, publicly highlight the ongoing efforts, and reward the winning group with some sort of prize or recognition.

NEIGHBORHOOD BENEFITS

Environmental

- Reduced energy use
- Conserved raw materials
- Reduced greenhouse gas emissions

Social

- Safer and more energy efficient homes
- Reduced risk of power outages at peak demand times
- Increased community solidarity through shared goals, collective action, and positive impacts on community and for individuals

Economic

- Reduced utility bills
- Green job opportunities
- Boost in local home repair industry
- Increased demand for energy saving products



Demonstration of energy and ventilation adult education class. Photo courtesy of Missouri Botanical Garden



Missouri Energy Efficiency Forum

RELATED TOOLS

When paired with other tools, a neighborhood energy challenge can contribute to a greater and more holistic, sustainable neighborhood. Think about community engagement and empowerment, greening, streetscaping, and a public input campaign. Try combining a neighborhood energy challenge with:

- **Create a Cool or White Roofs Program**
- **Create Public Art Installations or Exhibits**
- **Organize a Walking Group or Community Fitness Program**
- **Conduct a Weatherization Training Program**

EXAMPLES

Redwood Neighborhood Energy Challenge, Eureka, CA

Neighbors reduce energy usage as part of a team sponsoring a local school.

Neighbor to Neighbor Energy Challenge, Connecticut

A nonprofit community savings program that engages residents in 14 Connecticut towns to reduce their home's energy use by 20%.

Minnesota Energy Challenge, Minnesota

Neighbors, blocks, or other groups can create teams to compete.



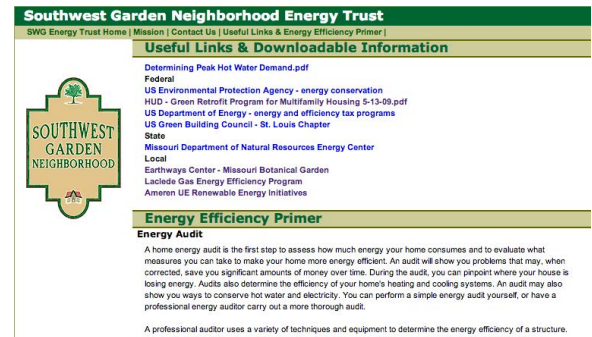
Green energy test. Photo courtesy of Missouri Botanical Garden

GET STARTED

- 1. Research** Research other energy challenges including the examples on the previous page, [FortZED](#), [Salt Lake Community Energy Challenge](#), [Albany Neighborhood Energy Challenge](#), [Power 2 Charlotte Neighborhood Energy Challenge](#), [Central New York Energy Challenge](#), and even tips from the [EPA](#). Gather ideas and tips for how to run a neighborhood energy challenge and decide which tactics are best for your community.
- 2. Plan** Considerations for creating your energy challenge are:
 - How are participants organized? For this scale, organizing by block, street, school, or small group of households or businesses is best. Remember that homeowners, business owners, renters, schools, and even corporations can participate in the challenge.
 - What kind of commitment do participants make? You can have residents sign a pledge.
 - What is the energy reduction goal? Many neighborhoods try to reduce energy use by 10%.
 - How will you track energy use? Participants will have to record energy use and bills over time. Find a creative way to make household changes/updates and energy records be visible or easily accessible, possibly with a public display board of ongoing progress.
 - Is there a time frame for reaching your goal? A suggested time frame is 6 months.
 - What incentives will you provide to encourage participation? In some communities, winners earn neighborhood improvements such as new sidewalks, street trees, street furniture, or rain gardens. Consider partnering other tools as a reward for the energy challenge.
 - How will the challenge be funded and what will the funding go to? Grants may be available through [Ameren](#), [Laclede](#), [Missouri Department of Natural Resources](#), or the [US Department of Energy](#). You can create a resource guide for residents to improve their homes; host a series of helpful workshops of hands-on how-to training sessions for simple home repairs; weatherization; do home energy audits; help fund home energy audits; and, most importantly, create a public competition display or announcement forum that is easily visible in the community.
- 3. Create Resources** Local resources are helpful for residents participating in the challenge. Make this information available to challenge participants and possibly have representatives from these organizations host workshops for challenge participants.
 - For home weatherization, see [Urban League](#), [Laclede Gas](#), [Ameren](#), [Rebuilding Together St. Louis](#), and the [MO Department of Natural Resources](#).
 - For home energy audits, you may be able to [negotiate group rates](#), [get tax reductions](#), [get support](#), or [train local resident volunteers on how to do home energy audits for the neighborhood](#). ([Seattle](#))
 - Work with local utility companies: [Ameren](#), [Laclede Gas](#).

OPPORTUNITIES

- 1. Publicize** Create a publicly visible and accessible component to the challenge. Information, energy statistic updates, progress and other information is usually hard to understand because energy is often invisible, so work with creative local residents and possibly use an art installation to convey information.
- 2. Track & Continue** Track and document neighborhood progress, celebrate the end of the challenge, and reward the winners with prizes. Plan for continuing or expanding the energy challenge in the future.



Southwest Garden Neighborhood Energy Trust
SWG Energy Trust Home | Mission | Contact Us | Useful Links & Energy Efficiency Primer |

Useful Links & Downloadable Information

Determining Peak Hot Water Demand.pdf
Federal
US Environmental Protection Agency - energy conservation
HUD - Green Retrofit Program for Multifamily Housing 5-13-09.pdf
US Department of Energy - energy and efficiency tax programs
US Green Building Council - St. Louis Chapter
State
Missouri Department of Natural Resources Energy Center
Local
Earthways Center - Missouri Botanical Garden
Laclede Gas Energy Efficiency Program
Ameren UE Renewable Energy Initiatives

Energy Efficiency Primer

Energy Audit
A home energy audit is the first step to assess how much energy your home consumes and to evaluate what measures you can take to make your home more energy efficient. An audit will show you problems that may, when corrected, save you significant amounts of money over time. During the audit, you can pinpoint where your house is losing energy. Audits also determine the efficiency of your home's heating and cooling systems. An audit may also show you ways to conserve hot water and electricity. You can perform a simple energy audit yourself, or have a professional energy auditor carry out a more thorough audit.
A professional auditor uses a variety of techniques and equipment to determine the energy efficiency of a structure. Through audits often use equipment such as blower doors, which measure the extent of leaks in the building.

RELATED SUSTAINABILITY PLAN CATEGORIES

This tool supports the following goals and strategies:

Urban Character, Vitality & Ecology

Strategies: F1-Preserve and reuse buildings as a means of achieving sustainability;

Health, Well-Being and Safety

Strategies: B1-Promote Awareness, education and program development around air quality issues.

Infrastructure, Facilities & Transportation

Strategies: B1-Encourage home and business energy efficiency through energy efficiency and conservation programs; B3-Conduct ongoing energy performance measurement and tracking.

Education, Training & Leadership

Strategies: E1-Educate and empower citizens in methods and benefits of being environmentally sustainable.

For the most current examples, updated tools, and information, visit the City's Sustainable Neighborhood Initiative website:

SUSTAINABLENEIGHBORHOOD.NET