

ECOWISE

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Solar Power Shines for PHAs



Photo courtesy of SolarCity. Solar panels on roof of DCHA's Sheridan Station.

With energy costs on the rise, many Public Housing agencies (PHAs) are utilizing energy efficient methods to save on those costs in their developments. Solar panels installation is one way PHAs are bringing power to their properties for less.

In 2011, the Saint Louis Housing Authority (SLHA) installed solar panels on more than 90 buildings including their administrative building. Energy costs for the common areas are expected to drop by over 75 percent; the agency hopes to see overall costs go down by 15 percent. The project was funded by both **HUD Green**

Communities stimulus funds and tax credits. SLHA also installed solar panels on top of their carport canopies to attain maximum performance of panels, while shading cars below.

"It's not that common to use solar panels in the Midwest...but we have more sun here than people think," said Cheryl Lovell, SLHA's executive director. "Because we spend less money on utilities there will possibly be more to benefit residents for services."

In Washington, D.C., 429 solar panels were installed on a new affordable housing development called **Sheridan Station**. Completed in 2011, the development was the product of a partnership between the **District of Columbia Housing Authority** (DCHA) and William C. Smith + Co., a local real estate concern. The project was funded by a \$20 million HOPE IV competitive grant and a \$5.8 million grant from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The panels will produce enough electricity to reduce energy costs in the buildings' common areas by 30 percent. William C. Smith + Co. plans to purchase the excess energy created by the panels through a power purchase agreement with **SolarCity**, a solar design and installation service provider. This power purchase agreement will provide DCHA with an additional source of revenue while lowering the use of conventionally produced electricity in the Washington, D.C. area. SolarCity has completed several solar projects in the D.C. area and continues to grow its solar leasing programs.

Harnessing the sun's rays can allow residents and PHAs to minimize their energy use and lower their energy costs.

Upcoming Conferences

Energy Performance Contracting: Use Performance Contracting to Green Your Housing Authority

August 6 – 11, 2012

Chicago, IL

For more information regarding course registration, course agenda, or lodging, please visit: <http://www.event.com/d/wcqp3p/1Q>.

Green Kids Conference

<http://greenkidsconference.org/>

June 10, 2012

Mountain View, CA

Coffee Grounds Recycling Can Perk Up Communities



A cup of coffee is a great way to start the day and a great way to start a recycling program. The [Green Building Operations and Maintenance Manual: A Guide for Public Housing Authorities](#) recommends recycling coffee grounds. Many businesses and

households create hundreds of pounds of used coffee grounds every year; most of the grounds end up in a landfill, where they produce the greenhouse gas methane when they decompose. Yet, there are many practical and creative ways to reuse and repurpose coffee grounds.

Plant and Lawn Fertilizer – Coffee grounds are a natural, organic fertilizer that contains nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium, calcium, magnesium, and sulfur. Just sprinkle the coffee grounds around the base of the plants or directly on to the lawn.

Compost – The high level nitrogen in the coffee grounds helps balance the nitrogen level within the compost.

Pest Control – Ants and other pests will not cross coffee grounds. Place a ring of coffee grounds near entryways, doorways, windows and window sills to keep pests out.

Cat Control – Cats are repelled by the smell of the coffee grounds. Lightly sprinkle coffee grounds around the yard and garden to stop cats from causing damage.

Even in the home, coffee grounds can have multiple uses before they leave the kitchen.

Kitchen Deodorizer – Coffee grounds can be used in place of baking soda to deodorize refrigerators or freezers. Place small, open container of wet coffee grounds in the back of the refrigerator or freezer until the grounds are dry.

Hand Deodorizer – After handling fish or chopping onions or garlic, rub the used coffee grounds between your hands to remove the strong odor. As a bonus, the coffee grounds will exfoliate the skin of your hands while leaving them with a slight coffee fragrance.

Both the PHA and residents can participate in coffee grounds recycling. The agency can collect the coffee grounds from the office coffee maker and provide the grounds to the recycling program. The residents can recycle coffee grounds for their own use or may also collect the grounds and provide them to the recycling program. If additional coffee grounds are needed, contact the local coffee shop. Starbucks and Dunkin Donuts have used coffee grounds available at no charge to their customers.

More coffee ground recycling options are available at: www.greenlivingtips.com/articles/151/1/recycling-coffee-grounds.html.

Resident's Corner | Set Up a Recycling Program!

PHAs are partnering with residents to keep their communities green through recycling programs. The Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) started the easy-to-use Recycle Buy-Back Program. The program helps the environment and CHA's residents. Participating residents receive money for selling their recyclables to the program. A mobile collection vehicle visits all areas served by the program, allowing residents easy access to this buy-back "drop-off location." Recycling education is also provided to further promote the environmental benefits of recycling. Moreover, this program supports local economic and environmental revitalization, as CHA residents are hired when possible to work on collection routes and in sorting facilities.

Another agency, the Saint Paul PHA, has partnered with Eureka Recycling and residents to recycle newspapers, aluminum cans, glass, and corrugated cardboard. The resident council receives \$20 per ton of collected materials each quarter. In a typical year, the residents in the PHA's 16 high-rise buildings recycle almost 140 tons of materials. The PHA also employs one or more residents in each building as recycling coordinators. Coordinators' duties include preparing the bins for collection day, distributing recycling-related literature to residents, assisting disabled and handicapped residents with recycling, and generally encouraging residents to participate in the program.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends seven steps for ensuring a successful recycling program.

- Step 1:** Choose a recycling coordinator to oversee the whole project. This person would be responsible for designing the collection program, arranging pick-up, facilitating education and outreach, and tracking progress.
- Step 2:** Figure out which materials your community will recycle by conducting a waste assessment to figure out what is currently being thrown away and identify how much of each material is tossed.
- Step 3:** Practice waste prevention - specifically, through reducing, reusing, and donating.
- Step 4:** Include vendors, staff, and volunteers. These groups are critical for success as they can be examples of proper recycling and it is important to have everyone at the PHA involved in the program.
- Step 5:** Select a contractor or hauler to take the recyclables away. Research how much companies charge, what materials they collect, pickup schedules, and potential payouts.
- Step 6:** Set up an easy-to-use collection system, placing bins in convenient locations, and providing clear signage to indicate what can be recycled.
- Step 7:** Facilitate outreach and education to encourage the public and vendors to recycle. Use signs, displays, or loudspeaker announcements. Finally, it is important to monitor and evaluate progress.

Finally, it is important to monitor and evaluate progress. Visit the EPA's site to learn at: <http://www.epa.gov/osw/conserve/rrr/rogo/program/index.htm>.

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