



City of Columbia

701 East Broadway, Columbia, Missouri 65201

Department Source: Sustainability

To: City Council

From: City Manager & Staff

Council Meeting Date: May 1, 2023

Re: Rental energy efficiency project status report

Executive Summary

As a preliminary step in the development of approaches to improve rental energy efficiency, City staff conducted stakeholder and community outreach. The intent, methods and preliminary conclusions are summarized in the attached report.

Discussion

The initial phase of information gathering summarized in this report consisted of two activities, a questionnaire and focus groups. Responses from three stakeholder groups: tenants, property managers/owners, and community based organizations surfaced points of agreement, points of friction/tension and priorities.

The survey was designed to focus on those who live in, assist those living in, and own or manage rental properties in Columbia. The survey was distributed online and in paper format in English and Spanish. Printed surveys were placed in high community-traffic locations. Volunteers also posted QR codes with links to the questionnaire in high community-traffic locations throughout the City.

The REE survey asked respondents to rank nine issues in order of importance for a REE policy, all three groups ranked cost of housing and quality of housing in their top three priorities. Tenants and community organizations also ranked utility cost and environmental impact in their top four priorities. The top four priorities of property managers and owners included cost of energy efficiency improvements and cost of property maintenance. Respondents suggested topics and sources of information to consider in policy option development cost of rental energy efficiency improvements, code and regulation, education, housing affordability, and housing quality.

Though 84% of tenants said that the cost of utilities is important to very important in deciding where to rent, most tenants expressed having a hard time obtaining this information. Of all housing types, tenants living in large apartment complexes expressed the highest value in utility cost in deciding where to rent.

When asked "do you share utility cost or usage information with potential tenants before they sign a lease," 55.3% of property managers and owners responded yes, while 42.5% said no.



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The tenant focus group discussion centered on support for tenants (educational initiatives, accessibility of information, and accountability for property owners & managers, and inspectors), energy efficiency upgrades, and ensuring market/rent stability.

Property owners and managers are naturally receptive to improving the energy efficiency and overall quality of their rental properties because they want to maintain the marketability of the units. The primary concerns property owners and managers shared are cost and feasibility.

The community-based organization focus group conversation centered on supporting low-income individuals who struggle to afford rental housing and their utility bills. The top priorities for this group are cost and quality of rental housing and the cost of utilities.

There were four top priorities from the survey and focus groups. These were cost of rental housing, quality of rental housing, cost of energy efficiency improvements, and cost of utilities. Each is acknowledged and closely linked across all three stakeholder groups in their common concerns.

The upcoming phase involves the work of a third party consultant with desired deliverables being; (1) an analysis of the energy efficiency improvement **potential** of the rental housing stock in Columbia, (2) a set of potential actions/policies that could be implemented in our community, and (3) analyses of the impacts to all stakeholders in the rental housing market. In response to the imperative from respondents for careful policy development to minimize rental housing market disruption, a data driven approach based on market research will be needed to successfully develop a plan to meet City goals.

Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: N/A

Long-Term Impact: N/A

Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

[Strategic Plan Impacts:](#)

Primary Impact: Reliable Infrastructure, Secondary Impact: Secondary, Tertiary Impact: Tertiary

[Comprehensive Plan Impacts:](#)

Primary Impact: Livable & Sustainable Communities, Secondary Impact: Secondary, Tertiary Impact: Tertiary



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Legislative History

Date	Action
07/05/2022	Council endorses staff efforts to create and implement rental energy efficiency policy development plan.
06/21/2022	Communication to City Council from the Climate and Environment Commission regarding Rental Energy Efficiency.
10/18/2021	Report to Council from the Climate and Environment Commission regarding increasing the accessibility of Home Energy Scores.
02/05/2020	Presentation to the Water and Light Advisory Board of a Case Study of the Home Performance with Energy Star Program in rental units by the Utility Services Department.
06/17/2019	Adoption of the Climate Action and Adaptation Plan which includes rental energy efficiency goals.
06/19/2017	Presentation to Council of the Staff Response to the Rental Energy Efficiency Report.
02/20/2017	Presentation to Council of the Rental Energy Efficiency Report from the Environment and Energy Commission.
04/21/2014	Council approves PR 62-14 A, approving a utility information and data policy for residential rental properties to provide on the City website a month by month City combined utility statement for City account service
07/17/2012	Presentation to the Environment and Energy Commission of the Capstone project on rental energy efficiency from students at the Truman School of Public Affairs.
02/14/2011	Council hears a report suggesting a pilot program to collect non-City utility information on participating rental properties and display the data on a map on the City website.

Suggested Council Action

This report is for information purposes only.