

ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND CONSERVATION

A major theme and concern for Workshop participants was our collective energy future. The question of how consumers, businesses and government can work together toward a more energy-efficient future by using conservation techniques, forming unique collaborations and taking personal responsibility for better management of energy usage surfaced in nearly all conversations.

Participants also expressed an interest in MGE's support of energy efficiency goals within the home, business and community at large and focused on specific actions and incentives that would motivate all members of the community to conserve and better manage peak usage. There was a particular interest in, and discussion surrounding, opportunities for future energy planning and conservation within the building and construction industry and in relation to housing in terms of the roles that homeowners, landlords and renters play in conservation.

Future Energy Planning: Energy Use and Conservation

As participants looked ahead to discuss what a shared energy future might look like, a focus on individual and community energy consumption and usage was at the forefront of the discussion. Many acknowledged the need for everyone to play a role in using less energy while also pointing out the shared benefits of those individual decisions.

Participants recognized the need to educate and/or communicate within all sectors of the population to share information about the benefits of conservation along with ideas and direction on how to do so. Other conversations about usage revolved around various examples of industries or businesses that seemed to be the larger consumers of energy and suggested working within those sectors to help identify ways to lower their usage and explore opportunities for operating more energy efficiently.

- *"Everyone benefits, if we all use less energy."*
- *"We need to focus on different energy consumption levels for the consumers."*
- *"Who is demographically using the energy and how can we reach them?"*
- *"Make sure that ways to save money through energy efficiency are fully understood by poorer and minority populations. Explain advantages of adopting new products."*
- *"Charging [electronics] is such a huge energy waste. People only think about light switches."*

Incentives for Conservation

Within the conversation about saving energy, many ideas were discussed regarding the concept of incentivizing individuals or businesses to conserve, including how to best manage "peak usage" times while acknowledging how technology and other factors influence usage. Participants discussed the need to educate people about the impact their energy saving could have and discussed encouraging them to do more by showing savings on their bill or using other incentives such as rebates for new windows.

Some suggested that reducing the carbon footprint and protecting the environment should be incentive enough but recognized that not all customers make the connection to the need to conserve. Discussions also ensued about the importance of conducting energy audits to help people better understand specifics about what they could do to change. Some also discussed the broader issue of providing incentives not just for conservation but also for engaging in more robust energy-savings efforts such as installing solar panels or investing in other energy generation methods.

- *"Conservation is important. Encouraging consumers to save energy, people will conserve because they want to save on their bill."*
- *"Concern about peak periods, with extreme temperature coming, we need to know how to manage it from our [consumer] end."*
- *"Tying energy conservation to community and personal well-being...healthy lifestyles...might be more of a driver than the economics."*
- *"People should be rewarded for thinking about and investing their time and money in figuring out how to reduce their own consumption."*

- *"Provide business energy audits – show us how we can make improvements to save."*
- *"Want to incentivize people to not only conserve, but to actually protect the environment."*

Building and Construction Partnership Opportunities

Workshop participants reflected a variety of industry and community perspectives. Several of these thought leaders provided interesting and specific recommendations – along with possible collaboration opportunities – related to energy usage and conservation in the construction and housing industries. The topics in this area included MGE playing an active role with developers and community planners to strategize about how to make older buildings more energy efficient; planning for future buildings with an eye on energy efficiency; and working to encourage builders, developers and landlords to make smart energy choices.

Homeowners, landlords and tenants were also significant topics of conversation. Some mentioned the feasibility of converting existing appliances, the cost of upgrades, whose responsibility the upgrades would be and the supportive role MGE could play in assisting homeowners, landlords and tenants. Participants mentioned incorporating "home energy ratings (winterizing, windows)" for houses, factories, apartments, etc. Others suggested re-establishing "energy audits" and even making an energy audit a formal part of real estate transactions. And, several comments surfaced about the importance of encouraging and supporting commercial property owners to develop an "improved model for different tenant businesses."

- *"Many of our buildings have not been well planned out from an energy perspective. So we have to both think about the buildings that we have already and the future buildings need to be more flexible and adaptive."*
- *"Recommend through city building department to add energy saving plans during construction planning."*
- *"Property managers could benefit from someone coming out to work with them to help them understand what they could be doing and what technologies they could implement in multi-tenant housing. Have information that the property managers could share with tenants to help educate. Audit their properties and then give them a list of services to take advantage of."*
- *"More options like home audit to help people get smaller fixes for low-income customers."*