

Rebuild Ypsilanti aims to increase energy efficiency

by Laura Blodgett | for Ann Arbor Business Review

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The weather outside may be frightful, but businesses in Ypsilanti soon will be able to warm themselves while pocketing some spare change at the same time.

A new program called Rebuild Ypsilanti is being launched by Ypsilanti-based Clean Energy Coalition (CEC). The program aims to reduce energy costs by assisting in energy efficiency improvements for commercial buildings such as offices, restaurants and multi-family residences in Ypsilanti.

"Program participants will not only reduce operating costs but also improve the comfort and health of building occupants and the environment by preventing pollution," says Greg Vendena, project manager, Clean Energy Coalition.

The hope is that freeing up money from decreased energy usage will serve the other budget areas for participants, feeding local economies and the community.

The program will provide resources such as free and reduced cost energy audits, technical guides, print and electronic publications, financial strategies for energy projects, workshops and meetings and grant writing assistance.

The program is part of the Rebuild Michigan program funded by the U.S. Department of Energy and administered by the State of Michigan Energy Office (Department of Labor and Economic Growth). Current stakeholders include the Ypsilanti Area Chamber of Commerce, Ypsilanti Downtown Development Authority, City of Ypsilanti, Eastern Michigan University, Growing Hope, Jacobsen Daniels Associates, Ypsilanti Food Coop and the Ypsilanti District Library.

Vendena comes to CEC with 15 years experience in green building and energy efficiency, most recently running his own consulting business in Detroit.

"Coming from Detroit where community development is really a struggle, I'm very impressed with Ypsilanti and the strong community of people dedicated to improving it in a number of ways," he says. "The fact that it has one of the largest historic districts in the country also makes it very interesting as far as improving energy efficiency."

ENERGY SAVERS

Top three energy improvements in commercial buildings:

- 1) Lighting: Switching older T12 lights with more efficient T8s provides the same amount of light using less electricity.
- 2) "Envelope" improvements, a.k.a. ceiling, walls, doors and windows: Tactics include adding insulation, replacing single pane windows with storm or double pane windows and switching a wooden door with an insulated door and weather stripping.
- 3) Occupant behavior: Vendena recommends setting the thermometer between 68-70 degrees, a comfortable setting for most people. During closed hours, turn the thermostat down to 55-60 degrees.