COMMUNITY PARTNER

CITY OF ATLANTA

Implementation Model: Public-Private Partnership

COMMUNITY SIZE
Large Urban, population 440,000

GOAL
To engage the local community in reducing energy and water consumption in more than 40 million square feet of buildings by at least 20% by 2020 and become one of the country's 10 most sustainable cities

APPROACH
Leveraged a public-private partnership to create a new initiative that provides access to project financing, free building assessments, education and training, and public recognition

INITIATIVE LAUNCHED
November 2011

Overview

Atlanta used a public-private partnership to develop and lead the Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge, an initiative to engage local building owners and operators, encouraging them to reduce their energy and water consumption in accordance with the City's energy and environmental goals.

The Mayor's Office of Sustainability championed the initiative which is aligned with Atlanta's sustainability plan, *Power to Change*, released in the fall of 2010. Central Atlanta Progress, a non-profit corporation of Atlanta business leaders, property owners, and institutions committed to enhancing the environmental sustainability and economic vitality of Downtown Atlanta, and the Atlanta Downtown Improvement District, a public-private partnership funded through a community improvement district in which commercial property owners pay special assessments to support capital projects and programs, were the City's primary partners in developing and implementing the Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge.

The purpose of this broad community initiative is to challenge downtown businesses to contribute to Atlanta's goals of reducing energy and water consumption by at least 20% by 2020 and help the City become one of the country's 10 most sustainable cities. Building owners and managers joined the Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge by pledging to save energy and water in their selected buildings. In return, the Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge team worked with participants to provide incentives such as free building assessments, energy efficiency implementation technical assistance, education and training courses, access to project financing opportunities, and public recognition.

Atlanta's Playbook

Policies

In 2010, Atlanta developed and released their first sustainability plan, *Power to Change*, with a focus on continuous improvement in sustainability practices through policies and activities that balance economic growth with environmental protection while being mindful of social justice.

Power to Change laid out a plan for continuous improvement in sustainability practices. The plan outlined key action areas, including municipal energy reduction, and updates are transmitted through the Office of Sustainability's web-based newsletter. The Office of Sustainability is gearing up for a refresh of the *Power to Change* plan that will be introduced in the fall of 2012.

Tools:

- *Power to Change*
- Power to Change Newsletter

Partnerships

Through the Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge, Atlanta brought together a network of partners that provided participating building owners and managers with services ranging from free building assessments to access to data and energy service providers.

Public Partners – City of Atlanta; U.S. Department of Energy; White House Council for Environmental Quality; General Services Administration; the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority; Fulton County

Private and Non-Profit Partners – Private and non-profit partners provided the Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge participants with a free energy and water assessment, energy efficiency implementation technical assistance, a streamlined means for sharing their energy data, and education and training opportunities. Atlanta also utilized its private and non-profit partners to market the initiative. For example, Central Atlanta Progress and the Atlanta Downtown Improvement District created a Newsletter Signup page on their website where interested

parties could sign up to receive monthly newsletters and future notices about the Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge.
Service Providers – Atlanta is working to lower transaction costs and simplify the delivery of energy services by connecting owners and managers with energy service providers. This streamlined approach will provide a clear pathway for building participants to pursue energy efficiency projects and will reduce the overhead costs for building owners.

Sponsorships – Atlanta attracted sponsorships from organizations offering financial and in-kind services support. Atlanta provided potential sponsors with a sponsorship proposal that explained the Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge, listed the participating local building owners, outlined the initiative's communication channels and audience reach, and presented sponsorship levels and benefits.

Tools:

- Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge Annual Sponsorship Proposal (2012)
- Newsletter Signup Page
- Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge Founding Partners
- Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge Sponsors

Outreach

Atlanta used a multi-pronged outreach approach to develop, establish, and market the Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge. Atlanta convened meetings to develop the initiative, established a dedicated Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge website, created marketing materials for interested participants, and designed public relations materials to inform the press and public about the initiative.

Convening Meetings – Atlanta held monthly Steering Committee Meetings that focused on program development and also provided a forum for subcommittees to report on their activities. The subcommittees, made up of individuals from partner organizations, tackled various components of the Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge including: marketing/branding, technical/benchmarking, ESCOs/utilities, finance, and education/training. In addition, Atlanta held quarterly Orientation Meetings for participants in the Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge initiative as well as various other events to connect vendors and property owners.

Website – Atlanta has a website dedicated to the Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge that provides information about the initiative as well as a list of resources, events, and projects.

Marketing Materials – In addition to a logo, Atlanta created an information package available on their Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge website that provides a number of helpful documents for interested participants including: an introduction letter, a program overview, a sample audit, a commitment agreement form, and a power and water billing history release form.

Public Relations Materials – The Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge website features a dedicated media tab that includes a press kit, recent news stories and press releases, and audio and video broadcasts about the initiative.

Tools:

- Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge Building Participant Package
- Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge Website
- Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge Web-based Vendor Profile Form
- Upcoming and Past Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge Events
- Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge Public Relations Materials

Data Management

Through the Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge network of partners, Atlanta provided participants with streamlined access to their energy and water use data, assistance benchmarking their buildings, and software that automatically feeds energy use data into Portfolio Manager. Once collected, the aggregated participant energy and water data is displayed on a public facing dashboard.

Access to Data – Through the Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge, the City partnered with Georgia Power to streamline the sharing of participant energy data and worked with the City of Atlanta Department of Watershed Management to gain automatic access to facility-level water consumption.

Data Tracking and Performance Measurement – Atlanta utilized Portfolio Manager to track and benchmark participating buildings' adjusted energy use intensity (EUI) data and partnered with a local university to assist building owners with collecting data inputs for Portfolio Manager. In addition, the Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge participants were provided access to software that automatically fed energy data into Portfolio Manager so that they did not have to continue manual data entry after their buildings had been benchmarked.

Data Display – Atlanta developed a public facing dashboard on the Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge website that displays aggregated EUI data and real time progress against program milestones. If participants agree to share their energy usage data publicly, the website will highlight building-level EUI improvements.

Tools:

- Georgia Power's Energy Direct Service
- Georgia Power Release Form (page 11)
- Department of Watershed Management Release Form (page 12)
- ENERGY STAR® Portfolio Manager Data Collection Worksheet
- Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge Online Interactive Dashboard

Technical Resources

Atlanta, through pro-bono support from its partners, provided the Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge participants with free building assessments, guidance on making the case for energy upgrades, monthly lunch and learn workshops, and scholarships to pursue outside training.

Implementation Assistance – Georgia Power, AGL Resources, and Southface provided energy efficiency implementation technical assistance to help participants identify opportunities and achieve their pledge. Technical specialists provided tools, such as a free targeted energy and water building assessment, to facilitate decisions on efficiency measures or cost/benefits. If a participating building owner had already completed an energy audit on their building, the Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge team was available to review the results, provide detail on the identified energy conservation options, and provide recommendations for project implementation. This information could then be easily shared with key decision makers during the project proposal process. In addition, the Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge team of energy specialists and utility representatives helped building managers make the business case for energy upgrades.

Training – Atlanta is providing educational resources for building owners, managers, and operators. Training topics include benchmarking with Portfolio Manager, utility incentives and financing opportunities, monthly lunch and learns on energy and water efficiency technologies and best practices, "LEED® for Existing Buildings: Operations and Maintenance Workshop" provided by U.S. Green Building Council of Georgia, and scholarships for participants to use to pursue other relevant educational training programs not offered through the Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge.

Tools:

- Sample Building Assessment (pages 4-7)

Financing

Atlanta, using the Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge initiative as a platform, fostered a marketplace for energy efficiency by connecting participants with financial institutions and promoting off-balance-sheet options such as performance contracting.

Creating a Marketplace – The City is currently pursuing a performance contract to finance public building retrofit projects, and community participants will have access to financing options.

Public Recognition

Atlanta publicly recognized the Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge participants for their progress in achieving milestones and reaching goals through various marketing and public relations initiatives.