Cities and States Take on Energy Benchmarking: New Report Highlights Opportunities and Needs for Building Energy Benchmarking

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We have heard the old adage "You can't manage what you don't measure," more and more over the past few years. In line with that message, cities and states throughout the U.S. have begun to require measurement and reporting building energy consumption. With the right tools and strategies, we can leverage the focus on energy consumption to encourage action towards increased building operation efficiency nationwide.

Regulations for public disclosure, disclosure to government or tenants, and/or point-of-sale disclosure are currently in place in Austin, DC, NYC, San Francisco, Seattle, California and Washington (point-of-sale only). The momentum that these regulations have built is tremendous and is a driving force behind market discussions on the clarity and support needed around energy data collection. Last week, the Institute for Market Transformation (IMT) released a report that dives into current building energy rating and disclosure policies in the U.S. This report will provide the basis for the support the market has been looking for, and will open the door to other support efforts around the country.

The IMT report communicates the availability of best practices that will help building owners comply with regulations in their locale. The report elaborates on best ways to approach outreach and education through activities such as partnering with local organizations and conducting benchmarking trainings. Projects certified under the LEED for Existing Building program and buildings participating in USGBC's Building Performance Partnership (BPP) have already taken their first steps in complying with energy rating policies by using ENERGY STAR's Portfolio Manager.

Most of USGBC's BPP partners are in a unique position to act as role models where disclosure policies require access to their energy consumption data, because BPP offers two options for data confidentiality (confidential or disclosed). We hope that participants will enjoy streamlined compliance with energy rating and disclosure policies if they choose to disclose their data through the program. Participants are demonstrating their commitment to energy efficiency monitoring; they are in a position to share their experiences with their peers and contribute to the market need for education.

In support of IMT's recommendation that jurisdictions develop and implement outreach and education programs on data disclosure and benchmarking, anyone who is interested in developing a local outreach and education program may take advantage of Building Performance Participant Handbook and an advocacy handbook (under development) as free resources. We will post additional resources and links to usgbc.org/bpp over the course of program development.

I hope that the market will view programs like BPP as aids in complying with energy rating and disclosure policies. These types of programs will help in identifying additional procedural guidance and support owner accountability, as the IMT report suggests. As discussions progress, it is likely that many data collection and performance monitoring programs in the market will come together to streamline the reporting processes nationwide.

I encourage all potential and current LEED building owners to consider the content of IMT's report and to identify ways that they are able to lead their communities and help local policy implementers by complying with energy rating and data disclosure policies in their area.

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