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Greenbuild Session Spotlight: The PEOPLE Side of Sustainability

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McGee Salvage House, part of the Berkeley Walking Tour at Greenbuild on Saturday, Nov. 17

The following session is part of USGBC's Greenbuild International Conference and Expo, an annual gathering of ~35,000 professionals, students and stakeholders in the green building movement. This year's conference will take place Nov. 14-16 in San Francisco, Calif. For more information or to register, please visit GreenbuildExpo.org.

Is your building operating efficiency? What about the *people* in your building?

Dive deeper in to how building occupants and stakeholders help realize the true sustainability potential of green design – especially in affordable housing & community development projects - at Greenbuild session "The PEOPLE Side of Sustainability – A Behavior-Based Approach to Green Building."

The session is part of this year's Greenbuild National Affordable Green Homes & Sustainable Communities Summit, put on in conjunction with Enterprise Community Partners and IPED, Inc. an affiliate of Nixon Peabody LLP – and sponsors Wells Fargo and the MacArthur Foundation.

We caught up with session speakers Naomi Bayer, Senior Vice President at Enterprise Community Partners; and Dr. Karen Ehrhardt-Martinez, Director of the Climate, Mind & Behavior Program at the Garrison Institute. Gina Ciganik, Vice President of Housing Development at Aeon, will also present at the session.

What's the topical focus of your session?

Naomi Bayer: Behavior-based approaches to drive further efficiencies in green affordable housing.

Karen Ehrhardt-Martinez: Building occupants and operations are equally - if not more - important as building design in determining the true environmental impact of a building. How can we do a better job of addressing the human dimensions of sustainability in buildings?

This session will focus on the importance of building occupants, managers, and other people who play a critical role in determining how buildings are actually used and the amount of resources that buildings consume. The session will explore three critical questions: 1) What is the relative importance of building design, building technologies, and human behavior in shaping the impact of buildings on the environment? 2) How have people-centered programs been successful in maximizing the sustainability of buildings? and 3) How can we do a better job of creating the right conditions to promote sustainable use of buildings?

Presenters will explore how the true sustainable potential of green design and building can be achieved through a people-centered approach -especially for affordable housing and community development projects.

Why is the topic of your session important?

NB: In 2010, Enterprise Green Communities developed a suite of resident engagement tools as a means of building out a solution to help shift behavior to maximize the efficiency of green affordable housing. These strategies encourage approaches to engage resident in green living and proper care and maintenance of their living environments in order to fully benefit from the health, energy efficiency, water conservation and environmental measures included in their

homes. We are seeing real results from these efforts.

KEM: Green buildings can't be green unless the people who run them and occupy them are engaged in green practices. The right design and technologies may be necessary but they aren't sufficient. We need to incorporate a better understanding of people, culture, organizations, networks and social dynamics.

Why should Greenbuild attendees attend YOUR session specifically?

NB: Attendees will hear from affordable housing practitioners on how to successfully engage residents and operators around conservation to minimize water and energy consumption patterns. Green education on the operations and maintenance of the home enables residents to fully realize the environmental, health, and economic benefits that green housing offers. This level of engagement is intended to drive resident awareness of green features and methods used in their home as well as their role in realizing those benefits in their own lives. This a way to monetize value without additional subsidies.

KEM: Because builders already know that building occupants represent the fly in the ointment when it comes to building performance.We won't provide fly swatters or bug spray but perhaps a new appreciation for the bugs in the system.

What's the most interesting experience you've had in the green building/sustainability world?

NB: Tipping the affordable housing industry to green.

KEM: Living in a passive solar house without air conditioning in Colorado after I fell in love with and then married the person who built it.

What's the most interesting non-green building related fact about yourself?

NB: I love to read current fiction - actively soliciting recommendations!

KEM: I spend more time than the average American outside of buildings. The average American spends 90-95% of their time in buildings. I love the outdoors.

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