

Green and Healthy Communities Initiative Overview

The Housing Partnership Network (HPN) envisions a just affordable housing sector that builds and sustains a vibrant, healthy ecosystem for the residents who call our members' buildings and the surrounding communities *home*.

Overview

The Green and Healthy Communities Initiative (GHC Initiative) strives to co-create solutions and implementation pathways with members and partners to facilitate the sector's progress towards science-based climate and health equity goals. We will work to understand what it will take for our members to reach those goals, enable more HPN members and the sector to become engaged in implementing solutions, and build the overall leadership profile of the affordable housing industry in the creation of green and healthy homes and communities. The GHC Initiative builds on HPN's core work in Peer Exchange, Programs, Policy, and Innovation to drive change at scale through ambitious, pragmatic strategies.

Communities and households with low- and moderate-incomes, where HPN members' missions reside, are disproportionately harmed by the present and future impacts of climate change. They simultaneously stand to benefit the most from proactive engagement in a sustainable and just transition to a clean, green economy. HPN members own and manage more than 340,000 rental units and have ambitious plans to develop more rental and homeownership units, creating an opportunity to significantly impact the climate and health outcomes for this housing and those that live in it, while advancing critical goals of economic and racial equity and justice.

Adding to the urgency of this work, a growing number of states and cities have greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets and/or energy/emissions disclosure ordinances, increasingly with requirements to meet reduction targets. Furthermore, HPN members are increasingly vulnerable to risks associated with climate change such as greater frequency and intensity of natural disasters, which has resulted in an increasing consideration of resiliency in risk mitigation strategies.

Many HPN members are leaders of affordable housing's efforts at the intersection of climate and health. Members have completed award-winning net zero energy properties, are piloting innovative technological solutions such as industrialized construction and 3D printed housing, and are participating in green building programs like Enterprise Green Communities. As of June 2022, twenty-five HPN members have signed on to energy and/or emissions reduction goals established by the Department of Energy (DOE) with additional members actively evaluating joining. HPN members are engaged in innovative financing of green projects that are building community resiliency. Yet, these members and others that care deeply about these issues also face limited capacity to respond.

We believe that with the right allies, resources, learnings from our own experience and those of other sectors, along with our sector's proven creativity, we can succeed in meeting the demand for high quality affordable housing while advancing towards climate and health goals. The role of HPN's GHC Initiative is to draw out emerging opportunities from members' experiences, document pragmatic and replicable responses, support members' planning efforts, and leverage the Network's strengths to increase and document positive movement towards climate and health goals.

Three Key Areas of Focus for the Green and Healthy Communities Initiative

Leverage Peer Experience – Utilize HPN's Peer Exchange model to strengthen communications across members and across the field and identify promising practice.

- Foster ongoing member engagement by building a community of practice for the diverse personnel whose work relates to the pursuit of green and healthy communities (sustainability, executives,

development, asset management, property operations, resident services). Explore member experiences, share learnings, identify challenges, and drive programmatic solutions.

- Identify policy opportunities and challenges that members are facing and, as appropriate and where there is consensus, collaborate with members to advance responses and strategies, and support member organizational commitments and obligations around climate and health.
- Uplift member ideas and achievements and increase the presence of HPN and its members in the wider community of climate action, representing member interests and experience.

Capitalize on Emerging Opportunities – Identifying opportunities to test, pilot, and advise on strategies that advance climate and health priorities including new technologies, products, frameworks, and financing mechanisms, particularly where HPN and/or HPN members are uniquely positioned to provide a solution.

- Portfolio planning towards de-carbonization: Work in collaboration with SAHF on a de-carbonization roadmap, the tool will provide a way for developers to utilize property data to create a plan to de-carbonize their portfolio taking advantage of natural decision points such as refinancing or capital upgrades. HPN is also seeking to enhance this de-carbonization model by integrating data on the health co-benefits of de-carbonization. In addition to assisting members with their portfolio, we see potential to utilize data to help attract new sources of capital.
- Advanced Building Construction (ABC): Explore opportunities to increase utilization of ABC, including multi-family modular new construction, rehabbing existing with industrialized construction techniques, as well as tracking emerging technologies like 3-D printing. Utilize peer exchange to identify potential social enterprise/investment opportunities and aggregate demand to de-risk any one member's engagement in this emerging space.
- Portfolio Risk Mitigation: Work in collaboration with HPN's member-led insurance captive HPIEx to pilot water sensor technology with HPN Members. Solutions that mitigate property damage from water, fire, and natural disasters address real challenges for members facing pressure to reduce property insurance claims and mitigate costs. Many also have energy and resource conservation opportunities, enhance resiliency, and can decrease disruptions to residents.
- Procurement – Market Transformation: Look for ways to leverage the scale of the network to increase access to green/healthy products and identify opportunities for planned purchasing and/or negotiate group pricing.

Deliver Innovative Tools and Resources – Leverage HPN's member data and collective expertise to convey where individual members and the Network stand today, to determine where we need to go, and what it will take to advance along the trajectory towards greener and healthier communities.

- Build out a resource hub of curated materials from across the affordable housing sector related to energy, climate, and health and combining it with a platform for ongoing exchange within our member network, providing members with a one-stop shop that they can access to better integrate green and healthy practices into their day-to-day work.
- Utilize member-specific data (property, energy/emissions data, etc.) and integrate it with relevant external or third-party data to develop a Business Intelligence platform, providing insights into decarbonization, climate, and health goal progress and identify funding or capital opportunities.

Conclusion

Collective challenges like climate change and health inequities are at the root of the Housing Partnership Network's mantra that by leveraging our collective talent, market power, and business innovation, we will achieve more together than we could acting alone. We invite HPN members and interested collaborators to connect with GHC Initiative director, Adam Meier (meier@housingpartnership.net) to get engaged in co-creating solutions towards a more just, sustainable world.