



Energy Productivity Success Stories

Atlanta's Leveraging Public-Private Partnerships

SUMMARY

In November 2011 the City of Atlanta, Georgia, used a public-private partnership to launch the Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge (ABBC), an initiative to engage downtown businesses in reducing energy and water consumption in more than 40 million square feet of buildings by at least 20 percent by 2020, and a goal of becoming one of the country's 10 most sustainable cities. 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. *Power to Change* lays out a plan for continuous improvement in sustainability practices through policies and activities that balance economic growth with environmental protection while being mindful of social justice.

DEVELOPMENT OF ABBC

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

Building owners and managers joined the ABBC by pledging to save energy and water in their selected buildings. Through the ABBC network of partners, participants were provided with tools and incentives such as guidance on making the case for energy upgrades, free building assessments, energy efficiency implementation technical assistance, education and training courses, access to project financing opportunities, and public recognition. The City is currently pursuing a performance contract to finance public building retrofit projects, and community participants will have access to financing options.

TRACKING PROGRESS

The City of Atlanta partnered with Georgia Power to streamline the sharing of energy data for energy consumed by participants in the Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge program. The city worked with its Department of Watershed Management to gain automatic access to data about facility-level water consumption. Atlanta also helped participants benchmark energy use in their buildings and provided software that automatically feeds energy use data into ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager, a no-cost web-based tool for tracking and reporting building energy use. Once collected, the aggregated participant energy and water data are displayed on a public-facing dashboard showing real-time progress against program milestones.

RESULTS & BENEFITS

Since launching the challenge in 2011, Atlanta has been on track to meet its energy and water savings goals, and it continues to expand its goals by engaging additional private-sector partners to commit their buildings to energy improvements. In 2014, Atlanta buildings participating in the pilot saved 163 million gallons relative to their baseline consumption, enough water to fill 570 Olympic-sized swimming pools. One of the key benefits of this pilot program is being able to show participants the impact of their behavior based and infrastructure-based efforts.

The floor area of city buildings participating in the challenge increased from 40 million to 100 million square feet in four years. These facilities are reporting their energy data annually. And, they have collectively reduced their energy use intensity by 11 percent from a 2009 baseline and have improved their water performance by 20 percent from a 2010 baseline. Nearly a quarter of the 350 participating buildings have already achieved 20

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percent savings. Annually, the city is using an average of 2.5 percent less energy and consuming 4 percent less water. Atlanta publicly recognized the program participants for their progress in achieving milestones and reaching goals through various marketing and public relations initiatives, including an annual recognition event supported by the city's mayor.