



local energy alliance program



ANNUAL REPORT

2013

LEAP | LOCAL ENERGY ALLIANCE PROGRAM

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Message from LEAP Governance Board Chair



2013 was a busy year for the Local Energy Alliance Program – one that saw new staff and grant opportunities, awards and recognition for the great work accomplished, and the addition of services to provide program income in a post-American Reinvestment and Recovery (“Stimulus”) world.

The Governance Board of LEAP saw some changes as well, with the addition of new Directors and a focus on the organization’s long-term sustainability. This translated into work on strategic and succession planning, and a renewed commitment to actively serve the organization.

Much of the content in LEAP’s Annual Report focuses on numbers and, of course, the “Alliance” aspect of our name. LEAP was founded on the principle that strong community partnerships create quantifiable success. This is borne out in the number of energy upgrades performed, investment leveraged, and savings generated. In 2013 we are thankful in particular for the support of the federal Department of Energy; the Southeast Energy Efficiency Alliance; the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals, and Energy; the Northern Virginia Regional Commission; the localities of Charlottesville, Albemarle County, Arlington County and Alexandria; the UVA Community Credit Union; and a host of hard working contractors who helped our residents and business owners make cost effective energy improvements.

As one of three original Board Directors, and the one who first registered the nonprofit’s business license, I have watched this organization come a very long way. LEAP’s innovative corporate culture thrives on performance and a passion for the mission at hand. It was a pleasure to watch 2013 unfold, with its attendant successes and challenges undertaken. The Governance Board looks forward to 2014’s solidifying of LEAP’s business model, staff and program expansion, and of course the growth of the Alliance.

*Ben Taube, BLT Sustainable Energy, Inc.
Chair, LEAP Governance Board*

Letter to LEAP Governance Board

Date: February 2014

Subject: Message for Annual Report

In 2013 LEAP completed over 1200 home energy upgrades in the Charlottesville area, earning top performer status in the Southeast Energy Efficiency Alliance's BetterBuildings portfolio. We implemented home performance XML as part of a national consortium to set a minimum data standard for residential retrofits. We won a residential program grant from our state energy office that gave LEAP oversight of Home Performance with ENERGY STAR in other regions of the state. We signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Reston Association for a major, year-long campaign in 2014 that will serve as a model for community engagement elsewhere. We successfully recalibrated our outreach to include Dominion Virginia Power Home Energy Check-ups, and in doing so, unlocked a means by which to fulfill our mission and sustain our organization. "*We did it*" is certainly the mantra for the year.

Speaking with VIPs and other stakeholders outside of our nonprofit, I often get the impression that expectations are high for LEAP. As Executive Director, I am very grateful for a dedicated staff capable of meeting those expectations. The LEAP team works long hours and is challenged by the changing nature of our funding streams, commitments, and the greater economic context in which we operate. But not only have they persevered and adapted, they have excelled. LEAP has exceeded the goals it set for itself last year – despite the twists, turns and speed bumps along that road.

The theme for 2014 is shaping up to be "*heads down, execute.*" LEAP looks forward to growing strong relationships with multiple municipalities and utilities, leveraging lessons learned. We have much to do driving demand for our programs and work for our residential Energy Coaches – especially as we have hired more of them. Like any self-sustaining business, LEAP has processes that must be standardized and optimized to lower costs and increase program income. Our nonprofit is also running a second Better Business Challenge, with a greater focus on energy and some heavy hitter businesses participating. In addition, 2014 brings with it new outreach activities, such as work sessions with localities on performance contracting under another State Energy Program award. Repeat: *heads down, execute.*

A new year brings with it new resources, and we welcome two new Board Directors – Chandler VonSchrader of the Environmental Protection Agency and Danielle Byrnett of the Department of Energy – who have vast experience with energy efficiency programs. On behalf of myself and the rest of the LEAP team, I want to thank the Governance Board for its continued support, oversight, and engagement.

*Warm regards,
Cynthia Adams, Executive Director*

2013 Governance Board

Ben Taube, Chair

President, BLT Sustainable Energy, Inc.

Ann Mallek, Vice Chair

Chairwoman, Albemarle County Board of Supervisors

Paxton Marshall, Secretary

Professor of Engineering, University of Virginia

Stephen Walz, Treasurer

Director of Energy Planning, Northern Virginia Regional Commission

Charlie Armstrong

Vice President for Land Development, Southern Development Homes

Dede Smith

City of Charlottesville Councilor

Dave Norris

City of Charlottesville Councilor

Catherine Powers

Vice President of Forecasting & Members Services, Old Dominion Electric Cooperative

Bill Prindle,

Vice President, ICF

David Slutzky

Research Associate, University of Virginia

Duane Snow

Albemarle County Supervisor

Brandon Stites

Director of Energy Conservation and AMI at Dominion Virginia Power

LEAP by the Numbers

2013

160: Home Performance with ENERGY STAR retrofits (78 central Virginia; 82 northern Virginia)

355: Home Energy Check-ups October - December (238 central Virginia; 117 northern Virginia)

2577 Megawatts: Electricity saved

943 kWh: Average energy savings per Home Energy Check-up

\$104: Average energy cost savings per Home Energy Check-up

8,593 kWh: Average energy savings per Home Performance with ENERGY STAR retrofit

\$3,323,460: Dollars of private investment leveraged

2010 - 2013

1,500+: Homeowners served

2.7 million kWh: Electricity saved

\$490: Average annual energy savings for homeowners

20: Audits of commercial buildings completed

12: Retrofits of commercial buildings completed

\$3,585: Average annual energy savings for commercial property owners

391: Equivalent number of cars off the road (residential and commercial programs)

In addition to the above benefits, LEAP secured more than \$975,000 in new funding for energy efficiency from grants and contractually based sources to provide education and outreach, as well as incentives for owners to get energy assessments and make improvements. We are especially grateful to the Department of Energy and the Southeast Energy Efficiency Alliance for their additional BetterBuildings funding; to our state energy office for their support of our Home Performance with ENERGY STAR program and for the Performance Contracting outreach award; to the City of Charlottesville for a grant to manage services tied to their Climate Protection Program; to the Energy Foundation for funding for the Virginia Energy Efficiency Council; and to a local foundation for a grant to help fund the Better Business Challenge.

Testimonials

KRISTIN S.

central Virginia homeowner

"It's so easy to be influenced by every article you read. And there was no way we felt like we could afford to do everything we were reading. The LEAP expert helped us match our budget to an effective strategy, which allowed us set and reach goals we could be excited about. We were thrilled with how easy it was to do the right thing for our energy use and the environment."

KIM W.

northern Virginia homeowner

"I had a Home Energy Check-up with a LEAP Energy Coach and I was so impressed! I learned where my energy dollars are being wasted. He was extremely knowledgeable, and gave us so many tips on fixes we can make ourselves. This is a fantastic program."

Millie Fife

Church Administrator, Sojourners United Church of Christ

"LEAP's energy audit offers valuable insights on how we can save energy and be better stewards of the Earth's resources. LEAP doesn't provide a 'one size fits all' approach. They obtain feedback to fine tune the assessment. Based on my experience, I'd heartily recommend LEAP."



TIM LEROUX

LEAP Director of Operations

"When I started with LEAP in October of 2012, one of the first things I did was have a LEAP Energy Coach come out to my house and do a full energy assessment – which was a real eye-opener. We used part of our 2012 tax refund to have contractors air seal the home, add insulation, and put in a state-of-the-art ENERGY STAR heat pump. We've been saving on average 40% since then. To put these numbers in perspective, my family spent \$4516.80 on our electricity in 2012. If that savings holds, we're on track to save better than \$1800 this year alone. What's more, our house is so much more comfortable that we sold our supplemental air conditioners that we used to keep the 2nd floor cool. On top of all that, we refinanced our mortgage, and our appraiser told us our house was worth a lot more due to the energy upgrades we did. All in all, this has been a huge win for the Leroux family and the experience has given me great confidence in the work we're doing at LEAP!"

Testimonials

"As a designated contractor for LEAP, in 2013 Home Performance Solutions experienced a 32% growth in sales revenue largely due to the efforts of the program. In addition, our company benefited from invaluable industry dialog, marketing trends, and new customer development. HPS has certainly valued the relationship with the LEAP team and the benefits of being a designated contractor. We are looking forward to the continuing growth potential in the coming years!" – **Marty Valentine, Home Performance Solutions**

"Since its launch, LEAP has connected thousands of homeowners with energy savings, built in-state workforce capacity, and expanded local and statewide economic opportunity. LEAP's continued leadership and innovation have transformed the landscape for energy efficiency in Virginia, and their success serves as a model for the region." – **Mandy Mahoney, President of the Southeast Energy Efficiency Alliance (SEEA)**

"Over the past three years, LEAP and the many community-based partnerships that it has successfully nurtured and developed have established energy efficiency as a key driver of economic development, community engagement and quality of life in Virginia." – **Al Christopher, Energy Division Director for the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy**



Energy Efficiency Network Coordinator Erika Palmer presenting Jackson-Via PTO Co-President Inessa Telefus with a check for promoting the Home Energy Check-up program

"The Jackson-Via PTO was very excited to run the LEAP fundraiser because it was about our community working together to preserve the environment and save money on energy bills. LEAP supported us throughout the fundraiser by providing flyers and workshops on saving energy, as well as communicating with us regularly to assist us with our goals. We are very happy with the results and encourage other schools to consider this as a powerful fundraising and educating tool." – **Inessa Telefus, Jackson-Via PTO Co-President**

Testimonials

"Having been in the residential energy efficiency arena since 1983, I've seen enormous progress in our industry and increasing consumer interest in making homes more efficient, safe and comfortable. There remains much work to do – and LEAP has become a 'go-to' resource demonstrating market based sustainability strategies can work without heavy utility or government support. LEAP understands the importance of connecting the efficiency dots to how contractors conduct and grow business, a winning perspective that benefits all parties." – **Chandler VonSchrader, Manager ENERGY STAR Existing Homes, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (joins LEAP's Governance Board in 2014)**

"Creating a virtual power plant is no small undertaking. That's where LEAP comes in. Begun in 2010, the organization has already made a name for itself as a leader and innovator in the Southeastern states. Through LEAP, Charlottesville recently participated in a 13-city challenge organized by the Southeast Energy Efficiency Alliance (SEEA) to make homes energy efficient. With a population of 44,000, Charlottesville was one of the smaller participants, yet it single-handedly completed more home energy upgrades than any other city – 34 percent of the total upgrades." – **Elisa Wood, excerpted from Energy Efficiency Markets, "Welcome to the Age of the Virtual Power Plant"**

"National leaders recognize that energy efficiency is the 'first fuel in the race for a sustainable energy future.' But like any energy source, efficiency needs infrastructure—pipelines, powerlines, etc.—to get it delivered. LEAP is a model for that infrastructure: LEAP's expert staff, its contractor network, its education and outreach, its financing tools are the pipelines and the powerlines that bring efficiency to homeowners and organizations. For these reasons, it's vital that LEAP remain a strong and capable organization for Virginia's communities." – **Bill Prindle, ICF International (LEAP Governance Board)**

Residential Program: LEAP is in the House



Residential Energy Manager Shayne Sandner with Check-up client



Executive Director Cynthia Adams presenting at 1000th retrofit celebration

When LEAP first launched its programs, building owners sought us out for the cash rebates we offered for home energy assessments and improvements. That funding was never infinite, and when the grants ended in 2013 so did rebates paid for out of them. As a result, LEAP's service model evolved quite a bit over the course of 2013, keeping our focus on the Home Performance with ENERGY STAR program while integrating lower-barrier entry points like the Home Energy Check-up.

Leading up to the grant conclusion we ran a special **90 Days of Summer cash rebates** offer in the summer of 2013 where homeowners in central and northern Virginia got a last-chance rebate of \$450 or \$500, respectively, for home energy improvements like air and duct sealing and HVAC upgrades. More than 350 homeowners took advantage of that special offer.

As we wound down our rebates, we dialed up a new program as a Participating Contractor in Dominion Virginia Power's **Home Energy Check-up** Program. For just \$45 we offer central and northern Virginia residents quite a deal: an evaluation of their home's energy efficiency; the advice of one of our expert Energy Coaches; installation of CFL lightbulbs, smartstrips, pipe insulation and/or door weatherization where appropriate at no additional cost; and a checklist of additional energy savings measures and local contractor referrals. We estimate it's a package worth \$250 in professional consultation and products, and the direct installs will help homeowners start saving money immediately. From October-December 2013, LEAP performed 355 Home Energy Check-ups (238 in central Virginia and 117 in northern Virginia).

Other highlights of our residential program in 2013 include...

...Hitting the 1,000 retrofit mark! Though we blew by the number over the course of the year, in March **we completed 1,000 home energy improvement projects in central Virginia**. It was a huge milestone that we celebrated with gratitude. Many of our clients, contractors, partners and other supporters joined us at the newly-opened Old Metropolitan Hall on Charlottesville's Downtown Mall (photo above) to reflect on and toast our collective success and the path forward.

Residential Program: LEAP is in the House



LEAP also found a unique way for these Check-ups to benefit other organizations in our community – by turning them into **fundraisers for PTOs/PTAs and other nonprofits**. For every Check-up scheduled through their promotions LEAP donated \$10. In central Virginia several elementary school PTOs took advantage, including Jackson-Via (raised \$580), Johnson (\$270) and Stony Point (\$530).

Indeed, by the time the Southeast Energy Efficiency Alliance (SEEA) awarded us (along with our partners at the City of Charlottesville, Albemarle County and UVA Community Credit Union) the **Energy Pro3 Award** (photo top left), we had completed 1,215 home energy upgrades – a whopping 34% of all the work in their 13-city consortium. This number represents a 3.6% market penetration of owner-occupied homes in Charlottesville and Albemarle County.

In addition to the success of the Check-up program and performing a landmark 1,000 retrofits, we also **launched our new website** in 2013. The transition was seamless, but it was the result of months of work to make the site and our online communications more user-friendly. Shortly after, we were selected to participate in the **Charlottesville Design Marathon** where a team of local web and graphics designers gave their time and creativity to support area nonprofits. We walked away not just with inspiration, but with a new set of marketing collateral.

In 2013 we teamed up again with UVA Community Credit Union for another (#3) **PowerSaver Home Energy Makeover Contest** in central Virginia – this time giving three lucky families their own reason to celebrate. With additional sponsorship from Dominion Virginia Power and Rappahannock Electric Cooperative, more than 1,100 homeowners entered the contest. The lucky winners were the Foster family in Charlottesville (photo bottom left; \$10,000 makeover), the Jones family in Madison (\$5,000) and the Richards family in Lake Monticello/Fluvanna County (\$5,000).

At the heart of the Contest is raising awareness of LEAP's Home Performance with ENERGY STAR program and **PowerSaver Loans**. The UVA Community Credit Union continues to offer central Virginia homeowners low-interest loans to finance their home energy improvements in HUD's pilot financing program, and we're proud to report that it's a leader nationwide in terms of uptake.



Residential Program: LEAP is in the House



Sometimes, however, a loan isn't an option, and financial assistance is needed to make any improvements. LEAP administers the **Assisted Home Performance with ENERGY STAR program** with grant support from the City of Charlottesville to meet a need in the City's low income households. We helped 25 homeowners with this program in 2013. Relatedly, LEAP teamed up with Albemarle Housing Improvement Program (AHIP) on their **Block-by-Block-Charlottesville** initiative to help homeowners in the historic 10th & Page neighborhood, the first phase of which saw the completion of more than 20 rehabs in 2013.



Who are the boots on the ground educating homeowners on the value of a home energy upgrade? LEAP has been building a team of Energy Coaches to perform Home Energy Check-ups. The home energy improvements themselves –duct and air sealing, insulation, HVAC upgrades – are completed by **LEAP's network of Home Performance with ENERGY STAR Contractors** (HPwES). We work with the best of the best and ensure that they are certified. Plus our technical experts perform independent quality assurance inspections on the work they install in the Home Performance with ENERGY STAR program. Our clients enjoy peace of mind by working with the HPwES pre-qualified contractor network.



To help ensure our clients' high expectations are met, LEAP invests in ongoing **workforce development** for our contractor network and utility partners. In 2013 this included the following:

- “Growing your HVAC business into Home Performance” general sales training and one-one-one session on expanding single-measure business into whole-house, home performance model
- Energy Efficiency 101 for new Energy Coaches in Northern Neck in partnership with Old Dominion Electric Coop (ODEC)
- “Selling Home Energy Upgrades and Creating Customers for Life” with Advanced Energy Installer Training on Air Sealing with Advanced Energy
- ODEC training on “Energy Efficiency 101” with Rappahannock Co-op personnel
- Demonstration/training of Auditor, the first HPXML-compliant modeling tool

Out and About



Senior Technical Advisor Guy Caroselli
at the EcoFair



Charlottesville Veggie Fest

LEAP staff log many hours on the phone with clients, in meetings with contractors, and on the road visiting both. But you might have seen us out and about in the community at these events in 2013:

Central Virginia

- 2013 Career Conference and Chamber Expo
- Charlottesville “Go Green” Festival
- Charlottesville Veggie Fest
- Monthly Chamber of Commerce Nonprofit Roundtable event
- Church of the Incarnation Green Festival
- Blue Ridge Home Builders Association Home Show
- Newsplex Healthy Living Expo
- C’ville Central Inaugural Event
- Trainings for Central Virginia Realtors and Property Appraisers

Northern Virginia

- Arlington County Energy Journey
- Monthly Alexandria Farmers’ Market
- Arlington County Green Living Expo
- Loudon County Earth Day Festival
- Alexandria Earth Day
- Vienna Green Expo
- Northern Virginia Housing Expo
- Northern Virginia Association of Realtors Trade Show
- Trainings for Central Virginia Realtors and Property Appraisers

Commercial Program: Getting Down to Business



Fort Union Baptist Church members with Senior Technical Advisor Guy Caroselli

The buildings in which we live, work, play, learn and worship consume almost half of the energy produced in the US – more than transportation or industrial activities. For property owners or managers of one of those larger commercial properties – a school, church or office building – this is a statistic they grapple with daily.

As part of LEAP's Better Building commercial grant, we allocated more than \$20,000 to four central Virginia commercial properties for energy upgrades: Aldersgate Methodist Church, Fork Union Baptist Church, Innisfree Village and Lloyd's Hallmark. Those upgrades represented a savings of more than 38,000 kilowatt hours and 42.6 metric tons of CO₂.

That two of our commercial grant recipients were churches is no accident. As more and more people recognize the moral obligation to respond to the call of good stewardship of resources, energy efficiency has become an easy way for churches and other faith-based entities to fulfill their stewardship mission. It was in this context that LEAP launched a **faith-based initiative** to help places of worship – often older buildings and with tight budgets – reduce their energy bills and support their congregations' efforts to be more energy efficient at home.

LEAP conducted walk-through energy and lighting assessments of several central and northern Virginia churches, two of which followed through with energy upgrades. We also teamed up with Interfaith Power and Light to host a series of workshops for members of various congregations. All told, more than 15 churches were part of our initial faith-based initiative in 2013:

Central Virginia:

Aldersgate Methodist Church
Buck Mountain Episcopal
Church of Incarnation
Church of Our Savior
Effort Baptist Church
Fork Union Baptist

Commercial Program: Getting Down to Business



Credit: Jack Looney



CHARLOTTESVILLE AREA
BETTER BUSINESS CHALLENGE

Sojourners
Trinity Episcopal Church
Unitarian Universalists
Unity
White Hall Community Center
Zion United Methodist Church in Troy
Westminster Presbyterian Church (UVA)

Northern Virginia:
Cherrydale United Methodist Church
Church of the Covenant
Trinity Presbyterian Church

Back by popular demand in 2013 was the second **Better Business Challenge**, which will stretch through the spring of 2014. At the heart of the Challenge is an online scorecard structured to help businesses take stock of their baseline and performance in six key areas (Energy, Transportation, Water, Waste, Purchasing, Innovation and Leadership); set goals for improvements and benchmarks for success; and take credit for those achievements. By the end of 2013 more than 60 central Virginia businesses had signed up.

Challenge businesses were introduced to a new **benchmarking tool** LEAP developed that estimates annual savings potential, simple payback, and potential added value to the building of energy efficiency upgrades. It will be used by all businesses that enter the Challenge and is available to any business that wants a rough idea of how their space performs. LEAP's goal is for the easy to use benchmarking tool to identify businesses that have great energy efficiency opportunities. Those businesses will be encouraged to input their data into Portfolio Manager, a more comprehensive benchmarking and scoring system used to earn an ENERGY STAR for nonresidential buildings.

Multifamily



LEAP continues to administer the Department of Energy's Weatherization Innovation Pilot Program (WIPP), which offers retrofits and tenant education to low-income multifamily properties. In 2013, weatherization was completed on 563 units, with over \$1.1M in leveraged private investment while providing \$650,000 in cash rebates.

A signature multifamily project was the 98-unit Midway Manor apartment complex in downtown Charlottesville. In June LEAP took part in a "CFL Bulb Exchange" for Midway Manor's residents as part of an ongoing education program after the property's \$500,000 energy efficiency upgrade. Residents had the opportunity to exchange one old incandescent bulb for a free, new, energy efficient CFL bulb, and they received information about reducing plug loads in their homes.

It is clear that LEAP is making a difference in central and northern Virginia, and accomplishments are reverberating beyond those borders, in other regions of the Commonwealth and indeed the country. We've embraced the roles of **mentor, innovator, and trendsetter**.

LEAP was a key player in two important industry developments this past year. Together with our software vendor EnergySavvy, the National Home Performance Council, the Building Performance Institute, Arizona Public Service, and NYSERDA, LEAP helped create a new data standard using Home Performance XML (HPXML). HPXML will allow for seamless transfer of information on energy improvements from one software tool to another. An important key to market transformation is the establishment of standards – in this case, data standards tied to energy improvement measures. Standards increase efficiency throughout the transaction chain, reduce errors with reporting, increase transparency and accountability of contractors and program implementers like LEAP.

Another benefit of the HPXML data standard relates to the ability of a program to export data out of their system and into another database - like the MLS. In 2013 the Building Performance Institute finalized the data standard for the Home Performance Certificate, and both it and the Appraisal Institute's Green and Energy Efficient Addendum was mapped to HPXML. This means that a program such as LEAP can provide a granular level of data on its clients upgrades to better help appraisers value energy improvements for a home's resale: a field by field Home Performance Certificate list matches up with other documents that can then pull from it.

LEAP's Executive Director and staff participated in the following workshops, boards, committees and presentations in 2012:

- Virginia Energy Efficiency Council Governance Board
- BPI Working Group 9 - Real Estate Data Collection Standard Committee
- HPXML Data Standard Working Group
- ACEEE/DOE Real Estate Transaction Summit
- Southeast Energy Efficiency Alliance Summit – Panel Speaker
- BetterBuildings Leadership Summit – Panel Speaker
- Home Performance Market Forum Summit
- ACI National – HPXML Panel
- ACI National – Real Estate Community Engagement Panel
- ACI National – Business Model Metrics for Programs Panel
- ACI National – Comparing Results: Actual Energy Savings from Real Home Performance Programs
- VAEEC Member Meetings - Speaker
- LEAP presentation at Emmanuel Episcopal Church
- LEAP Presentation for Reston Association Board Meeting
- BetterBuildings Summit for State and Local Governments: Value of Public-Private Partnerships Panel
- Rocky Mountain Utility Conference – HPXML Panel
- SmartGrid Summit – What are the Benefits to Programs? Panel
- Bi-Partisan Energy Efficiency Education Day at the Nation's Capital

Shout Outs



Executive Director Cynthia Adams receiving
SEEA Pro3 Award

This is the part where we get to toot our own horn. “Our” here isn’t just LEAP. It’s LEAP and our Alliance partners: funders, contractors, clients, business partners, and many others.

Southeast Energy Efficiency Alliance (SEEA) Pro3 Award (received together with our partners the City of Charlottesville, Albemarle County and UVA Community Credit Union.)

SEEA held a series of convenings and awards that highlight the productivity and progress achieved through energy efficiency programs across the Southeast, showcase the results programs like LEAP have achieved to date, and demonstrate how these efforts are paving the way for sustained economic growth and prosperity in our region. One of the accomplishments cited by SEEA was LEAP’s 1,215 home energy upgrades – a whopping 34% of all the work in their 13-city consortium.

Honorable Mention from the State and Local Energy Report

These awards recognize the efforts of organizations who have successfully leveraged government funds to make U.S. homes healthier, more durable and more efficient. In awarding LEAP Honorable Mention, they cited our innovative approach to most efficiently use the government and foundation funding that seeded our organization three years ago, including our cash rebates, interest-rate buy-downs, and Assisted Home Performance with ENERGY STAR program.

Shout Outs



Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED ®) Platinum for ecoREM0D1

Our offices in Charlottesville at ecoREM0D1 received LEED Platinum designation from the U.S. Green Building Council, just one of two local homes to achieve that level (and only 10 LEED-certified homes in the area). This historic home in the City's Ridge Street Neighborhood was substantially rehabilitated through a partnership of the City of Charlottesville and the University of Virginia by Alloy Workshop and with a generous donation by Dominion Virginia Power. LEAP was also a major sponsor and participant in informing the deep energy retrofit vision and now proudly occupies the building.



Next Up: Building a Community Power Plant

In just shy of four years, LEAP – together with a “who’s who” of partners – has made great strides in our mission to implement energy efficient technologies in buildings that promote cost savings for families and businesses, job creation, energy self-reliance, local economic development, and the mitigation of climate change. We are proud of the impact we’ve made so far, the equivalent of taking 169 homes off the grid.

That’s why in 2014 we will continue to ramp up our efforts to build the virtual community power plant. The idea is that the aggregate energy savings of more efficient homes and buildings delay or negate the need for additional power generation to meet new capacity. The community creates negawatts, not megawatts, and itself becomes the virtual or energy efficiency power plant. In 2014 “construction” on the power plant will include:

- Home Energy Check-ups in our central and northern VA service areas
- Better Business Challenge
- City of Charlottesville Clean Energy Loan Program
- Re-energize Reston Community Challenge
- Home Performance with ENERGY STAR program administration
- Assisting with nonresidential energy improvements through outreach to faith-based, scholastic, and nonprofit entities
- Outreach to local governments and school systems on the value of performance contracting

The virtual power plant is not a revolutionary concept, but it’s a unique, community-building way to approach the energy performance of the buildings where we live, work, worship and study. The pieces of this Community Power Plant have been coming together for years even though we are newly using this metaphor to describe our activities. Indeed, the national website EnergyEfficiencyMarkets.com featured LEAP and Charlottesville in a story on this very subject in 2013 – and it was their most read article of the year. The idea has taken root here in Virginia.

In 2014 we’ll be working to extend those roots and grow our successes together.