

“EnergyWorks” For Bob Housh

Changing a culture isn't easy, but that is exactly what Bob Housh is out to do. As Project Director of **EnergyWorks** in Kansas City, Missouri, Housh intends to generate enough interest in energy efficiency to sustain his program after a five-year grant from DOE ends.

He freely acknowledges this is a tough sell in a metropolitan area with the world record for paved highway miles yet very little mass-transit. But he points out the area's huge market potential for energy efficiency services: 104 municipalities, 250 non-profit organizations, and numerous hospitals, universities, and schools.

EnergyWorks was founded two years ago by the Metropolitan Energy Center (MEC) to deliver energy efficiency services to community organizations and public agencies. “Many groups look at energy bills as something they have to pay, not manage,” Housh says. “Our goal was to show them how to manage energy and help them divert their resources to what they were chartered to do in the first place.”

Housh came to the MEC in 1985 to start a precursor to the EnergyWorks program. He had specialized in community studies at Baker University in Kansas, earning a degree in sociology, and worked with various community service agencies after graduating. “I got hooked on energy and how it

could help the community when I ran a neighborhood weatherization program for Della C. Lamb Community Services,” Housh said.

“Energy efficiency is a tool to help improve communities and make them sustainable,” Housh explains. The goal of EnergyWorks is to achieve a 25% savings in energy use in 56 million square feet of non-profit and local government building space. Housh estimates \$30 million will be invested in retrofit projects in the community over the five-year program.

Housh is energetic when he describes what his EnergyWorks staff of three has accomplished so far. “We’ve already identified over \$2.5 million in annual savings in about 6.5 million square feet of space,” he said. In Jackson County, Missouri, for example, Housh expects retrofits to begin this Fall. And the City of Kansas City recently signed on as a partner.

In addition to EnergyWorks, Housh is now serving as acting executive director of the MEC. Peter Dreyfuss, who founded the MEC, has come to the U.S. Department of Energy to work with the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, where Rebuild America is based.

Serving the Community

Working with non-profits presents different challenges than local governments, Housh said, noting that “their prime motivator is not simply to cut energy costs.” EnergyWorks retrofitted the headquarters of the local United Way, a renovated turn-of-the-century building being used as an example of what is possible for other United Way member agencies.

A key part of the retrofit process for non-profits, financing, is arranged through a \$750,000 revolving loan fund set up by Hallmark Foundation, United Way and Greater Kansas City Community Foundation. Housh is also exploring ways to leverage that fund with the primary source of funding for government projects, the Missouri Environmental Improvement & Energy Resources Authority.

The MEC itself is housed in a super-efficient renovated house, which originally was an example and source of information on energy efficiency. “We show [clients] that by improving their equipment they can solve some building problem like maintenance and help manage their budgets at the same time.”

When he’s not working, Housh relaxes in a small rural community north of Kansas City. His two kids help take care of their part-Arabian horse, Big Boy. “I’m very involved, with school activities, coaching sports, Cubmaster,” Housh says. “My priority in my life is my family.”



Bob Housh (right) is congratulated by Mark Ginsberg, the deputy assistant secretary for building technologies at DOE, at the 1996 Rebuild America Fall Forum.