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Project Goals and Outcomes

Goals

- Goal is to help implement sustainability as a priority for Spokane's Affordable Housing Committee
- Project required our group to work closely with SNAP, SAS, and the Affordable Housing Committee to learn which sustainable practices would most help vulnerable communities reach a clean energy future in Spokane.
- The prioritization of providing sustainability assistance to low-income and affordable housing communities will help close the gap for Spokaneites in the city's work towards a green future.

Outcomes

- Proposed to the Spokane Affordable Housing Committee to consider sustainability as a priority when making decisions regarding future low-income builds.
- We anticipate having a completed a completed document which we will virtually present to the Affordable Housing committee and City Council which proposes our recommendations for sustainability within affordable housing and contains our research throughout this past year.

Background

- Individuals and communities in the most vulnerable social positions are also the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation.
- For someone who does not have the financial means to ensure their house is of maximum energy efficiency and prepared for an electric grid, cities and municipalities have a duty to take care of those things for them.
- Spokane already experiences high rates of homelessness and housing insecurity with a large wealth gap in the city. This paired with the 2019 WA HB5119 places low-income households at higher risk for homelessness and high energy costs that the city needs to address.

What We did

- Conversations have been had between our group and Councilwoman Burke, Affordable Housing Committee Chair Dr. Adrienne Leithauser, and the City of Spokane Sustainable Action Subcommittee Built Environment Group to make them aware of this issue.
- Toured local affordable housing units, learning about ways in which sustainable resources can intersect with the city's providement of low-income housing.
- Attended multiple meetings with city housing officials to sharpen the way we saw the intersection of sustainability and housing in Spokane.



http://uii.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Report-7-Environmentally-Sustainable-Affordable-Housing.ashx_pdf

What We Learned

- Our group learned about the current actions the City of Spokane is taking to address climate change, we learned about the systems and processes in the City government for affordable and low-income housing developments.
- Through meetings with SNAP we learned about the current issues surrounding energy-efficiency, weatherization, and housing stability among the low-income population in Spokane.
- During SAS meetings, our group learned about current regulations and possibilities of sustainable urban development in Spokane.

Civic Perspective

- Working with our aforementioned community partners helped to broaden our understanding of the challenges faced by low-income community members in Spokane.
- Our work aimed at a long-term solution to a problem that has yet to become pertinent in Spokane, which forced us to think into the future.
- This project has given us the necessary experience in community organizing to effect significant change within our community, and to understand the complexities of whatever community we might one day move into.

Academic Perspective

- As Environmental Studies students we have been able to apply what we have learned about how lower income communities are disproportionately affected by climate change.
- In learning this in the classroom and through other ways in our project we were able to take what we have learned with our major to apply what we know about energy efficiency to better prepare communities for sustainable resilient futures.

What Next?

- We will deliver the proposal to the Affordable Housing Committee with hopes that they consider our recommendations and we will continue to make sustainable decisions.
- We will take our newly found knowledge of city sustainability to impact change post-grad.