PANEL DISCUSSION

Tenant Engagement Projects

Randy Daier, Anne Gloger, Vera Straka, Ravi Subramaniam

- Tenant Engagement
- Landlord
- Partner
- Repeal model
- Engaging for Success
- What is needed?
- Priority
- Tenant survey
- Poster's about energy water reduction
- Look at our neighbour's energy use!
- Tower community
- Power
- Community
- Ambassador

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Keir Brownstone (Community Development Officer, Tower Renewal, City of Toronto)
Randy Daiter (Vice President of Residential Properties, M&R Holdings)
Vera Straka (Associate Professor, Architectural Science, Ryerson University)
Anne Gloger (Founding member, East Scarborough Storefront)
Ravi Subramaniam (Lead for Resident Engagement, Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office and St. James Town)
Engaging residential tenants in energy conservation was the focus of the first Partners for Change workshop on November 6, 2014. In an unprecedented gathering, over 40 apartment building owners, property managers, utility representatives and other experts participated in the discussion. The workshop was delivered by the City of Toronto’s Tower Renewal Office and ALERT, and it was generously sponsored by Enbridge and hosted by Autodesk.

ALERT created the Partners for Change workshops to generate innovative ideas to unlock financial and environmental value from energy efficiency in Toronto’s aging residential high-rise towers. These action-oriented workshops are intended to channel the insight and expertise of forward-thinking leaders, collectively identify promising opportunities, and scale them for region-wide systemic change.

**FINDINGS and CONCLUSIONS**

Participants coalesced around two main ideas: building a sound business case for investing in tenant engagement; and creating a community of practice to regularly share ideas and best practices from building owners and property managers.

A sound business case is critical for convincing building owners to support tenant engagement programs. The benefits of tenant engagement must outweigh the costs to demonstrate a favourable return on investment. Benefits can include energy savings and social gains such as happier tenants, reduced vacancies, and pride of place. The business case for tenant engagement can then be compared to other traditional investment opportunities, such as technology upgrades, maintenance, and operational improvements.

Communities of practice have successfully facilitated shared knowledge in other sectors, and they have the potential of catalyzing positive change for energy conservation in apartment buildings. They are forums where best practices can be shared and where members can encourage one another.

These two ideas are complementary, with the business case establishing the rational, logical impetus for action, and the community of practice fostering a culture of information sharing and continuous improvement.

**NEXT STEPS**

Workshop participants expressed trust in and strong support for information and tools that originate from the City of Toronto, utilities and industry associations.

- **Business Case:** The initial business case could be based on information already amassed by Tower Renewal. Tower Renewal has several case studies of successful projects that can potentially be replicated in other buildings.
- **Community of Practice:** ALERT, in partnership with Tower Renewal will create a framework for a community of practice forum, seek funding to start the forum, and enlist key participants.

Get Involved! We’d love to hear your thoughts! The ALERT project derives its strength from being a grassroots, community-based effort. Please let us know if you have a successful case to share, would like to support the community of practice, or have an idea to push things along. Contact us at info@imaginemycity.org
BACKGROUND

ALERT (Affordable & Low-income Environmental Renewal in Toronto) is a project to encourage energy efficiency investments in Toronto’s residential high-rises. ALERT is founded by Ramtin Attar and Jessie Ma, and it is a project incubated through CivicAction’s Emerging Leaders Network (ELN).

ALERT is a project under Imagine My City, a non-profit that enables and increases productive and meaningful community-based collaboration in issues related to our built environment.

This Partners for Change workshop has been the culmination of a year-long effort. ALERT won the support of civic leaders by capturing the grand prize at the dragons’ den event hosted by ELN in March 2014. ALERT then used the prize money, along with corporate donations, to run the PowerOf50 Hackathon in July 2014, bringing together dozens of “hackers” and industry experts in a fun, weekend-long competition.

One of the winning hackathon ideas, Building Rewards, captured the attention of the City of Toronto’s Tower Renewal Office, which is working with apartment building owners across the city in better engaging their tenants in energy efficiency. Enbridge has also been interested in helping its customers conserve and sponsored the first Partners for Change workshop.

“Over 500,000 people live in these buildings, making them important to the city and to the quality of life they provide for the people who live in them.”
Eleanor McAteer, Project Director, Tower Renewal, City of Toronto
INTRODUCTION

Torontonians spend about $5 billion annually to heat and cool their homes. The cost to the planet is also high with the residential sector creating 50 percent of the city’s total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (TAF 2014). Although proven technologies exist that could dramatically improve energy efficiencies in homes and buildings and save hundreds of thousands of dollars annually, the barriers to making those changes is both a business and social problem.

On the social side, engaging tenants in energy conservation is an important part of energy efficiency, and on the business front, the ability to justify expenditures for building cooperation of tenants in the process is a critical first step.

On November 6, 2014, over 40 apartment building owners, property managers, utility representatives and other experts participated in an unprecedented, action-oriented workshop focused on engaging residential tenants in energy conservation. They developed tangible ideas and a shared vision.

This report provides an overview of the main activities of the workshop including the expert panel presentations and team ideation sessions. It also summarizes the key recommendations and next steps put forward by participants.

OPENING REMARKS

Eleanor McAteer, Project Director, Tower Renewal, City of Toronto, welcomed participants to the workshop. She said that to get the best out of our apartment buildings, we need tenant engagement. “If we are to achieve the desired improvements in our buildings, engaging tenants in how buildings work is really important.”

In his opening comments, Ramtin Attar from ALERT expressed his hope that the workshop would be a dynamic and creative exchange of ideas about tenant engagement strategies, and that we would reach agreement on what could serve as a future resource.

The business case will measure the costs and benefits of investing in tenant engagement and compare this return on investment with alternative investments, including traditional technology and maintenance.

The community of practice is a group of people who share a common interest in engaging tenants in energy efficiency. They also share a goal of gaining knowledge in this field. This can be done through a combination of in-person and online interactions.
PANEL PRESENTATIONS

The panel presentations addressed several tenant engagement projects including:

- WHAT tenant engagement challenges were addressed
- HOW the programs were delivered
- WHY tenants and landlords were engaged and WHAT their motivations were
- WHAT lessons were learned
- WHO the key enablers were

Keir Brownstone, Community Development Officer, Tower Renewal, City of Toronto, served as a moderator for the opening panel discussion.

The four panelists were:

- Randy Daiter, Vice President of Residential Properties, MåR Holdings
- Vera Straka, Associate Professor of Architectural Science at Ryerson University
- Anne Gloger, Founding member of East Scarborough Storefront
- Ravi Subramaniam, lead for resident engagement in Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office and St. James Town

Keir Brownstone, who has spent many years working in social housing in Ontario and energy related building initiatives, provided a historical overview of resident engagement in energy in landmark projects in Germany, the U.S., and Toronto Community Housing.

Each panelist provided a brief overview of the challenges and successes of resident engagement projects related to energy savings.

Randy Daiter described how MåR’s process of ‘Share, Listen, Partner and Repeat’ has begun to show consistent positive returns. MåR starts a change project by sharing their vision first with building staff and then with tenants and ask for and listen to feedback. On many projects from window replacement to recycling to toilet replacement, tenant suggestions provided positive insights that were subsequently implemented.

Vera Straka’s most recent project will result in a model for an educational platform on tenant engagement in energy conservation. Tenants were divided into groups. Using meters in units participating in the program, different groups received varying levels of education information, and some were able to compare their energy use to their neighbours. Every seven days, tenants saw their total energy use and were informed if they were below the 10% reduction goal.

Working at East Scarborough Storefront, Anne Gloger strongly recommends taking the time to build a tenant council and putting the community development process ahead of product development. Implementing this structural change ensures residents own part of the process. East Scarborough Storefront obtained community buy-in by involving residents in design of a sports court, splash pads, shading projects, and accessible features.

Ravi Subramaniam is involved in community development projects with 19 buildings and initially found only a very small number of tenants came out for meetings. He developed an ambassador program enlisting people who gathered in the lobby to talk to other people in the buildings. He found that community gatherings helped create a sense of belonging and pride-of-place in which residents work with landlords to care for the building.

See Appendix A for detailed notes from each panelist.
GROUP DISCUSSION AND IDEATION

Following the panel presentations, participants broke into small groups to brainstorm issues and ideas about tenant engagement. Small teams then amalgamated with other teams to expand and refine their ideas and present them along with potential challenges to the larger group.

Emay Cowx, the workshop facilitator, noted the key ideas and asked the group to review the list in order to amalgamate and prioritize ideas. In the final analysis, participants voted on the ideas that were most important and compelling to them.

Ideas on the short list included:

- Share savings with tenant
- Ensure program sustainability
- Measure and benchmark
- Involve kids
- Provide tenant education
- Create pilot projects to assess approaches
- Create partnerships with other local organizations
- Establish shared resident/management goals
- Celebrate success and attract media
- Share methods through a community of practice
- Develop a business case
- Create a funding model to support tenant engagement

From this prioritized list, participants collectively decided the two ideas that would serve them best are to develop a business case and to create a community of practice.

While the two top ideas will be pursued initially, other ideas may be incorporated in the plans or tried in the future.

The final task of the group was to discuss a plan of action.

“Can we bring all these tactical elements together for all stakeholders? If we can find a way to share this knowledge, it would have a major impact.”
Erika Lontoc, Manager, Residential and New Construction Marketing, Enbridge
“Having a business case is critical to advancing tenant engagement. We need real proof: qualitative and quantitative data, not just anecdotal information.”
Alison Minato, VP of Sustainability, Minto

“There are hundreds of engagement strategies out there to choose from. If companies can track the influence of their brand, which isn’t that easy, then it should also be possible to measure the influence and effectiveness of tenant engagement.”
Lenard Hart, VP of Sales & Marketing, Summerhill

“We need a micro and macro understanding of the goals. What was attained in energy savings and what impact did it have on the community? And how was all of this obtained?”
Keir Brownstone, Tower Renewal, City of Toronto
It was agreed that the tools asked for by the group, a business case and a community of practice, would be built to facilitate initial program roll out at demonstrations sites in 2015. To assist in carrying out these goals, the stakeholders will approach various channels to access resources.

The **business case** is necessary to encourage and enable buy-in by property managers and building owners. It will be developed from local case studies, including metrics related to cost, impact and effectiveness of tenant involvement to ensure value for money is achieved.

Tower Renewal, which has amassed several case studies of successful projects, can be a resource for a standard business case that can be used in multiple buildings.

Building a **community of practice** will require sharing case studies and other tools that property managers need. Workshop participants expressed strong support for information and tools that originate from the City of Toronto, utilities and industry associations.

ALERT, in partnership with Tower Renewal, will seek funding to undertake preliminary prototyping of a community of practice.

These two ideas are complementary, with the business case establishing the rational, logical impetus for action, and the community of practice fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

In her closing remarks, Eleanor McAteer said: “Diverse groups intersecting brought us to a better level of understanding. Collaboration ensured everyone was part of the solution.”
APPENDIX A

SUMMARY OF PANEL DISCUSSION

KEIR BROWNSTONE, TOWER RENEWAL OFFICE

- The notion of resident engagement has been around for some time now.
- In 2005 a German study was lead by Abrahamse in two residential communities. One community received education, feedback and goal-setting and were able to achieve energy savings of over 5%, while the other community, who were not exposed to the same engagement strategies, actually increased their energy consumption.
- Feedback is an essential component as it allows people to continually receive information about their energy consumption and behaviours.
- A Toronto community housing project - the Brahms community - saved 6% through community energy engagement.
- In Toronto, Windsor and Ottawa, peer-to-peer (residents-to-residents) through social marketing resulted in energy savings of 9%. When the education component was removed, energy savings increased up to 12%.
- The cost of investing in tenant engagement is considerably lower than making changes in the mechanical systems of a building.
- A US company (PNC) installed meters for workers at their desks. Employees were divided into 4 groups.
  1. Some groups received no information about energy use, some received a dashboard showing plug load of their energy consumption and some saw comparisons with neighbours
  2. The groups with no information achieved a 7% savings
  3. The groups with the most information achieved a 38% savings.
  4. PNC has now decided to implement this system (feedback and education software) in their offices across the country.

RANDY DAITER, M&R HOLDINGS

- Among the challenges faced in tenant engagement are tenant buy-in and communication.
- A 3 step model is currently used in all projects:
  1. Step 1: Sharing the vision with tenants, through newsletters, posters, special events, letters, a tenant portal.
  2. Step 2: Listening – this is simple but has a profound effect. Accepting feedback reveals new opportunities that were not previously visible.
  3. Step 3: Partner with tenants to develop association and trust.
  4. This model is repeated again and again.
- Both mandatory and voluntary initiatives are used. Mandatory initiatives include window replacements, installation of energy star washing machines, etc. Voluntary initiatives include recycling organics, etc.
- Case study with window replacements, example of mandatory initiative:
  1. Implemented across two buildings
  2. Benefits include, gas savings between 27-29%, six-figure increase in NOI, 10-year payback, double digit ROI.
  3. Engagement model included a window mock up, listening to the tenants and consulting with tenants for design and colour.
- Case study, recycling organic, example of voluntary initiative:
  1. Implemented across 2 buildings
  2. Lowered waste by 11% in one year
  3. Top 25% of multi-unit residential buildings
  4. Less overall cost, Less odour
  5. Engagement strategy consisted of convenience, education, student volunteers, enforcement.
- To summarize the engagement strategies: share your vision with tenants, listen to tenants and partner with tenants.
- Tips for effective tenant engagement include engage employees before tenants, explain benefits before implementing projects and maximize convenience / ease of use.
- Feedback for property management sector: management is important as well.
VERA STRAKA, RYERSON UNIVERSITY

- Project consisting of a post-occupancy evaluation of a retrofitted building was described.
- A tenant engagement campaign advising all tenants about their energy and water use was recently launched.
- Campaign also included a survey of environmental attitudes and an invitation to attend information sessions.
- One of the features of the campaign was that over a period of several weeks a relationship was built with tenants.
- Information sessions consisted of a brief but visual presentation on why energy and water conservation are important.
- Project looking at different feedback strategies to determine which is the most effective.
- Monitoring energy use in the suite and fan coil units. Data is being collected about temperature and relative humidity.
- Participants divided into 3 groups:
  1. Group 1 who have been exposed to the campaign
  2. Group 2 who receive daily feedback on their own energy use
  3. Group 3 who receive daily feedback on their own energy use as well as the average of their neighbours’ energy use (social comparison).
- Tenants receive their total seven-day energy use as well so they know if they are below the 10% group reduction goal.
- Instrumentation:
  1. Real time monitoring / feedback system to tell how each suite is doing, instantaneous energy consumption feedback.
  2. No means or funding for water use, focus is strongly on energy use.
  3. Using results to develop a platform to inform people about energy use.
  4. Data so far suggests that tenants are below the 10% goal.
  5. Various gadgets are being used to capture energy data. Energy data is being captured at 10-second intervals.

ANNE GLOGER, EAST SCARBOROUGH STOREFRONT

- Poverty is a huge issue in towers so we were not quite ready to engage tenants.
- 32% of tenants are employed, 53% are earning under $15,000 per year.
- Tenants do not talk to each other, complaints are often individual.
- The aim of East Scarborough Storefront is to develop pre-conditions for effective engagement by building a trust-based decision-making system.
- Three-fold project aims:
  1. Developing resident decision-making structures that involve all residents.
  2. Professional engagement (urban planning and architectural issues to help residents understand the complexities of doing these things).
  3. Explaining the physical changes necessary to create more livable communities.
- Power is a huge issue in this context, as homes are owned by large corporations.
- Short-term goals:
  1. Thorough site planning
  2. Robust tenant council
  3. Active community support
- Key features of project development:
  1. Well- articulated site planning to maximize green space.
  2. A well thought out and effective tenant council.
  3. Active resident-led initiatives supported by the appropriate organizations.
- Recommendations:
  1. Take time.
  2. Prioritize process over product.
  3. Articulate that the project belongs to residents. Residents need to own part of the process, it is their home.
  4. Support residents to work from an asset based approach.
RAVI SUBRAMANIAN, THORNCLIFFE NEIGHBOURHOOD

- Manages 19 buildings with 4 being social housing.
- About 30,000 residents in total.
- Has a community model in which he works with 5 agencies that also help engage tenants at the outset.
- Went to different landlords to get buy in for tenant engagement: bulletin boards in buildings so tenants know what is going on.
- Initially found only about 20% of tenants came out for meetings.
- Started having tea/coffee meetings and more people came out.
- He developed an ambassador program enlisting people who gathered in the lobby to talk to new tenants and other people in the buildings who may be unable to go out.
- He made partnerships and brought services to residents this way.
- He is trying to develop the ambassador approach in all 19 buildings.
- The meetings have helped develop trust with the landlords, so they are able to listen to issues and respond to them; they too want happy residents.
- Community gatherings are important as they help create a positive environment and neighbourhood.
- Landlords attend meetings and know if there is an issue.
- One landlord likes art and encourages murals in the building.
- Another building started a community garden.
- These are small wins but help create an atmosphere and neighbourhood people want.
- He found that community gatherings helped create a sense of belonging and pride in place in which residents work with landlords to care for the building.

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

- Capreit
- City of Toronto-Tower Renewal Office
- City of Toronto-Solid Waste Management Services
- City of Toronto-Parks, Forestry & Recreation
- City of Toronto-Shelter, Support & Housing Administration
- East Scarborough Storefront
- Enbridge Gas (Premier Sponsor)
- Evergreen
- FRPO-CRB
- Honeywell
- Housing Services Corporation
- M&R Holdings
- Minto
- Now House
- Park Property
- Q Residential
- Ryerson University
- Summerhill
- Toronto Community Housing Corporation
- Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office
- Toronto and Region Conservation Authority
- Transfert Environment and Society
- WJ Properties