

## **CUTTING COSTS AND POLLUTION BY BENCHMARKING BUILDINGS**

Atlanta's skyline has long been a symbol of innovation and prosperity. What you can't see is that these same buildings are some of the city's largest energy consumers and polluters. The city is proposing a benchmarking ordinance that will help redraw this energy and environmental profile.

The benchmarking ordinance will give owners the ability to retrieve utility data from tenants, and will require that the data to be entered into an online software tool. In return, the owners will receive weather-adjusted performance scores that they can compare with the scores of similar properties. This will help building owners diagnose the energy efficiency of their buildings.

Then what will happen? Last year, Atlanta was selected to become one of 10 cities nationwide to join the City Energy Project. The CEP is an initiative designed to create healthier, more prosperous American cities by improving energy efficiency in large buildings. Because of this CEP grant, the Mayor's Sustainability Office can help align building owners with sources of financing and assistance to retrofit their buildings.

The ordinance requires that city-owned buildings first be benchmarked; subsequently, the city's privately owned buildings larger than 25,000 square feet are to be benchmarked. The buildings targeted by the proposed ordinance represent 14% of the building stock in the city, 40% of the city's energy consumption, and 36% of its carbon emissions.

If this ordinance passes, Atlanta's real estate market will soon operate more efficiently. High performance buildings will be worth more. Tenants with high utility bills in poor performing buildings will be empowered. And buyers will know more about the true value of properties before they make an offer.

I have studied the impacts of such programs across the U.S. and in other countries and have seen how they can boost local economies by creating jobs, raising property values, lowering energy bills, and cutting pollution. I urge Atlanta's leadership and citizens to support this benchmarking ordinance when it comes to a vote next week by the Atlanta City Council.

Dr. Marilyn A. Brown  
Brook Byers Professor of Sustainable Systems  
School of Public Policy  
Georgia Institute of Technology

Email: [Marilyn.Brown@pubpolicy.gatech.edu](mailto:Marilyn.Brown@pubpolicy.gatech.edu)  
Phone: 404-385-0303

April 13, 2015