

Rebecca Schaaf, Stewards of Affordable Housing for the Future

Poster Title: Next-Level Sustainability: Affordable Housing's Role in an Equitable Clean Energy Future

Abstract: The transition to a clean energy economy is well underway. Numerous states and cities are embracing policies that drive toward greater efficiency and renewable energy. Furthermore, market forces alone make renewable energy the cheapest way to add generation in many markets. At the same time, recent studies validate concerns that the benefits of the clean energy economy will not be equitably shared without concerted efforts. For example, Stanford University's DeepSolar project confirmed that low- and medium-income households are less likely to have installed rooftop solar even in favorable geographies. The move away from natural gas and toward building electrification raises similar concerns around who will bear the cost of stranded assets for natural gas infrastructure. The thirteen non-profit affordable housing providers who are members of Stewards of Affordable Housing for the Future (SAHF) are longstanding leaders in embracing energy efficiency, water conservation, and renewable energy, having set a 20% reduction goal by 2020. As long-term owners of large portfolios of affordable housing, they understand the risks climate change poses for the communities we serve and the importance of ensuring that the benefits of our clean energy future are equitably shared among people from all walks of life. As we near our 2020 energy efficiency goal, the SAHF members are poised to take climate action to the next level, pivoting from a focus on simple efficiency to a carbon reduction focus. This presentation will outline the implications of this new approach to sustainability on multiple fronts, including the range of carbon emissions affiliated with multifamily housing, the implications of electrification and moving away from fossil fuel use, data management tools and needs, and implications for future-focused building design. In addition to these organizational dynamics we also will address the institutional relationships that support and enable our shift from a focus on energy efficiency to a focus on carbon reduction and delivering the benefits of the clean energy transition to disadvantaged communities and vulnerable populations.