

# Toolkit to Support Renter Energy Conservation & Weatherization



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# The toolkit aims to foster better relationships between renters and landlords to support Green Rental Housing.

2020:  
A2ZERO

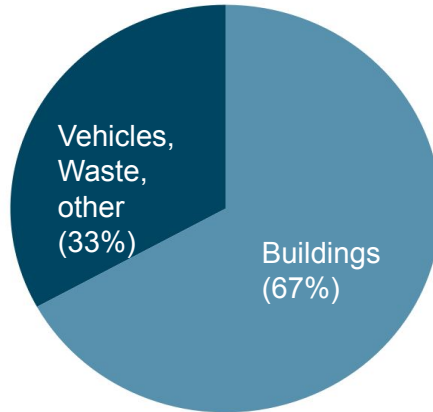
2021-23:  
Green Rental Housing Program  
(not yet finalized)

2023:  
Renter engagement

Ann Arbor has a lot of old (~1964) rental housing that was built **before MI created energy efficiency requirements (1977).**

67% of A2's GHG emissions come from buildings, and 55% of the housing stock are rentals.

2019 GHG Emissions in Ann Arbor



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## Split-incentive issue:



**Landlord**

Has to pay for the  
improvements



**Tenant**

Usually pays the  
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## Split-incentive issue:



**Landlord**

Has to pay for the  
improvements



**Tenant**

Usually pays the  
energy bills

If passed, the GRH Program will  
**require rental units to meet a  
minimum energy efficiency.**

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Residual issues informed by Task Forces...

**Landlords:** Why install a programmable thermostat if tenant doesn't know how to use it?

**Renters:** Why am I being punished for putting up window film to keep my home warm?

# Methods: Community-Based Social Marketing

1. SELECT BEHAVIORS TO PROMOTE



2. IDENTIFY BARRIERS AND BENEFITS



3. DEVELOP STRATEGIES



4. PILOT TEST STRATEGIES

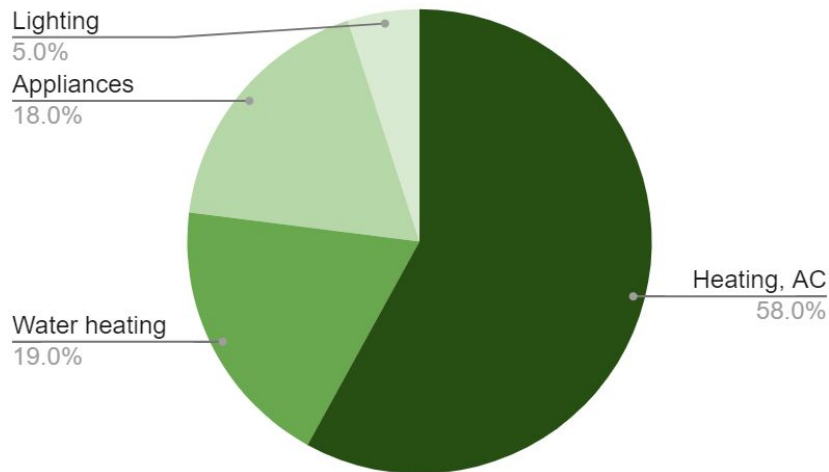


5. IMPLEMENT AND EVALUATE STRATEGIES BROADLY



Source: U.S. DOE illustration of concepts developed by Doug McKenzie-Mohr, *Fostering Sustainable Behavior*, [www.cbsm.com](http://www.cbsm.com)

## Home energy use for Michigan renters



Data from EIA 2015 Residential Energy Consumption Survey

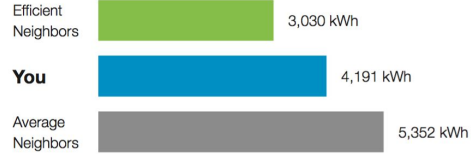
- 1) Select behaviors.
- 2) Identify barriers and benefits.

The biggest gaps that this toolkit hopes to fill are the lack of procedural knowledge for how renters can save energy at home and the motivation to do so (whether that's financial benefits, associated health risks, or climate change).

### 3) Develop strategies:

- a) **Community norms.**
- b) **Call to action.**
- c) **Prompts.**
- d) **Competition.**

## Here's how you compare to neighbors



Jun 20, 2013 - Jul 21, 2013

You're compared with 10 homes within 6 mi of you that are a similar size (1,200 sq. ft.) and have gas heat. Efficient neighbors are the most efficient 20% of this group. See back for details.

- 😊 Great
- 😄 **Good**
- 😞 Using more than average

**38%** more electricity  
than efficient neighbors

**In one study, messaging regarding childhood asthma cases from burning fossil fuels led families with children to decrease their energy usage by 19% [\(Asensio & Delmas, 2015\)](#).**



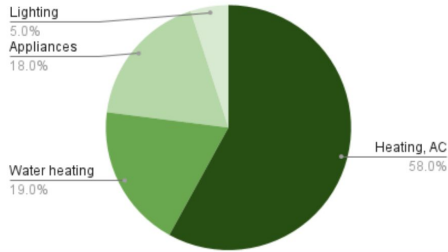


## TOP 3 THINGS RENTERS CAN DO TODAY TO SAVE ENERGY

- ✔ **Program your thermostat to 78 in summer and 68 in winter.**  
Bonus! Turn your heat/AC down even more when you leave home for the day. Each degree could save you up to 3% on your annual energy bill.
- ✔ **Wash your clothes in cold water and dry them on the lowest setting.**  
This will also protect your clothes from wearing out quickly!
- ✔ **Unplug phone chargers, TVs, and laptops when not in use.**  
Use power strips to make this easier & avoid wasting \$ on "phantom loads."



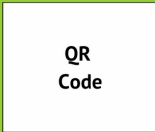
### Home energy use for Michigan renters



Data from EIA 2015 Residential Energy Consumption Survey

Why these 3?  
They'll help you save in the biggest categories of home energy use!

Find more energy-saving tips on our website:



Our city is working hard to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030, because we care about protecting the health of our most vulnerable neighbors - like seniors and children - from air pollution and hotter temperatures.

Renters like you have a big role to play in helping us get there - did you know that 55% of our city's housing stock is rentals, and 2/3 of our city's emissions come from energy use in buildings?

Ann Arbor's Green Rental Housing program is trying to make sure every rental in our city is more energy efficient, but we need your help too - **make a pledge to take one of these 3 energy saving actions today!**



## LESSER-KNOWN HOW-TO'S OF SAVING ENERGY FOR RENTERS

### 1. PROGRAM YOUR THERMOSTAT

Energy Star estimates that you can **save up to \$180 a year (for a single-family home)** in energy costs when you set these temperatures while you're away from home during the day:

- Up 8 degrees in summer
- Down 8 degrees in winter



Video: How to program your thermostat

### 2. USE SMART POWER STRIPS

Did you know that **leaving a computer on all day can waste about \$75 per year?** Smart power strips will switch off power to all unused devices at once.

For example, when you turn off your TV, the smart strip will also switch off power to video game consoles.



Video: How to use a smart power strip

### 3. CHECK FOR LED BULBS

LEDs, especially ENERGY STAR rated products, **use at least 75% less energy than incandescent lighting.**

Plus, they last up to 25 times longer, so you'll have to replace them much less frequently!



Video: Check for LED lightbulbs (skip to 8:24)

### 4. TURN DOWN YOUR WATER HEATER

Most manufacturers set your water heater to 140°F, but a typical household only needs it at 120°F. The U.S. EPA estimates that a **water heater set too high at 140°F wastes from \$36 to \$61 annually** in standby heat losses.

**SAFETY WARNING:** Consider the risks (mentioned in the video) of turning it down if you are immuno-compromised or have a dishwasher without a booster heater to kill nasty bacteria.



Video: How to turn down your water heater

# Community Norms



Energy Saving  
Ideas

TOP 3 THINGS RENTERS CAN  
DO TODAY TO SAVE ENERGY



Energy Saving  
Ideas

LESSER-KNOWN HOW-TO'S OF  
SAVING ENERGY FOR RENTERS

Program your thermostat to 78 in summer and 68 in winter.

Research shows that turning your thermostat down 1 degree can save you 1% on your energy bill.

Energy Star estimates that you can save up to 10% on your energy bill by turning your thermostat down 1 degree.



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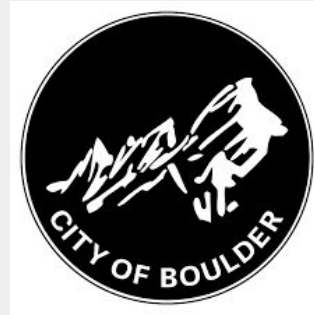
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Video: How to turn down your water heater.

## Call to Action

**Interviews informed a “How to Use” section in the toolkit with strategies on how to deliver the information effectively.**



## **SmartRegs Tenant Quiz**



Highlight opportunities and constraints of financial assistance options

(e.g. Washtenaw weatherization just contracted with state to do multifamily buildings)

Focus on Peer-to-Peer engagement

Make everything points on the green rental housing checklist

Emphasize tenants' inherent right to do **temporary weatherization**



Green Rental Housing

## DIY WEATHERIZATION FOR RENTERS

### STEP 1: HOME ENERGY AUDIT

Watch this video to conduct your own audit in 15 minutes, including:

- Checking your windows and doors for air leaks.
- Checking the efficiency of your lighting and shower head.



Video: home energy audit



Optional: fill out this report as you go

### STEP 2: CONSIDER FUNDING OPTIONS

Options for **free weatherization** (mostly for renters in single-family homes or duplexes):

- DTE free home energy assessment
- Washtenaw County weatherization assistance program

**Or, try talking to your landlord.** For bigger updates, consider offering to sign a longer lease or pay a small premium (\$10/month) to split the costs with your landlord.

In the meantime, try these low-cost, REMOVABLE (so you don't have to risk your security deposit) weatherization measures you can do yourself!

### STEP 3: MAKE IMPROVEMENTS

Watch these videos to learn how to install in under 5 minutes -->



Photo: Canva



**Rope caulking:**

\$5 for a 30ft roll to seal air leaks



Photo: Pinterest



**Window films:**

\$10-15 for enough to air seal two 3x5ft windows

Average cost -->



Green Rental Housing

## HOW TO TALK TO YOUR LANDLORD ABOUT WEATHERIZATION (PART 2)

### NEXT, EXPLAIN TO YOUR LANDLORD THE BENEFITS:

1. Better insulated homes don't just keep energy in, they also keep bad things out! Weatherizing a home **reduces the risk of mold damage to a property** and reduces the effects of childhood asthma.
2. Tenants are more likely to stick with a landlord who helps them out, **allowing landlords to avoid the costs of tenant turnover.**
3. If passed, the **Green Rental Housing Program will require a minimum energy efficiency in rental units.** Incentivize them to start early by offering to sign a longer lease or pay a small premium (\$10/month) to split the costs of the improvement.

Start with a request for a conversation, not a complaint. For example:



My apartment has been pretty drafty and hasn't been able to keep a decent temperature this winter. I've been working from home more so this has become a big comfort issue for me. Would you be open to talking about ways to improve this?



Photo: istockphoto.com



Photo: Canva

Find "How To" videos on how to properly install DIY window films or rope caulking on our website:

QR Code

[a2gov.org/...](http://a2gov.org/...)

# Emphasize temporary weatherization options for emergency situations or if landlord is not cooperative.

In the meantime, try these low-cost, REMOVABLE (so you don't have to risk your security deposit) weatherization measures you can do yourself!

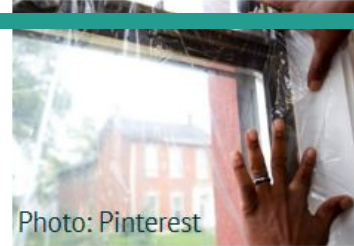
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# In non-emergency situations, tenants can use the weatherization agreement to start a conversation with their landlord.

## Agreement between Landlord and Tenant Regarding: Basic weatherization of the rental unit

### Specific improvements to be allowed

Landlords: Please specify which improvements the tenant is allowed to make without risk of penalty (e.g. loss of security deposit). Check all that apply:

- Adding window film around windows to prevent air leaks
- Caulking around windows and/or exterior doors
- Replacing or adding weather stripping around windows and/or exterior doors
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Tenants: Please specify how you can assist with making energy efficiency improvements:

- Adjusting the heat/AC when away to save energy (but not below 55 in winter to prevent pipes from freezing)
- Alerting the landlord about heating/cooling issues as soon as possible (instead of just opening windows in the winter)
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

If the landlord wants to do larger retrofits (e.g. installing a heat pump), tenants could:

- Coordinate with contractors (help get quotes, let them in the apartment to do work, etc.)
- Identify options for free home energy audits, rebates, or other financial assistance
- Pay a small premium with their rent (e.g. \$10/month)
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

# Quizzes can be used at community tabling events, on your city's website, or in peer-to-peer training workshops.

## Energy Conservation

1. Heating and cooling accounts for what percent of a typical Michigan renter's energy bill?
  - a. 26%
  - b. 34%
  - c. **58%**
  - d. 75%
2. In the winter, set your thermostat to 68 when you're home. To save more energy in the winter before leaving home or going to bed, it is best to:
  - a. Turn up the thermostat
  - b. **Turn down the thermostat**
  - c. Leave the thermostat where it is
  - d. Open all of the windows

## Weatherization & the Landlord-Tenant Relationship

1. How can you check for air leaks around exterior windows and doors?
  - a. Toilet paper test: Take a strip of toilet paper and move it over every place where the window meets your wall or the window frame to see if it flutters
  - b. Wet palm test: Put some water on your hand and move it all around where your door meets the frame to see if you feel any air on your wet palm
  - c. Light a candle or incense near the window to see if the flame/smoke blows away from it
  - d. **All of the above**
2. How can you get rid of air bubbles in window film after you install it?
  - a. You can't; rip it off and try again
  - b. **Use a hair dryer**
  - c. Nail it to the wall to make it tighter
  - d. Window film doesn't work and you shouldn't use it

# Next steps



For Ann Arbor:

Send Green Rental Housing ordinance to city council



Add tenant section to Resource Hub



Work with local partners to get the word out (Renters Commission)

For any community:

Consider a [Green Rental Housing Program](#) to address systemic energy efficiency issues for renters

Canva templates with red “fill in” prompts



**Low budget:**  
Distribute flyers at community events (local library, farmer’s market)



**Bigger effort:**  
Hold peer-to-peer trainings in large multifamily buildings



# Thank you!

Zach Waas Smith, Joe Lange, Carissa Ebling - awesome mentors!

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Sarah Lee - ALL the support

Fellow fellows - <33333

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Zackariah Farah - Ann Arbor Renters Commission

Carolyn Elam - City of Boulder

