

Solving the Debate: Housing Affordability vs. Sustainability

- Session Time: 2:15 pm - 3:15 pm
- Session Date: 10/02/2026
- Location: Grand Ballroom

Session Description:

CREDITS: 1 CM

ABSTRACT

Municipalities across Illinois have developed sustainability plans, set greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals, and/or made climate commitments. At the same time, local governments are struggling to increase the supply of affordable housing within their communities.

Conventional wisdom suggests that “green” initiatives, such as setting higher standards for energy efficiency in buildings, is a luxury that would increase the cost of constructing or retrofitting a building.

This session will open with a mock city council meeting at which competing public comments voice support for an energy-efficiency focused sustainability initiative and opposition to the initiative based on concerns that it will conflict with the community’s need to increase access to affordable housing.

The ensuing staged debate among council members will articulate key arguments in support of the importance of each of the community’s objectives. A comment from a council member will inquire about the potential for the initiative to support both the community’s sustainability goals and its housing affordability goals. We will then invite attendees to engage in the debate by making “comments” that support one of the objectives, or (ideally) that offer strategies to support both sustainability and affordability objectives.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Participants will understand that incorporating sustainability-focused initiatives into municipal plans can create synergies with increasing access to affordable housing.
2. Participants will be prepared to apply and adapt the ideas shared by other attendees for planning strategies that align affordability and sustainability to planning efforts in their communities.

3. When faced with potentially competing objectives, such as sustainability and affordability, participants will be prepared to create plans and policies that support both objectives.

Dan Streit *He/him/his, Slipstream*

Dan is an experienced advisor in community-centered clean energy solutions, municipal energy planning, and financing. Dan is committed to supporting communities in achieving their energy savings and decarbonization goals and creating solutions based on community priorities.

Ian Blanding *He/him/his, Midwest Energy Efficiency Alliance*

Ian Blanding is MEEA's Director of Building Codes and Policy. In this role, Ian leads regional efforts to reduce energy consumption and improve outcomes for residents through building energy codes, building performance standards, and other building policies across the Midwest. With over a decade of experience directly supporting state and local governments, Ian has dedicated his career to ensuring the adoption and effective implementation of building policies. His expertise includes state and local code development, energy code compliance assessment, and the management of utility and federal code assistance programs. Having worked across the non-profit, governmental and private sectors, Ian brings a unique and varied perspective on engaging in building policies. Ian earned a Master of Community Planning from the University of Cincinnati, and his B.S. in Environmental Policy and Public Administration from Central Michigan University.

Cheryl Scott *She/her/hers, Metropolitan Mayors Caucus*

Cheryl Scott is the Senior Sustainability Specialist at the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus and has been working on a variety of environmental initiatives there since 2019. Her work has focused extensively on helping local governments prepare for transportation electrification and building energy policy advancement. She helped to create the Electric Vehicle (EV) Readiness Checklist and develop the EV Readiness Program, the first program in the nation to recognize communities for taking EV-friendly actions. As part of the EV Readiness Program Team, Cheryl guided 45 local governments through the program across four cohorts. She also assists in managing the Advanced Building Energy Efficiency Policies (ABEEP) Task Force of 25+ communities that are considering the stretch codes, benchmarking, and building performance standards (BPS). Before starting at the Caucus,

she worked in local government and communications. She holds a master's degree in public administration from Northern Illinois University.

Katie Kaluzny *Illinois Green Alliance*

Katie directs and implements education programming, fosters organizational partnerships and collaborations, works with all staff on their program goals, and oversees day to day activities of the organization.

Before Illinois Green, Katie worked for the Chicago Department of Environment leading volunteer, intern and education programs at the Chicago Center for Green Technology (CCGT) for two years. And for four years, led the volunteer programs at the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum in Lincoln Park.

Outside of work, Katie serves on the Village of Brookfield's Board of Trustees.

Ryan Wilmington *He/him/his, Illinois Green Alliance*

Ryan joined Illinois Green Alliance in summer 2023 as the Policy and Communications Associate. He works to advance building decarbonization and efficiency policy across Illinois by educating policymakers and connecting them with industry voices. He also supports communications & marketing efforts. Ryan is a graduate of the University of Illinois at Chicago College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs. Before joining the team, he worked at the Cook County Forest Preserve as a Policy Fellow. In this role, he researched and developed Forest Preserve policy across a variety of subjects including sustainability, equity, and land use. Previously, he interned with the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative and Illinois PIRG.