

Tulane partners with city of New Orleans to help buildings save energy, money

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Cory Duggin, an energy project engineer with TLC Engineering for Architecture, presented during the Tulane Energy Benchmarking Symposium held March 14 at GNO, Inc. Facilitated by the Tulane School of Architecture Sustainable Real Estate Development program and the City of New Orleans Office of Resilience and Sustainability, the event brought together members of the building community to discuss methods to track and reduce energy and water use in commercial and multi-family properties. (Photo by John Huppi)

Buildings in the United States consume approximately 40 percent of the country's energy, and an average of 30 percent of energy in commercial buildings is wasted, according to the city of New Orleans' Office of Resilience and Sustainability (ORS).

As part of a citywide effort to address this issue and reduce energy use, ORS partnered with the Tulane School of Architecture to present the Tulane Energy Benchmarking Symposium on Wednesday, March 14. The symposium was supported by the City Energy Project, a national initiative to improve the energy efficiency of buildings in 20 major American cities.

The daylong symposium for local commercial and multifamily building owners and managers highlighted best practices, tools and resources for energy benchmarking and increasing efficiency.

Energy benchmarking, the regular monitoring and measuring of a building's energy and water use, revolves around the concept of "you can't manage what you don't measure."

By tracking energy and water consumption, building managers can evaluate how a building performs over time as compared to similar structures. The data can also be used to spot problems with climate control or lighting systems and identify areas for improvement.

"Tulane has tracked the energy use of its properties for several years, and the School of Architecture's Master of Sustainable Real Estate Development (MSRED) program incorporates specialized electives that emphasize the use of energy data to finance capital improvements," said symposium coordinator and MSRED Director Casius Pealer. "Tulane graduates are well-suited to be a resource for the city of New Orleans and for individual commercial property owners as they seek to improve building performance while generating a return on investment."

The event brought together experts from urban areas across the country to discuss how energy benchmarking activities and policies have supported cost savings, workforce development and economic activity in their cities.

MSRED graduate students were on hand to help attendees create accounts in Portfolio Manager, an online tool developed by the federal government to enable building owners to measure and track energy and water consumption and greenhouse gas emissions in commercial buildings. This platform is the basis for the city's recently launched [Downtown NOLA Energy Challenge](#), a competition to reduce energy usage among commercial buildings in downtown New Orleans.

