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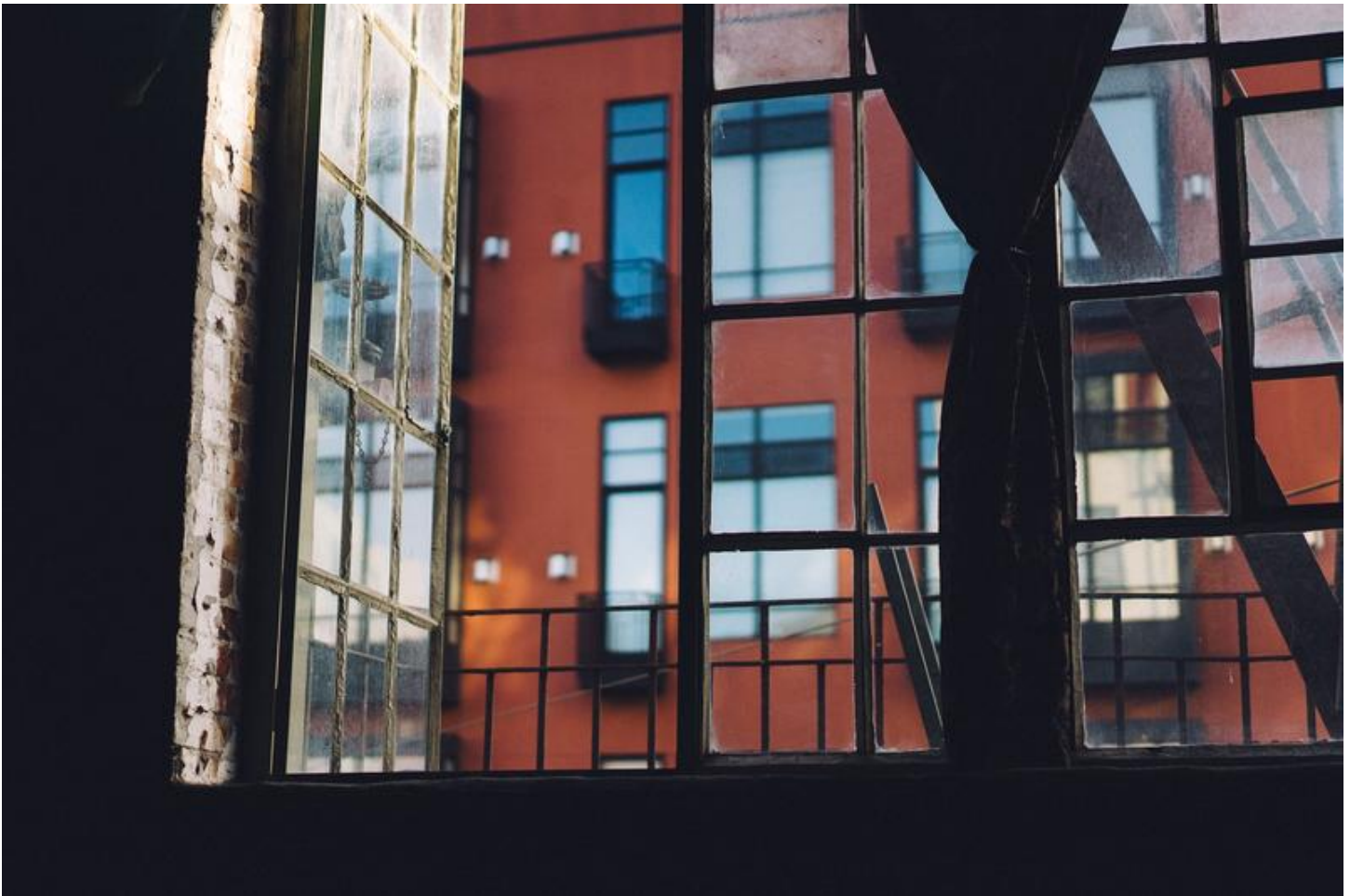


Study Aims To Reduce Energy Disparities In Cincinnati's Multifamily Housing Stock

By [TANA WEINGARTNER \(/PEOPLE/TANA-WEINGARTNER\)](#) • AUG 20, 2020

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A study by researchers at the University of Cincinnati finds energy efficiency disparities in Cincinnati's multifamily housing stock. The city of Cincinnati's Office of Environment and Sustainability will use the findings to inform policy.



Amanda Webb, assistant professor of architectural engineering, and David Moore, a graduate research assistant, reviewed the city's multifamily rental market (https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343610403_Understanding_Cincinnati%27s_multifamily_housing_income_households?channel=doi&linkId=5f3403b3a6fdcccc43c34a6e&showFulltext=true), which for their study is defined as buildings with four or more units.

Webb and Moore found energy cost intensity (cost per square foot) and energy burden are unevenly distributed throughout the city, with up to 20% of some residents' income going to energy bills.

"That's not fair," Webb points out. "It's not fair that just based on where somebody lives in the city, they end up paying a higher dollar per square foot or they end up with a higher energy burden."

Most multifamily dwellings are congregated in a handful of areas, with two thirds located in very low or extremely low income areas, she adds.

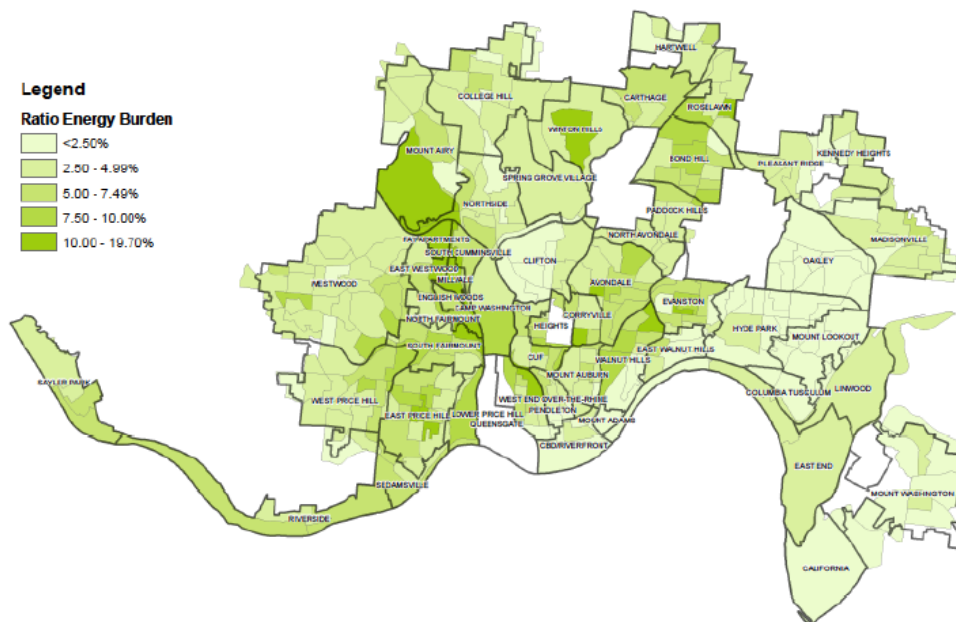


Figure 16: Map of energy burden

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A map showing where Cincinnati's multifamily housing residents experience the greatest energy burden.

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Webb says it's important to understand this data in order to find solutions, and because multifamily dwellings represent a sizeable percentage of Cincinnati's built square footage, a figure which she says wasn't known prior to the study.

"It's 17% of the total square footage in Cincinnati and 31% of the residential square footage," she says. "It's also important to understand multifamily buildings because they suffer from what's known as the 'landlord-tenant split incentive.' Often multifamily buildings house renters and in the split incentive

landlords pay for upgrades but tenants are the ones who pay the utility bill and benefit from energy savings. So, there's often a barrier to energy efficient upgrades in these buildings."

In other words, there's no incentive to make fix uninsulated walls, drafty windows or replace old HVAC systems.

The research is meant to inform city policies and lead to a targeted policy approach. Webb says some actions are already being taken. She points to a program called WarmUp Cincy (<https://www.cincinnati-oh.gov/oes/news/city-duke-energy-ohio-pilot-energy-efficiency-program-for-income-eligible-renters/>) which aims to improve energy efficiencies in low income, multifamily homes.

Now that Webb and Moore have the data, they're working on a more detailed statistical analysis including socioeconomic variables, race, income, and housing characteristics and how they interrelate. They're aiming to have that data by the end of the year.

Additionally, Webb says, they're collaborating with Office of Environment and Sustainability to view the data through a historical lens like "historical housing policies in Cincinnati, for example, the practice of redlining, etc. to see how these historical practices relate to what we're seeing today in terms of building energy performance and energy burden."

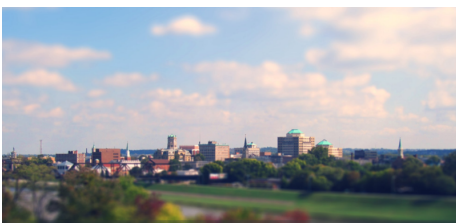
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