INTRODUCTION

Environmental Entrepreneurs (E2), an affiliate of the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), recently launched the 1 Hotels Fellowship for ten emerging entrepreneurs to develop clean energy projects over 2018. As one of E2’s Fellows, Greg is working to create a city-based platform (starting in Boulder, Colorado) for energy efficiency investments in a large untapped market sector: small commercial buildings. He currently works for the Rocky Mountain Institute in Boulder and has a background in commercial real estate finance and investment.

THE PROBLEM

While energy efficiency has gained traction in certain segments of the built environment, adoption remains extremely low in small commercial buildings (<50,000 square feet) due to a number of market barriers: capital constraints, split incentives, limited awareness, credit risk, fragmented ownership, high transaction costs and higher customer acquisition costs.

Accelerating progress in this sector is critical to meeting carbon and climate goals. Commercial buildings account for almost 20% of all energy-related CO2 emissions nationwide (a larger proportion in cities), and 94% of them are small - totaling 43 billion square feet.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY IN U.S. SMALL COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS

- $35 billion Investment potential
- 424,000 Jobs (FTE) to create
- 415 trillion Btu annual energy savings
- 86 million Metric tons of CO2 to mitigate
- 18 million Cars off the road each year
- 2 billion Trees planted
THE OPPORTUNITY

The small commercial building sector requires a different type of business model than what has been successful serving larger buildings. CurbCollective (C2) will be an online marketplace for financing and streamlining energy efficiency retrofits in small commercial buildings, connecting owners with third party investment capital and turnkey implementation.

C2 will leverage crowdinvesting to finance projects and will partner with energy service contractors to install them – at no cost to building owners. Projects will be limited to measures with <3-year paybacks (e.g. LED lighting, smart HVAC / lighting controls, retro-commissioning), generating 10-20% returns for investors over 4 years.

PILOT PROJECT

C2 is working to pilot in Boulder, Colorado later this year given the city’s climate goals, progressive policies, and urban scale (with roughly 1,300 small commercial buildings totaling 19 million square feet). C2 is looking for a small commercial building owner and energy service contractor interested in participating. The pilot project(s) will be used to produce a case study to be shared with future partners and customers while the platform itself is under development. After proving concept, C2 will strategically expand into additional cities.

CONTACT

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