



Forty Under Forty – Anita Ledbetter, Metropolitan Partnership for Energy

By Darlene Pickens

In the past year, the Build San Antonio Green program has experienced tremendous growth, certifying nearly 200 homes. “This is preventing more than 1 million pounds of CO₂ emissions from polluting the air—the equivalent of taking 91 cars off the road,” says Anita Ledbetter, Executive Director of the Metropolitan Partnership for Energy (MPE), which runs the program.

Ledbetter estimates these homes save buyers an average of \$360 annually in energy costs.

These statistics, she says, are a highlight in her career. “Green building for me is about saving the environment and, at the same time, living in a healthy home that’s not going to make you sick, not going to make your children sick and, a home that’s going to save you money.”

In fact, this achievement can be attributed to Ledbetter’s redesign of the Build San Antonio Green flagship program when she took the reins of the organization in 2006.

Initially, the program was full of costly requirements in order to win the group’s certification. Ledbetter implemented a plan with a tiered system allowing tract builders to obtain a lower level of certification. Builders can be certified at a higher level based on a home’s energy saving features.

She admits builders weren’t initially sold on the idea of constructing green homes. But, she didn’t let negative opinions hinder her efforts. “I looked at Build San Antonio Green and thought this is the biggest thing that we are doing,” she says. “This is going to be the future.”

The timing couldn’t have been better. The housing market was booming in 2006 and so was interest in green building. And as the program promoted green concepts, local builders recognized the value of including those concepts. “It just seemed like common sense,” she says. Because of her work, the Greater San Antonio Builders Association is now a member of the MPE.

Ledbetter says she inherited her interest in conservation from her grandmother and her mother. She says they taught her to recycle and re-use household items, as well as conserve energy use because they were low income.

Poverty was just one hurdle Ledbetter has been successful in overcoming in her life. When she dropped out of high school, her father provided home schooling to help her get a GED. At 20 years old, she was a single parent looking for work. She found a job at a construction company handling bids and other aspects of building costs. "I was more concerned about day-to-day financial survival, working, and making money to pay bills," she says.

Wanting more for her family, Ledbetter enrolled in college, moving back in with her father so she could afford tuition. She took a few classes at St. Phillip's College, which she says opened her mind to the social problems affecting other underprivileged families in her East Side community.

Ledbetter then transferred to Our Lady of the Lake University, graduating with a degree in sociology. In 2002, the college named her Student of the Year.

After graduation, she accepted a research job at Texas Engineering Experience Station (TEES) hoping to combine her experience in construction, environmental energy and its social impact. While giving a speech one day, she caught the attention of Bill Sinkin. The 95-year-old founder of Solar San Antonio saw Ledbetter's potential and, in 2004, hired her as executive director to promote the use of solar energy.

Two years later, he supported her appointment to the position of executive director of MPE, a coalition of organizations – including CPS Energy, the city of San Antonio, and Solar San Antonio – promoting energy conservation and renewable energy. For Ledbetter, the organization is an extension of the work she was doing at Solar San Antonio.

Sinkin has high praise for her achievements. "She came in and took a corporation that wasn't doing very well and turned it around with hard work and strict discipline," he says.

Looking down the road, Ledbetter hopes MPE can serve the community by helping low-income families find affordable, energy efficient homes. She knows the cost savings are desperately needed.

Outside of work, Ledbetter serves on the CPS Energy Green Ribbon Committee as well as the boards of the Balcones (Central Texas) chapter of the U.S. Green Building Council, Solar San Antonio, and the Greater San Antonio Builders Association. Recently, she was selected to serve on the advisory committee for the Mayor's Task Force on Sustainability in San Antonio.