

Day Four | December 7, 2022 | Saerbeck

Saerbeck Bioenergy Park: Powering a City and Inspiring a Minnesota Small Town

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The Bioenergy Park (BEP) in Saerbeck started its life as a military bunker and ammunition depot. In 2011, Saerbeck took over the site. Instead of selling the land to a private investor, they retained the property and began to envision the future of energy supply. Fast forward to 2022 and BEP now provides clean energy to the 4000 people in the town as well as the businesses through wind, solar, and biomass (this includes wood pellets and bio gas).

Before this could happen, they needed funding. The municipality had the land but needed approximately 70 million Euros to complete the project. The German government played no role in obtaining the money. Instead, the community stepped up and raised over 50 million euros to get the project off the ground and the municipality didn't need to invest any public funds.

This happened because the residents of Saerbeck were engaged from the beginning of the project. It all started with a community survey to see what was important to them. After seeing that many people were interested in the proposal, BEP started to take shape.

The success of the park is based on efficiency and understanding what would be needed to achieve that. One solution to help efficiency was to move the energy in a liner factor through the town. An example of this is Enapter which is right down the road from the BEP.

Enapter uses the direct connect with the park to use completely grid independent energy to power its facility. They manufacture modular hydrogen

generators that can store and transmit energy. Essentially, Enapter is using clean energy to create infrastructure components for others to use clean energy.

Guido Wallraven has been a catalyst of the BEP and a driving force to bring the example of Saerbeck to the world. Wallraven has been the technical director of Saerbeck since 2009. He also serves as a consultant to cities and municipalities on local sustainability measures.





Guido Wallraven

When asked how a town could start moving towards a clean energy economy Wallraven said, "It happens between your ears. You can't do everything at one time."

This sentiment was echoed by Ken Smith, CEO of Ever-Green Energy. Smith said, "Build off of a solid foundation. Everytime I come here (Saerbeck), there is something new."

Because of Saerbeck's creative vision, BEP has become a tourist attraction for groups interested in the future of clean energy. The Region Nine delegation was one of these groups. This was important to the region as many communities want to explore the possibilities and economic benefits of moving towards a clean energy economy. One of these communities is Comfrey, MN.

Comfrey is a town of approximately 400 people and their Mayor Gary Richter was a key member of the delegation. Many of the German delegation were excited to meet with him and discuss some of the initial steps to moving towards a clean energy economy.



Gary Richter

Richter said "Often the smaller towns are looked over. We don't have the tax base to make large-scale changes. With that said, it may seem overwhelming, but I think Comfrey can start making the initial steps."

RNDC Executive Director Nicole Griensewic is a little more confident. Griensewic said, "Comfrey will be the next Saerbeck."

With the guidance and support of Wallraven and Saerbeck, and the example of the BEP, this could very well be the case.

