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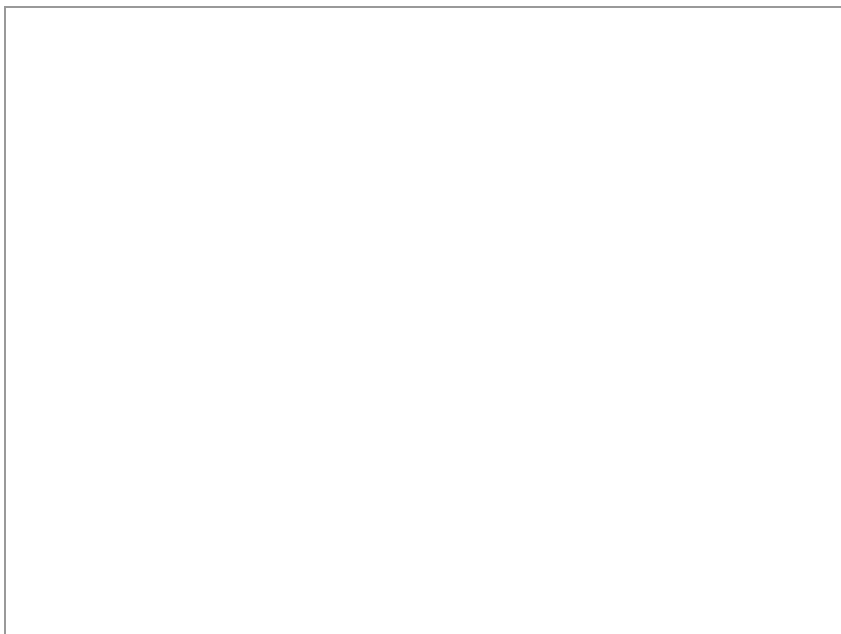
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DOWNTOWN

Pilot project to weatherize Chinatown homes, employ locals

Posted by Matt Rocheleau November 12, 2010 10:46 AM E-mail | Print | Comments (0)



(Courtesy Community Labor United)

Weatherization workers and Aulson Company members at Tuesday's ribbon cutting for the pilot project.

By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

Between 70 and 130 Chinatown housing units will be weatherized by local residents in need of work as part of a pilot project to test new models for making the state's energy programs more accessible to working-class families.

Chinatown residents, construction union members, utility representatives, civic and community leaders gathered at the Chinatown Gate on Tuesday to launch the \$200,000 project, according to Community Labor United, a coalition that advocates for the interests of low and middle-income working families in Greater Boston.

"We are weatherizing Chinatown to stabilize Chinatown" Lydia Lowe, executive director of the pilot's lead community partner, the Chinese Progressive Association, said in a statement. "This project benefits our community on many levels: reducing energy use, helping working class families save money and creating high-road jobs for our community"

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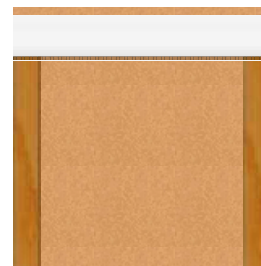
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members."

Three other proposed pilot projects in Chelsea, Springfield and Lynn are in negotiations, coalition officials said.

"Chinatown is piloting a new national model that holistically addresses the issues of housing, environment, and jobs in a historically disadvantaged community," the statement said.

Around eight unemployed and underemployed area residents will be hired to do the weatherization work. The Aulson Company, a large local contractor, will employ the residents at a living wage with health benefits, the coalition said. The residents will also become members of the Painters' Union with a pathway into the apprenticeship program.

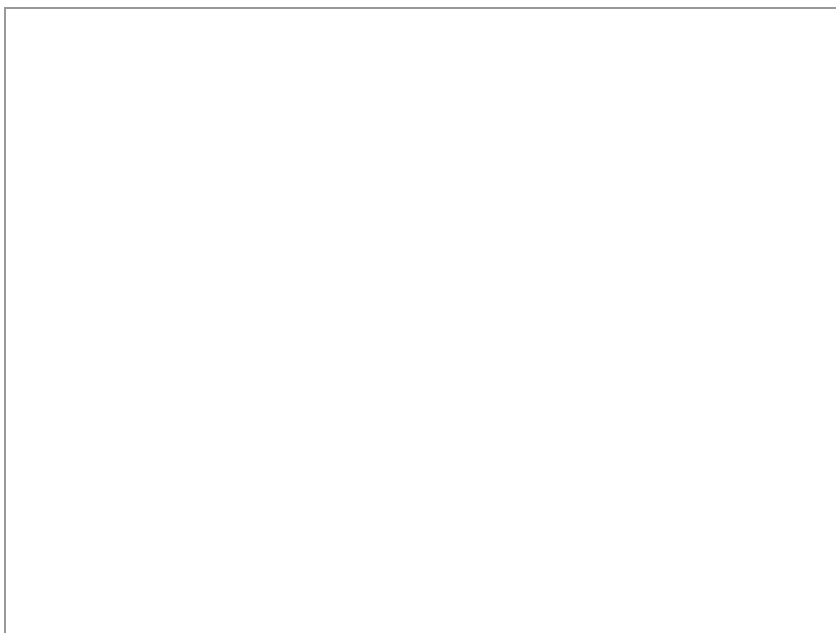
"This [weatherization training] has not only helped me develop new skills but it has prepared me for entering a new area of work within the construction field. These weatherization jobs are the type of high quality employment our workers deserve," said Wen Wei Zhou, a project crew chief.

The state and city provided key funding and policy guidance for the project, while the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades, the Aulson Company, and utility companies NStar and National Grid are partners in the project.

"We're always looking for new ways to get more customers involved in our energy efficiency programs," Penni Conner, NSTAR's vice president of customer care, said in the statement. "This exciting initiative will help us do just that – while also creating green jobs right in our own backyard."

"This initiative will provide energy savings for our customers and help to contribute to a clean energy future for the Commonwealth," added Tina Halfpenny, National Grid Director of Residential Program Operations.

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