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Three community organizations to lead city 'green' program outreach

Posted by Matt Rocheleau February 11, 2011 04:00 PM E-mail | Print | Comments (0)

By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

Three community-based organizations have been selected to lead grassroots marketing and neighborhood outreach for Renew Boston – an energy-efficiency program launched by the city in partnership with NSTAR and National Grid last year.

Around \$150,000 in grant funding will be shared by the three organizations: Dudley Square's Partnership for Greening Blue Hill Avenue, East Boston's Neighborhood of Affordable Housing (NOAH), and the Dorchester Bay Economic Development Corporation, according to a city announcement this week.

The city hopes the financial boost will improve community access to the program's services and connect up to 3,000 city households with no-cost weatherization services, officials said.

"Renew Boston energy efficiency services have already had an impact as Bostonians see smaller utility bills and feel warmer in their homes this winter," said Mayor Thomas M. Menino in the release. "By partnering with these trusted community-based organizations we will take this innovative program to the next level, breaking down some of the historic barriers to accessing energy efficiency, from landlord-tenant agreements to financing."

With the new help from the trio of neighborhood organizations, the city said it hopes to reach residents and businesses that have not traditionally accessed weatherization programs in the past, "particularly moderate income Bostonians and those for whom English is a second language."

Starting this winter, each organization will serve as a satellite office for Renew Boston. Each will also receive funds to hire neighborhood network coordinators who will help connect residents with the program's weatherization and job training services. Additionally, the coordinators will work alongside city business development staff to aid in implementing Renew Boston's small business retrofit programs throughout Boston's Main Streets districts.

"We are enthusiastic about the opportunity to host a Renew Boston neighborhood network site," David Price, Executive Director for Nuestra

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Comunidad CDC, one of the members of the Partnership for Greening Blue Hill Avenue, said in the release. "The goals and objectives that the Mayor has set for Renew Boston are very closely aligned with our own mission, vision and goals as a community-based organization."

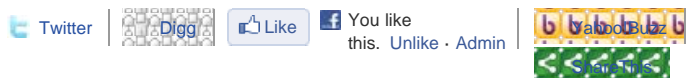
The city said it expects the program to complete more than \$11.9 million in energy efficiency improvements throughout the city, saving Hub residents over \$3.4 million in annual energy costs. It is also expected to create 58 local "green" jobs.

The no-cost energy efficiency improvements for residents are provided by Mass Energy Consumers Alliance and Next Step Living, a Boston-based energy services company. Eligible small business are contacted directly by NSTAR and RISE Engineering.

"This innovative partnership provides Bostonians with a unique level of access to incentive programs for energy efficiency," Jim Hunt, the City's Chief of Environmental and Energy Services said in the announcement. "This is critically important in Boston where space heating represents the largest share of our energy bills, and older building stock accounts for nearly 70 percent of our greenhouse gas emissions citywide. Renew Boston will help meet Mayor Menino's aggressive climate change goals for Boston."

Renew Boston is the nation's first partnership between municipal government and investor-owned utilities for co-delivery of energy efficiency home improvements, the city said. The program uses about \$2.8 million of the \$6.5 million federal stimulus-fund grant from the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) "to leverage rebates available under existing energy efficiency programs administered by NSTAR and National Grid for Boston residents and businesses," the release said.

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