

## A BETTER WEATHERIZATION IDEA FOR AUSTIN

- The groups participating in the Austin Housing Repair Coalition are dedicated to repairing the homes of low-income households in the city. These are Meals on Wheels and More, Urban League, Austin Habitat for Humanity, IACT, and American Youth Works.
- Through Neighborhood Housing the coalition has funds for fixing code violations and eliminating health and safety hazards such as lead abatement and architectural barriers. The Housing Repair Coalition lacks the funds to make homes more energy efficient.
- The weatherization program funds must be spent exclusively on energy efficiency, providing limited funds for minor repairs and health and safety improvements. Eleven percent of all applicants were denied service because of the extent of repairs needs prior to weatherization.

### WHAT IF WEATHERIZATION PROGRAM FUNDS FROM AUSTIN ENERGY WERE AVAILABLE TO THE HOUSING REPAIR COALITION?

- *Through a single point of contact, the home of a low-income family could be evaluated for code compliance, health and safety, and energy efficiency.* This is more cost-effective for the city because every home visit has an associated cost. A single point of contact system is also less disruptive to the low-income client.
- *Austin Energy will reach more low-income customers.* The Housing Repair Coalition organization is made up of trusted groups sought out by local residents seeking help.
- *The cost effectiveness of the program can be improved for Austin Energy.* Having repairs paid for by the Housing Coalition lowers Austin Energy's cost per dwelling unit which increases return on investment for the utility and allows more clients to be provided weatherization services.
- *Fewer low-income households will be denied weatherization.* Many low-income families are turned down for the weatherization program because of the poor condition of the dwelling unit and the high cost of repairs needed before weatherization can begin. Combining resources allows both the repairs and energy efficiency improvements to be made.
- *The investment is low-risk.* The Housing Repair Coalition participants are single audit organizations. All Austin Energy weatherization funds would be audited and reviewed on a regular basis.

### HOW CAN THE CITY MAKE THIS GREAT IDEA WORK?

1. Dedicate a portion of the funds for Austin Energy's low-income weatherization program to the Neighborhood Housing and Community Development Fund.
2. Have Neighborhood Housing administer the weatherization funds in conjunction with local housing repair providers already responsible for housing repair.