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Late Backup

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.

TALKING POINTS
CITY COUNCIL MEMBER MEETINGS
JULY 17, 2012

- The Austin Housing Repair Coalition, through Neighborhood Housing, has funds for fixing code violations and remedying health and safety hazards through solutions such as lead abatement and architectural barrier removal. The Housing Repair Coalition lacks funds to make homes more energy efficient.
- The recent Austin Energy rate increase approved by City Council on June 7, 2012 creates a new Customer Assistance Program (CAP) and a community benefit charge rate schedule to collect monthly charges from customers to support a rate discount for low-income households, weatherization, and billing assistance.
- The housing repair and weatherization programs complement one another because weatherization funds cannot be used for housing repairs and housing repair funds can't be used for energy efficiency improvements, air conditioner and appliance replacement.
- Neighborhood Housing and Community Development has a successful process for delivering housing repair services through the Austin Housing Repair Coalition made up of Meals on Wheels and More, Urban League, Austin Habitat for Humanity, IACT, and American Youth Works. All are single-audit organizations.
- Many low-income customers would benefit if Austin Energy's weatherization funds were leveraged with the housing repair coalition funds received from general obligation bonds and federal programs.
- Austin Energy's weatherization program modeled on the federal weatherization program has a waiting list of 488 households. In addition, 11% of all program applicants have been denied service because of the extent of needed repairs for their dwelling unit.
- Approximately 800 of the 13,655 residential consumers enrolled in the Customer Assistance Program in FY 2011 have electricity usage levels above 1,500 kWh per month. These customers should be targeted for housing repair and weatherization.
- Austin Energy could reach more low income customers with less administrative costs and realize a higher return on our energy efficiency investments.
- The weatherization program and the Housing Repair Coalition both provide opportunities for job training and job creation and contract with minority and women owned businesses.
- By contacting one agency the low-income client will have access to funds available for building code compliance, health and safety and energy efficiency.



Community Development Commission

P.O. Box 1088, Austin, TX 78767

www.cityofaustin.org/housing

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Date: September 14, 2012

To: Mayor and Council Members

From: John Limon, Chair, Community Development Commission

Subject: Austin Energy Weatherization Program

The CDC met at a regular meeting on Tuesday, September 11, 2012. An item on their agenda for consideration was to discuss and make recommendations to make the Austin Energy Weatherization Program more efficient in order to assist more low-income families in Austin. The CDC unanimously passed the following motion:

The CDC recognizes the successful collaboration of the members of the Austin Housing Repair Coalition in seamlessly delivering urgently needed repairs to Austin's most vulnerable citizens. The Coalition's work produces numerous benefits to low-income homeowner's quality of life, lowers utility bills, employs MBE/WBE businesses, and trains youth. This is an ideal partnership to also carry out weatherization services. Adding weatherization to the types of repairs provided by the Coalition would strongly be in the interests of low-income homeowners.

Therefore, the CDC would support the Neighborhood Housing and Community Development (NHCD) and Austin Energy to work together to enable the transfer to, and administration by NHCD, of at least one half of the Austin Energy CAP Weatherization funds for use in the Housing Repair Coalitions menu of programs.

Please let me know if I can answer any questions or provide additional information.

Cc: Marc A. Ott, City Manager
Bert Lumbreras, Assistant City Manager
Larry Weis, General Manager, Austin Energy

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