

# The Better Buildings Neighborhood View

How energy efficiency is improving lives, communities, and the economy

From the U.S. Department  
of Energy Better Buildings  
Neighborhood Program

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"Energy efficiency is one of the biggest wins that there is. It creates jobs. It spurs economic development. It makes our homes, our biggest investments, more comfortable for us to be in. It improves our indoor air quality. It lowers our bills. It does so many different things."

-Cynthia Adams,  
Program Manager,  
Charlottesville, Virginia

## Get To Know the Better Buildings Neighborhood Program on a Whole New Level

In late September, the Better Buildings Neighborhood Program launched a new public website: [betterbuildings.energy.gov/neighborhoods](http://betterbuildings.energy.gov/neighborhoods). We are excited to use this as a platform for sharing the many facets of the Better Buildings Neighborhood Program and its partners. You can now find [innovative approaches](#) that Better Buildings partners are implementing, learn about key [milestones](#) their programs are reaching, access tools and templates to help [launch an energy efficiency program](#) in your community, or get inspired by watching our first [Better Buildings Neighborhood Program video](#). Sections of the site include content tailored to [media contacts](#), [government professionals](#), and [home and building owners](#). We highlight how our partner programs are [driving demand](#) for energy upgrades, providing attractive [financing options](#), fostering a trained energy [workforce](#), and creating [models for energy efficiency programs](#) across the country. Take a few minutes to browse the site and [let us know what you think](#).

## Energy Tip

If just one out of every 10 homes and commercial buildings in the United States reduced its energy consumption by 25%, we could save \$8 billion per year. Connect with the Better Buildings partner in your region to learn how.

## Better Buildings Partners Gather To Plan for the Future

Better Buildings Neighborhood Program partners are doing great things across the country to help home and business owners save energy and increase comfort while creating jobs. Better Buildings seed funding helped these programs get underway. Now, less than halfway through the grant period, program partners are already looking ahead to how their programs will continue their strides once their seed funding has been fully invested. The [Better Buildings Business of Energy Efficiency Workshop](#), held in October in Burlington, Vermont, helped partners conceptualize and enhance their business models to ensure that their efforts thrive well into the future. "We wanted to help our partners prepare for the future, even while they are still concentrating on identifying the best models to follow, so that when our funding cycle is completed in December 2013, they can sustain the momentum for energy

efficiency in their local neighborhoods," said Better Buildings Neighborhood Program Manager Danielle Sass Byrnett. DOE provided workshop participants with numerous [resources to help with business planning](#), including a [draft Business Models Guide](#) for residential energy efficiency. Learn more about Better Buildings Neighborhood Program partners' [progress to date and plans for the future](#).

## Local Contractors Face an Enviably Challenge

[Clean Energy Works](#) in Portland, Oregon, has become so good at enticing homeowners to complete energy efficiency evaluations and upgrades that some contractors are politely asking for the projects to slow down a bit. Clean Energy Works hit the ground running by launching its program with significant rebate offers to residents. However, the rebates were so successful in driving demand for the program that contractors began to get overwhelmed. Although initially surprised by the demand for energy evaluations and upgrades, contractors in Oregon have been able to handle the extra work by adjusting schedules and bringing on additional staff.



An energy advisor talks with a homeowner in Boulder.

Meanwhile, in Boulder, Colorado, the [EnergySmart](#) program was one step ahead of the dropping temperatures, beginning awareness efforts earlier in the year to remind home and business owners to consider upgrades before the seasons changed. This community awareness helped generate energy upgrade jobs during the normally light workload days of summer, allowing contractors to sustain full workloads throughout the year. This fall, the calls have continued rolling in to contractors from chilly residents seeking relief from drafts.

Learn more about how these and other Better Buildings Neighborhood Program Partners' programs are finding [innovative ways to create jobs for their local workforce](#).

## Public Displays of Efficiency

Imagine if an electronic billboard displayed how much energy you used this morning, or you stepped outside to see your energy savings painted on the street for passersby to see. For some Better Buildings neighborhoods, these public displays are popping up—and they're helping call attention to saving energy. To help residents understand the impact of their energy use, [RePower Bainbridge](#) developed innovative [Island Energy Dashboards](#) that display the island's collective real-time energy use on commuter ferries to and from Seattle, at kiosks around Bainbridge Island, in local businesses, and online. RePower Bainbridge also created Electric Avenue, a street mural that builds awareness by displaying the collective energy savings of two island neighborhoods.



Electric Avenue drives efficiency by promoting friendly competition among neighbors.

In Connecticut, the [Neighbor to Neighbor Energy Challenge](#) encourages

homeowners in 14 towns to reduce their energy use by 20%. As residents join in and take action to help meet this goal, they earn points that can be redeemed for community energy projects. The Neighbor to Neighbor Energy Challenge website tracks these points via an [online leader board](#), bolstering the healthy competition among participating communities. Learn about these and other [innovative marketing strategies](#) program partners are using to encourage energy efficiency in their neighborhoods.

## Low-Interest Rates Entice Philadelphians To Reach for the Stars

For many Philadelphia area residents, getting a loan for home energy efficiency improvements is a no brainer when it's offered at a 0.99% fixed interest rate. [EnergyWorks](#) in Philadelphia is using low-interest loan rates to incentivize homeowners by tying the interest rate to the number of energy efficiency measures incorporated into the home, thereby encouraging homeowners to make more efficiency upgrades to receive the best rates. For example, "Gold Star" projects, which are guided by an energy assessment and consist of multiple efficiency measures, are eligible for the lowest possible rate—0.99% fixed for 10 years. As an alternative to the Gold Star level, the Silver Star allows homeowners to initiate energy efficiency improvements by installing a single energy efficiency measure using a participating home energy expert, which can qualify them for a 4.99% loan, in addition to rebates and tax credits. Learn more about the [unique financing options](#) EnergyWorks and other Better Buildings partners are offering residents.

## Program Offers New Spin on Traditional Marketing

Seattle-based [Community Power Works \(CPW\)](#) has a new song-and-dance routine, or at least a new breakdance troop. Known as the "Cleveland Boys" around the neighborhood, this group of seven high school seniors performed at eight community outreach events for CPW this past summer. For CPW, the Cleveland Boys offered a unique way to draw in crowds and educate the community on what energy efficiency means and how it can be used to improve their homes or businesses. As for these breakdancing seniors, some are aspiring to become scientists and engineers, and all of them plan to keep on dancing. Learn about more ways CPW and other program partners are [driving demand](#) for energy efficiency in their neighborhoods.



The Cleveland Boys break it down at a Community Power Works event.

## Stay Tuned...

As the Better Buildings Neighborhood Program reaches the halfway point in its funding cycle, we will share program progress throughout the country in the winter issue of The Better Buildings Neighborhood View.

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Have something you'd like to contribute to The Better Buildings Neighborhood View? Send an email to [Better Buildings Neighborhood Program Support](#) to submit your idea.

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