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**University Park's STEP-UP Program Posts Impressive First-Year Results, Announces Expansion into Neighboring Towns, Plans for Solar Installation**

University Park, Md., January 28, 2012 – The Town of University Park today marks the one-year anniversary of its \$1.42M, three-year, U.S. Department of Energy-funded Small Town Energy Program for University Park (STEP-UP) by announcing its impressive first-year results and expansion of the program into neighboring communities.

At a Community Energy Fair today, Mayor John Tabori will announce that 22 percent of University Park's 923 homeowners have signed up to participate in STEP-UP, and that 10 percent of homeowners completed home energy efficiency improvements within the program's first year.

The program's total first-year energy savings are in excess of 60,000 kWh of electricity and 7,500 therms of natural gas. Mayor Tabori says the savings are equivalent "to the entire annual energy consumption of eight local homes and a 100-ton reduction in greenhouse gases going into the Earth's atmosphere."

Tabori adds, "The impressive savings are just the tip of the iceberg. As more homeowners sign up to participate in STEP-UP, the savings go up, the homeowners' costs go down and we emit less greenhouse gas. It's a win-win."

**Homeowner Costs Defrayed by Rebates**

Participants in the program first have their home assessed by a qualified home energy contractor. The resulting assessment includes costs for targeted energy efficiency improvements in the home, averaging \$3,700 per household. With rebates averaging 60 percent of that total cost, the average net out-of-pocket expense for a homeowner is \$1,400 – a return on investment of 26 percent and a simple payback period of about four years. After that, the ongoing energy savings mean money in the homeowners' pockets.

Besides the energy-related savings and benefits, the Department of Energy grant has also had a direct impact on local jobs and the local economy. Since the start of the grant, 35 contractors have been engaged on the project, nine full-time jobs have been created and more than \$700,000 has been invested in the local economy.

“University Park and its STEP-UP program can be a model for many similarly-sized towns in the United States looking to help homeowners lower their energy bills,” says DOE Better Buildings Neighborhood Program Director Danielle Sass Byrnett. “Across the country, programs like STEP-UP are increasing the demand for energy-saving products and services and helping families save money.”

### **Expanding Program to Neighboring Towns**

The success of the program’s first year has encouraged Project Director Chuck Wilson to suggest launching STEP-UP in adjacent communities that can test University Park’s Better Buildings Neighborhood Program models for recruiting participants and assessing program benefits.

To that end, Riverdale Park, Hyattsville and unincorporated College Heights Estates will be invited to consider initiating customized STEP-UP programs in the coming months. Wilson notes, “The STEP-UP grant was awarded based on the plan to build case studies, so that other small towns could replicate our actions and get the same results. So let’s test our current experience and put it to work for our neighbors!”

At the Community Energy Fair, residents from University Park, Hyattsville, Riverdale Park and College Heights Estates can talk with contractors about home energy assessments, energy-efficiency improvements and high-efficiency and renewable energy system upgrade options. Also present will be experts on advanced home energy systems and products – such as geothermal, solar, efficient lighting and windows and smart meters – to help attendees gain deeper knowledge of these topics.

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If you would like more details about this topic or to schedule an interview, contact Chuck Wilson, STEP-UP Program Director, at 202.280.8123.

*The Town of University Park, Maryland was awarded a Better Buildings Neighborhood Program grant by the U.S. Department of Energy to implement the Small Town Energy Program for University Park, or STEP-UP. STEP-UP’s three-year effort is designed to achieve energy efficiency market transformation within University Park and to serve as a roadmap for energy transformation in small towns across the US. STEP-UP includes a full suite of model activities for replication including energy audits and retrofits for homes, financial incentives, local community delivery partners, and low-cost social media techniques. STEP-UP may also include additional energy-related activities such as solar, composting, and transit programs.*