

Funds available for energy efficiency improvements

By [Gary Silverstein](#)

Special to the News & Record

Monday, November 7, 2011

The City of Greensboro has been awarded a federal grant to create and implement a program to make our buildings more energy efficient. As a primary focus the BetterBuildings for Greensboro program will seek to reduce energy usage in approximately 2,000 existing homes throughout the city.

Participating households will not only use less energy, lowering their monthly utility bills, but they will also have a healthier, more comfortable home. The \$5 million grant, part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, is a pilot program that could be replicated in other cities.

BetterBuildings for Greensboro offers significant incentives to motivate residents to participate. For households whose earnings are within the program's financial threshold, the grant will pay for upgrades that will save at least 15 percent off of their yearly utility bills. This will be accomplished through energy assessments; a comprehensive evaluation of a home's energy loss and through having the energy retrofit work completed as outlined in the assessment.

Households that exceed the earnings threshold will also be able to participate in the program. There are incentives available, including \$150 towards a home-energy assessment (if the 15 percent minimum improvement is reached), and up to \$425 worth of rebates from Duke Energy for the first 100 residents that make energy upgrades. These upgrades include home sealing, attic insulation, duct sealing and duct insulation. Special financing options are also available through banks and lenders who are partnering with the program.

All homes that have been retrofitted through the program will receive a Home Performance with Energy Star certification. This designation, through the federal Environmental Protection Agency's Energy Star program, gives credibility to the retrofit work done to the home. It acknowledges that the work was executed by a pre-screened, highly qualified energy-reduction contractor and that a 15 percent or greater improvement has been achieved.

Another great service this program provides is educating households that they do not have to settle for high energy bills, uncomfortable homes and unhealthy indoor air quality. Whether you live within the Greensboro city limits or beyond, most homes will benefit by having energy reduction retrofit work done by skilled, certified professionals.

The BetterBuildings for Greensboro program also has the potential to generate much-needed local jobs, jobs that cannot be outsourced and can be one well-placed puzzle piece toward rebuilding our local economy.

Participation in this program is also a contribution to improving the air we breathe and preserving the spectacular natural environment we are so fortunate to enjoy here in the North Carolina Piedmont.

More information can be found at www.betterbuildingsgreensboro.org or by calling 373-2489.