



Community Development Commission

P.O. Box 1088, Austin, TX 78767

www.cityofaustin.org/housing

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Date: May 26, 2010

To: Mayor and Council Members

From: John Limon, Chair, Community Development Commission *John Limon*

Subject: Letter of Support for Nurtured World's Application for the Department of Energy "Austin Weatherization Innovation Grant."

BACKGROUND: The Austin Housing Repair Coalition (AHRC)¹ was founded by Housing Works in 2008, with over a dozen public, private and non-profit organizations providing home repair and retrofit services throughout the City of Austin. These organizations united by their desire to deliver housing rehabilitation services to low-income households more efficiently and completely, eliminating duplicative work as well as improving the communication, resource-sharing, expertise and fundraising capabilities of the coalition members. This coalition is unique within the United States in its scope and structure. From 2007-2009, A Nurtured World (ANW) developed and piloted a program in Austin to make low-income homes more resource efficient through the use of volunteers and several partner organizations in the AHRC coupled with ANW's successful behavior change models and education strategies. This model, *1house at a time*^{TM, 2} is unique in that volunteers overseen by skilled leaders complete the majority of the work, allowing the donor funds to be leveraged at an approximately 3:1 ratio (\$1 donated is matched by \$3 of in-kind labor and materials). In addition to the ~20% reduction in utility bills experienced by the homeowners, each volunteer learns how to complete weatherization projects at their own homes. Their projects are also measured and quantified, expanding the overall impact. On average, volunteers have saved more than \$1,000 per year and reduced their carbon footprint by 1 ton of CO₂.

WHY AUSTIN? Since 1990 when Austin became the first city in the world to launch a "green building" program, Austin Energy has promoted a definition of a "green home" as one "that's healthy, comfortable, efficient, durable, and low

1. The coalition is made up of a broad variety of stakeholders including: Austin Energy, Texas Gas Service, City of Austin Water Utilities, Travis County, City of Texas, Austin Groups for the Elderly, Habitat for Humanity, Meals on Wheels and More of Austin, American Youthworks, Austin Area League, AAIM Hands on Housing, Faith in Action Caregivers, Texas Ramp Project, Catholic Ladies of Charity, Family Eldercare and A Nurtured World.

2. The *1house at a time* model was endorsed as a National Community Service Model to President Obama by his Energy and Environment Subcommittee in 2009. The USEPA has also provided initial funding to launch demonstration events in Dallas/Fort Worth, Houston/Pasadena, and New York City in 2010 with the goal of expanding the model to other cities.

maintenance,” delivers these benefits in a way that minimizes harm to the environment, and emerges from an integrated design and development process. Austin’s model for new green building construction has led to market transformation – it is now time to apply these principles to existing homes and the retrofit industry for low-income homeowners.

THE OPPORTUNITY: The Department of Energy (DOE) is offering up to \$3MM to organizations that have innovative models for completing home weatherization for low-income homes. The Austin Weatherization Innovations Partnership Model proposed by the Austin Housing Repair Coalition (AHRC) to the DOE presents a unique opportunity to:

- 1) offer enhanced housing rehabilitation services to our low-income communities,
- 2) decrease the carbon footprint of our existing housing stock,
- 3) build a model of the community helping their own members in need and providing these services cheaper than any existing government assistance program, and
- 4) create an innovative, “whole-home” retrofit model for replication nationwide based on the Austin Model.

In order to receive this funding, the partnership must demonstrate through letters of commitment strong financial and political support for the effort to ensure its success.

OUR VISION: The AHRC model that will be proposed for this funding opportunity offers a powerful vision of a “whole home” approach to residential retrofits for existing homes that:

1. Coordinates health, safety, and resource efficiency interventions in low-income families’ homes from start to finish, making it safe and affordable for these families to stay in their homes and neighborhoods;
2. Provides training for future leaders in whole house retrofits and builds a market to retain those new green job opportunities-
3. Leverages local volunteer, in-kind, material, and financial investments with federal funding to maximize the impact of each dollar and hour invested;
4. Builds a Home Repair database shared by all AHRC members to facilitate future coordination, decrease inefficiency and eliminate duplication and fraud;
5. Creates a Wellness Survey that will track the physical and mental health of our low income families before and after the renovations are performed; and

6. Establishes an efficient, holistic weatherization model that can be replicated by other communities across America, especially in the south.
7. Causes lasting behavior change in both the homeowners and the volunteers who participate in the program.

Already, the AHRC and the City of Austin have developed an effective and efficient program with unprecedented collaboration among city agencies and nonprofit organizations offering housing repair and retrofit services and green job training opportunities.

OUR REQUEST OF THE COUNCIL: The DOE would like to see a 3:1 leverage of non-federal funds, materials, or in-kind (volunteer hours) for every dollar they provide. Fourteen (14) organizations have already pledged match to ensure this effort is funded. We are requesting the City Council approve matching the DOE federal funding in a letter of commitment through existing programs expanded into 2011 such as GO Bonds, the Holly Good Neighbor project and other funds to ensure this proposal is funded by the DOE.

For more information: Contact Elizabeth Frisch, Development Director, A Nurtured World, Inc. (512) 656-7518; email: elizabeth@nurturedworld.org. Web Site: www.nurturedworld.org. A Nurtured World is a non-profit agency dedicated to a global change in thinking that allows people to live prosperous lives and sustain the environment.

Cc: Margaret Shaw, Director, Neighborhood Housing & Community Development
Betsy Spencer, Assistant Director, Neighborhood Housing & Community Development