

ITEM FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION

One-Stop Weatherization

Implementing the universal application and contractor rebate recommendations should make the delivery of program services more seamless but falls short of providing what some task force members refer to as “one stop” weatherization where other city programs could be reimbursed for providing Weatherization to their housing repair program eligible clients. At the January 16, 2015 Task force meeting, Letitia Brown, Neighborhood Housing and Community Development and Austin Housing Finance Corporation provided a description of 9 housing repair programs¹ that could also provide weatherization directly instead of referring the client to Austin Energy. Also note that newly constructed affordable housing must meet city’s energy efficiency code but there is no such standard for the housing repair programs.

A panel discussion of non-profit organizations was asked to share insight on ways to improve weatherization and utility based programs. A number of organizations participated including Austin Tenants’ Council, Home Repair Coalition, Austin Habitat for Humanity, Foundation Communities and The United Way for Greater Austin. Charles Cloutman from The Home Repair Coalition and Jesse Porter, Habitat for Humanity, expressed frustration for clients who receive home repairs and weatherization through two separate programs. Representatives for both organizations recommended that the weatherization funds be made available to the housing programs so that weatherization measures can be installed at the same time other repairs are being made on the client’s home.² Susan Peterson, Foundation Communities pointed out that weatherization is often piecemeal in an apartment building because of differing housing income eligibility and weatherization income eligibility requirements.³ She suggested that all subsidized housing units should qualify for the weatherization program.

Further streamlining of program delivery and cost reduction may be possible with a seamless operation that uses all the city’s programs to reach low and low moderate income households that would benefit from energy efficiency services.

¹ Architectural Barrier Removal, LeadSmart, Lead Healthy Homes, Private lateral Pipeline Grant, Home Repair Loan Program, Holly Good neighbor, Emergency Home Repair, GO Repair. Distributed to Task Force members January 16, 2015.

² Low-Income Consumer Advisory Task Force Meeting Minutes January 16, 2015, p. 2.

³ *Ibid.*

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Increasing the cap on incidental repairs for the weatherization program.

The Austin Energy weatherization program places a cap of \$500 on incidental repairs. As of September 1, 2015 Austin Energy reported to the Task Force that it was unable to serve 2,372 of 3,883 households screened for the program.⁴ The Task Force has requested data on the reasons for the utility's inability to serve. The extent of needed repair is one possible reason.

Incidental repairs are repairs that need to be made to properly install an energy efficiency measure. The term incidental repairs is coined by the Federal Weatherization Program. The definition is "those repairs necessary for the effective performance or preservation of weatherization materials". Some examples of incidental repairs are:

- Installation or replacement of attic vents
- Minor roof repair
- Wiring replacement
- Patching openings in walls (more than 1 sheet of sheetrock)
- New trim and clasp for ceiling hatch
- Replacing deteriorated door frame (plus primer and sealer)
- Replace broken window stops
- Replace rotted jambs and wall framing
- Flue repairs
- Construction of a separate CAZ (Combustion Air Zone) per code requirement
- Replace light sockets

Under the Federal program, the cost of incidental repairs is added into the cost effectiveness calculation. The cost test calculates a savings to investment ratio (SIR). The minimum SIR is 1.0 which means the cost is recovered in energy savings over the useful life of the measures.⁵

If incidental repair costs exceeding \$500 is a predominant reason for denying program access to Austin Energy applicants for weatherization service there is a need to explore other avenues for reaching customers through the housing programs as discussed previously or to raise the cap on incidental repairs from \$500 to a higher number that would reduce the number of applications being denied.

⁴ AE Weatherization Program job status as of September 1, 2015 provided at September 4, 2015 Low-Income Consumer Advisory Task Force meeting.

⁵ Title 10: Energy PART 440—WEATHERIZATION ASSISTANCE FOR LOW-INCOME PERSONS.