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Local Leaders and Homeowners Unite to “Change the Climate in Cully”

MACG organizes 100 Cully homes for the Clean Energy Works Portland weatherization pilot program to provide energy efficiency retrofits, spur local job creation

Portland, OR – Over 200 residents from Portland’s Cully neighborhood gathered at Rigler School today to learn about the “Changing the Climate in Cully” initiative – a Clean Energy Works Portland (CEWP) residential weatherization retrofit program that will improve the comfort and value of local homes, save energy, and create family-supporting jobs in the community.

Sponsored by Metropolitan Alliance for Common Good (MACG) and a coalition of other community partners, the event – which also featured free ice cream, music and games – marked the kick-off of the neighborhood-led initiative. Homeowners in attendance learned about home weatherization and many signed up on-the-spot for a free energy audit assessment. Through outreach and volunteer activities such as door-knocking and house parties, “Changing the Climate in Cully” will organize 100 Cully homes by September for retrofits this year.

“Changing the Climate in Cully” is also concerned with creating family-supporting jobs and growing the area’s economy. As a start, the program will create 17 new jobs, while sustaining another 16. Six small, local construction contractors and workers from LiUNA – the Laborers International Union of North America – have teamed up to perform the weatherization retrofit work. With a new breakthrough weatherization training program, LiUNA has been providing training and credentials in highly-skilled jobs as weatherization installers and supervisors. Additionally, subcontractors representing three trade union locals – Sheet Metal Workers Local 16, Electrical Workers Local 48, and Plumbers & Pipefitters Local 290 – will be performing specialty work on the project.

Earlier this year, the U.S. Department of Energy awarded a \$20 million “Retrofit Ramp-Up” grant to the City of Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability to weatherize thousands of homes and commercial buildings across the state through an expansion of the pilot program called Clean Energy Works Portland. “Changing the Climate in Cully” is part of that larger CEWP Program, which has already retrofitted 143 homes in Portland and has another 220 homes in progress.

In the coming weeks, MACG’s Cully neighborhood volunteers will talk to their neighbors about the project, as well as organize house parties and community events to bring Cully neighbors together around this opportunity. Outreach activities will wind down at the end of September and the 100 retrofits are expected to be completed by December 2010.

For more information please visit: <http://macg.org/> and <http://www.cleanenergyworksportland.org/community.php>

STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT

“This is a success story in the making. Our members are walking the streets of Cully talking with residents about the program, helping to build this innovative organizing model, and most importantly to us, will perform this work under a union contract,” said **Greg Held, LiUNA Oregon and Southern Idaho District Council Business Manager**. “Thanks to the efforts of MACG and its partner organizations, workers on this energy efficiency project will all be making living wages and receiving health care.”

“With MACG and the Cully neighborhood leading the way, we are going to show that grassroots efforts make a difference,” said **Multnomah County Chair Jeff Cogen**. “It’s a win-win. Together we will create jobs, lower energy use and protect the environment.”

“The key to confronting our climate crisis is a community-based strategy that creates good jobs for all Oregonians,” said **Representative Jules Bailey**, a chief sponsor of state legislation that supported the energy efficiency pilot program. “This is a campaign that really connects the dots: local homes, local jobs, a greener community, a stronger economy.”

“Our church is proud to be part of this wonderful opportunity for the Cully neighborhood,” said **Joan Winchester, Pastoral Associate at St. Charles parish**. “Through this effort we can reduce energy bills, foster economic security, and increase home comfort and value for our parishioners and Cully families. Best of all, neighbors are uniting here today to improve their community.”

“‘Changing the Climate in Cully’ is all about neighbors and groups working together to bridge the green divide,” remarked **Alan Hipólito, Executive Director of Verde**, a sponsoring non-profit group that aims to connect low-income people to the economic benefits of a new green economy. “We’re here today because we see this as an opportunity to protect the environment, create jobs, and build a pathway out of poverty.”

“While this is a local effort to improve homes in Cully, a lot of people around the country are paying attention to see if this neighborhood-based approach will be a successful model that can be replicated in other cities,” said **Bev Logan from St. Andrew Catholic Church**, a MACG member institution.

“The organizing efforts of MACG in Cully it easy for homeowners to take advantage of the Clean Energy Works Portland program. We are pleased that the federal stimulus funding that the City and its partners secured can help homeowners – especially those from Cully, Lents and Interstate neighborhoods – make energy-saving improvements to their homes with no upfront costs,” said **Portland Mayor Sam Adams**. “Clean Energy Works Portland supports the City's goal of reducing carbon emissions 80 percent by 2050.”

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