

# The Partnership for New Communities

*Civic Leadership for Chicago's Neighborhoods*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **“Green Jobs” On the Way for Low-Income Workers**

*New grant will fund training of city's public-housing residents for weatherization work*

(CHICAGO, July 15, 2009) - Led by The Partnership for New Communities, a group of five organizations in Chicago has been selected by Living Cities, an innovative philanthropic collaborative of 21 of the world's largest foundations and financial institutions, to launch a pilot program that will create new job opportunities for low-income residents in the emerging field of energy efficiency.

Through the grant, an estimated 30 to 50 public-housing residents will be trained for jobs weatherizing residential buildings around the city. The training will include attention to basic reading, math and computer skills so that participants are positioned to advance along a career path in the field. A variety of support services also will be available to ensure that trainees have the resources they need to complete the program successfully.

The five organizations – known collectively as the Workforce Partnership for Energy Efficiency (WPEE) – include The Partnership for New Communities, Chicago Housing Authority, City of Chicago, Chicago Jobs Council and Chicagoland Green Collar Jobs Initiative. The WPEE will lead city departments, nonprofit organizations and colleges to work together to train Chicagoans for jobs in the local green economy, modeling its approach after the successful Opportunity Chicago collaborative.

A city-wide workforce development initiative with numerous partners, Opportunity Chicago aims to help 5,000 public-housing residents prepare for and find employment over five years (2006-2010).

"If you don't intentionally build the connection between low-income communities and the emerging green economy, then it just won't happen." said Marian Urquilla, Director of Human Development for Living Cities. "We searched the country for innovative and workable ideas to achieve lower energy costs while creating jobs with legitimate career paths. Opportunity Chicago does that."

The approach of the WPEE ties directly to the Chicago Climate Action Plan, which identifies energy efficient buildings as one of five key strategies for reducing the city's greenhouse gas emissions. The WPEE also supports the city's workforce strategy of "Green Jobs for All," which seeks to ensure that all Chicagoans – including those living in poverty – can benefit from major public and private investments in the environment.

The Obama administration is taking action to catalyze similar efforts on a national level.

U.S. Labor Secretary Hilda L. Solis recently announced a \$500 million grant program – funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act – to help prepare workers for new jobs in the energy efficiency and renewable energy industries.

Locally, the WPEE's work will result in new weatherization curricula and training programs intended to become models for expansion in Chicago and beyond. Through a competitive process, the WPEE will select one or more qualified organizations to develop and deliver the training.

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“Chicago is in a great position to undertake this work,” said Jennifer Keeling, Director of City of Policy at Chicago Jobs Council, which coordinates and facilitates Opportunity Chicago. “We’ll build from the city’s research that projects how addressing climate change could affect the local workforce, and the invaluable lessons we’ve learned through Opportunity Chicago about what training and services really work to get low-skilled individuals into good jobs.”

**The Partnership for New Communities** is a collaborative that brings together business, civic and philanthropic leaders to invest in strategic economic development, community-building and employment initiatives that promote large-scale improvements in the neighborhoods most affected by public-housing transformation in Chicago. <http://www.thepartnershipfornewcommunities.org/>

**About Living Cities:** Founded in 1991, Living Cities is an innovative philanthropic collaborative of 21 of the world’s largest foundations and financial institutions. Our members are not simply funders. They participate at the senior management level on the Living Cities Board of Directors and contribute the time of 80+ expert staff toward crafting and implementing our agenda, which is focused on improving the lives of low-income people and the urban areas in which they live. <http://www.livingcities.org/>

**Living Cities’ Members:** AARP Foundation, AXA Community Investment Program, Bank of America, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, Citigroup, J.P. Morgan Chase & Company, Deutsche Bank, Ford Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, The Kresge Foundation, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, The McKnight Foundation, MetLife, Inc., Prudential Financial, The Rockefeller Foundation, Surdna Foundation **Affiliate Members:** The Cleveland Foundation, The Skillman Foundation

**Opportunity Chicago** is a city-wide workforce development initiative that aims to help 5,000 public-housing residents prepare for and find lasting employment over five years (2006-2010). Developed by The Partnership for New Communities, Chicago Housing Authority and the Mayor’s Office of Workforce Development (now the Department of Community Development and Department of Family and Support Services), it is becoming a national model due to its success in identifying, and helping low-skilled workers overcome, barriers to employment <http://www.opportunitychicago.org/>

The **Chicago Climate Action Plan** is a comprehensive and detailed strategy to help lower greenhouse gas emissions and address climate change. The plan outlines five strategies, which are broken into 26 actions for mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and nine actions to prepare for climate change. The Chicago Climate Action Plan details steps for organizations of all kinds and suggests actions for every individual. <http://www.chicagoclimataction.org/>

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