

# Clean Energy Works: Portland Project a Model for Green Stimulus

In Portland, Recovery Act funds are "laying the foundation for long-term economic, environmental, and community health."

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posted Oct 26, 2009

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The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) promised to pump millions into projects promoting green jobs and energy efficiency. Though much of the money has yet to be spent (only 12 percent of the money allocated has been used), early projects are demonstrating the returns that green investments will have.

Take the City of Portland's Clean Energy Works program, whose goal is to retrofit Portland homes to be more energy efficient while **creating green jobs** and raising home values. In the next two years, 500 homes will be retrofitted—part of a pilot program that, pending approval by the state government in Salem, will expand to cover 100,000 homes.

In a recent conference call organized by **Green for All**, a national organization working to create green jobs, Portland Mayor Sam Adams discussed why Clean Energy Works is so important right now. "In Oregon, a state with one of the highest unemployment rates in the country, this program stands to provide a scalable national model by leveraging federal recovery dollars **to put people back to work** and achieve significant carbon reductions."



The Portland pilot is focused on four key outcomes with the first 500 homes: achieving the maximum **efficiencies**, making the most greenhouse gas reductions possible, creating jobs, and reducing the burden of energy costs on people who are too well off to qualify for weatherization programs but still without the means to get a bank loan for retrofits.

Clean Energy Works will use ARRA funding to achieve maximum efficiency through energy audits at each home, allowing homeowners to pay the loan when they pay their utility bill. Homes need audits before and after retrofitting to be sure that the retrofit creates the maximum energy savings. The consistent challenge for these programs is making sure that retrofits actually happen and having an audit after the work is a way to do that.

Phaedra Ellis-Lamkins, executive director of Green for All, **called** Clean Energy Works "one of the nation's leading models for how to use Recovery Act funds not just to stimulate short-term economic activity, but to lay the foundation for **long-term economic, environmental and community health.**"

The Portland City Council also approved a **Community Workforce Agreement (CWA)**, signed by businesses, churches and labor unions, to focus the job creation effort in the places where it is needed most. The agreement sets a series of goals designed to make sure the green jobs that the program will create are also equitable:

- ⇒ 80 percent of the project's employees must be from the local workforce;
- ⇒ workers must earn a living wage (at least 180 percent of the state minimum wage);
- ⇒ the program will strive to provide workers with access to adequate and affordable health insurance;
- ⇒ people of color, women, and low-income residents will perform at least 30 percent of trade and technical project hours;
- ⇒ the program will provide career opportunities to former inmates;
- ⇒ continuing education and certification will be available.

The Portland City Council, in endorsing the CWA, noted that green weatherization jobs contribute to the City's commitment "to growing green businesses and a green economy that puts people back to work and provides new employment opportunities to disadvantaged communities" as well as its goal of an 80 percent reduction in carbon emissions by 2050.

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Roger Valdez wrote this article for **YES! Magazine**, a national nonprofit media organization that uses powerful ideas with practical actions. Roger is a research associate with the **Sightline Institute**, a not-for-profit research and communication center whose mission is to bring about sustainability, a healthy, lasting prosperity grounded in place.

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