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CITY LAUNCHES GREEN BLOCKS

Residential energy conservation project aims to bring free energy efficiency upgrades to 300 Missoula homes

The City of Missoula and NorthWestern Energy are launching their second Green Blocks Residential Energy Conservation Pilot Project this week. The partnership aims to provide free energy audits and free home energy-saving improvements such as programmable thermostats and insulation for 300 Missoula homes. The program also includes free water-wise audits and improvements from Mountain Water Company.

Applications are available now at the Mayor's Office, on the second floor of City Hall at 435 Ryman St., weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Read about Green Blocks and see the application packet on the City of Missoula Web site at www.ci.missoula.mt.us.

The first Green Blocks pilot project, in 2008, provided energy-saving measures to 91 Missoula homes in seven neighborhoods around Missoula. The average investment in each home was \$1,500, free of charge to participating homeowners. Of the 91 homes, 86 qualified for insulation upgrades.

The 2008 project grew from a proposal by Missoula resident and energy expert Gerald Mueller to Mayor John Engen's Mayor's Advisory Group on Climate Change and Sustainability. It was funded entirely by NorthWestern Energy and administered by staff from the Mayor's Office.

This year, the second pilot project will be funded by up to \$250,000 awarded to the City of Missoula in federal Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant money and up to \$230,000 provided by NorthWestern Energy.

The project is dedicated to improving energy conservation and reducing household energy bills to promote a greener city.

“Green Blocks is about making life better for Missoulians,” said Mayor John Engen. “When we conserve energy, we save money, protect the environment and make folks’ homes more comfortable to live in. During our test run of the program, we helped nearly 100 families make their homes more energy efficient; this time, we’ll help 300 Missoula households do the right thing for themselves and our community.”

Here’s how it works: Green Blocks homes are chosen in two-block areas, where residents must participate at a rate of 90 percent. Any Missoula resident can decide to serve as a Block Captain. Block Captains pick up applications in the Mayor’s Office. The Block Captain is responsible for enlisting 90 percent of his or her neighbors in a two-block area and returning the application packets by the deadline of Aug. 13.

Once a two-block area is chosen, participants will be asked to attend a mandatory introductory meeting, which will be offered at several times in September. At that meeting, the initial audits will be scheduled, and residents will have a chance to visit with staff members from the City of Missoula, NorthWestern Energy, the audit firm KEMA and Mountain Water.

Here’s a time schedule:

- Aug. 13, 3 p.m.: Complete application packets due in Mayor’s Office. Early submission is strongly encouraged.
- Later in August: Applicants will be notified of committee decisions, including possible additional actions necessary for project inclusion
- September: Mandatory Green Blocks orientation meetings
- Later in September: Audits will begin
- Also in September: Conservation Side Orders program begins
- Ongoing beginning in September: Energy-saving measures retrofits installed
- 2010 – 2012: Energy use monitored to note any benefits and changes

The new pilot project has an additional feature we’ve called Green Blocks Side Orders, a package of City of Missoula programs offered exclusively to Green Blocks participants. Participants can choose from a menu that includes discounts on locally manufactured Clawson Windows, waterwise landscape planning, professional solar site assessments, education and help establishing food gardens, and more. The Side Orders program is made possible by our partners in private business and nonprofits.

Please join us in promoting energy conservation and community. Green Blocks: Giving conservation a square deal.

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Additional contacts:

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