

Help for home energy efficiency

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Reprints



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OAK PARK — I recently attended a gathering that reminded me of a Tupperware party, yet it was for home energy efficiency.

It was organized by Energy Impact Illinois, a program run by an alliance of local and federal organizations, utility companies and nonprofits that help communities save energy. Although the event was held at the circa-1910

Chicago abode of Baird & Warner realtor Enid Winters, what I learned seemed a perfect fit for Oak Park with its abundance of old – and more than likely drafty – houses.

Energy Impact has completed nearly a dozen energy assessments of Oak Park homes, with more on the way, said Pamela Brookstein, the program's Oak Park representative and regional lead field organizer. Homeowners who complete the recommended energy efficiency projects stand to save at least 15 percent – but in many cases more than 30 percent – off their energy bills, Brookstein said.

“Oak Park homes are very well-built, but many were built before any codes were invented and are lacking some of the very basic things that would make a huge difference in keeping us warmer, or cooler, like proper insulation levels,” Brookstein said. “Then, we made holes all over the place, for things like dryer vents, TV cables and new plumbing stacks without properly sealing. These holes are letting air leak out or in constantly.”

Energy Impact is offering a limited-time rebate of up to \$1,750 to improve a home's energy efficiency. The program helps single-family homeowners lower their energy bills and connects them with qualified contractors, rebates and other financing solutions.

“With the fall, we really want people to get involved in this program,” said Dan Olson, project manager for Energy Impact through the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, a partner in the program. “We're really encouraging people.”

The procedure is easy. Call 1-855-9-IMPACT and get connected with a certified energy efficiency contractor, who will analyze your property and identify the most cost-effective energy improvements and the cost. Once the work is complete, usually within 30 days of your initial call, the instant rebate for 70 percent of the cost of the work, up to \$1,750, is processed through the contractor and is applied up front. So if you get \$2,500 worth of work done – the average estimate for a 15 percent energy savings – the cost to you is \$750.

There's more incentive: host a party and get a free assessment. But if you're not into that, for a limited time, Energy Impact partner Nicor is offering a \$49 audit. If you miss that offer, Energy Impact will do it for \$99.

Participants also receive an Illinois Home Performance certificate for energy efficiency, which can be included in a home listing should you decide to sell.

“When residents of Oak Park participate in the program, they are helping to create a lasting energy efficiency market in the community,” Brookstein said.

Oak Park residents can also contact Brookstein at Pamela@energyimpactillinois.org or (708) 252-0623.