

## Expanding employer-assisted housing through energy efficiency retrofits



By [Lillie Sellers](#) May 24, 2011 [Post a comment](#)

*Authored with Breann Gala, MPC Research Assistant*

More than 75 employers in Illinois have enjoyed success by offering [employer-assisted housing](#) (EAH) programs for their workers. Most participating employers include down payment/closing cost assistance to help eligible employees purchase a home close to work. EAH advantages for a company or institution include: offering a unique benefit, helping employees and their families become financially stable through pre-purchase budget and credit counseling, and setting program guidelines about where employees can purchase homes to support local community development goals.

Now, both existing and new EAH employers will be able to expand their current program to include eligible employees who already own a home but need some help making it more energy efficient. A regional collaboration between the City of Chicago, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), and the City of Rockford was awarded a \$25 million dollar federal grant to tackle energy efficiency by retrofitting commercial and residential buildings.

This collaboration and grant led to the creation of Energy Impact Illinois, which addresses various climate change goals laid out by the 2008 [Chicago Climate Action Plan](#) and the region's comprehensive plan, [GO TO 2040](#). Through Energy Impact Illinois, MPC will administer the EAH Retrofit Program.

The EAH Retrofit Program will expand on the existing EAH framework by adding energy efficient retrofits to the benefits that employers can offer their employees. For example, a participating EAH employer could contribute \$3,000 to an employee homeowner for energy retrofitting their home, which would be matched with \$3,000 from the EAH Retrofit Program. The homeowner will receive an energy audit of their home to best determine which type of retrofit—such as adding attic insulation, upgrading to an energy efficient furnace, or replacing old windows—would be most beneficial to saving energy dollars and usage long-term.

MPC will work with EAH employers to leverage these matching funds and administer this program with the goal of assisting 150 homeowners in metropolitan Chicago in greening their homes.

The EAH Retrofit Program is a good resource for employers and existing homeowners. Currently, energy consumed by buildings accounts for 61 percent of greenhouse gas emissions in the region. The opportunity for improvements are immense, and this program

will allow employers to positively affect the environment, invest in and show a commitment to their employees, and create local green jobs.

To brainstorm about how this program could work for your employees, contact Lillie Sellers at (312) 863-6005 or [lsellers@metroplanning.org](mailto:lsellers@metroplanning.org).