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Gurnee mayor leads by example on energy program

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Kristina Kovarik

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By Bob Susnjara

Gurnee Mayor Kristina Kovarik says she wanted to lead by example in touting the merits of a program meant to make homes more energy efficient while offering Chicago-area property owners a chance to tap into federal grant money available for recommended work.

Kovarik participated in Energy Impact Illinois. It's part of a federal energy grant initiative that can help residents save up to \$1,750 by making certain improvements to their dwellings.

A D V E R T

Robert Fuller, field organizer for Energy Impact Illinois, said about \$25 million in federal taxpayers' cash has been allotted to the seven-county Chicago metropolitan area for those who participate in the program. Funding comes from the U.S. Department of Energy, with local involvement from the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning and utilities.

"Right now, most homes, probably nine out of 10 homes, throughout Chicagoland and right here in Gurnee are wasting up to

15 percent of their energy because their homes are not properly insulated or they have drafts that allow for energy to move

from parts of the home you want heated during winter or cooled during the summer into places like the attic or crawl spaces," Fuller said in a recent presentation to the Gurnee village board.

Kovarik said an energy inspection was performed at her house so she could review the program, which she called "really legit." Results from the inspection showed her house needs to be more energy efficient, which can be accomplished with \$3,350 in recommended improvements including weather stripping, door sweeps and spray foam insulation in a crawl space and in all accessible exposed basement areas.

Under Energy Impact Illinois, Kovarik would be eligible for a \$1,750 rebate on the work done by a professional contractor. Energy Impact promotes rebates covering up to 70 percent of a job or the maximum of \$1,750.

"I would reduce my heating bill and my electric bill and it's all a good thing," she said.

Kovarik said she's heard residents remark the village should set an example in efforts perceived as environmentally friendly or green. She said that's why she wanted the inspection of her home before promoting the program's benefits.

About 440 households have had inspections so far through Energy Impact Illinois, Fuller said. Similar to Gurnee, the village of Libertyville has scheduled an informational meeting about the program at 7 p.m. Wednesday at the civic center, 135 W. Church St.

Kovarik said home inspections typically cost \$99, but a homeowner who hosts neighbors for an informational session won't have to pay the fee.