

Chicago wants to help you upgrade your drafty apartment



Alexander Helbach, HANDOUT

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If the heat in your apartment is flying out the window, Chicago wants to help.

The city said Monday it is partnering with Chicago-based nonprofit Elevate Energy to upgrade 2,500 electric-heated apartments and to distribute energy-efficiency products to an additional 7,500 households across Chicago over the next three years.

Building owners can apply for free energy assessments and energy-efficient light bulbs installed in common areas. Financial incentives will be available for those who opt to implement more in-depth efficiency measures, including air sealing and insulation and HVAC system upgrades.

The city also said it distributing thousands of free energy efficiency products, which Chicago projects will cost \$1.6 million over the time of the program.

To participate, building owners will complete a short application at retrofit.cityofchicago.org or receive more information by calling 855-372-8377 toll free.

The vast majority of Chicago's housing stock are rented two- to four-story walk-ups that also include a sizable

share of the city's affordable housing.

Residents of lower-income rental apartments pay 76 percent more for energy than owner-occupied single family homes based on cost per square foot, according to a University of Arizona study published in May. The study estimated the lost savings at \$200 to \$400 per year.

Cook County and Chicago have been pressing for energy-efficient buildings.

A county ordinance that took effect this year requires large county-owned buildings to report their energy use to be scored on efficiency.

Chicago has a similar ordinance that applies to both private and public buildings that took effect in June. That ordinance focuses on the 1 percent of large buildings that consume 22 percent of all energy used by buildings. Two- to four-story walk-ups are not addressed.

Elevate Energy has been working since its 2008 founding to convince owners of such buildings that they, too, can reap benefits from energy efficiency improvements, even when tenants foot the bills for utilities.

The Retrofit Chicago Residential Partnership combines the efforts of Elevate with ComEd, Peoples Gas, the Community Investment Corp., the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning and the Historic Chicago Bungalow Association and those of the city.

Chicago said Monday it has nearly doubled its original two-year goal of 7,750 retrofitted homes since starting the program, completing more than 15,000 in-depth upgrades. More than 100,000 households had received free efficiency products as of October.

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