

Baltimore Neighborhood Energy Challenge Overview

As one of the initial projects stemming from the Baltimore Sustainability Plan, the Baltimore Office of Sustainability, in partnership with the Baltimore Community Foundation, is launching the Baltimore Neighborhood Energy Challenge (BNEC) to motivate households to reduce their energy use. Based on social marketing research that suggests a few neighbors taking conscious steps to conserve energy can influence the rest of the neighborhood to follow suit, BNEC challenges participating communities to achieve energy reductions against their own baseline. In its initial phase, BNEC will be a 9-month pilot program in 6-8 Baltimore communities designed to raise awareness, reduce residential energy use, stimulate demand for energy conservation services, and learn lessons on how to motivate behavior change related to reducing residential energy use. After the pilot, we hope to use what we learn to expand BNEC citywide and connect the program to other efforts aimed at creating jobs to make Baltimore homes healthy and energy efficient. BNEC has the potential to be a national model of community mobilization, social marketing, and verifiable energy use and greenhouse gas emissions reductions.

Relevance to Baltimore Sustainability Plan Goals

The BNEC directly responds to the following Plan goals:

- Pollution Prevention Goal 1: Reduce Baltimore's greenhouse gas emissions by 15% by 2015
- Resource Conservation Goal 1: Reduce Baltimore's electricity use by 15% by 2015
- Education & Awareness Goal 3: Raise the environmental awareness of Baltimore's residents
- Education & Awareness Goal 4: Expand access to information on sustainability
- Green Economy Goal 1: Create green jobs and prepare City residents for these jobs

This Challenge will address all three pillars of sustainability through:

- *People*: strengthening neighborhood cohesion and pride
- *Planet*: reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving air quality by reducing energy use
- *Prosperity*: reducing residential energy bills, stimulating green job creation by increasing demand for energy service jobs

How does it work?

- Challenge eight neighborhoods to reduce the energy use from their own baselines using social marketing techniques.
- Create web-based interface, assemble and update a resource clearinghouse, design information and outreach materials, work with neighborhood outreach teams, and serve as central hub for data collection.
- Neighborhood organizations will recruit teams of volunteers/neighborhood energy "ambassadors" (10 – 20 per neighborhood) to do neighbor-to-neighbor outreach and encourage participation in the program. Ambassadors will be enrolling residents during the program enrollment period, August 1 – October 15 and then will transition to a role of cheerleader and educator until the pilot program ends in April/May.
- Civic Works will train ambassadors to educate their neighbors about energy saving tips and, when needed, help them install the products included in the Energy Savers kit.
- Participating households will receive a free or subsidized Energy Savers kit, access to informational resources and "coaching", and public recognition.
- Participating households will be asked to sign a public pledge to adopt the no- and low-cost modifications contained in the kit and a waiver to allow their energy use to be shared with program organizers.

- Once the pledged households institute the suggested modifications, we expect them to see a resulting reduction in their energy use and bills. This positive reinforcement may compel some households to take subsequent, larger steps to further reduce their energy use such as replacing an appliance, air sealing their home, or installing a cool roof. The BNEC clearinghouse will help connect residents to available subsidized programs and market rate energy services.

How did we select BNEC target neighborhoods?

- Diverse mix in terms of geography, housing type, housing size, race, income and level of community organization
- Some sites already working on “green” activities, such as improving recycling rates, planting trees, and starting community gardens
- Some sites from the Healthy Neighborhoods network so that we can connect with their community organizing as well as their block and home improvement programs
- Neighborhood-based organization or association to serve as lead partner for each target site

What are we offering to participating neighborhoods?

- Americorps member to assist neighborhoods; i.e. 1 Corps member per 2 neighborhoods
- Access to resources for neighborhood residents
- \$1,000 stipends for neighborhood-specific actions to encourage participation
- Recognition as a leader in Baltimore neighborhood taking action on energy use reduction

What are we asking from participating neighborhoods?

- Recruit 10 – 20 volunteers who will be trained by Civic Works’ staff to do outreach to their neighbors
- Create outreach plan with volunteers
- Gather information and data obtained by volunteers and provide it to Project Coordinator
- Plan fun and engaging activities to spread the word about the program and its benefits to residents

Proposed Timeline

- July-Aug 2009– BNEC pilot is launched in target neighborhoods
- Aug-Feb – Seven month pilot Challenge occurs
- March 2010 – Assessment information is collected
- April 2010– Reporting and evaluation
- July 2010 – Potential citywide BNEC launch

Metrics for Measuring Success

- Number of participating households
- Number of volunteers recruited and trained
- Kilowatt hours of energy saved
- Dollars saved in energy bills
- Metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions avoided
- Number of households utilizing clearinghouse resources to make more extensive home modifications